The Full

V.2026.7 Sept 2026. See last page.

Us, Politics,The System And Class

The key issues in public life -
How we relate in politics and producing the wealth.
What's wrong with it and how to put it right, worldwide.

Has all the Writings, Summaries, Extracts,
including The Right To Unionise.
The Summaries / Reads provide the basics in ever-
smaller packages, so there's some repetition.
For the Summaries, read up to page 60 -
The Micro-summary and The Essential UsPol (below)
With 'The Business System, Not Capitalism' graphic, p.7
'It's Our Money Not Theirs', p. 14,
The Ten Minute Read p.18, The Twenty Minute Read p.26,
The Thirty Minute Read p.45, What Will It Be Like p.60.

Then Contents of the main work, p.61. Then the main work.

The Essential Us, Politics, The System And Class

Starting with The Micro-summary

We're in a state about politics. It's because we don't base politics on 'the system' – how some people run businesses, producing goods and services, industrially, employing multiple staff; and trade in free markets; and the economic classes this system produces. We need to persuade each other to base all political views and discussions on it...

People think political parties and governments run the country. But they don't run the business and work relationships where we make our living and some get wealthy. These key relationships are mostly left to run as free markets. And the point of free markets is that governments don't control them.

Conservatives claim free markets mean everyone is free to run a business, so anyone can 'make it'. So the extreme differences in power and wealth are fair. But that's a fantastical view. It's not how the world works. High-volume mass production (industrialism) in making goods and providing services is more efficient than small. So, with trade being in free markets, high-volume producers constantly drive out small ones. So most production and work comes to be done in a smallish number of large operations, collectively, owned and run by a small minority, business people. Not with everybody producing and trading as independent individuals.

They've Got All The Rest *- How the most important free market, the one in jobs and people, operates, is ignored. With volume production meaning multiple-staffing in most businesses, even small ones, they can keep their operation going without any one particular worker because even without them, they've got all the rest working and producing.*

Where Their Wealth Comes From *That means they can trade harshly over pay and conditions with each separate worker. And can sell their work for more than they pay them. And that's where their wealth comes from - through unequal power and control of the work process. Even though they might be enterprising and able and deserve more than most of the rest for what they do, that's where it comes from.*

Even small businesses, with multiple staff, run more industrially than individual traders, so all business people are making money collectively, not as individuals

With many staff, they get wealthy more from the work they do, collectively, than from what they themselves do.

The conservative claim that this is all about individual rights and freedom is ludicrous. But with it being widely accepted, it gives legitimacy to the freedoms and wealth accumulation of business people who actually operate collectively, with multiple staff, in companies and corporations.

Business people's activity is the economy, they run most of it, not governments. They are a class, the business class. That gives them the inbuilt political power to drastically limit what progressive governments can do.

And they use the wealth they take from running the system to actively promote politics that favours them. Business people of all sizes, down to the smallest, organise and support conservative parties and media and pressurise progressive parties. By making business freedom in free markets the dominant political view they protect their power over everyone else in the work process.

So the political parties are not just different teams of public-minded managers, just claiming to be the ones who can most competently 'run the country' or 'the system' for everyone's benefit, as many people see them. They come from the system, from people in it organising to protect their partisan roles and interests in it.

The key process where interests are different is where we produce goods and services and create wealth and make our living. The business class dominate the rest

because they put more into looking out for their interests than the majority do, who are mostly workers. Workers don't get what they want from work or from politics because they don't even identify themselves as the economic class – the employed class - that they absolutely are, and mostly don't organise as such, at work or in progressive politics.

We need a clear view of the system, these basic political and trading relationships, as a foundation for discussing politics. The works that make up 'Us, Politics, The System And Class' provide it. Then the employed class need to put their relationships with the business class – at work, and in the politics of taxation and provision of public services – at the centre of political debate. ***(End of Micro-summary)***

The Main 'Essential UsPol'

That was the Micro-Summary. This next 'Essential UsPol' is an earlier, longer summary. It covers the same topics so some of it appears as repetition. But it is in more depth and, covering fundamental things that are ignored, worth reading again.

The Essential UsPol, First Take

Us And Politics

All across the world, people think they're not getting what they are entitled to. And that there's a lot wrong with public life. They are having a hard time making a living and getting basic needs. Public services aren't good enough. They look to 'politicians', political parties and governments to put all this right, to provide for or enable their needs. And political parties and governments claim they can and will. But people think they let them down.

In response, some give up on thinking about politics and base their views on just feelings, like whether or not they like or don't like particular leading politicians. Some blame and are hostile towards people cast as outsiders, including fellow-citizens, for no good reason, and turn to misleading nationalism and nasty populists. Many or most distrust politics. Some turn to daft conspiracy theories. And we are even wrecking our own habitat.

This is all because we don't have a clear view of basic political and trading relationships. Of how we relate and work together in politics and the economic system. We need one, and to base political thinking, debate and our own actions on it, and for people to get what they are need and are entitled to. One that exposes the nonsense of the dominant conservative world view.

Politics And The System

People expect politics and government to run everything for us. But our biggest need is to make a living, and most do it in relationships separate from politics - in business and everyday work, producing and selling goods and services, mostly done in free markets, in the economic system. That's where we get the money to meet our essential needs - for housing, clothes, food, wi-fi. It's where we make our living and some get wealthy.

And political parties and governments don't control all that. So they only have a limited role in people getting what they most need, through whatever public support and services progressive parties achieve against conservative opposition. So as well as looking at how we relate in politics, everyone needs to look beneath politics and government at how we operate and relate in different roles and groups in the underlying economic system. And since we only have flimsy relationships in politics, it diverts us from these basics of society and wealth and power. (More about that in *The Twenty Minute Read).*

How We Think About Politics And The System

Do you think about this - how we relate and trade together in politics, business, production, and work? About 'the system'? Do political activists and commentators? And do ordinary citizens? The answer is no, isn't it? Or not much.

For many, debate about the system is limited to brief, broad-brush comments on 'capitalism' or 'socialism' or 'communism', maybe in conversation at social events. But even before any more organised discussion of our views on these, we need to establish what ***actually goes on***, outside our heads. To establish what we actually ***do***. To base politics not on abstract discussions of ideal social systems, the 'isms', but on what actually ***is*** - on how politics, public services, the economy; markets, business, workers, class, jobs; unions, income, wealth generation and distribution, poverty, opportunity; media, identities, racism, nationality - all actually ***work***. On where we ***are***. On the ***facts*** of how we relate to each other in politics and how we trade together in producing wealth and allocating it. To develop an observable, demonstrable, view of all that, a framework that people can agree on, and base political debate on it.

To do that, put aside the talk of left, right, capitalism, socialism, conservatism and communism and of Thatcher, Reagan, Rayn, Hayek and Marx. And put aside politics based just on people's political *views* and simple *feelings*.

Argue that the system of trades we make every day is the basis of society, not politics and the state. Our relationships in making goods, providing services, and selling them, to make our living or get wealthy - business, trade and work. It's 'the economy', ***then*** politics. By expecting politics to sort everything, people actually get diverted from this. So we need to persuade people of our need to understand how we trade with each other outside politics and how politics is built on top of this.

With this clear understanding of what is, ***then*** talk about how society ***should*** be - about political change for fairness, dignity, security, support, equality and preserving our environment. To meet this need, *Us, Politics, The System And Class* explains the system, from everyone's everyday experience, from how you are involved. It will help you think and talk about where we are and what to do.

But everybody takes how we relate in politics and how we trade with each other for granted, ignore it and, instead, flail about, arguing about single issues, the wrong issues, blaming innocent people and each other, and supporting the wrong people. So we get some ordinary people, workers, making things worse for themselves by voting conservatives, hostile to their interests and those of their relatives, workmates, friends and neighbours, into government; deserting progressive parties that do try to look after them, for not doing enough; or turning to malicious mavericks who divert them from tackling those who are responsible, the business class, into attacking each other, often over colour or personal things; turning off from politics; getting angry about politics and with each other over politics; and, in making their living, the business class bossing and mis-treating them and cornering huge wealth from their work.

People see the various parties as all aiming to 'run the country' as if they control it, for the public good, in everyone's best interests, as if they are just different management teams. But politicians don't make the system and don't simply ***run*** it, as if from ***above***. It's the other way round – governments, public services and law come ***from*** the system, from groups in it organising politically, in parties, to protect their role and interests in it. And they usually conflict with the interests of other groups.

The System - Volume Production - 'Industrialism' - in Free Markets

We call 'the system' the economy, free markets or capitalism. But they sound like self-existing 'things', outside and above us. And they don't say anything about the core activities - everyday business, work and trade. (Property is important but can be only about storage and transfer of wealth). And it's not really a system, not laid down anywhere, just the established customs of buying and selling, of contract law.

The big issue is who gets what, isn't it? To understand that, we have to understand how we relate where wealth is created, in the production process, the ***work process***. That is more important than free markets in goods and services, or

property. It includes, importantly, but hugely neglected, free markets in ***jobs***.

High-volume production dominates how we live. Industrialism is the usual term. It can seem to mean just the manufacture of goods in factories but high-volume, large-scale operations dominate services too. We do talk of 'service industries' and 'the chains.' But we need the language to put how it works at the centre of politics. Maybe say 'mass production, of goods and services'? 'High-volume production of goods and services'? Or 'large-scale.' Or just 'volume.' ***But whatever we call it, we have to get to grips with the industrial revolution. We've had over 250 years to do it.***

Volume production and trade in free markets is more efficient than small-volume and relentlessly displaces most of it. It leads *inevitably* to larger businesses displacing small ones. And that *inevitably* leads to a small number of business people dominating work and wealth. And they usually use their power for their own benefit and against everyone else's.

And from high-volume production we get large workforces. Volume production includes small businesses, because small businesses are crucially different from individual traders in having many staff, which determines how the key job relationship works, as explained below. So it is ***collective.*** Individual 'sole traders' are a small minority compared to how most people work, in 'jobs', for 'bosses.' It means the conservative stress on 'the individual' is nonsense. More later on that.

Class - Economic Class

The Business Class – Again, it's the *inevitable* result of volume production in free markets that a small proportion of the population – business people - come to dominate the markets. So a minority, whoever they are, will *necessarily* own and manage most work. That demolishes the conservative argument 'you can always start a business yourself.' You can, but the efficiency of volume production means most will inevitably be forced out and have to become workers.

Business people are, and run, the economy. That distinctive, hugely important role, makes them a *class*. It is key to ordinary people and progressives getting anywhere to recognise them as one, ***the business class.*** And it's the *whole* business class, all believing strongly in business people's rights, that achieves the wide political acceptance of their rights in politics, which is our main problem. Talking only of billionaires, 'the corporations', 'oligarchs' or 'the'1%' obscures how it's the whole class who promote business people's rights in conservative political argument, and legitimise, give political cover, to the biggest ones.

The Employed Class - And most of the rest can only get work by working for them, or for public bodies. You can see it in how much people talk of themselves or others 'getting a job'. We have to call this majority a class too and define it by their vital, definite, unarguable role in the system, as workers. 'The working class' is corrupted by narrow usage. The worker class? ***But it has to unarguably include people who need jobs who are 'white-collar' workers.*** 'Working people'? The employee class?

I'm thinking 'The Employed Class'. What do you think? A full discussion of economic class is at pages 111 to 135 of the full work.

From all that you can easily point out to others that there is a class who run most production of wealth through control of the work process. And that with volume production such a class develops inevitably. And that the other main class will be, inevitably, the employed class.

Us And Wealth And Wages - Producing The Wealth

We create wealth by producing goods and services. But all that is discussed is how they are either ***sold***, in free markets, or ***provided***, by public bodies. Nobody talks about ***how we work together producing*** them. ***The work process*** is the central activity in human life but everyone takes how we do it for granted.

The Power Relationship In The Work Process

Here is how it works - with volume production, employers have multiple-staffed workforces. Where they trade with them each trading as an individual, they have so many they can easily do without any one. Because they've got all the rest still working. They can say, and they do, 'There's The Door If You Don't Like It', because They've Got All The Rest still working. This is why workers are weaker than employers. It's not 'Well that's your opinion' or 'point of view' *- as even a Trumper said about it -* ***'Right - it's just the arithmetic'.*** *Meaning, numerical fact, not opinion.*

(It's the biggest 'bad trade deal' affecting American workers and Trump is on the business class's side in it.)

Allocating The Wealth

The business class use that advantage to allocate themselves huge wealth from what we produce in the work process. They justify it with well-worn arguments about ability, risk and hard work. These are valid arguments. But they get their wealth not so much from them but from that key power advantage they have in the trading relationship with the employed class, from volume-production and large-workforces - They've Got All The Rest.

With this power over staff, business people sell their work for one amount, pay them less, and keep the difference. That's how they get wealthy, not just from their own ability and effort. **This is explained more fully on page 14.**

The Business System Not Capitalism

Everyone calls the system 'capitalism'. But the central process is where we produce goods, services, wages and wealth, before capital - familiar everyday production in business. The everyday work process. 'Capitalism; obscures and mystifies this process, and obscures the business class. 'Capitalism' is just where business people re-invest the surplus money they accumulate from the more important work process. It's a supplementary process to the main activity, not the core process. That's normal business, production and selling. So call the economy 'the business system', not 'capitalism'.

See the diagram, next page...

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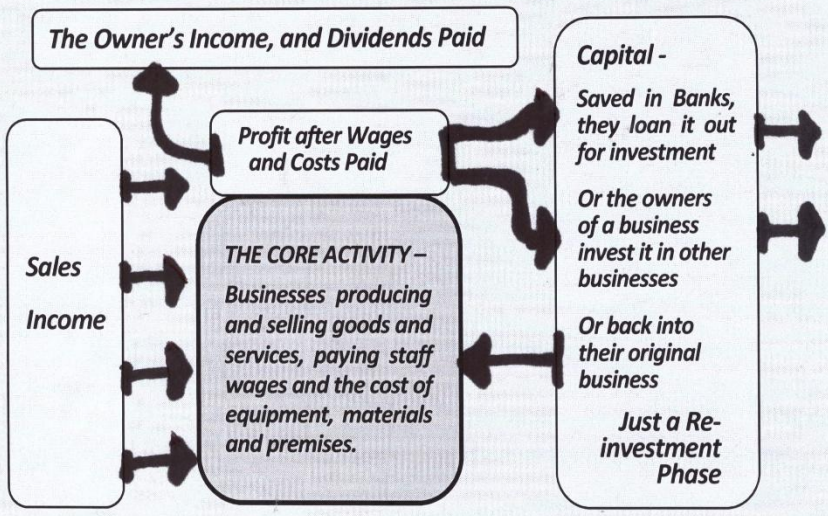
Business System, Not Capitalism

To tackle conservatism, the dominant ideology, we need to point people past politics and at the system. Most call it capitalism. That makes it sound like an obscure thing-in-itself, outside human agency. And capital isn't the core of the system. What is, is ordinary everyday business activity - business people, using us as workers, organising the production of goods and services and selling them in free markets. *Capital* is just the surplus money created *in* the business system, *capitalism* just the re-cycling of it, just a development phase of the main business system. Here, a graphic to show this...



Business people invest capital in better production methods. This brings constant growth, importantly. But it's not the core of the system. The core is ordinary business, business people producing goods and services, and selling them in free markets.

SO WE SHOULD CALL IT THE BUSINESS SYSTEM, NOT CAPITALISM.

This changes our sense of the system from a remote, mysterious, inaccessible thing, to one easily recognisable in daily experience. It enables us to see and talk to each other about 'the economy'. And to identify and name the class who run it, the business class. And to see how the business system and the business class's power and wealth in it is the central thing to consider in politics.

The Essential UsPol, Second Take -
The System - Volume Production Is Collective, Not Individual

Conservatives push the view that their class and the rest of us trade as individuals in the system and so are equal. It's fantasy – it doesn't match what ***is***. It's not true of their class, the business class. From partnerships up to companies to corporations, the business class trade as organisations – collectives. So do public agencies. And its not true of us, the employed class. Because in this volume-production, industrialised world, including service industries and public services, not many are independent, self-employed traders with a number of customers. With volume production you get mostly multiple-staff workforces. So most people, the employed class, work co-operatively, highly collectively, with tens, hundreds, thousands and millions of others, for these collective businesses, Companies, Corporations, and public bodies. In the job deal with these collectives, ***they*** trade as individuals, but in a different way from independent traders. They work in 'jobs', for 'bosses', on very unequal terms, as shown in ***The Power Relationship In The Work Process***, above**.**

Some people do believe they can 'make it' on their own, especially in the USA. Sometimes, some can. But the business system usually means most can't. That's when it is stable. Then there's its crises, see the 2008 crash and since. So, not understanding how their suffering is caused by the business system and the business class, they turn for security to vague collective identities like colour and nationality where nothing is said about how those in the identity group might relate if there were no outsiders, just themselves. No actual policies, just following political leaders who promise salvation through hostility to harmless fellow-citizens, or outsiders, not the business class

The Business Class And Politics

How we trade with each other enables business people, the business class, to dominate everyone else at work and allot themselves obscene wealth. Here's how they dominate *politics* too.

Even without organising politically, they seriously limit what governments can do, simply because they run the economy. We hear examples every day.

The business system involves people working together so much, is so industrialised - including the service industries - so social, so *collective*, it's really a *public* activity. That's why we call it the economy. But it is run privately, by a self-confessed selfish minority, the business class. *They* run the key activity of us making our living together, intensely inter-connected, and *they* control the allocation of income and wealth.

They claim that people looking out only for themselves, as individuals (which we don't, really), actually makes it work best for everyone. So they claim this system works best, for everyone, when governments don't regulate it. *Conservatives think the government shouldn't govern*! It's more nonsense, borne out by the outcome - great inequality of power and wealth, unfairness, misery, and instability. The business system is dynamic, true. But negatively almost as much as positively and, on balance, dreadful. This - 'laissez-faire' - leave the system alone - is the core belief of conservativism. It

obstructs political protection of people in their basic needs, and democratic regulation of the economy. They resist government regulation of the business system as that leaves all the power with their class.

And they do organise politically, mostly in conservative parties. Conservatives represent the business class and are mostly members of it. Being wealthy enough to not need public services, they oppose them and the taxes to pay for them. It's most of them, from the smallest businesses upwards, and not just 'the billionaires' or other sub-sets of the business class, who create, support and sustain the conservative parties and media, to maintain the dominant political view that business people's freedoms are sacred and can be imposed over worker's rights. They put monsters like Trump and idiots like Johnson in power because whatever else they do, they protect the business class.

The business class aren't all nasty but their competitive system pressures them to be. Exploiting the majority employed class to get great wealth, running the economy, dominating politics and the state - the business class are the ruling class.

But we don't see them as a class. And most people are workers but don't see themselves as the worker class – better employed class - either.

The System Again

It's all because people accept the free-market business system as if it's our natural habitat, like fish accept water. Conservatives get themselves elected into government despite being hostile to most people's interests because everyone just accepts it and they can pose as just 'managing the economy', claim to be working for everyone and, ridiculously, they get away with it.

But progressive parties accept the business system too. So while claiming to 'run the country', all parties actually leave business people to do it and people are mis-treated whichever is in government. As policy by conservatives, reluctantly by progressives. So people, not even recognising that the business class exists, blame politicians as a group and even call them a class, which they aren't. And then they believe maverick conservative business class activists, posing as 'outsiders', who cast politicians as a ruling elite. But *the business class, of which they are members, is the elite*. They run the economy and dominate government, the state and politics. All conservatives are of them, including Trump. They divert people from blaming the business class into blaming each other via shallow identities. And into blaming progressive parties, who, by failing to tackle the business system and the business class, enable the view 'They're all as bad as each other.' (They aren't.)

Us, Politics, The System And Class – The Employed Class's Response

How The Employed Class and Progressives Should Respond To How Things Are With Politics, The System, Business Class Power, And The Dominance Of Conservativism

As said, we ignore the system, so people don't see how it works and how it enables the business class to dominate, don't even see that the business class exist as a class. So they can't make sense of how they are treated, some say politics is confusing

and don't even vote. Many are diverted into phony loyalties like nationalism, and false divisions and daft conspiracy theories.

So, as said, to deal with it all, worldwide, we need a factual framework, a shareable knowledge base, of how we relate in politics and how we trade and work together in producing wealth and wages in business and jobs. A common understanding of these basics of society to found political opinion and action on. Our own politics, but also other ordinary people's politics. And to relate discussion not just to opinions or attitudes, like left or right, socialist or conservative, but ***to people's economic role in the system.***

This work, *Us, Politics, The System And Class*, helps to develop this, to show what it is about how we relate that causes our problems, and what we can do about it. It shows how we work together in the system, worldwide, how we co-operate, collectively, intensely, but also antagonistically; how a minority dominate the majority; who they both are; and how the majority employed class can stand up to and regulate the business class minority, in the workplaces and in politics. Uniquely, it identifies the basic problems - how employers overpower each worker because they have many others. and that business people are organised, at work as businesses, and in politics; that the rest, mostly workers, are mostly not.

Us and Politics

Some say politics is about opinions - 'Well, you think that, I think this'. But all the above is not just opinion, is it? We can debate the rights and wrongs but it's fact, isn't it? We should base all political debate on it. I do. It works. **Base political debate and opinion on these *facts* - the volume-production business system is the basis of our societies, as the big landowner system extracting wealth from tenant farmers and peasants was before it (now incorporated into the business system).** Refer as often as you can simply to the ***existence*** of the business class.

Most people can only find work with business people or state employers and are weak if not unionised. And low unionisation enables the business class to take great wealth out of the production process, enough to also spend on commanding political debate.

We need to get it widely accepted that the main issue in society is this business-class supremacy. That they have it because they *organise*, at work and in politics. On all political issues, ask 'What's the role of the business class in this?'

Ordinary people don't get what they need because business people put more into looking out for themselves as business owners, and into political activity as conservatives, than they do. So also say, as often as you can, that the worker majority - defined, by economic role, by how you make your living – in the unequal role of being easily replaced by ***All The Rest*** – are entitled to organise too, to unionise; that they desperately need to do, and to organise in politics as well - ***to match up to the business class at work and in politics, do what they do, and organise. It starts with Identifying***

with fellow-workers as the employed class and talking to each other about how they relate and organise and build what level of unionisation and political organisation you can.

In politics, we need to go deeper than every little thing each of us wants and think about what everybody else wants too, and how to co-ordinate it all. Debate how to vote based on the ***facts*** of ***how trading relationships in the work process determine great unfairness in income and wealth.***

And to go beyond leaders and what they 'are like' or do. Like progressive leaders being too cautious or Trump being what he is. We do need to try to influence political leaders when in office but if they are so wrong, we need to work on how they get there – because of the class issues explained here, and others not covered here.

When people do vote in '***progressive***' parties who aim to govern for all, they can't do enough for people to be convinced to vote them in regularly. That is, one, because the business class organise the economy, they can't much challenge them; and two, because there's so many relationships in the system, established in so many long-standing laws and institutions, they can't promise much change without a lot more backing from we voters. So it's our fault too – because we accept the system and don't give progressive parties the votes to regulate the business class and their system.

That comes from how our fellow-citizens vote, and that comes from how they see the world and politics. Like, if unhappy with Labour and the Democrat's centrism, recognise that the evidence is, over many elections, that there's not enough fellow-citizens prepared to vote progressive parties into government with anything other than centrist programmes. Last time Labour offered a radical programme, people even voted in the conservative clown Johnson instead, on the nationalist 'solution' of leaving Britain's biggest market. And accept that the problem with Trump isn't him but the American business class, represented mainly by the Republicans, and those who voted for him or didn't vote for the more civilised Democrats.

So, we need to get fellow-citizens to be more progressive. But it isn't just the party leader's job. Conservatives don't just leave campaigning to their leaders - their independent activists own and run most of the media, campaigning relentlessly. Progressives don't have media power but can counter that by communicating with fellow-voters directly themselves. This work provides material that will help. ***How To Talk Politics With Each Other,*** page 286.

The observations made in this work can seem remote from normal political discussion because conservatives convince people that the business system is the only way, they take its relationships for granted, fail to base politics on it, and let conservatives divert them onto lesser issues. But it is a grounded explanation of the essentials that we should base all politics on.

The 'Ism' That Matters Most – Volume Production, Industrialism

In summary - we need to get people to recognise that the work process is the central activity and we do it mainly by volume-production or industrialism. It started hundreds of years ago with the industrial revolution, is the biggest change in our history, and now dominates human life worldwide. But we've never worked out the power relationships of how we trade with each other, seen how they are unacceptable, and dealt with them. We need to. It's our most pressing task.

It's not a difficult or academic thing - you can easily observe and explain the relationships in it from how we take part in everyday life. Then see how the economy and politics are built *on top* of this core *factual* social process. Only *then* discuss political *views* about it all. **The key is to see that there is a business class and how it's their organisation that enables their supremacy, and that to stand up to them we need to organise too, as workers, at work and in politics.**

The argument to make to business people and conservatives about unionisation is this: you assert business people's right to organise, collectively, in their economic activity, as companies and corporations. The rest of the population, mostly workers, are entitled to organise too.

'Us, Politics, The System And Class' helps you make more sense of politics and our everyday world by explaining the key public relationships, from the daily experience of ordinary working people, and shows how to make them fairer. It will help you talk about them and work and politics - which we need to do.

Next, a stand-alone explanation of probably the biggest issue – the unequal distribution of wealth. There'll be some overlap with the rest of 'The Essential UsPol'.

How It's Our Wealth, Not Theirs

Wealth comes from adding value with work -.

Business people spend on premises, materials and equipment. They spend some more on staff to work on the materials.

The work produces goods or services of greater value than what is spent. That's the point of most business and work activity.

The greater value is set by what they are sold for. What that is above the original spending is added value.

The equipment and materials can't increase their value themselves. The work done on them does that.

The owners might do some hands-on work, but the bigger the business, the more it's the staff who do most of the work.

The business owners pay staff less than the value their work adds; they charge more for it than they pay them. After paying interest on loans etc, they pocket the rest and call it theirs.

That's how they make profits. That's what profits are.

They can do it because of the inequality in the job relationship – see The Entitlement to Unionise, later.

The business economics view is different. *They say business people buy 'the factors of production' - premises, equipment, materials and labour – that's 'costs' - and add the higher, sale price on top as a separate thing. They say profit is from this, from what they add on top.*

This is absurd, fatuous, ridiculous. Although there is some trading where sharp operators play the market to make money by just buying and selling things, the non-human 'factors of production' are (mostly) bought in at the going market price and don't increase their own value. The work done on them by staff is what does that.

When they sell at the 'added-on' price*, or value, what are they selling? It's still the workforce's original work. Even the 'adding-on' is done by workers, in the Accounts or Sales departments! Likewise, if they buy equipment and materials for less than the usual market price, and claim that is where some of the profit comes from, that's the work of the workers in Buying.*

No - the money is made by the work done on materials, by adding value to them - turning metal and other materials into cars, maybe - and selling them. The staff do that.

They buy the staff's work at one price and sell it at another. If they don't make money out of the staff's work, why do they employ them? To create jobs, as they sometimes claim to be doing? If they sold their work at cost it might be believable.

Is their own work worth all of the added value?

Business people and the rich claim they are entitled to the added value, seen as profit, because of their enterprise, their taking of responsibility, their managerial talents, the risk of losing money, and their hard work.

They do deserve more but they overdo it. *Again, the bigger the business, in our high-volume-production economies, the more the staff do most of the work.*

What the business class take for their role – which is central, sure – isn't from some reasonable assessment. It's from the unfair trading relationship they have with the staff in the job deal – see the brief 'The Entitlement To Unionise' below – to take an unjustifiable share of the added value for their own role.

On the 'risk-taking' – it can be high for small businesses but big businesses generally cover losses with successes. And they all use bankruptcy to evade their debts, meaning suppliers and banks carry much of the risk. And most of the capital they 'risk' was skimmed off workers' earlier work, as shown. And if they do go bust, they just join the rest of us as workers. They claim to be 'self-made' but usually, we staff create most of the value - Jeff Bezos doesn't shift many parcels.

Higher ***taxes*** *on them is just workers reclaiming what's theirs originally.*

Note - income tax is only part of general taxation. The rich pay less national insurance, the same VAT as everyone else, and capital gains at only standard rate. In the UK. Note 2 - some make money from buying and selling not-easily-manufactured resources like property and even currencies. This is just gaming the system. The work process is still the root source of wealth.

But their wealth can also be regulated at source, by staff being able to bargain effectively for their fair share. Here is how…

Fair Trade Deals – The Entitlement To Unionise

Most work is industrialised. *So most employers have many staff.* ***With the rest working*** *they can get by without any* ***one*** *who leaves, any* ***one*** *they sack, or any* ***one*** *new who wants more than they are prepared to pay. Each is weak in the job deal they make with their employer* ***not because they can replace them from the unemployed but because even without them They've Got All The Rest.***

People shouldn't have to make their living on such unfair terms. *That's anybody, whatever colour, gender, or nationality. They all have the right to bargain with business people and public sector managers as equals,* ***by unionising. See www.therighttounionise.org***

Note – 'Go somewhere else if you don't like it'? With most work industrialised and most workforces not unionized, there's the same unfair relationship in jobs wherever you go.

Note - the issue explained here is the allocation of money between the owners and all of the staff. That's the big issue and is explained by 'They've Got All The Rest', explained above and in the chart 'The Right To Unionise'. Within a workforce there's the secondary question of variation between how much each worker contributes and what each should get. It is the very stuff of unionised negotiation - unions negotiate comprehensive Agreements with employers on Pay grades. They are referred to at pages 109, 146, and, in 'The Rich – Are They Worth The Expense?', at page 327.

End of The Essential 'UsPol'

For more, see, at page 363
'Why People Should Read 'Us, Politics, The System And Class'
'About The Author', page 366
Reviews, page 368

The Ten Minute Read of
'Us, Politics, The System And Class' *v.2025.1*

Humanity is in a ridiculous, unnecessary state. On top of our usual problems with jobs, health services, recessions, war and the rest, we're allowing the least public-spirited of us, some of them malevolent crazies, to run our world, and we're wrecking our own habitat. With our amazing technical knowledge and ability to cooperate to produce all we need and more, it needn't be like this. To change it we need to get the basics of politics, the economy, work and business - 'The System' - clear in our heads.

'It's the system' - what workmates would say to this writer when he argued against employers' power over workers and how it enables them to annex wealth and the power to dominate society; and the need to organise to match up to them, at work and in politics.

'A lesson from the Obama years – failure to seize the opportunities offered by the great recession to reform an economic system that has worked against most Americans for four decades.'

(The Observer 17-1-2021)

People, politicians and media commentators only talk about things that happen, not about how they come from how we interact in business, the economy and politics. They treat that as just how the world is. While obsessing about all sorts of things, we ignore how we relate in the vital tasks of making products and services, making a living, making money!

But conservatives, when arguing against wealth re-distribution, by government, do mention it, saying it's wealth creation that really matters. Yes, OK. Yes, and let's take a good look at it. Let's bring the trading relationships and social processes where wealth is created out of the private arena of business and work and into the light of public, political discussion.

Central but neglected is the work process. And central to that is the employment relationship. Examine them and you see how the distribution of wealth at source is the issue, and how it is the foundation issue in the debates about taxes, public spending and the role of the state.

We ignore it because conservatives convince us that the business system is the only way. So people get on with their lives, meeting their needs, enjoying their pleasures, and just expect whoever is in government to 'run the country'. But Presidents, Prime Ministers, Members of Congress, Parliaments and Assemblies, don't simply 'run the country'. They don't initiate all that happens in society - that, and they, come from society and from how people relate in the system, the business system.

Conservatives use politics to divert workers from tackling the

business class. It gives only weak opportunities for workers to exercise any power over them. Because conservative parties only intend to represent the business class and progressive parties haven't the ideological tools or the backing to tackle them. So then conservatives - representing the actual elite - spread confusion and disillusion with politics, telling people that politicians are an elite that fails them. And persuade some to back alternative conservative 'strongmen' who offer them the self-defeating answer of uniting with the business class in national identity and turning on outsider groups.

So put 'politics' aside while we examine the underlying system. People have different roles in it, especially in that most necessary activity - making a living or making money. We need to be much clearer about how we interact with each other to do this and how it means people's interests in the system are different.

A minority, business people, run businesses. So its them who organise the production and sale of goods and services and provide most work - the supremely important activities. Most other people get a job, working for business people, or for public bodies. So, in this central arena, business and jobs, people relate differently. They have different power, get different incomes, are different in their need for public services and support. They have different interests. We should group them by this. The different interest groups look out for their interests in everyday business or work. In politics they promote relationships and public policies that suit these interests and oppose those that don't. They are classes, better defined than what are commonly referred to as classes, based on less significant attributes. Political parties and politicians come from and represent these different classes, defined by functional relationships not income or culture.

Each party claims to represent everyone's interests but it's not true. Certainly not of conservatives. They represent the interests of business people, the business class and the wealthy. Labour or progressive, social-democrat parties mainly represent the rest, who are mostly workers.

Business People - The Business Class -Run The System

The key to understanding the system is to see that business people run it. They organise the production and distribution of most of the goods and services we need and the jobs we need. They dominate politics simply because of that. They are a class - the business class. They organise politically too, generally as conservatives. Business-class supremacy is the basis of the system. With this in mind, the rest, particularly politics, becomes clearer.

Most people make their living working for these business people or for public bodies. We have to call this majority a class too and define it by their vital, definite, unarguable role in the system, as workers. 'The working class' is corrupted by narrow usage. The worker class? But it

has to unarguably include people who need jobs who are 'white-collar' workers. The employee class? I'm using 'The Employed Class'.

Not enough people support the state organising production so we do need business people to organise most of it. But we need to make them behave civilly, to regulate them. For that, we need to be far more organised, and these works explain how. But if we don't do that, let's at least get everyone to see how the system works and build it into political debate.

Conservatives claim the basis of the system is 'the individual', trading freely with others, as equals, in free markets. Ok, we do have or should have individual rights. But the conservative view is simplistic, highlighted to distract us from how society actually works.

The view that it's all about individual rights comes from centuries ago, when people worked out the case for freedom from the absolute dictatorship of monarchy - for freedom of religion, for political rights and free markets. Conservatives still speak of it like this. They say the key issue is 'the individual' versus 'the state' and promote a small state and low taxes. They trumpet this as the essence of freedom, of liberty. And many people see it like this, particularly in the US, and is why some call it 'The Land of The Free'.

But with a small state, you might be less controlled by the state but you still have to make your way in life in the unequal relationships of the business system, and they control you as much or even more than the state. With the state you should at least have some egalitarian democratic voice, which you don't in the business system. And that is a reason why business class conservatives are hostile to the state.

*In the business system you have to trade, to buy and sell, under its rules, often to people with far more power than you. Crucially, you have to trade with people who are **organised**, who **don't** trade as individuals, especially **business people** in their **businesses**, their **organisations**. Because most business-class conservatives don't themselves operate as individuals: Because in the business system, with trade in free markets, the efficiency of mass production leads inevitably to the collectivism of industrial production, owned by a few powerful and wealthy people.*

The business class are the people who organise all the collectivism! They set up and run all the collective companies and corporations, and organise the rest of us into industrial workforces. They run the collective global system of mass production and trade. In this highly industrialised, trading, mass-marketized, commercialised, corporate, financialised, micro-managed, nation-state, inter-connected, globalized society, we

are hugely collective and inter-dependent.

Business-class conservatives feel, correctly judging by the huge wealth many of them acquire, that they are good at operating in this privately-run collectivism. So they resist the state regulating it in the interests of everyone else. And they get wealthy enough from it to not need collective public support and services. But everybody else needs them, to make up for the brutality, insecurity and instability of business people's system in making their living.

The issue isn't the simple 'the individual versus the state' but the distribution of power in all this collectivism. Conservatives represent business people and that is why they oppose the state. Their talk of individualism might make sense in an imaginary world of small traders and genuine self-employed. In the industrialised real world, it's nonsense. They do it to divert us from organising while these very collective business people do organise.

Simple individualism is just not how the world works. The very existence of things like money, inflation, interest rates, banks, and the many other powerful business organisations, in the business system, all show this.

In many, many trading interactions you are a long way from being equal. Particularly, crucially, in making your living, in getting work, in getting a job. More on that soon.

And it's nonsense to claim individualism is in general the basis of society. With all our collectivisms like family, community, religion, identity, clubs, football fandom and patriotism, we are highly social. Our talk, our mindset, what we do, are full of 'we' and 'us' and 'our'.

All the above is obvious if you just look at it. It results, first of all, in huge inequality of power, and, as a result, of wealth. Yet people ignore it. We need everyone to talk about it and develop a common understanding of it.

Everyone knows what's wrong with the outcomes of the system but not the processes that enable it. People call it capitalism but that evokes something remote where some invisible people accumulate money, invisibly. It doesn't explain capitalism's key relationships and how they are rooted in, and observable in, everyday life.

We give the system status above and beyond us, as apparently self-standing 'capitalism'. But it's just how we relate ordinarily to each other, dominated in the everyday world by business people. We can do it differently.

However, it has many well-established relationships, many embedded in law. To change all that through politics, our rights are limited. You get one vote, every four years, isolated from each other, on all of the issues bundled together, for political representatives who can ignore you, with minority parties hostile to the interests of the

majority often getting into government.

Most people oppose excess wealth and agree the wealthy should be taxed more. But they claim they earn their wealth from their abilities and effort. They get away with that claim because workers don't see that business people make most of their wealth from the work they themselves do. How capital and wealth is made, in the work process, by workers, is concealed by just referring to 'capitalism'. It means the central relationship in creating and distributing wealth - how employers buy labour and workers sell it, the trade in our labour, the trade in people - goes unexamined.

Here it is - with most workers not being organised in unions, not negotiating their conditions together, the deal on starting, or keeping, a job is made between an employer and an individual worker.

*In these industrial economies, most employers have many staff, even small businesses. With the other staff producing whatever the business or service does, they have enough staff to be able to do without any **one** of them. That is why employers can drive a hard bargain with each one individually.*

That is how workers are in an unequal bargaining position. With these 'free' labour market conditions, each worker has only 'marginal utility' (usefulness) to the employer. Any one worker needs the job more than the employer needs them. Call it the unequal 'ratio of need'. While it's a hugely important political point it's also just plain arithmetic and undeniable!

It is why business people, and public employers, can say 'take it or leave it'. It is how employers can be the 'boss' of people who are, according to the free market propagandists, equal trading partners. And when they say 'Go somewhere else if you don't like it', in any other job in these industrialised economies you are usually up against the same unequal trading relationship with the employer.

It's the most important feature of the system. The inequality of it is what enables the imbalance of power between business people and workers. Business owners use it to not pay staff the full price they sell their work for and keep the difference for themselves. That is how most wealth is gained. They don't earn their power and wealth from what they actually do in production but from taking the trouble to organise it and get us to do it, on these unfair terms of trade.

They inflict this unfairness on fellow-citizens, their fellow-country(w)men who they should treat with respect, the great majority, in making their living. It gives them the right to organise, in unions, to respond to and match up to business people's

organisation. It's up to us to do the same as them - take the trouble to organise, act together, collectively, and negotiate with them as equals.

But because the system is so established, accepted and poorly-understood, people don't notice how the inequality in the production process is the real problem. So, confused and dismayed, some give up on politics. Others, angrily seeking answers, adopt crazy conspiracy theories; divide us by racial groupings and culture wars; blame flimsily-defined 'elites'; and support business-class mavericks like Trump who get them to blame anybody and anything but them and their system.

We'll do better when we share a clear, factual, understanding of the system as the framework for political debate. 'Us, Politics, The System And Class' provides one. It explains the roles and relationships, rewards, and penalties, obligations and protections, rights and wrongs, of public life, which includes economic activity. It shows how power and wealth, powerlessness and unfairness, come from social organisation and lack of organisation.

It shows how the majority organising in their economic role as workers would make the system much fairer. It shows how humanity can relate better, fairly, and run a sustainable global society. It does it without any academic talk of capitalism, liberalism, socialism, communism or economics, but simply by showing how we interact together ordinarily, daily.

Political thinking and debate not based on the system is futile. When you hear anyone talk about politics, relate what they say to the system. When you talk politics with people, don't just exchange views and attitudes - relate it to the system, to your role in it, theirs, their family, friends, neighbours and workmates economic roles.

Finally - 'capitalism' and 'free markets' as names for the system place it up above us, beyond our reach. Capitalism's core activity is business. Capital is created in business. We encounter business every day, take part in it as workers and consumers, speak naturally about it. We can locate it in our normal experience. So let's call it 'the business system', and be more comfortable talking about it and evaluating it.

What We Need To Do

To solve humanity's problems, we need to get it widely understood, accepted in everyday political talk, that -

...business people run the world more than politicians do...
...because they organise the production of goods and services, the buying and selling of them and of people's labour - work, jobs and trade...this makes them 'the economy' (most of it)...being the economy gives them inherent political power, under any government, even without them acting directly in politics ...
...to act directly, the most class-conscious of them organise and run the conservative parties...some run the conservative media...
...and that - politics comes from this system, that business people

dominate, and not the other way round…politicians can regulate its unfairness but conservatives won't…and progressives won't enough.

…Conservative parties exist to obstruct the system from being regulated…because they represent business people and it's their system… the business system is the main thing conservatives work to conserve.

…politics 'rides-on-top' of the system…you might get improvements in how you and your fellow-workers are treated through it but not many.

To see how little individual freedom people have in business and work, look again at how free markets operate. They develop inevitably to industrialism so that the majority have to work for the minority business class, and be dominated by them, unless regulated and made fair by workers unionizing and putting in progressive governments.

Conservatives claim, and liberals accept, that free markets provide everyone with 'opportunity'. But in industrial systems only a few can really succeed. Most people will inevitably be standard workers. There can only be fairness in who gets the better positions.

And, as said, business people don't themselves operate as individuals! ***Each and every day, all day, night-time too, they organise and act together collectively, as businesses, as companies, as corporations.*** *They are a class - the business class. Some are alright, and credit them for their organisation and enterprise etc. But as a group they exploit and mistreat the great majority, viciously so in their opposition to us organising too.*

The majority of citizens are workers. But compared to the business class we represent ourselves weakly in everyday society and politics. We let them dominate us at work, in political debate; in political action. We are so weak we don't even see them as a class, nor ourselves… haven't got names for their class or ours and … don't organise together and act together like they do.

Business people organise in their meaningful, active, everyday economic roles (in companies and corporations). We need the majority of citizens to organise in their everyday economic roles, as workers, in unions… with this collective strength, stand up at work to the business class… and to public sector managers… and also…represent themselves in public life, as mature citizens… speaking together through credible institutions, their unions… join business people as 'players' in the system.

…in politics, match up to the business class by doing as they do and act in politics organised in their own economic role…in mass progressive political forces and parties, with other progressive groups …

...and run their own media to counter the effect on political thinking of the propagandist conservative media.

Progressives always have better policies for the majority than conservatives. What they lack is organisation and its use to communicate policy and get support for it.

Widespread organisation will enable communication of progressive attitudes and policies throughout society and politics, independent and counter to conservative media. (Social media is not good for this. It's not people acting together meaningfully, in meaningful social organisations, but mostly just mouthing off as atomised individuals).

It's because we aren't clear about these basics of the system that many find politics confusing and, not recognising and opposing the business class, the dominant people in society, group themselves and others by low-content 'identities' based on passive attributes like skin colour and country of birth, and allow these identities to define their politics...

...and allow the business class minority, who mostly care only for themselves, to govern, disastrously for all of us and even for themselves at times.

We need to persuade fellow-citizens to stop identifying themselves and others trivially by appearance, locality, mass culture or personal preferences... but by more meaningful things like how they behave, by what they do - especially by how they act and interact in the practical world of business, jobs, the economy and politics - by economic class ...

... to persuade the worker majority, blue-collar, white-collar, whatever colour, whatever gender, to find their main identity in their most important, practical role, in being, with most other citizens, a worker, a member of the worker class.

When we share a clear understanding of the system such as put here and in the full book, it'll be easier to make sense of politics, discuss the issues widely, and organise to get society working fairly for all. Us, Politics, The System And Class will help, explaining the system clearly using everyday language and locating it in our daily experience.

We need to spread widely this explanation of the system... the rights and wrongs of it... show it is true, because drawn from everyone's observable everyday life experience, and not just opinion... explaining especially how business people and public employers get power over workers from having many staff and being able to do without any one... and how to make it fairer by organising... spread this view widely, globally. and ...how to make it fairer by organising...spread this view widely, globally.

Go By Facts or By Feelings?

'Us, Politics, The System And Class' shows how the system - work, business, money, politics - works, by looking at it in everyday life. What it shows is observable fact, not just opinion or one narrative of many. Taking the key example - As even a Trumper said when I explained the unfairness and inequality of the labour trade to him – find it on page 30, The Job Deal – 'It's just the arithmetic, isn't it?' Meaning it's not a contentious political point. It's plain undisputable fact.

But many say they don't understand politics and vote by feelings. They won't vote for a party leader because they don't 'like' them. Or they'll vote for a party because they do like their leader. Or they'll vote for politicians who just promise 'change' or 'hope' instead of voting on real policies.

And many see political parties as just alternative management teams who offer to 'run things' better than the others and all we do is vote for one or another. As when people say - 'I thought we should give the other lot a chance'. Or they'll base their politics on the feelings of belonging offered by low-content 'identities'.

Basing your politics on how you feel instead of on the facts of business and job relationships and on policies is no way to use your democratic rights. 'Feelings' will be addressed again at the end of this paper. But first, a

A System Analysis to base politics on, a common framework for our political thinking...starting with –

Business people run the world.
Because they organise together.
And because the rest mostly don't.

This helps to explain most of politics.

Business people are a class and they run the world because they run 'the economy', because they organize (most of) the goods, services, and jobs. But people don't talk about this as the hugely significant political fact that it is. They just accept, unspoken, that business people organise production, trade and jobs as if it's the natural order. They don't even speak of business ***people*** *but of businesses, companies, corporations. Or more likely just of what 'they' are doing.*

So most political debate is not about how we all earn our living, income and wealth. For all the serious issues

around public services and the role of the state, and the daft distractions of culture and identity wars, this, the basic, underlying issue, is not addressed.

If people do talk of the system, usually as 'capitalism', it's as if it's self-existing. They don't talk about how it works, think they haven't the power to change it, and think all we could so is change to another 'self-existing' system like socialism or communism, that most people think won't work. So they just expect 'politicians' to 'run the country', which means managing the system or letting it alone.

This is all a consequence of conservatives winning the argument on the key economic issues so everyone treats them as settled. Yet conservative ideas are facile and don't correspond with observable reality. Progressive politics makes far more sense but isn't argued for strongly enough. This paper aims to enable it to be.

Most of the system runs independently of politics. Politicians don't normally really control what goes on every day. And the basic business and job relationships that shape it all were established over the centuries, in practice and in piecemeal legal decisions, never publicly debated or democratically voted for. They persist from before we won limited democracy. Since then we've not developed an adequate awareness of how the system works, or the organised strength, to change it. In countries with little or no democracy, business people just seize political power through their conservative activists.

We can challenge business people through politics but, by being the economy, they have the power to seriously limit what politicians can do. We need to look at how we can regulate this most powerful group.

Some think the world is secretly run by 'the deep state' or some Jewish people or 'the Illuminati'. But it's business people, and not a secret. You can see it by just looking around you, at what you've got in your home, what's in the high street, what's on the road, in your job, in leisure activities. It's business people, who are represented in politics by conservatives. (Who come in all colours, races and nationalities.)

We depend on business people to organize production and jobs because we aren't mature and organized enough to do it ourselves. But it means we leave essential public needs – jobs, incomes, the economy – to be provided privately, by them, not for us all, their fellow-countryfolk, but for their own gain. We allow them to run the world economy greedily and recklessly, with the unregulated free markets they demand, and to cause instability such as the crash of 2008. In Britain, the Conservatives used that as an excuse to attack public services and support. That attack caused many affected workers to support Brexit – 'we can't see what's wrong and who causes it, let's blame

foreigners'. The US business class instigated the forty-year standstill in American workers' living standards and the job losses in the rust-belt that led many to turn, angry, insecure and confused, to Trump.

The big business class people get insanely wealthy from our work while causing billions to live in insecure jobs and poverty. Insisting on a right to 'make a return on capital', they generate the needless growth that is wrecking our planet.

Since we do depend on them we have to do deals with them, at work and in politics. But we need fairer deals. For that, we, the worker majority, first need to see how they dominate us.

We need a better term for the system than 'capitalism'. That just evokes remote financial operations. 'Free markets' only refers to trade. Neither refer to production, work and business - the central processes where capital is made and where we are all involved! Business is how we experience the system and how we refer to it every day. So let's call it 'the business system'.

*And call them **the business class**. When politicians and commentators even acknowledge that they are an identifiable group, they call them 'the business community'. Community? Community?? They are a class and we need to name them as one. Especially the corporate and financial operators. Not 'the 1%'. Too vague, doesn't refer to what they do. The business class are the ruling class, not vague 'elites' or 'the establishment.*

Conservative politicians and parties are of them and represent them. Their key policy is to let business people do what they want. That's what 'free markets' and 'laissez-faire' economics mean. The power the business system grants to business people is what conservatives aim to conserve.

They conceal this by:

- *presenting the system as a self-existing thing, above us, just 'there'. But it is only the customary everyday relationships in business, work, jobs and trade.*
- *talking about 'businesses', 'companies', 'corporations', 'multi-nationals' and 'the markets' as if they too are extra-human, self-existing entities. But they are just **people**, fellow-citizens and we can hold them to account in political debate and democratic government.*
- *claiming to be just 'politicians' looking after everyone's interests. They just honestly think the business system is fair for everybody, and effective: just honestly believe giving business people great freedom, protection and low taxes, with the rest not having the right to organize, and little state support, is how to do it!*

- *justifying business people's power and wealth as fair outcomes of a fair system. They aren't, it isn't. It is loaded against the worker majority.*

  Their case is absurd but they get away with it because we don't examine it. This system doesn't exist by itself - it's an ongoing set of relationships that conservatives actively maintain, protect and extend. Capitalism isn't the problem – it's capitalists. It's their system, not ours. Their business system has its points and the rest of us have no complete alternative system to hand. But however good they claim it to be everyone knows it's not good enough. We need to regulate it, and them.

  Progressives and organised workers have better policies, that can make the system fair, civilized, stable and sustainable. But they don't see what it is that enables business people to dominate, and what's wrong with it, and concede to them their free-market business system. That limits progressives' ability to do what's needed so they often disappoint people.

  But progressive parties can't do it all on their own. We, the voters, also don't understand the system and how it limits progressive parties, and workers don't vote with enough conviction, in enough numbers, for progressive party policies that will regulate business people and improve the majority's lives.

  For this, and for civilized, planet-saving politics, we need to match business people's organised power as the business class by getting ourselves organised into a corresponding mass political force, operative every day, permanent. Just as business people are organised together as businesses, the central framework needs to be non-business people, mostly workers, blue collar and white, organised as workers.

  We need to spread knowledge of more key features of the system:

- *in industrial society economies of scale mean production, trade and services inevitably come to be dominated by fewer, larger operations; run by a minority, the business class; and inevitably the majority have no option to make their living but to work for one or another of them.*
- *business people are organized. A business is people organized together, at work, with shareholders, suppliers, customers, managers and staff; endorsed by the state with privileges such as limited company status.*
- *their collective organisation and activity at work makes them the economy (most of).*
- *so they can and do dictate to governments.*
- *when conservative parties win elections, it amount to business people themselves being the government. What conservatives really exist to conserve is business people's rights and privileges.*

- *independent conservative activists run mass media to set a pro-business political agenda and pro-business political thinking, and divert attention from what they do and direct it at minorities.*

Business people, the business class, do deserve more than the rest, because they take the trouble to organize and be active every day, in businesses. And we can credit them for the public utility of their enterprise and risk-taking. (But not, on risk-taking, as much as they credit themselves. The bigger the business, the more they spread the risk across projects and investment funds, successes cover losses. And losses are protected by limited company and bankruptcy laws).

Some can be decent, maybe more the smaller ones and small traders. But competition pressures even the decent ones to be bad so we need to regulate competition. It has benefits, but not as many as co-operation.

The Rest - The Worker Class?

*Aside from them, all who need a job to make a living are workers. Blue-collar, white-collar; shop floor, office; manual, technical, engineer; teacher, lecturer. Even managers. The working class, the great majority of the population. But people muddle definition of class with 'middle class', that 'classes' by spending power and lifestyle, and 'working class' that 'classes' people by culture and education. We need to class people by **how** they make their money, by **how** they take part in the vital activities of production, work, business and wealth creation. So maybe it's the worker class and the business class?*

The Job Deal – A Bad Deal

Every worker knows the power an employer has over them in the job transaction - when starting a job; in a job; in how easily they can sack you.

*Unique to the book 'Us, Politics, The System And Class' is that it shows just **how** business people, and public bodies, overpower people in this transaction. Workers and progressive parties need to understand this clearly, and how it entitles those who are workers to organize in unions.*

This is how ... in our industrialised world, economies of scale mean most jobs are in workplaces with many workers. So the employer can get the work done without any one of them – They've Got All The Rest.

***This** is why workers are weak and employers and the business class strong and why there is the huge disparity in wealth.*

'The 'Market Ratio' In 'Free' Labour Markets

Here it is again - In the transaction each of us makes with an employer, a worker is ten, hundreds or thousands of times weaker. depending on how many other staff they have. That's how big a difference there is between how much they need one worker and how much one worker needs the job. It is great inequality in the ratio of need.

It means each worker is of only 'marginal use' to an employer. That's why people get a bad deal and bad treatment in jobs - because whilst making a deal with one worker, the employer has all the others to rely on for output. Go to another job - 'There's the door if you don't like it ' – and, in our industrial societies, you are at the same disadvantage. It operates against better-qualified, so-called middle class workers the same as the less-qualified.

This demolishes the conservative claim that free markets mean freedom and opportunity. That 'you can make it by your own efforts' and, in the US, achieve 'the American Dream'. This claim vaporizes before the plain fact that in modern industrial society most work isn't individual, it's collective, and having many staff gives employers power over workers that far outweighs whatever opportunity there may be. To make their living, people shouldn't have to sell themselves so unfairly.

*And the huge inequality in **wealth** is because this unfair job deal enables business people to pay workers less than the full value of the work they do. This is where profits and most wealth come from, from control of the work process, because that is where wealth is produced. The wealthy claim it is because of their superiority, their ability and effort. Yes, some is from that. But it's mostly from the unrecognised and unfair power they have in the labour process that produces wealth.*

*This all entitles the worker majority of citizens to organize in unions. It is the mature, adult, legitimate response to the injustice of trading with employers alone, one at a time: to organize together so employers can only have **all** of us or none of us, and negotiate together, with strength, for union conditions.*

Centrists and Liberals – Not Woke Enough

There's a few inequalities but the biggest is in the job relationship because it's inequality in everyone's most important task – making their living. Inequality of power. We fail to identify it, expose it, and use it to establish and spread the case for the right to organize as workers. Most workers do recognise bosses' power but see it as part of the natural order and let the business class alone. While some then blame other people for their problems instead.

The failure to challenge the inequality of power in the job transaction enables some 'white working class' people to see action against other inequalities as favours done for minorities, that they don't get. They are badly-treated by their fellow-white conservative business class. But not knowing the case for their right to organise to stand up to them, they turn and are easily turned on minorities and liberals and progressive parties and, in the USA, vote for business-class boss-class Trump's minority-bashing.

The 'white working class' should see non-union job deals as an over-riding inequality shared with minorities and that they should organise with the minorities and liberals to tackle it. This will improve their condition more than attacking the minorities, who don't in fact do much or anything against their interests, and voting for outsider-bashing businessmen like Trump; or, in the UK, for outsider-blaming policies like Brexit.

Liberals are just fair-minded better-off people who tackle the obvious inequalities based on skin colour and gender. But they depend on business people to run the economy and some are business class themselves so don't see the biggest inequality clearly enough, that between employers and all workers. They need to challenge this inequality as much as the others and support all workers, white and of colour, whatever gender or personal tastes, in getting equal to employers by unionising.

The Case For Organising Summed Up

Look at all the institutions that organise and operate in society. Business people organise together and operate as companies, even protected from their responsibilities by limited company and bankruptcy laws. They have trade and employer associations. There's government itself, government departments, national, state and regional government, city and town councils, courts, schools, hospitals, fire authorities, the police and military, churches, sports clubs, printed, televised and digital media and more. These are all people organised, collectively. For so many of us, the worker class majority, not to be organised likewise in making our living is ridiculous. And, by being so hostile to workers organizing, vicious, from the conservative, business class side.

Make the case for the right to organize to fellow-workers, and even conservatives, with the simple arithmetic - employers with many workers have an unfair advantage over them as individuals.

For equality for <u>all</u>, for workers of all colours, genders and personal lives, the right to organize and the

right to union recognition from employers should be a recognised civil right.

Individual But Very Collective Too

Conservatives, representing the business class, talk of the individual as the basis of society. Yes, we are individuals, but in a very social and collective world.

Keep in mind - these are industrialised societies. That means all large-scale collective working methods, not just smoky factories. We co-operate very collectively in all the companies, corporations and banks, the public authorities, in production, trade, and at work. It's the business class who do the collectivizing, by constantly industrializing work. It's collective even though it's not democratically controlled.

In this collective world, look at how collectively organized business people themselves are – the owners, the boards, the CEO's, multiple departments, middle managers, supervisors, and we staff, on many work sites and in many countries. Team-building exercises, 'There's no I in team' and so on. Compared to them, the rest of us are mostly poorly organised as workers, atomised. Many are organised but not with enough confidence and conviction, and nowhere near as many as need to be. As said, we need to take the trouble to organize at work and trade with employers on equal terms; and in politics to identify and organize distinctly as the worker class, to be strong enough to regulate the whole business class.

How Collective Do We Want To Be?

The conservative argument that making our living is about the individual and politics mainly about the liberty to do so imagines a non-industrial fairytale world that has never existed. Except maybe in 19th century America where land was easily available to whites. In this fantasy land we can all be small traders, set up in business, and it's all in your own hands, you aren't affected by what everybody else does. But the success of industrialism means we can't all be small traders, most people have to work in large organisations and in most jobs, without union organisation, you are dominated by your boss, with little individual freedom.

The self-employed, one-person businesses, traders, tradespeople, do operate as individuals in making their living, and unintentionally act as a buffer class, obscuring the fundamental reality of mass, business class-organised industrialised collectivism. And even for them, the market system means they too are affected by what everybody else does, particularly big business people.

How much we want to operate as individuals is an issue but the fact is we are highly collective and the question is more 'How collective do we want to be and in what ways?' It's a big

political question, at the heart of US politics and elections. We need to make it central to the debates about the state, freedom, public spending on public support and public services, taxes, socialism, patriotism, military spending and military service. So here goes…

Public Services and Taxes –
The Individual, Liberty, and the State

The business class do 'take care of business', make the big decisions on money, managing, and selling goods and services, in activities we all depend on to make our living. For that, they deserve a fair amount. But they take more than their fair share using the unfair power in the job transaction.

They take so much from this collective work they get enough wealth to not need public services and support. They claim they get the money by individual effort so their conservative parties say everyone is individually responsible for meeting their needs by doing the same. With that argument they block ***public services and income security*** *for the worst-off, and the taxes needed for them.*

Many people think the wealthy have too much money but also accept this claim that it's from their own effort and that in the business system everybody has the freedom to do the same. So conservatives, notably in the US, deter many from supporting public spending and public services by convincing them that taxes to pay for them are attacks on this liberty. But the claim that the money is from their own efforts is false, and taxes just a way for the majority who helped make it to reclaim some of it from them. And public services and welfare are just fellow-citizens backing each other up on basic needs, spreading the risks and costs with the common practice of insurance. Taxes are just for collective spending, democratically decided, like people do in many types of clubs.

But the conservative claim to be for individual liberty, a small state, and being against public support is false. To protect themselves and their business interests, they are vigorous collectivists. They strongly promote patriotism, and even compel allegiance to 'the nation' and 'the country'. They support huge public spending on the police and the military. They even force citizens into compulsory, life-risking military service to protect their privileged trading relationships. They oppose socialized health care but support socialized warfare. We need to ask, are they simply rugged individuals, or also collectivists?

We need to say to workers who conservatives deter from supporting progressive parties by calling public services 'socialism' – 'To support conservative politics instead, while expecting 'the country' to look after you, as the MAGA people do, is a kind of socialist expectation itself. But it's one that must fail. Because conservatives' core policy is that everyone has to look out for themselves in the business system and the country – the state - shouldn't support those who can't make it on their own'. They say the unregulated business system will enable people to meet their needs and their ambitions themselves. And sometimes it does, for many. But the evidence keeps re-appearing – it often doesn't, disastrously, and you need the state to provide. The business class won't.

Taxes and Public Services isn't all one way – you need to support others too, which can mean collective spending via taxes that doesn't always benefit you directly. There's plusses and minuses. But you can't rely on conservative business people for support. You need to ally with fellow-citizens who actually believe in mutual support, and support and vote for progressive parties.

Just blaming conservatives and the business class for diverting people from voting for public support and services like this does us no good. They are just taking the trouble to look out for themselves in their brutal, uncaring system and if that involves diverting us that's what they'll do. It's our own fault for not taking the trouble to understand the system and not demolishing conservatism's feeble, self-contradicting politics.

The Individual and 'Identities'

Now, look at individualism and the 'Identities' that people readily adopt, and conservatives promote. They too are in opposition to the supposedly basic notion of individualism. They are collective. And though they are low-content, everyone makes a lot of them. Far more than they do of class, properly defined by how people earn a living or make money.

Identities divert us from seeing the business class and blaming them and their system. So note again, we need to see how we relate to business people, public service managers and each other; to see that we are the worker class; to see it as our main identity; and to talk to each other about it, as fellow-workers and mature citizens. And to organize, at work and in politics, and not let them distract and disarm us with low-content 'identities', some that unite us falsely with them; others that divide us against each other.

The National Identity

Conservatives' trumpeting of individualism is nonsense. It's demolished by the reality of how collectively our societies function, with our intensely collective economic systems, with

the job deal that enables employers to treat fellow-countrymen and women terribly, and with their unstable business system regularly hurting many innocent people, enterprising individuals and small business people too. But many believe in the individualist view, and to believe conservatives, so do they.

Yet they and most people adopt this opposite, collectivist view – the national 'we'. Conservatives use the 'we' to mask class identities, theirs and ours. We don't see their dominant role, workers drop their class identity in favour of it. Progressive parties lose their independence from the business class in it.

People go along with it because it gives them feelings of significance, belonging and security, from being (weakly) part of so strong an institution as a country and being one of so many other people – being 'British', 'Americans', Russians, French, and the rest. You don't have to do anything like organize, at work or in politics. Just by living in a country you get to be in a big national 'we'.

Conservatives use the prestige of the nation state to draw people into national identities which mean unity with them rather than with each other in opposition to them. Independently active conservatives overwhelm people with national identities in print, radio and digital media. But again, conservatives contradict themselves with their core belief that people should manage on their own (dressed up as individual freedom) - 'it's everybody for themselves' - the well-off earn it through ability and hard work - that the less well-off are less able or are idle - that those in trouble should not get state support - that people should be left to sink or swim.

To conservatives 'the nation' only really means the laws and institutions that enable business people to use, misuse, discard and abandon fellow-country(w)men. Their opposition to public services and welfare means they don't believe 'the country' should support its citizens! Conservative parties talk big about 'the nation' but won't support the people who are the nation. In the US, not even with their health.

Workers who vote for them self-harm. We should ask - Is 'the nation' the institutions or is it the people? Is this one society? What will conservatives and business people do for their fellow-nationals? What will they give up for them? Will they be enterprising, not just for their own greed but for the good of fellow-nationals, for only fair rewards? Will they agree their fellow-citizens shouldn't have to trade with them for work in unfair tyransactions?

Shouldn't they have the right to organise in unions (and be recognized by employers)?

If we vote in governments to regulate the business class, make them act decently towards fellow-nationals (and the planet), will they accept it? Or will they, if regulated, disinvest, as conservatives always threaten?

With how little conservatives and business people care for their compatriots, nationality only really means people reside in the same system of politics and law. There are practical things to it, rights and obligations you are entitled to, or had better abide by, but anything more depends on what fellow-citizens actually do with and for each other.

To accommodate to how people do suffer from their brutality, conservatives do promise citizens their needs will be met, but by the business system. It doesn't do that of course and they have to promise the state will support. But they do no more to support fellow-countrymen and women than the minimum they can get away with.

People who are workers - the great majority - shouldn't share with the business class and conservatives the national identity they laughably claim to believe in and should downplay the whole notion of 'the country' and a 'we' with them.

'The Nation' Hides The Business Class

But most people, and progressive parties, ignore this clear conflict of interests between the business class and the worker class and do go along with 'the nation' , incorporating the system, as the framework for politics. So when the business system fails, people can't even <u>see</u> the business class or take them on about its failings. The business system is accepted as the natural way of things, as part <u>of</u> the national framework. The business class blend into it and recede from view.

So conservative business class activists are able to divert us into blaming an abstraction, 'the economy'. Progressive parties and voters also accept the business system and go along with conservative's talk of problems being with 'the economy' and affecting all of 'us', and limit themselves to disputing which party has the greater competence to 'manage' the economy. Which they don't in fact do.

'The Nation' Blames Outsiders

So, having hidden themselves and their system from responsibility, conservative business class media and politicians use the national mindset to further divert 'Britons', 'Americans' etc. into thinking that their problems are caused not by them but by 'outsiders'. Falling in with the powerful voices of conservatives and their media and blaming outsiders is an easy option. This is people unable to tackle the people above them turning on those below them. It's punching down instead of up.

The key to tackling this is to grasp that being able to blame outsider groups depends on there being an insider group and to examine its credentials.

For outsiders to blame there's 'foreigners', people in other countries, who don't live under this system of politics and law, so are outside the national 'we'. 'Foreign competition' is blamed for job losses. But native business competitors do the same.

In the UK after the 2008 crash, many workers, instead of blaming conservative free market madness, and the Conservative government for making them pay for it with huge cuts in public services, blamed the foreigners of the European Union for their problems and thought leaving it would fix them. They supported 'taking back control' only to hand it to the Conservatives. Now, in 2024, that is being seen as the bad move it was.

And inside the country there's foreigners who people are encouraged to believe they have 'insider' entitlement over - migrant workers, refugees. Brexit voters were against Eastern European workers using EU free movement of labour to 'come here and take our jobs'. Yet they didn't blame British business people who used free movement for them and their operations and investment to export their jobs,' often to EU countries. Anyway, migrant workers create jobs - they buy things here, so businesses don't have to go to the trouble of exporting them to them.

Also inside 'the country', conservative and populists divert people from blaming them by encouraging citizens to divide into 'insiders' and minority 'outsiders' by colour, gender or being different by personal things like sexuality. National and white - or, as in India, religious 'identities' - set people against each other instead of them.

When challenging the 'outsider' diversions don't over-debate the 'outsiders' themselves. The hostility to them depends on the insider 'we' and that's what you need to question. There's usually little content in it. We need to call out conservatives and the business class on nationalism and patriotism. Ask how much 'the country' really means to conservatives? How much do they really care about fellow-nationals? What will they pay towards the taxes needed for their fellow-citizen's health and public services, and support when they suffer from their unstable business system?

Nationalism can never work for workers simply because it leaves business people unchallenged. Conservatives will lead workers in being hostile to foreigners, and workers might vote in nationalist

governments. But then what? The business class will still have power over workers, will still misuse and abandon them, obstruct them from organizing, and won't release their wealth for public services.

That's conservatives. But as well, how much does anyone white care for other white people? What do the 'we's' of colour (and nation) mean in real mutual support in getting the basics you need in life? What policies would an all-white society have to ensure fairness, security in getting life's needs, health services, and the rest?

Another Conservative Diversion –
'Them' and Conspiracy Theories

Another diversion used by populist conservatives is to point people at local and central government rather than the business class. As said, the business class dominate, and don't want to be regulated. In democracies, central and local government could be a way of the non-business class majority getting some control over them and providing some social support to make up for the mis-use of citizens at work and in wealth distribution that the business system embodies. But they don't give citizens much power, and that is why conservative argue that everything should be done via the ballot box, because it's a remote way of getting at them. Business people claim the right to be able to do what they want and you have to understand the system to see how they should be called to account, and people don't.

But local and central government do make the promise of acting in people's interests. And much of what local and central government does can be found fault with, and the democratic connections with citizens are weak and remote. So a lot of people, not seeing the business class, are being wound up by conservative media to see traffic control, necessary because we have all made millions of private decisions to run far too many cars on the road, as 'the council' or 'them' conspiring to control people. And environmental protection, clean air zones. And vaccinations. The answer? Show people the power of the business class, the ruling class, such as in cutting council funding through their conservative parties, and how that needs tackling before the council. As for the council, look into Sortition, people's assemblies, to make what they do more accountable and have more legitimacy.

Voters And The Economy, The Business System

The mainstream parties rely on business people to run the economy, the business system. Allowing them the freedoms to do that is the main policy of the conservative parties who represent them. And the centrist parties accept the business system. So, either because of wealthy business people's demands for incentives and personal riches, or because their system goes into crisis, both conservatives and centrist parties often don't

deliver what they promise to voters.

Conservatives often get away with not delivering (for the majority) because of being effective at blaming other things and other people than their system, that they maintain works best left free of regulation. They are good at dividing voters and diverting them onto scapegoats. Often successfully enough to stay in government.

Centrist parties also leave the economy to be run by the business class, but don't say so, so take the blame when it goes wrong. Not being as nasty, as uncivilized, as conservatives, they don't blame minorities so they can't evade responsibility like they do. Because everybody thinks the government 'runs the country', voters blame them for the crises. E.g. after the 2008 crash caused by the finance section of the business class, Labour got blamed in the 2010 election in the UK; the Democrats in the US in 2016.

So then, when all mainstream parties fail, fringe conservatives – also supporters of the business system, members of the ruling business class – call the main parties and the state 'the establishment' and 'the elite', charge them with letting down workers and 'the country', and pose as radical challengers to 'the establishment'. Workers, and people in general, don't see how the business system works and how the economic failures are the responsibility of the business class and the business system. Believing in the promise of 'the country' and national identity, they are pointed at the 'metropolitan elite' as people betraying their insider status. That includes those established parties who try to treat everyone fairly. And at outsider minority groups. So, many, taken in by the radical challengers, back nationalist, populist, business-class people like Trump. This is not the answer.

Class Organisation In Politics

The case has been made for people's right to organise at work. Organisation should be the base from where they represent themselves in politics too. It should be about having the sense and the right to participate in the economy and politics as mature, dignified adults with comparable power to the business class. About full citizenship.

This is a leap for many people. When conservatives even accept our right to organise unions, they say it should only be about conditions at work, that political rights are only individual, only to be exercised in place-based geographical constituencies.

And this is how most people do see political activity. That you are grouped by where you live, some of your

fellow-constituents associate as political parties, the constituency parties form the national parties; and every few years you can vote for one of them.

But in place-based constituencies people have no organic connection. Being grouped just by address, without functional connections to each other, doesn't' amount to much. It is far more meaningful to base political activity on how we associate in making our living in business, the economy and work, the central, vital activities. And so are the relationships we have there, with fellow-citizens, as bosses or workers.

In the years between elections, voters, atomised, don't talk to each other much about politics or how they vote, in an organised way. Mouthing off to people you don't know on social media doesn't amount to that. And nor do they in election campaigns. And they vote secretively, individually.

But they do get, day in and day out, a huge amount of information and debate about the parties' leaders and policies from the mostly business class owned or business-system accepting media. Media businesses are run by business people, formally independent of conservative parties, who pose as independent commentators while campaigning frenziedly for conservative politics. The daily blast of conservative, business-class politics from them shapes much of political debate and influences most people's political opinions and how they vote when elections do take place. The parties themselves only contact you during the elections, and even during elections you still receive most of your information and debate from the conservative dominated media.

Conservatives and business people don't build their political strength from just being individual, atomised voters in the constituencies. They build it from being organised, collectively. Firstly in their economic roles, in businesses, at work, where they organize by class without even being in political parties. As said, this gives them great political power because governments, and the rest of us, rely upon them to organize most of the goods, services and jobs we need - they organise most of 'the economy'. Look at how national governments and local councils entice them with grants, tax breaks, planning permission, low regulation, 'flexible labour markets' (that's us being dominated by our bosses). Then, as companies and through trade associations, they fund think-tanks, contribute to conservative parties, and lobby politicians.

Then, being individually wealthy, they fund conservative parties, campaigns and candidates. But they mostly don't earn their money from their individual efforts. Their political donations are from what they make at work, from us, from our work! So they take money from us at work and use it against us in politics; then say politics is nothing to do with us in our unions,

only about us as atomised individuals, once every few years, in place-based constituencies.

So, as well as their economic and financial strength, the business class get their political strength from work. The worker class majority need to do the same. But worker's organization in politics is pitiful compared to business people's. Politics is about running the country collectively but we don't do much together, aside from a few party activists at election times. We accept the limits of constituency-based politics, that atomises us, where we don't talk to each other about our shared class position, where we can't develop class politics. While all the time, between elections and during them, we ingest business class political thinking from their media.

Like business people, workers are entitled to, and should, base their political thinking, their debate and their activity on their shared economic, work-based role, their work-based collective organisation. They should use the meaningful relationships they have with each other as union-organised fellow-workers to communicate with each other, daily, on political issues and voting choices. Political views developed there can go into the voting system expressed in constituencies.

Wherever workers organize, in unions, activists do act together politically. But it is marginalized, not getting through to inactive members and the millions who are not unionised. Just as the case for organizing together on pay and conditions at work needs to be more clearly made to workers, so does the case for using that as their main political base.

*Here are the central arguments of 'Us, Politics, The System And Class': we need to establish, as a civil right, the right to organise as workers, and be recognized by employers; we need to **do** it, to actually organise, all across the world; and if we are not to forever flounder around weakly in the vague constituency-based relationships of the electoral system, being divided and overwhelmed by conservatives, the business class and their media, we need to use our workplace organisation as our main forum for developing our politics as the worker class.*

What To Do

Spread this or some similar understanding of the system. Urge people to use the relationships between the business class and the worker class as the framework for political thinking; and downplay the framework of 'the nation'; to base their politics on who they actually are in 'the system' - urge each other to adopt authentic identities that come from their real, active roles, especially in making

a living, in working together; as blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, shop floor, office; manual, technical; teacher, lecturer; and even managers (as workers); of all nations, colours, genders, ages and personal tastes.

Business people inter-act intensely 24/7/365, in serious work-based relationships, between countries, worldwide. And they identify as business people. Convince each other of our right to do the same. Base it on the undeniable simple arithmetic of the job deal – on how employers having many workers makes it an unacceptably unequal deal for every worker.

Urge workmates and other workers to see being a union member as normal, natural, everyday, expected. And for this relationship with each other at work to be as serious and meaningful as the one they have there with our employers. Say to each other 'Organized, you aren't alone against the boss. You get a feeling and a reality of support, security and fair treatment. You get real action to protect and improve your conditions. You get the adult dignity of being on an equal footing them.'

Urge each other to get organized, in nearly every job, section, department, workplace and trade; between almost every workplace and industry, trans-nationally, worldwide. Then do deals with business people and public service managers as near-equals.

And with politics based on class, convince each other as voters not to fall for conservative myths of individualism, opportunity, and seemingly low taxation; nor let them divert us into targeting fellow-worker 'outsiders' instead of them.

Conservatives should never get into government. With workers being such a large majority, we should always be able to vote into government strong progressive, pro-worker parties and back them to strike fair deals on worker's rights with the business class as a whole.

But basing your hopes on finding great leaders won't work. However able, they can't regulate the business class on their own. For that, we need an organised, everyday, permanent, social force that can match business people's everyday, permanent, recognized social force. That is <u>us,</u> organised as workers, in our unions and in our progressive parties.

Ambitious, all this? Yes. It would take many steps, by many millions, organizing together. But it's what's needed if we are to get our world into a civilized state and to not wreck it.

We can start by getting each other to see that the system is the problem, and to talk about it. And to agree that we are entitled to and should be organizing so we can play active, mature, roles in the system.

So, Go By Facts Or By Feelings?

Returning to people not wanting to bother with all that and just go by feelings - Us, Politics, The System And Class deals with that by giving people, for the first time, a clear explanation of the system, that anyone can understand, so they shouldn't find politics too much to think about.

But on feelings and facts –

The great majority of decent humanitarian people - progressives, liberals, trade unionists and socialists - have the strongest hand in making people feel they belong, are fairly treated, supported, secure and looked after. Conservative identities - nationalist, white, nativist - and anti-outsider politics don't offer real support. They say nothing about what they would do for people if the 'outsiders' weren't there to blame. Nothing about how relationships would be between fellow-nationals and 'whites'. Nothing about what to do about the business class's power, about jobs and incomes. Nothing about support at work, supporting each other in health, housing, education, social insurance.

And we can show

- *how the 'individual freedom' conservatives claim to offer is cover for business people's collective seizure of wealth in the work process.*
- *that real freedom is based on supporting each other, not abandonment.*
- *that shallow 'identities' can't deliver what proper organisation as workers and voters can.*

At work, strong union organisation replaces feelings of powerlessness with feelings of real support and dignity. Progressive and socialist politics and governments give genuine support and security in income, health, education, equal treatment and equal opportunity and in regulating business people.

Most people want fairness in society. Conservatism aims for unfairness, abandonment, and isolation. The fairness that progressive politics is all about is a powerful appeal to people's feelings that conservatism can't offer. And with wide, everyday organisation, we can get all this over to people, and deliver it. So though this work offers not an appeal to feelings but a thought-out factual analysis, we can do that too.

The Thirty Minute Read

The Essential Debate – Who Gets What?

Let's start with the huge gap in wealth and power between the few and the many. *Debate about the wealth gap* should not centre, as it does, solely on redistribution through taxation. It's too easy for the wealthy to claim 'their' money is being taken from them. We need to look at and control how they *get* excessive wealth (and power). Most of it is gained through business activity. *Business* is buying materials or services, adding value to them, and selling them. *People add that value, by working* on the goods and services. The work is done by the owners or their managers, and by staff, the workforce. The bigger the business, the more the staff's work outweighs that of owners.

The value added is set by how much the owners sell the products and services for. *The owners pay the workforce* less than that, less than the value they add. They keep the rest for themselves. This is Profit - the difference between what they get from selling the goods and services and what they pay the workforce for doing it.

Business people have difficulty with this view. They think the money they take in sales income is simply theirs. But if they didn't make money out of the work of the people they employ, why do they employ them? Out of philanthropy?

The owners deserve more of the value added than the workforce because of their initiative, enterprise and commitment. And they have to pay back whatever capital they invested. And they bear the risk of not being able to pay it back. But the amount they get for this is not determined by any known, agreed, fair evaluation.

It could easily be but it's not. It's worked out like this … *They use one trading relationship,* with *customers,* to get the added value. And *a different one* with *staff,* to pay them less than the value they add.

This is the employment or job relationship. A crucial relationship in society, it works like this: These are industrial societies we live in. That means large-scale work activity – call centres as well as factories. It means that in most jobs people work for an owner or a government body that has many staff. The more they have, the less they need each one. The more they have, the less they can pay any new or existing one *because they've got a lot of others doing it too.* They don't need any *one* worker enough to put them under pressure to pay them their fair share of the added value. They don't lose much by rejecting someone applying for a job or by sacking an existing one. They can manage with the staff they've got and say "take it or leave it." The worker, on the other hand, is usually in great need of this job. It's usually their only way of making their living.

People, each subject at work to this unfair trading, need to band together, to unionise. Then say to the owner or employer "You can't now say to any one of us 'Take it or leave it because I've got A Lot Of You'. If you don't bargain fairly with us, we'll all stop work and you won't have any. We will suffer, but so will you, until we come to a fair agreement."

Business people, when you discuss this view of added value and the

unfairness of *They've Got All The Rest* with them, can be quite intense in arguing against it and arguing for their right to hire and fire workers on their terms. (That's a conscious understatement.) They'll argue that workers who don't like what they offer them will just have to go and get a job somewhere else. This is business people blissfully ignoring the Industrial Revolution of the last 300 years, which means that most work is highly collective. So workers are at this same disadvantage in almost any other job they can go for.

One key argument they make is that these rights are justified because of them having risked capital, millions of pounds and dollars, if their business fails. In counter-argument, the bankruptcy laws allow them to evade similar amounts that they owe to suppliers.

Only ever arguing from their side, they think their enterprise and risk-taking gives them an absolute right to dominate the rest of us. Their enterprise and risk-taking is all well and good and, to a degree, fair enough. But wealth and power can't be worked out just on their side of it. It has to be also about the rights and wrongs of the relationship between themselves and workers.

They always argue their case as if the business system is made up entirely of small businesses started by involved, genuinely enterprising individuals. But much - maybe most - business activity and sequestration of value added by staff is done by large companies and corporations. Most of the sequestered added value goes to shareholders, many of whom do nothing to add value. And these people don't risk much of their capital. They spread it across funds where one business failing isn't much of a risk and the general success of others in their portfolio means they successfully get much of the value added by workers for doing nothing, at little or no risk.

And the capital risked is often from banks, not usually from someone's life savings or secured against their house. (Occasionally it is. This writer has as close friends people running at least three separate business. And one has, indeed, risked his house by borrowing against it to invest in his business. This writer is, as he writes, trying to work out how he can help him escape from this unusual and unwelcome trap.)

But they can't be allowed to base their case on the plucky small business model. Even from the smallest business upwards, and increasingly so as they get bigger, employers exploit the *They've Got All The Rest* mechanism. And most of the real world is *big* business.

As for their claim to the extra wealth they get (which, in total, is stupendous) work is a generally a collective, co-operative activity. In actual cooperatives, pay is determined by democratic decisions about what each person contributes or how much their skills, maybe specialist skills, including management skills, is needed. But the wealth and power business owners get, and the power the government gets as an employer, is not set by any such fair assessment of the greater value of what they do. It is set by the crude, unequal power of having many staff and being able to do without any one of them at a time *and paying them as little as they can get away with through this unacceptable mechanism.*

The *A Lot Of* mechanism governs a key society-wide relationship, in which fellow-citizens make their living, and that's not right. *Workers are the majority of the population. They are fellow-citizens in societies where there is a lot of talk about 'we' and 'us' and 'ours' and 'the country'. The work and wealth relationship has to be fairer, with more equality of power, by workers being organised enough to be equal to business owners, and the state as an employer.*

People and The System

But at least business people are interested in these debates, and their enterprise does provide the jobs that the rest of us depend on to make our living. *People in general* won't look at all this, about how we relate to each other and business people in politics, business, and work. They won't examine 'The System'. They complain about *what's done,* on each of the wide range of issues – the wealth gap, jobs, health, education, climate change and all the others. But they tamely accept the *relationships* that enable it.

Why is that? Are they too intimidated by the system to question it? Too self-centric to devote their attention to examining it? Too lazy to? Yet they have ravenous appetites for gathering – or googling - information all sorts of other things, and for eagerly exchanging it. They have fervid interests in consuming goods and services, in sport, music, celebrities, history, and various hobbies.

Seems like people will take an interest in anything *but* how we relate to each other in politics, business and work, the key relationships, the central issue in society. Before tackling what's *done* in politics, business and work, people need to examine and understand these relationships, to examine and understand the arrangements we live by, *the system*.

The key problem is that business people have more power than we should allow them. They have power in politics because they are 'the economy'. What people think of as politics is subsidiary to this practical, everyday power. They get this by being *organised*, in their businesses, companies, corporations and banks. They also dominate political *debate,* because they are organised enough for some of them to own most of the media.

Everybody else can only respond to business people's everyday political power at elections held only every four or five years. And it's with just one simple vote, atomized, divided, unorganised; grouped together shallowly, by only geographical proximity, not by real everyday relationships.

Business people have more power over the rest than is right *at work* too. It's worth repeating that in industrial societies most businesses have many staff. As a worker, each individual is of only marginal use to them. They can turn down any one person for a job; or in work, not treat them right, not give them the right pay and conditions; or sack them, with little loss of output. *This* is the advantage employers have over each member of staff - ***They've Got All The Rest***. It is an unfair, unacceptable advantage. Public sector employers also have it over public sector workers. *The response to this unfair power is for people to organise together at work too,* to make employers deal with them fairly or risk losing all their staff when they treat people wrong, not just one.

*The unfairness of the **A Lot Of** mechanism to people as individuals makes the personalised case for people to organise in Trade Unions*. They need to do it universally, to make business people and public sector employers deal with them together, fairly.

This is also the proper response to business people's excess power in politics. With everybody else also organised, mostly as workers, they would not only match up to business people as everyday equals at work. They would also develop their political awareness, attitudes and organisation, to respond to business people's excessive political power. *So the solution* in both politics and work is for people to organise together to match organised business people.

So What Is The System?

The common, official view of society sees the core of the system as everyone altogether as fellow-nationals and governments running the country, in everybody's best interests. Instead, we need to see everyday business and work relationships as the core of society.

These relationships grant business people a huge excess of power and wealth over the rest through unfair, unequal relationships in business and work, and also in politics. All political discussion must centre on a clear understanding of this. Currently, it doesn't.

What are these business and work relationships, the system? Everyone knows them but they are so accepted in everyday life and political debate they are almost invisible. Those who champion the system call it free markets, and free, or private, enterprise. Critics generally call it capitalism. Those terms are too remote for normal discussion. Let's talk of it with a familiar everyday term - ***the Business System*** or ***the Free-market Business System.***

Business people convince the rest that it is the only way to run society, as if it's the natural order. It's not. Throughout all of human history up to only a few hundred years ago the system was different. (Though not necessarily better).

The essentials are said to be that anyone - any *individual* - can set up in business and any other *individual* is free to do the same, in competition with them. And any *individual* is free to buy products and services from any *individual* seller. Every *individual* is free to decide the price they will sell at and the price they will buy at.

Free markets favour business owners over everybody else, the majority, most of whom are workers. Business people want, and get, a lot of freedom to do as they please. They use it to dominate and abuse fellow-citizen workers. They claim they deserve their position because of their enterprise but they are over-entitled. They benefit far more than their enterprise merits. And what they take, and the way they treat people, challenges the notion of a national identity shared with them.

This is the basic system. Politics is built upon it, not the other way round. Politics is the arena for struggle between those who want to retain it – it's what *conservatives* seek to conserve – and those who want to make it meet the needs of the many rather than the few.

Business people established the business system before

industrialisation and before the rest got the vote (in most countries). And since then this occasional, simple, atomised vote does not give the mass of people the power to challenge and regulate it – regulate *them* - in everybody's interests.

Many people do argue this, that business people are allowed too much freedom. These people want, at least, basic public services to be provided by society as a whole, not by business people for the wrong reasons. They also want business people's activity in general to be regulated in some ways by society as a whole, for the benefit of society as a whole. For example, consumer protection regulations restrict business people's unfair power over people as consumers. And environmental protection seeks to restrict their crazy activities.

Business people fiercely oppose such regulation. They argue it is state intrusion into individual freedom, which they claim free markets provide. But regulation can be seen simply as democratic decisions, made by and for all citizens. *They are under-regulated* and allowed great freedom because they are 'the economy' and won't perform unless indulged. And they often get themselves into government, as their conservative parties, and de-regulate themselves.

Most of business people's arguments do not make sense and do not match reality. They speak of free markets as consisting of ' individuals being free to achieve on their own'. Yet they actually operate as organised groups - ***as companies*** **and** ***corporations***. In them they have intense *collective* relationships with many staff. They expect staff to be 'team players', don't they? That's modern industrial work and business.

And they relate to their many staff through 'the labour market'. ***The usual debates about markets don't matter much compared to the need for debate about this one***. It governs how *citizens* are bought and sold in making their living. And the work relationship between them and business people is key to production, profit, wealth and capital. Yet in politics and everyday political talk, this market in people – for most people, the market in *themselves* when making their living - is not analysed, debated and disputed like the others are.

The labour market is the main everyday flaw in the system. It has the majority of the population, most citizens, near to helpless in earning their living. *They are weak in earning their living because the employer can either not employ, or mistreat, or sack, any one of them on their own, because they have the others.* ***This, again, is the 'They've Got All The Rest' relationship. This flaw in the system needs challenging before any of the others can be***. The response to *They've Got All The Rest* is for those who are workers – most people - to organise together too.

When they are not, and people sell themselves as ***true*** *individuals, as is common*, they sell to business owners and state employers who not only have many of them but *who are not themselves individuals*. They are *organisations.* Yet for workers to also organise and act together is condemned, obstructed, and heavily regulated.

In our highly inter-active, collective, industrialised economies, justifying the free-market business system as individual freedom is plain absurd. And it is run against the interests of the majority. Yet, as voters, many are

bewitched by this myth of individual freedom. So too are progressive commentators and politicians, who don't challenge it due to their own, and the electorate's, bewitchment. We need to expose it as a myth, an absurd view of modern mass society, and challenge it.

Business people are the main advocates of free enterprise, the business system. But they are a small minority. The majority are workers, deeply disadvantaged by the system. So business people, to get into government, build political alliances and parties by showcasing the apparent freedom it offers to others. Firstly, to small business people. Then, small traders. (They do often benefit from free markets. But they also often don't.) Then, workers also are persuaded that it's the only game in town and they should only aspire to advance as managers or as well-educated, skilled workers.

Across this range of making your living conservative politicians cast a holy mantle - 'the freedom to achieve through your own efforts'. It's 'The American Dream.' It is the key myth that sustains conservative politics.

(Although this business - or capitalist - system grants business people grossly unfair power over the majority of their fellow-citizens, allow that it has merits. It encourages enterprise, it encourages people to provide the goods, services and jobs we need. We do rely upon business people for this. Through competition, it encourages consumer choice and greater efficiency. It enables the accumulation of capital that can be invested in ever-greater efficiencies in production and better goods and services.)

But on top of the unfairness at work, it leaves the obviously collective world of work and business – the economy – to be run by people with fiercely individual aims, who believe in looking after just themselves, and everybody else can sink or swim. (Though they do organise themselves, politically, as conservatives, to protect the business system that enable this.)

And, under-managed, their business system is unstable and prone to crisis. And it allows them to so relentlessly pursue 'a return on capital' that they produce senseless growth that is destroying humanity's ability to live on this planet.

A classic argument made for the free-market business system is that, despite its inequality, anybody can 'make it'. They don't have to be subservient workers. Anybody can start a business and, if any good, become successful. This is true. But it's an irrelevant argument. We live in industrial societies. Many people working together, with costly equipment, is generally more efficient. Larger-scale production out-performs smaller-scale and takes most of the trade. We can't all be small traders. The majority of people *have* to work for employers who have many of them.

So it doesn't matter if anyone can 'make it'. It just means that, with industrial production of goods and services, we all have a chance to be the one of the few mistreating the majority. We need to challenge and regulate that. Each of us having the chance be one of those doing it is no solution.

The argument that 'anyone can make it' can *seem* to be justified by there being many small businesses. By acting as a buffer zone between the worker majority and big businesses, they provide cover for, they legitimise, the big and corporate business class, that lets them portray their excess power as justified reward for self-made-man, little-person-made-good enterprise. It masks them, obstructs us from identifying them as a ruling class, challenging and regulating them. But they *are* the ruling class.

Us, Politics, The System And Class argues for people to organise as workers, within the business system. There is a more ambitious approach. It is to transform the key relationships into Socialism. But when most people don't even see the case against the free-market business system's relationships as it is now, nor the case for being free to correct its unfairness, there's little prospect of them making that greater leap. Nor of us developing the mature approach to civilised living with each other that Socialism would require.

Instead, we need to start where we are and spread a sound understanding of what's wrong with relationships in the present system. And organise to be equal in it to business people, at work and in politics.

Germany is of interest. This writer hasn't especially studied how they do things there and it's not a perfect society. But the evidence is fairly clear and undisputed that business owners and organised workers in Germany relate in a far more equal and productive way than most other countries.

That leads to the criticism the business system's advocates made of 'unions' in the UK in the 1970's, and still make. We were more organised and combative than we'd ever been (and so society was fairer, more equal than it is has ever been.) However there was a short-sightedness - we usually fought just for our conditions without taking the whole business into account. That's partly because owners had always treated us as outsiders to the business, and we did well enough just to organise to defend our conditions in it.

Having acknowledged that, trade unionists *did* attempt to participate positively, with alternative business plans. But employers were even less interested than us in working collaboratively. In 1980, the biggest UK car company, British Leyland, famously fired the senior union convenor for publishing a union business plan for the company.

Referring back to the start – we live in countries that assume we are all together as citizens, and that government's primary purpose is to secure the common good. Check the preamble to the US Constitution. But it's not done, because business people prefer this system in which they dominate and the rest sink or swim. The way to change that is not to hope, from atomised weakness, for progressive governments or Presidents. It is to organise, practically, daily, to be equal to employers at work; and from that base, to build political alliances that give progressive governments the support they need to regulate business owners on behalf of the majority. Then we can enjoy civilised, stable societies.

Next – The Right To Unionise - The Three-page Read

This exists elsewhere as a short, stand-alone version of 'The Right To Unionise' but belongs here too as part of The Thirty-Minute Read.

The Right To Unionise - The Three-page Read

Unionising Means Becoming Mature Citizens

Organising is firstly about bargaining at work. That's on the next page. But we do poorly in politics at getting governments that will work for the majority and that's because the worker majority operate weakly in politics compared to business people with their conservative parties. Being organised as workers can be the base for matching up to them in politics as well as at work. It can mean becoming 'players' in the economy and politics, like they and the state are, becoming mature, involved citizens.

Business people's economic *and* political power from being organised overwhelms what the rest get simply through voting. Business people, organised in running businesses, corporations and banks, are effective players in the economy and politics, every day, not just at election times. What they do *is* 'the economy'. From this everyday, practical organisation, and from their assertion of business rights through their conservative parties, they dominate political life. Through their media, they impress on workers self-defeating views of how the world works and mass acceptance of business class rights and politics.

We are encouraged to see the vote and parliament as the height of social and political organisation. But while the vote is important, it's not enough, unorganised against *their* organisation, to get governments that will run society for the majority. As a form of collective organisation and action, the voting process is too flimsy to enable the rest to challenge the business class. To match business people's workplace *and* political power, the great majority of citizens - workers - need better organisation than being atomised voters in occasional elections. With so many people not organised in their meaningful economic role, they can't develop their own collective politics. Organisation at work is the obvious base, extending to political influence. Just as business people's political base is *their* organisation at work, *as* businesses.

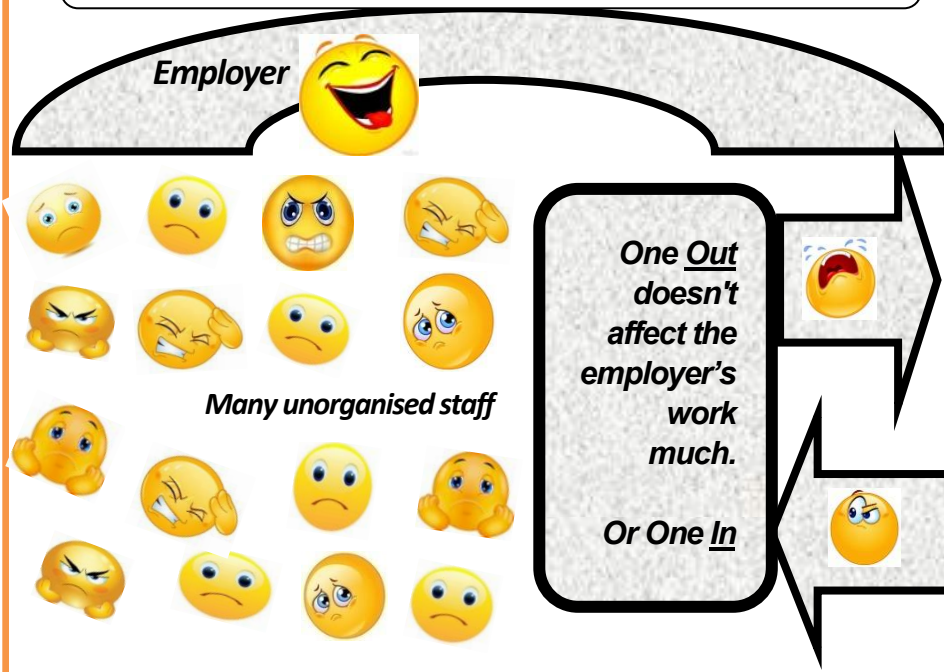
They are organized. All workers should be.

And confidently so. Don't you think?

Note *- The entitlement to unionise comes from the individual need for social backing and the consequent shared need to associate with each other. It isn't based on the rights of 'the unions'.*

The Right To Unionise and *Us, Politics, The System And Class* argue all this fully.

Weak As A Worker because Employers Have Many Others –
The personal case for the Right To Unionise

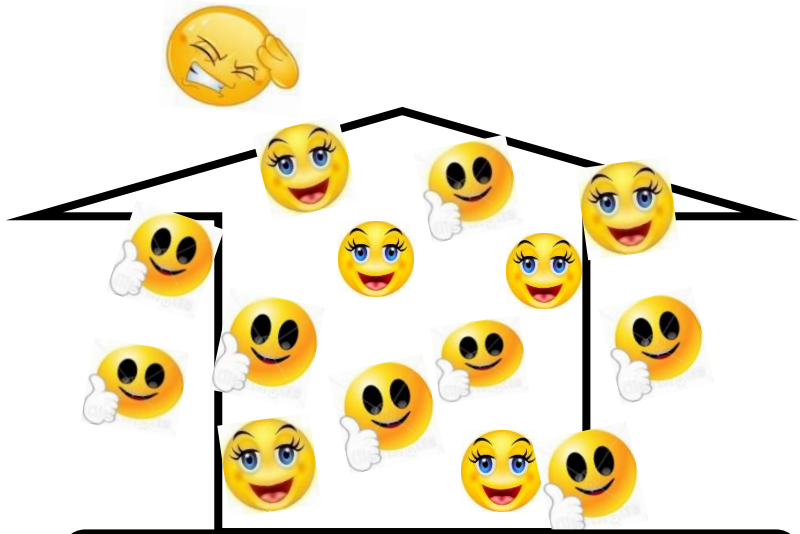


Work relationships as shown explain why people are not equal to employers. It's because They've Got All The Rest Working and gives us the personal and the political Right To Organise.

Most employers have other staff as well as you. With many others working they can easily carry on their operation without any particular one. That's what gives them power over you and every other worker when starting, managing and sacking you.. (It's not because they can replace you from the unemployed.)

This unequal bargaining in earning your living is unfair; and has never been approved by anyone. It's just an unplanned feature of industrial society. That is, most work is collective and to earn a living most people *have* to work for an employer who has many other staff. You can't avoid it. Industrialism works better than small trading. Only a minority can be business owners. Most will be workers, inevitably. The chance to be an owner only changes *who* are the owners. There will always be *some.* And without staff being organised they will have unfair power over them. And for the same reason, so will the state as an employer.

It's not right for people - the majority – to have to make their living on such unequal, unfair terms. It is the biggest issue in politics. To relate fairly to business people and public sector employers fellow-citizens are entitled to organise together at work – and need to.



People Organised at Work – Negotiating and Acting Together

For society to be fair and civilised, the majority, workers, have the absolute right to correct the unfairness in work relationships by organising together, in unions. It should be expected, normal, recognised in everyday life, respectable, uncontroversial.

The heart of it is union recognition – getting employers to accept and agree that staff negotiate their terms and conditions with them as an organised body, with recognised workplace representatives.

It has to go as far as denying fellow-workers the 'freedom' to work on less than union conditions. It is just essential - it stops employers from forcing us into bargaining each other downwards (that you see happening). It's for every worker's good.

It has to include requiring fellow-workers to join the rest of the staff in a union. When taking a job you accept coming under the owner's and manager's authority. You should accept some from your fellow-workers. It's not against anyone's authentic freedom. It means everyone *gains* freedom from the employer. And gains the freedom to act – to have workmates who might drag your conditions downwards under yours and the others democratic authority.

It has to include helping and persuading workers in other companies to also work only on union conditions for the trade. Because in free markets for, as consumers we generally buy the lowest cost alternative. So the worst employers get the trade, or force yours to worsen your conditions in order to compete. You see it happening, most obviously with globalisation, but also within countries. For that reason workers need to win union organisation and union conditions, internationally as well as domestically.

A Key Argument About How We Relate - Who Gets How Much Power and Wealth?

Business people and their parties make a standard set of justifications for them having their power and wealth. The main ones are that they are enterprising and risk losing money they put into the business.

That at least recognises the centrality of business activity. Because often obscuring it is the belief that property and property rights are the central issue in wealth creation and retention. They aren't. The central issue is making money in running a business, employing people, and taking a portion of the value of the work they do. Property rights are significant, but not as much.

Property was the central issue when owning land was the main way of making money (often from rent rather than personal farming activity) and land was the key, fixed resource. But in industrialism, the productive property, like premises and machinery, can be and are repeatedly assembled, used and discarded. ***The key mechanism now is the use of people's labour to make money.*** (And the money for the premises, machinery and materials usually comes from earlier rounds of the use of labour.)

There is weight in the argument that business people are entitled to more power and wealth because of their enterprise and investment. They do deserve more than the rest of us for the effort they put into running businesses. But *how much* more power and wealth is the issue. What they make from using everybody else in their business activity is not determined by a fair measure of their enterprise and risk-taking. It probably could be. But it isn't. It's determined by the unfair ***They've Got All The Rest*** relationship that operates in the majority of jobs. ***And that is the key issue in the whole of politics and work.***

The justification because of risk-taking is over-stated. It does happen, and is most acceptable where small business people genuinely put their own personal money into the business. But – researched figures would be interesting – most invested money is borrowed from the banks or comes from profits made from a previous cycle of paying workers less than the value of what they've done. And so, if it is lost, it wasn't rightly theirs in the first place. And they limit their liability by use of the bankruptcy procedure. The people who really carry the risk are suppliers who don't get paid when the business goes bankrupt.

Some rich people get there from their own efforts. These include film actors, successful musicians, and top footballers. Good luck to them, they don't do it by exploiting others. Leaving them aside, most wealth *is* made by exploiting the many, using the *A Lot Of Others* mechanism. This explanation, and the way it justifies strong, universal union organisation, is at the heart of the challenge to the free-market business system.

Not far behind ***They've Got All The Rest*** *in importance* is the question of whether it is sensible to leave the running of what is in fact a highly collective economy in their hands, when their declared main objective is to look after only themselves (presented, approvingly, as the individual freedom to achieve.)

They Show 'The Nation' To Be Nonsense

In response to our attempts, in the interest of balance and fairness in society, to regulate them and the wealth they take from everybody else's work, they refuse to perform. They argue that to invest and be enterprising they need the incentive of fabulous wealth.

To make their conservative parties electable, they mask all this with expressions of concern for everybody. And by presenting the policies that benefit mainly them – such as free markets - as being for everybody's good. They take care to say a lot about doing things for everybody; but what they actually do in government is look after themselves and their class.

Yet, through their conservative parties, they vigorously promote the notion of everybody feeling intense unity with them as fellow-nationals. 'The nation', 'the national interest'. With their great selfishness and their callous and sometimes brutal behaviour to fellow-nationals, this is absurd. Particularly at work, where they often treat adult fellow-citizens almost like children.

Although fervent belief in national identities shared with them is absurd, it is highly successful. That's because, against all the talk of individualism, people need to feel they belong to large, successful social organisations*. 'The Nation' is the most significant. Business people use it to obscure their oppressive role and to direct attention at outsiders for the cause of problems.

(* Like fervent support of football teams, whose fans have no real, participatory collective identity. And belief in flimsy local identities - 'where you're from' - as big self-defining things – when again there's no real collective identity. 'Where you're at' is what really matters.)

Organising sufficiently to really challenge them is not about to happen very soon. But in political debate we can challenge them on the absurdity of sharing national identity with them. And we can argue that to each other, as fellow-workers, and that class identity, organised, mature class identity, is the proper alternative.

And it has an immediate use in tackling divisive racism. Anti-racist argument normally focuses on the unfairness of discriminating against 'outsider' groups. Much more useful is to demolish the belief in the *insider* group that those discriminating feel they belong to, and are vigorously encouraged to by conservatives. That is, to show how seeing themselves as British, American, French, German, Russian, Brasilian and so on, fervently as one with self-centred and oppressive business people and conservatives, is self-demeaning and self-defeating.

But What About People?

All that is all very well but what about all those many millions, who

have their own, different ideas? Many of them are dismayingly short-sighted and lacking in analysis.

In the UK the Labour party gets the blame for not getting themselves into government. That's not fair. It can't be just their responsibility. It's everyone's. The solution for Labour and other progressives isn't to give up on what you believe you should do in order to get elected. It is to campaign to influence and change the electorate's views and voting practices, like as follows.

Although it's argued here that the voting system is highly inadequate, people don't use it at all wisely. Flimsy as it is, people could in fact easily use it to stop conservative parties, the anti-majority parties, getting into government. But many people get taken in by self-defeating arguments and take self-defeating positions.

Many get taken in by the view that voting is a choice between parties or leaders simply on their competence to 'lead the country' or manage the economy. Being competent is of course a good idea. But most of the people who get to be party leaders are much the same competence wise. Before considering their competence there's something about them of greater importance – in government, what do they aim to do? Conservative parties aim to look after and represent the rich, business people. Social democratic parties aim to look after everybody. You'd be best advised to vote for parties that aim to look after you rather than those that aim to do you in, before considering competence.

And many people give up on, say, the Labour Party (in the UK) because of what they do or don't do on just one issue. There's no sense in that if it means letting in parties that do even more things you don't like or are not in your interests. The point is, with just one vote, you have to put up with a lot of things a party does, vote for the least bad alternative party, and look to develop better control of them and influence over them issue by issue.

One of the biggest examples is diverted voting. That's people deciding their vote on an issue that, whatever the ins and outs of the issue, is a relatively minor issue. Anti-outsider voting is the biggest example. Compared to the role of business people in the economy, the health service and other issues, immigrants or asylum seekers are not issues worth swaying your vote over. They just aren't. But the business-owned media pound away at these issues every day and convince people that they are. People are swayed to vote anti-outsider because, either from lack of understanding of how central business people are to the system, or through being unable to see how to challenge them, they turn on the people presented as being less deserving than even themselves.

In broader, futile protest, people vote for parties other than the one they usually support or that best represents them for one with no chance of winning the seat or getting into government. So what these people are doing, for the sake of making a futile gesture, is letting the Tories in.

It might make sense if it's part of a long-term plan to establish this other party – say the Greens or one of the 'real labour ' groups who put up candidates. But in the short-term, in any one election, it's plain daft. And if it is long-term, then rather than just make the futile protest vote, they need to put some effort into building that party in between elections, particularly in constituencies where it might get a chance of winning the seat.

Then …. dohh!! there's not voting at all. Thirty or more per cent of voters in the UK don't. Since conservatives aren't daft enough to pass up this simple chance to help get governments that will work for them, it's reasonable to suppose that most non-voters are people who Labour tries to look after and who should vote for them. The usual reason given for not voting is 'They (the parties) are all the same.' That is simply refusing to think. Really, it's quite easy to see differences and also to see which party is best for them. While the parties do all present themselves as aiming to do the same thing - run the country well – there is that key fact that conservative parties actually exist to look after the rich and business people, and Labour genuinely wants to look after all (although hampered by their deference to business people.)

Some progressives even argue that not voting will somehow make politicians be more progressive. I'm sure conservatives love these people.

Another problem is that people don't talk openly enough to each other about voting. They allow all the debate to take place in the media. The social media may be changing that, and maybe that is its key new role in politics. Underpinning the lack of proper discussion between people at election time, there's the old saying and practice 'Don't talk about politics or religion' in pubs and at social occasions. That is so self-defeating. We (*WE*) have got to be able to do that if we are going to achieve civilised society.

All in all, what people should do is vote, and vote for the least-bad party that can win their constituency or win a national majority. Doing anything else simply lets in the worst. (Currently, and usually, the Tories). There's more to after that, of course. But do that.

The business issue is one where it really is Labour to blame and not so much everybody else. Being clear about the relationship between business people and the rest is an absolute requirement in politics, and it's not, it's fudged. Basically, we and Labour should say about business people, and to them, 'Ok, you play a key role. But you need regulating, in the cause of fairness and the greater good. If you really believe in the national identity as you claim to, you'll accept regulation with good grace. If you don't, shut up about the 'we' of national identity. And we'll regulate you anyway, as far as we can manage to without you taking your ball home.'

The practices just analysed show up Labour's major traditional flaw - they have not been a campaigning party. They only, mainly, approach people through the media-dominated debates and mainly only at election time. They only have weak and indeed hostile connections to the mass of the electorate. So at elections they find them all over the place politically, with a range of anti-Labour attitudes. (This is changing in 2018, the party is campaigning regularly.)

So Labour has floundered around trying to present themselves as competent and pro-business. And anti-immigration and not soft on people on benefits. At the same time, they try to present themselves to those who want an actual Labour party, but who give up on them as they become alternative Tories.

In August 2015, during the Labour leadership election, there is a revealing debate about whether to choose a leader who is 'electable' or one who truly represents what Labour is supposed to be about – representing the majority of non-business people, workers. *The 'electable' arguments says* 'There's no point in being purist if the electorate won't vote you in'. That's true enough. But there's also, as we have seen, not such a great point being elected if you do it only as Tories-lite.

The answer – work to change the political thinking of many of the electorate. Campaign, argue. It's no use just presenting progressive policies to 'the electorate' as they are.

The connections are weak but they can be built. As argued earlier, that is a key point about workers being organised - not just for decent working conditions but also to be 'players' in the economy and in politics. Organised workers have many opportunities to talk to each politically, and they have families, friends and neighbours and people in the bars pubs and clubs. *It might seem difficult to campaign to change people* but if you don't even attempt it, you never will. Business people manage it, with their use their media to divert and disillusion people. So much so that, in 2015 in the UK, they managed to get themselves into government, and govern viciously, against the interests of most of the electorate, with the votes of only about 25% of them.

The start point and end point of campaigning to change people's politics is the argument that business people dominate; that they do it by being organised; and that to deal with them on an equal basis, at work and in politics, everybody else also needs to be organised.

This writer regularly argues this with people

and EVERYBODY goes 'Ah hah! Yes – that's right'.

What Will It Be Like If People Do As These Writings Urge?

It will be common knowledge that business people have the central role in society and that it is because they are – by owning and organising the production of most goods, services and jobs - 'the economy'; that that makes them the most powerful group in society; that this is because they are organised (as businesses), and are granted the right to organise; that they are a class, the Business class; that they are 'the wealthy'.

It will be the common view that most of the rest, a large majority, are workers (however well-educated and paid they are); that most of the wealth the rich have is made by the work workers do for them; that workers are entitled to balance business people's power with their own.

It would be the norm, widely accepted, that they too need to be organised and are entitled to be; that almost all of them would be organised; and that as organised workers, this majority will stand up to business people and public sector employers at work, negotiating together for good conditions and pay, locally and across industrial sectors, and internationally.

It will be widely recognised that since being organised at work makes the business class most of the economy, that also gives them political power that can limit governments; that they also have conservative parties and conservative press and broadcast media promoting politics and laws that govern business and work relationships that favour them.

It will be recognised that like them, workers can use their organised relationships with each other in business, work and public services, to communicate and organise with each other on politics, independently of the business-class-owned media; that they develop their own politics and support and vote for progressive parties.

It will be recognised that most of rich people's wealth comes from paying workers less than the value of the work they do for them; that they get so well-off from that that they don't need public services and public support; that that is why they oppose taxes; that it is fair to reclaim the wealth they make from workers by taxing them to fund good public services and welfare.

Due to the majority being class-conscious as workers and aware of the difference of political interests between them and business people, and organised politically as well as at work, they will always elect progressive governments. These will regulate business people generally to make society fair and sustainable.

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Why This Book and The Big Picture

Britain is the main setting for this analysis of the system but it's the same globally.

The writer has been active in politics and organisation at work in the UK since the 1950's. Through all that time he's seen a repeating pattern of defeats of the majority, workers, in politics and at work. Widely accepted features of 'the system' explain and cause these defeats and setbacks. The writer believes the worker majority need to assess the key relationships in 'the system' and change them. More on his experience and motivation at page 366.

Concerned About Politics and Work?

How much should we bother with politics? This is a part of one of the biggest issues in life - how to get the right balance between 'going with the flow' and 'taking care of business'. One means just doing things that directly make your life better in the world as it is. That's what most people do, it seems – take it easy, make the best of things as they are. Abandon attachment to striving, go along with what everybody else does, say 'que sera, sera'. Or, alternatively, take care of business, in a wider sense than making and selling things, do what needs doing. That runs from your personal life, from doing the washing up to getting a job to buying a house or taking care of a friend who needs help; to trying to change the world for the better.

In politics, work and business, people complain about what's done on each of the wide range of issues – jobs, health, education, climate change, and all the others. But most aren't prepared to take care of business by standing up to those – business people - who do. Ok. But they won't even look at how we relate to each other in politics, business, and work. They accept the relationships that enable what's wrong. They won't examine 'the System'. Why is that? Are they too intimidated by the system to question it? Too solipsistic to give any attention to it? Too lazy to? They have fervid interests in consuming goods and services, in sport, music, celebrities, history, and various hobbies. And they have ravenous appetites for gathering – or googling - information on all sorts of other things, and for exchanging it. Seems like people will take an interest in anything *but* how we relate to each other in politics, business and work, the key relationships, the central issue in society. But even without challenging the system you can at least take the trouble to understand it and discuss it with others.

Many turn to feelings rather than rational understanding. They find the system and politics confusing, so give up on understanding and tackling it. Unable to do something themselves, they get feelings of something being done by supporting 'strong' characters like Trump who claim to be able to sort things out for us, and by supporting non-solutions like blaming 'outsiders' like immigrants. The business-owned media work hard to achieve this and pressure people with scare stories about lesser issues than the way the system is set up.

This writer believes that making the system understandable and explaining how ordinary people can sort it out by their own organised, civilised activity, as this work aims to do, is a step towards generating more sensible feelings. The key

element will be actual organisation, where people talk to each other about their shared problems, and through mutual support and education generate feelings of support more meaningful than the false promises of populist politicians and demagogues.

Moving on with that approach - before tackling what's *done* in politics, business and work, people need to examine, understand, and challenge *the relationships*, to examine and understand the arrangements we live by, *the system.* The key problem is that business people have more power than is right. They have power *in politics* because they are 'the economy'. What people see as politics is subsidiary to this practical, everyday power. They get this by being *organised*, in their businesses, companies, corporations and banks. They also dominate political *debate,* because they are organised enough for some of them to own most of the media.

Everybody else can only respond to their everyday political power at elections held only every four or five years. And it's with just one simple vote, atomized, divided, unorganised; grouped together shallowly, by only geographical proximity, not by real everyday relationships.

Business people have more power over the rest than is right *at work* too. Everyone knows that, *but they don't know the reason*. It's because in industrial societies businesses have many staff. Each one worker is of only marginal use to them. So they can turn down any one person for a job; or in work, not treat them right, not give them the right pay and conditions; or sack them, with little loss of output. *This* is the advantage employers have over the rest. It is an unfair, unacceptable advantage. Public sector employers also have it over public sector workers. The response, to make business people and public employers deal with them fairly at work, is for people to organise with each other too.

There's little point complaining or campaigning about each separate political issue. The political system grants us little power to affect any of them. And there's little point grumbling about each problem at *work*.

The real problem is how we relate to each other and to business people in politics, and how we relate to each other and to them and public sector managers at work. The solution in both politics and work is for people to organise together to match organised business people. First, the case needs making and spreading widely. Argue and campaign to change relationships so that our views on political issues carry weight and we have the power to bargain effectively at work. That's what's needed to make lasting progress on any of the issues. Use this book to learn about relationships in the political system and in the free-market business system we work in. Use it to examine forms of social identity and organisation. Use it to explore the changes we need and how to get them.

Whoever You Vote For Business People Always Get In

Business owners, not governments, run society. They cause the problems in politics, the economy and work, and many of the social problems. This book shows how the system enables them to. It shows how they are a class, the business class. Business people are the often-mentioned but never actually *identified* 'ruling class'.

Most People Are Workers

In the business system most people are workers. At work and in politics workers have little power. They can't act as mature, adult citizens. Look at their relationships with business owners and public sector managers, and with governments, and see why they are unfair. They need to reject these relationships and organise to become equal to business owners. To become properly 'players' in the system, like they are.

There's No 'We' With Them

Because of how badly business owners treat fellow-nationals, *Us, Politics, The System And Class* argues for not sharing national identity with them. It argues for workers to have an independent class identity, one based on being workers, not on cultural trivia. It argues for them to organise as workers, maturely, solidly, confidently.

You probably have views on these things but never think them through? This book will help you to, and to talk to other people about them. That's essential. Because while decent people and commentators and politicians argue for fairer policies, protest and fairer policies never get far in the system as it is. You need to challenge and change the social processes, the system, that business people use to dominate everybody else. First you need a sound understanding of it. This book offers one. Download it free or buy it printed. Read it, put it out on social media.

Will You Read It, and Pass it On?

Will you read this book? There's a lot of it. The writer has found that the few who do read it say 'It's great. "Agree with all of that". But many read only some early parts. Or, having shown real interest, don't read it. Sales are almost non-existent. That's Ok. It's not written to make money but to make the world better for the writer as well as everybody else. Download figures appear better. But it's not taken off like the writer expected. He thinks that he has taken all the everyday, important views of work and politics, exposed the falsity of them, and put forward clear alternative views of how society actually works and how it should work. He thought people would be drawn into that and read the book avidly, and mostly agree with the analysis, saying yes – yes - yes.

They don't. Yet there's futile article after futile article in the civilised press condemning excess power and wealth and unfair policies; but never identifying the business class and everybody else's relationship with them in the free-market business system as the core problem. Naomi Klein, John Pilger, Piketty, Owen Jones, Russell Brand, and others, write books solemnly or fiercely condemning this state of affairs and arguing for fairer public policies. Yet they never identify and criticise the relationships that enable the unfairness. And they never identify and argue for the social agency needed to implement fairer policies – ordinary people, effectively and confidently organised as workers and citizens.

I find the analysis worked out here works far better than any of this. It enables me to understand most of the political news, and see the answers. Usually it's just that one answer – we need to be organised, like they are. When I talk to people about this analysis their faces light up as they see the validity of it - like identifying business people as the class that runs society, because they are organised. They recognise the need for the whole analysis. Yet they don't follow up by getting the

book, judging by download figures and sales.

Its written for everybody, whether noticeably political or not. Throughout a lifetime of activism, I've found that everybody is interested in the system. But not interested enough to take a serious look at it by reading this book, evidently. Surprisingly, even the million or two people seriously active in political protest, demonstrations, union organisation, to whom I thought this would be a vital and welcome gift, aren't reading it and promoting it either.

I don't know why. People do have a deep acceptance of the established views of how society runs. But many hate conservatives and big business people for their nastiness and for how they keep people down mentally and politically, and have done so historically, and say so. But it's no good just blaming them. Sure, they are nasty. But saying so won't change anything. We have to look to ourselves, sort ourselves out, organise as politically mature people and stand up to them.

Maybe people don't have the mind-set to study the system afresh, as this book asks them to. But that's contradicted by the almost universal welcome people give to the idea when spoken to. I dunno. All I can do is make it as accessible as I can. You should notice that it covers the most common everyday views of work and politics and says 'Let's have a look at them'. So it should be very readable. Apart from the thoroughness, intensity and length. But they are necessary.

Promoting Unionisation

There's little point complaining or campaigning about each separate political issue because the political system grants us little power to affect them. And there's little point grumbling about each problem at work. The real problem there is our relationship with business and public sector employers and managers. And the real problem in politics is that most of us are not organised on a day-to-day basis. Argue and campaign instead to change work relationships so we have the power to bargain effectively at work and our views on political issues carry weight. That's what's needed to make lasting progress on any of the issues. So, at page 276 is a piece on promoting unionisation.

Setting The Scene - Where Is The National 'We' ?

A big issue in life is how much we are each an individual, and how much a social being.

In the deepest sense we are all individuals, on our own. A lot of what each person experiences and feels is entirely theirs. Nobody else is ever going to know. We can’t communicate it all. We don’t even know ourselves, in many ways.

But we share a huge amount. We take part in the many kinds of communication, inter-action and co-operation in what we call ‘society’. We’ve got language, empathy, sympathy, many types of organisation. We’ve got convention, adherence to social norms. Although this writer opposes much of it - there are better ways to work together than convention – it shows how we need unifying norms. Ritual – pomp and ceremony in public life - is taken so seriously is because it we experience the same thing at the same time, blocking out for a moment our individuality, even though in itself the ritual is ridiculous. We are part of humanity as a whole.

There are many strong forms of group inter-action, from the family, through sports clubs, hobby groups and clubs, workplace inter-action, political inter-action, national and international institutions. Strong group identities are formed. This book examines the basic economic and political forms of group inter-action and argues that, taken together with them, many of the usual identities don't make sense.

The first, most general one is the use of a national 'we' for a country's population or voters. Politicians, commentators, and ordinary people talk about political issues and speak of what ***we*** should do about it. And they talk of ***us.*** They talk of ***our***. This assumes that in business, in jobs, in making a living and in politics, in running the country, everybody is in it together. It assumes that the key relationships are set up for us to run society together, in everybody's interests.

No 'We' With Them

This is simply not true and everyone knows it. Everyone knows that, in all or most countries, political and work relationships have, at best, some very unfair and uncaring aspects. And that at worst, they are brutal. Everyone knows the basic relationships enable a minority, business people, especially the richer ones, to evade any 'we' and to be economically and politically selfish. They don't remotely believe in 'we' as far as looking after each other goes. They forcefully argue that the basic relationships are about individuals looking out only for themselves. And the basic relationships enable that – they enable the minority, rich business people, to put their 'me' before 'we'. And they keep the rest unable to act as a 'we', atomised and unorganised, and because of that, unequal. That's why, even while people accept the false 'we', they talk just as commonly, and more accurately, of ***'they'*** and ***'them'*** for those who run the country.

Take any country and ask 'How many of the people there care about their fellow-countrymen? How much do they care about how they get the great necessities of jobs, homes, health, education, support? How much do they express such care, how much do you hear of it?' Can you think of anywhere where you could say most people are like this? Most care strongly about how *they themselves* are treated. But the number who feel and express that as care for *other* people, fellow-countrymen and women, is much lower. Those who do care, and do something about it, tend to be the least patriotic. Those who care least tend to be the most patriotic. That's conservatives, everywhere. As examples, conservatives, Republicans in the USA; and conservatives, Tories, in Britain.

Conservatives talk of *we* to obscure the fact that *they* run the system, and do it for themselves. With their insistence that society must be run on individualism they contradict themselves spectacularly.

Others – Labour politicians, social democrats, liberals – talk of 'we' partly from naivety about how society really works, unequally and antagonistically. And partly because they are afraid to challenge conservatives and business people over the unfair relationships.

It's Us, and Them

For a real 'we', ordinary people need to organise themselves into one. They need to get themselves into a real 'we' as workers committed to look out for each other, with enough daily organised power to equal the daily organised power business people have. To become a 'we' that will win more democracy and make the system fairer and more cooperative. This book aims to help get these things.

Challenging The System – Reform or Revolution

Challenges to the system are usually one of two kinds. The most usual one is to work within it, roughly as it is, and try to make it more humane. Like Labour in the UK does, some of the Democrats in the US, and equivalent parties in many countries. The weakness of this approach is that it doesn't try to change existing relationships. So, because these relationships are deeply unequal, this approach is constantly limited in what it can achieve. Worse, it is repeatedly put into retreat. Like the creeping privatisation of the Health Service in the UK.

The other main approach, is to work for a revolution, a transformation of relationships so we have a society where the mass of people, workers, have the major say. The weakness is that, far from believing in taking over and transforming society, people don't even have a clear view of how it works now and what's wrong with it. They largely accept it. For example, people have no common definition or name for the class that runs the country; and many are taken in by that class's diversion of criticism from them onto 'outsider' groups.

Before either approach can have much success we need a wide understanding of how things are and what's wrong with them. This book aims to provide it.

It's A Class Society

Most people make their living by getting jobs. So they are workers. Others make their living by running businesses. So they are business people. And that covers most people.

In jobs and politics business people dominate that large majority who are workers. Relationships in which we earn our living are the most basic social relationships. They strongly favour business people. The usual names for them as a system - *'The Economy'* - *'Capitalism'* - *'Free Markets'* - obscure their familiar everyday operation. The ***Free-market Business System*** is the term to use, or simply ***the Business System***. All over the world it is the dominant system.

In it, business people are able to dominate everyone else at work, in politics, and in society as a whole. Workers strongly criticise what's ***done*** to them in this system - hard conditions at work, job cuts, poverty, benefit cuts, public service cuts, racism, war and many other problems. But they never examine ***the system itself and the rightness, or not, of the relationships through which they are badly treated.*** People generally don't even see that they could stand back and examine and criticise them. They accept them as if they are the natural order of the world. That's why laws that obstruct workers from organising together are widely accepted even though they are, when examined, as this book does, outrageous.

This book shows just ***how*** each and every worker is weak in their relationships with business people, and how the relationships are unfair. It argues for these views to be more widely held and argued, and for workers to organise together in response to business people's organisation. It puts the personalised ***Right - Entitlement - To Organise***. That's something that has never been done before and has long needed doing.

Business people present convincing arguments for the job relationships that enable them to dominate. They argue, successfully, that they earn the right by being active and enterprising. Workers don't know, and don't present, the arguments for

alternative, fair relationships.

Rather than being written about the system as if of something 'above' us, this book starts with each worker's experience of selling themselves to business people and public bodies to get work. But before that starts on page 80, a very important fact – the situation we have, and have had for centuries, is this: business people are organised; workers are, in the main, not.

Business People Are Organised

Business people are organised each and every day - running their businesses.

In doing that, they make meaningful links, meaningful contractual relationships, they are organising with, many other people. Internally, a business usually consists of partners, shareholders, a board of Directors. Those people are organised together. They make other meaningful relationships - renting or buying *premises*: identifying *Goods or Services* that other people will buy: buying equipment and materials from *Suppliers.* In making the goods or providing the services, they make contractual relationships with ***workers – the staff.*** They have complex management structures to supervise and instruct them. In marketing and selling the products or providing the service, they make contractual relationships with ***customers***. So a business is an ***Organisation.*** Business people's organisation, their business relationships, are the foundation of their workplace power.

And, through being organised in their businesses, they are ***the Economy***. That gives them immense political power even before they actually organise politically. Because of them being the economy, even governments elected to challenge their power and wealth back off. This has been clearly seen in the financial crises of 2008 to 2010. Whatever kind of government is ***in office,*** either one that represents them or one we expect to challenge them on our behalf, business people are always ***in power*** - at work, in business, in finance, and in politics.

But they do organise politically as well. In politics they present business relationships as good for everybody, as 'individual freedom', the opportunity for everyone to 'make it' through their own efforts. The American Dream. That's plain nonsense. We're all in it together. It's a collective world. But with the false notion of individualism they convince many non-business people, many workers, to accept the free-market business system.

Business people's activity, their enterprise, does, to a degree, justify some of their power and wealth. They do take the trouble to be organised (in their own interests). But it doesn't justify their common brutality and ruthlessness, at work and in politics.

When we sell ourselves to business people and public bodies to earn our living, we usually sell ourselves simply as individuals. We don't organise with other people. We need to. Everyone knows we are weak, individually, in relation to employers. But people don't know exactly how it is so, how it is unfair, and how our own organisation and action is justified. Section 1 of this book explains all that, very clearly.

Even with the laws against us acting in our unions that obstruct us, we could be solidly organised, if we only took the trouble to be. That starts with making the effort to clearly understand why it is right for us to do so and taking every opportunity to convince each other of this. This book aims to provide the arguments, in a form that can easily be recommended by workers to each other.

The book clearly identifies business people as ***'The Business Class'***. Some workers call them 'the bosses' or 'the boss class'. But that omits how they get the power to be bosses. It's no use naming them solely by our job or worker relationship with them. They have prior, stronger relationships with *customers and suppliers* and with partners or shareholders,

running their business without us (if there's just the owner) or with us, making money for themselves or for shareholders, and making a lot of the important things happen. They take responsibility, they 'take care of business'. As said, they organise much of the economy - the provision of the goods and services everyone needs as consumers. And that's why they get all they want from governments, even those that are supposed to represent all our interests.

There's a lot more of us workers. But we're not as organised and active as business people. It needs each of us to do just a bit towards class organisation, and we could easily negotiate with them at work and in politics on a much fairer and more civilised basis.

We'd be saying, ***as the Working Class***, thoroughly organised - look - this system is yours, not ours. *You* like it uncaring and anti-social like this; we don't. We are going to regulate you with strong *Unionisation* across each *Trade* and through proper democratic government. If they'd go along with all that, which is a big political question.

Are they Stupid or Just Dishonest ?

We need to demolish their core arguments. The business class, their conservative parties, and writers who defend the free-market business system, argue that to be individualist is just how people are and must be, that it is unchangeable ***Human Nature***. And so their competitive, dog-eat-dog, uncivilised, system is the only way to run global society. They argue that aggressive self-interest, making unlimited profits, income from shares, and huge salaries, is only normal.

Yet when workers do the same and bargain hard for ourselves, they find that outrageous! Business class conservatives go all *socialist*! *Our* selfishness and greed 'ruins the country'! They insist that we should behave for the public good. But if humans are self-centred, as they claim, why shouldn't we workers be?

Many business people are alright. They just have initiative, ideas and energy and want to work for themselves, not someone else. Some of them do work harder than some of us and deserve more reward because they 'take care of business'. But ***Competition*** is a key element of their system: it can force even the well-meaning ones to treat people harshly, to be able to compete with those in their market who are not so nice.

And although some of them as individual employers can be Ok, ***as a class*** they are thoroughly nasty and vicious. In politics, they obstruct us from standing up for ourselves against their power. They resent even weak individual rights like unfair dismissal. And they pass laws against our freedom to act together in unions that prevent us organising to be more nearly equal to them. And that also obstruct us from organising independently politically.

Let's Examine 'The System'

So from all that, we should thoroughly examine our relationships with them. Yet oddly, though these relationships are so basic to each of us and to the whole of society and so full of problems, there's no clear analysis written down anywhere. People struggle to think and talk clearly about them. We've not even had the language. Workers, the majority, have long known they are badly treated but have been unable to look at and talk about how society is set up and unable to agree what's right and what's not about power at work and in politics. And because of that,

unable to agree what to *do* about it all. It is urgently necessary that the basic relationships are examined from the working person's point of view. This book does that.

It starts from every workers direct, everyday experience of that basic, necessary relationship – the one in which you ***Earn Your Living***. The great majority of people, including probably you, earn their living by getting a Job, by going to work. That is, by working for 'somebody else' and having 'a boss.' So how you, your workmates and most of us relate to business owners, public sector managers and each other, is very important to each of us personally.

Jobs and work are full of problems, aren't they? Maybe in not having a job at all. When you've got one, not being secure in it. Managers having excessive and demeaning authority over you. Low pay, long hours, stressful workloads. When you challenge these things personally or together with your workmates, you come up against business owners and manager's power and rights that are determined by the political system.

Our job relationship with them is important to each of us personally. But it's also as central to the economy as the customer and sales relationship. Our work is the source of profits, 'their' wealth, nearly all the money in the banks and the financial centres. How the economy is organised is the biggest issue in governments and politics.

Critics of capitalism usually say owning property is the source of their power. It isn't that. It's their dominance in the labour market, their power over us in the work process. It enables them to make surplus money from our work, which they buy more productive property with, and make money from us repeatedly in a constant cycle. The first main section of this book, 'How We Relate At Work', starting on page 80, isn't just about the unfairness of how they treat us as workers. It's also about how it's the source of their unacceptable power in the economy and politics.

In summary -

We Need To Catch Up With The Industrial Revolution -
Business People Are Organised. The Worker Majority Aren't.
And that's our main problem

Looking ahead to the whole book, we need to answer two key questions -

Should those who run businesses and our lives at work, particularly big business people, have the right to dominate workers?

Should the Worker majority get equal to this business class by organising together and acting together? Should we be free to?

To answer these questions, this book examines these and other key relationships -

How You Sell Yourself to Business people or the Public sector.
How You Relate to Workmates.
Our Personal and Collective Right to Associate as Workers.
Classes and How to Identify and Organise by Class

Whoever You Vote For, The Business Class Always Get In.

Class Organisation Comes Before Politics. Especially Business People's Class Organisation.

"... the ruling class** justifies the economic status quo as natural and beneficial to every social class rather than as an artificial social construct benefiting itself...

" Stuart Jeffries, Guardian, 2013.

** nobody ever says which class ***is*** the ruling class. 'Ruling class' doesn't name, or define, any actual class. First, there needs to be a class. Then we might say it is the ruling class. It was once the landowner class, now merged into the business class.

Recent UK and US Politics

The need for this book's analysis was highlighted by people's political response to the economic crisis of 2008. People voting in the next UK election blamed Labour for it and allowed the Tories into government in their place.

But the crisis didn't occur because Labour ran the economy. *It occurred because they didn't*. They had decided to allow the Conservative's class, business people, to run it. New Labour had conceded to conservative class policy, their way of running their business and banking system – 'free', under-regulated markets. The reckless pursuit of a return on capital, managed by their enterprising selves, is their mantra. Free markets in finance in particular turned out, unsurprisingly, to be a crazy way of running the key system function of re-cycling capital. So the bankers, a leading section of the business class, took the blame as well as Labour. But Labour were only doing what the business class and its party, the Tories, expected of them.

They – the business class - caused the crisis in *their* free-market business system. So it made no sense, when it failed, to allow the real Tories into government! Labour, while conceding to Tory economic policy, at least aim to look out for everybody's interests. In government, the Tories have been allowed to tackle their crisis by making the poorest, and immigrant workers, the scapegoats. It's appalling.

It is because people don't look at the basics of the system that such daft things happen. It was partly Labour's own fault, for being so willingly overwhelmed by the argument that business people operating in free markets was the only way to run the system. But everybody has to take a bit of the responsibility too, for not building a shared understanding of how the system operates and behaving more rationally. The system needs a good looking at. This book does it.

Politics Myths

People are encouraged to see voting for politicians and the political parties in occasional elections as the main way, an effective way, to look after their interests and to influence society. They are encouraged to see the one simple vote they are allowed, infrequently, unorganised, as 'democracy'. These are myths. Other related myths are that with occasional electoral debate, conducted mainly by the media, and with, between elections, much pointless expressions of opinion, we have a democratic public arena in which to discuss our common concerns.

These myths dis-empower people, in particular that majority of people who make their living by getting a job; that clear majority, including you most probably, who are workers. They have been misled by these myths over several centuries,

during crises and during 'normal' times. They are misled by them in the present crisis.

These myths obscure these fundamental issues - how the system works; who has practical power in it; how people can protect and promote their interests in it; how it goes into crisis; how to fix it; and how to stop it from going wrong.

Whoever You Vote For the Business Class Always Get In

Another myth is that governments aim to run society in everybody's interests. Another, that they actually control society. Governments are not in fact and in practice the central social authority. Business people are. They are the most organised and most powerful social force by far and they control the main activity in society – the economy.

Governments *could* run society, but they don't. They allow business people to. The Tories and their equivalents in other countries do so enthusiastically because they represent them, they are the parties of the business class. Some, like Labour in the UK, do so because they are afraid of the business class, afraid of subjecting them to public control.

So when people look to their electoral vote as their only or main way to influence things they are overlooking how 'the system' works. They are not seeing how business people dominate politicians and governments because they control the economy, that key public, political issue – production of goods and services, sales, profits, re-investment, jobs, wages, exports, growth. In their control of all that, businesses – business *people - are* 'the economy'. ***** *but see the next paragraph.* As US President Coolidge famously said - "The business of America is business". As General Motors president Wilson said – "What's good for General Motors is good for America".

** That's not conceding the conservative view that public spending is a drain on the 'real' economy. Public spending is as real as business and individual consumer spending. It's just collective spending. But business is the major part of the economy. And much of what is called public spending actually goes straight to private business.*

All the main issues, especially public spending on public services and social support, are subordinate to the state of the economy. As Bill Clinton said "It's the economy, stupid". He might have said "You might think I'm a progressive President but business people call the shots." He was elected on a platform of improving social support in America, particularly to organise its citizens to look after each other's health. It is said he was furious when told by advisers that he couldn't because of business people's opposition.

In the current financial crisis all strategies to fix the financial and economic system are limited by what business people will tolerate before they reduce, transfer or cease activity. We are constantly told what 'the markets' think of government policy. Who *are* these 'markets'? They are business people. Particularly, they are those who own the banks, who don't make any products or provide any services, but who control and direct the surplus money – capital – that drives the economy. Obama has been having great difficulty in his attempts to solve the financial crisis because of their resistance.

Conservatives talk of the economy, the economic system, as 'free markets' and 'free enterprise'. (Free, eh? Can't argue with that, can you? Well, yes, you can.) We'll find it easier to talk to each other and to assess it when we call it *the business system* or, in full, *the free-market business system*. That brings it out from economists' jargon and into our everyday language and experience. In the UK business people set up this system long before we won any mass democracy. And ever since we got the little democracy we have, they have worked, successfully, at protecting it. Ever wondered what conservatives want to conserve? It is the business system, *their* business system, free from being regulated to protect non-business people, that great majority who are workers, from its unfairness and

its brutality and instability. We do have cycles where we develop our case and strength, they are constrained, and society is run more socially, more collectively. Like in 'New Deal' 1930's America. Like from 1945 to about 1980 in the UK and USA. But they repeatedly knock us back because they have practical economic power and a firm hold on our ideas.

How *do* we challenge them then? First, by spreading this understanding that it is them who really control society, how they achieve it by being organised *outside* of the political system, independent of government:, and how they use it to define politics and direct governments. And by responding to it - to get society run in everybody's reasonable interests we need a permanent, solid class response to them in daily organisation and action at work and also in political thinking and action.

The fact that what business people want or will tolerate limits and determines what governments do is actually quite well known and there is some criticism of it. But we rarely come close to getting them seriously regulated. Why? Because we have little in the way of organised social force to challenge them with or to insist that governments challenge them. Like, those who voted for Obama in the US have no leverage between elections. Unlike business people, they're not permanently, effectively organised enough to *decide and enforce* that, if business people won't act for the social good, and, as 'the economy', threaten to reduce or transfer their activity, the state will regulate them for us.

Another reason is that instead of talking of real people, fellow-citizens we can identify who owe duties to the rest of us, we talk about their organisations - 'business', businesses, corporations, banks: and about their system - 'the economy' and 'capitalism' - as if they are entities in themselves. It all becomes clearer if we name the actual people. For example – capital ***ism*** isn't the problem. It's capital ***ists.*** Business people, the business class, those people who insist that human society be run by *their* rules and relationships, by those of *their* unregulated free-market business system.

Another reason is that business people argue effectively that they are entitled to be free from 'state interference', to be free to do what they want with '*their*' money. But their money is actually mostly gained by paying we workers less than the value of the work we do for them. That's one of several key understandings we need to spread, as part of convincing ourselves of our right to stand up to them.

Running the country and the economy means challenging business people or letting them run it. The assumption behind most of what governments do or don't do is this: we do rely upon them to run the economy: they are a well organised and confident class: so we have to give them pretty much what they want. Even governments that genuinely aim to run society for everyone's benefit make the major policy decisions – about the economy, business regulation, interest rates, taxes, public spending - limited by the view that what 'business' wants must prevail over the needs of the majority, workers.

How do they have such power and yet we don't challenge them as a clearly identified class? But look instead to governments to simply 'run the country' better, faintly influenced by our occasional vote? It's because many people, probably the majority, accept how 'the economy' is presented as a 'thing in itself'. Not, as said above, as actual people. Nor as a particular *class* of person. Not the same thing as the people who run it, those who own and run businesses. It is accepted as a *system* that

government's job is just to manage. Many or most people accept the view that governments 'run the country': and judge the political parties and vote for them according to which they think manage the system more effectively than the others. It's just a choice of management. It's as if each parties' leaders are just alternative managers. People say 'Labour has failed, let the other lot have a go'. As if it's just a question of competence. As if there's no difference in each parties' intentions.

This brings us to another major myth - that each party aims to run the country for the benefit of everyone. None of them admit to class bias or allegiance. They themselves and the media present them like that and many people believe it. They accept each parties' promise to 'run the country' and 'the economy' in everybody's interests, just doing it better than the other parties. But it's nonsense. Labour and progressive parties do aim to govern for all. But because they are not convinced of the case for challenging the business class - as most of us aren't - they largely allow them to run it. And business people think they are entitled to so much that, even with governments we expect to look after all our interests, we continue with huge inequality in power and wealth and great insecurity for working class people. Then we get disappointed with our progressive government and allow the business class back into direct government, through their conservative parties.

Conservative parties don't aim to govern for everybody at all. After all, one of their main arguments is that people should look out only for themselves in their anti-social, ruthless business system, do badly or well in it, and sink or swim accordingly. They don't actually believe in government, except for over-seeing and protecting business relationships. Conservative parties represent business people, the business class, with the support of those managers and better-off workers who do best in their system. Now and again their dumber members blurt it out – as Bush did when addressing a banquet for 'top business people' - "Some people call you the power elites. I call you my base". Look at the mass and local membership of conservative parties and their funding and it's plain to see - they *are* and they *represent* the business class. That's what they exist to do. They *are* the business class, organised politically.

They have differences between themselves, such as between small traders and big business people; and between productive business and the greedy and reckless financial section of their class. They have to resolve these differences, as currently, where they have to find ways of controlling their financial sector. Which some of them, *being* that sector, don't really want to do. But they generally manage to stick together as a class on their basic policies – freedom from regulation for themselves, severe regulation of workers right to unionise, and anti-public spending.

And yet – conservative parties present themselves to voters as if they are working for everyone's benefit: that they support the un-regulated free-market business system not because it favours them and their class but because it's the best for all. And they get away with it. Many voters accept this pose.

How do they do it? How do they get away with promoting relationships and policies that clearly favour business people over everybody else as if they are to *everyone's* benefit? The main argument is that their system provides for 'individual freedom'. For 'free enterprise'. The freedom to 'set up in business' or to 'go into business for yourself.' The freedom to trade as suits you best. Below that level, encouragement of the idea that you progress individually rather than through organisation with other workers. The catch-all is 'the freedom to do what you want with your own money'.

It's these arguments that do the important job of legitimising business people's

power and wealth. People talk of millionaires as 'self-made men or women' and see their wealth as being justified by their work, their enterprise. It's not. Some of it is, they do play significant roles as enterprise organisers and managers. But the greater amount of 'their' money and capital comes from *our* work, from charging customers more for it than they pay us in wages. That's what exploitation is and that's where profit comes from.

They also claim free enterprise produces more and better goods and services, faster growth, and jobs. That's true, to a degree. Free markets and constant competitive re-investment in products and services does do that. Many people accept that as conclusive justification of the business system. But it does it by configuring society by mass production. In that, there cannot be freedom for the great majority - they *have* to work for whichever small class of person establish themselves as the business owners. And its motor is intense, brutal exploitation of people as workers: in which whatever opportunity a few workers have for individual progress is swamped, for the majority, by horrendous oppression in their jobs, horrendous workloads, and job insecurity.

All their talk of 'free' this, 'free' that and 'free' the other sounds good and is probably their most powerful myth. But they're strongly against any freedom that doesn't benefit them, like us being free to organise together to match their power. *Because the key 'free market' isn't the much-debated one in goods and services. It is 'free' labour markets, how business people trade with workers.* 'Free', unregulated, un-organised labour markets give business people the power to oppress and exploit the individualised majority. They intimidate us and suppress us on *that* freedom, enterprise by enterprise, and by law. The unfairness and unacceptability of that is the subject of section 1 of this book.

Their talk of individual freedom is false even on their side of the economic relationship. For small traders, maybe it's valid. But we never have, never will live in the society of cheerfully independent and equal traders of the conservative free enterprise myth. Worthy individual traders don't make up and dominate the economy - banks, corporations and companies, big business *organisations*, do. Their freedom is freedom for big business people to boss us, the majority, at work, and to gain from our work the wealth that enables them to be in charge of investment and the planning and running of the economy. At which key social duty they are neither socially motivated nor competent.

They argue that with free markets society runs better for everyone – which means them making the key decisions - than with 'state interference'. But 'the state', run by governments that we elect, is what they say we have to use to get our needs met: not our own class organisation and action. And while they argue we should let them perform the key social duty of running the economy, they cheerfully admit to gross anti-social selfishness. They argue that everybody being like that and pursuing just their own interests leads to the good of all. Bit of a logical contradiction there. One that we see painfully worked out in practice. But the individual freedom argument convinces small business people, traders, people classed as self-employed, and many professional and skilled workers to accept their system and vote the business class directly into government as well as allowing them to run the economy.

The business class also point to the Stalinist regimes that once ran Eastern Europe and say 'look at what happens under Communism'. Yet although those regimes were dreadful, it's actually noteworthy that they worked as well as they did, with considerable security and decent public services for people, despite lacking the mass democracy that defines Socialism or Communism. That they functioned at all as imposed systems indicates that we could easily do Socialism properly if we were actively, democratically involved.

But the business class win these arguments and have done for a long time. They established their system several centuries ago and ever since have got most people to see it as the only way to run society, as the natural order. They argue exactly that – that it fits human nature. It doesn't - it contradicts our essential human quality of co-operation. But they get away with this anti-social nonsense and, interrupted by occasional brief upsurges of support for socially responsible government, we allow conservative, business parties to govern. Which actually means *NOT* governing, but freeing themselves as a class to run the system independent of government. That's what Republicans in the USA mean when they say the best government is the least government.

How do they achieve all this? Again, it's partly their direct economic power, from their business organisation. They dictate to any government that intends to govern for us all by transferring large amounts of money, undermining the currency and public spending, transferring business operations. Or even closing them down, simply refusing to be economically active unless they get what they want. Harold Wilson, twice Labour Prime Minister in the 1960's and 1970's, said that with 'the City' really running things, being in government was – for Labour anyway - like trying to fly a plane that is on auto-pilot. 'The City', of course, is simply the financial section of the business class.

Some wealthy members of the business class operate on their own account politically, outside of their class's conservative parties, through owning newspapers and radio and TV channels. As 'The Press' and 'The Media', they dominate the political agenda and the political thinking of the great majority of people. They pose as political neutrals by standing in judgement on all the parties and politicians. But they are not. They are independent business class political activists. In the UK, some people call them 'Tory' papers. That's not quite what they are. They are another business class organisation, formally independent of the Tories but working alongside them, and pressurising Labour and Social democratic parties.

They play a key role in convincing people that they have democratic power, as voters, through the electoral system. But the appearance of control of society that voting gives is a smokescreen for what really happens. Business people, the business class, dominate every-day society and politics and the limited democracy we have won over time is a distant mechanism for influencing it. Look at it. All we are allowed, to challenge their every-day class power with, and to wield our own class influence, is one very occasional vote. Only about fifteen times in your life, a cross scrawled on a scrap of paper with a pencil. We briefly 'unite' isolated from each other in the silent individual act of going into the local school for a minute every four years. Amorphously, in constituencies defined by the economically and politically meaningless connection of living within a few miles of each other. We're not organised in doing that, and certainly not by class. It's far from being a way of either building or exercising class power to respond to theirs. It diverts us, keeps us at bay, as much as it empowers us. As the history of Labour and Social democratic governments shows.

Even in the USA, where people have always had the vote (if white) the constitution was deliberately written to limit democracy by giving the Electoral College the power to

over-ride the popular vote in appointing the President. They haven't dared do it in recent years but they can.

Labour and Social democratic parties and governments promise to represent us all. But they don't dare challenge business people because of their power in being 'the economy'. Business people also dominate political ideas. Not just those of Labour and social democratic politicians and parties but of ***all*** of us. We, the majority, non-business people, are weak on the arguments about business people's rights and powers. We criticise the many personal and society-wide unacceptable *outcomes* of how their system operates. But that's not enough. What we need to do is criticise the social *processes* through which it's all done.

Labour's weakness just reflects our weakness as a class. It's up to us to correct that, for ourselves, between ourselves. This book tries to provide the analysis and arguments. And Labour handicap themselves and all of us by only working through the inadequately democratic electoral system. They restrict themselves to seeking support and political power only through that occasional amorphous, non-organised, non-class, pencil cross on a piece of paper. In between elections, they restrict themselves to a lot of hot air on an agenda set by the business class and conducted largely in the business owned media. These media are useless as forums for class debate and building class awareness and self-belief.

Seeking support only in the vague, disconnected electoral system, Labour has to appeal to people as they are - mesmerised and misled by the business class views constantly projected at people by their 'news' papers: unorganised, unable to have proper in-class independent debate. Seeking support for progressive politics in this conservative-dominated forum, they are unable and unwilling to put forward the arguments against business people's excess power. They disagree internally over whether to do so or not, and generally don't dare to. So much so that many people can't see any difference between them and conservative parties. Labour are not an everyday campaigning party, they don't try to educate and change people's ideas. They just go round putting leaflets through doors on the few occasions when there's an election. It's is no way to challenge the daily bombardment of anti-progressive politics that people are subjected to. In the weak forum they restrict themselves to, they concede not only the general argument on free markets but far more importantly, the argument on 'free' markets in *labour*. Shamefully, they refuse to support our organisation and action as organised workers. (As of 2016, this writer is a member and arguing for the party to change on these issues).

So Labour parties, Social Democratic parties and the US Democratic party manoeuvre to find progressive policies that straddle enough of the existing business-dominated views to get elected. Sometimes they achieve it. But then, they let business people actually run things, under-regulated, and because of the myth that governments run the system they get blamed when business people mess it up! That's what happened to Blair and Brown's 'New Labour' government. Voters then allowed the business class's own parties back in to govern! Without – in 2010 - them even winning an election!

The business class are highly organised, daily, in their business activities, while we are not. Just look around you. And from that organisation and from owning 'the Press', they dominate political debate. They win the political argument about 'free markets', about public spending being somehow a problem, and, crucially, about our

organisation in unions being somehow wrong and therefore justifiably restricted by law.

For most people being a voter, simply observing what governments do and very occasionally casting a vote, is the only form of social organisation they see themselves participating in. But to stand up to business people, those who are workers need a level of permanent, everyday organisation that corresponds to theirs, to wield corresponding power in political ideas and action. Business people's workplace power is obvious and the unacceptability of it, and that of public employing organisations, is spelled out in section 1 of this book. People need to match their workplace organisation daily with wide union organisation and the preparedness to use it, to wield, like business people do, practical economic power. For that, the case for our own workplace organisation and action in defence of our interests needs to be made and is made in this book.

From wide, strong everyday economic organisation workers can build, as business people have done on their side, the political beliefs and political organisation with which to challenge them. Through the connections we make with each other as organised workers, we build political ideas and unity. For instance, by convincing some of us not to vote (or not bother voting) in such a way that allows business parties into government. To convince each other that although Labour parties let us down, we know why, and whatever the failings, it's better than being deliberately attacked by the conservative parties. That what we need to do with Labour is to organise and educate each other so they get enough votes for pro-worker policies, convince them to implement them, and act ourselves if they don't. Like the business class does. Or support and build viable parties unafraid to represent the working class majority.

We note the madness of how the business class run the system at the broad level - we see the failings of 'capitalism'. But we have to challenge what lets them get away with their failings, their key defence, what protects them from being held to account and being regulated – the core, basic, everyday relationships, their justification of their business rights as 'free enterprise', which gives *them* the right to organise unregulated, alongside suppression of *our* right to organise.

For more on the three main British parties go to page 279:

'The Parties - They're All The Same - And They're Not'

What About Real Socialism?

Some on our side might call the arguments made here for workplace organisation 'Syndicalism', a naive view that ignores the political level. They argue that if we do all this, get the level of organisation and activity argued for here, the business class will not have it, will not accept us as equals in the economy and politics. They will act against union organisation, raise even higher their promotion of class-obscuring politics, of racism and nationalism, and even ditch democracy and resort to fascism. They've sometimes done that when worker majorities have challenged them, such as in Italy in 1922, Germany in 1933, Spain in 1936, Chile in 1974. (Note that workers have also sometimes stopped them doing that, in France in 1936, Portugal 1975.) But the argument goes that when they react like that we'll have to go the whole way and, by revolution, transform this into a socialist society.

But although this work argues strongly for workplace organisation, it clearly argues for it not to the exclusion of politics but as base for political strength. It argues that workplace organisation, organisation as workers, is an absolute pre-condition for tackling the system politically as well as at work.

In addition, it argues that we'll never be equipped to transform the system to

socialism anyway, when we haven't even got the arguments against the business system and for our right to organise within it ***as it is*** clearly made and widely held. That is why they always knock us back whenever we make progress, because so many workers are convinced by their arguments. That has been demonstrated numerous times, classically like when people voted for (or, by voting for the SDP or not voting at all) allowed the Thatcher-led Tories into government in 1979. And let them in again in 2010.

By spreading the arguments in this book widely and by organising widely, they'd have to concede to us being their equals and agree to society being run more fairly. And competently.

But if they won't, then with these arguments we'd be in a state as a class to make them, and to prevent them from resorting to fascism. And maybe, for the more ambitious amongst us, transform our society into one in which we inter-act with each other in socialist relationships. And we could do that peacefully, as we'll be stronger than the business class, having conclusively refuted their arguments for their system.

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(***The Right To Unionise 1 here to page 120)***

How We Relate At Work - They've Got All The Rest – The Need To Be Organised - The Entitlement To Be

Making Your Living is the one essential thing everybody has to do. So how you relate to others in doing that is everyone's most basic relationship. Most people do it by getting a job - ***by selling themselves to somebody***. Our biggest shared problem is how we do it. We are treated badly in our jobs, and we complain about it. But we don't understand job relationships and we don't talk to each other about them.

Our jobs are ***trading relationships*** we have with ***employers***. In them, we are, supposedly, their equals. Employment contract law sees you and them ***each as equal individuals freely making a deal with the other,*** much like when buying or selling ***things*** from each other, where neither one is the boss.

Yet we call employers ***bosses.*** That's because we aren't equal to them, as you know. So why *is* that? To answer that, we need to have a good look at what happens when ***you sell yourself as a worker***. Understanding it explains problems at work and inequality, wealth, power and politics. And it explains why workers should organise with fellow-workers. *You* need to help get this across to everyone who sells themselves to get work. That's most people.

Your Main Problem, Selling Yourself As A Worker, Is –

They've Got A Lot Of Other Staff

The main thing to understand is that when you sell yourself as a worker you are weak because the employer has plenty of you. Sell yourself to an employer who has 100 other workers and you are 100 times weaker than them. Someone who sells themselves to an employer who has 1000 workers is 1000 times weaker than them. This is a big political point. It's not right for people to have to earn their living in such a weak relationship. It's the case for their union rights.

To explain it fully, let's look at how people sell and buy *things*. And then examine how we sell *ourselves* to employers in getting work, and how they buy us.

How You Sell Things ....

You probably sell things now and again. You don't need whatever it is anymore; the buyer hasn't got one and wants or needs it. Selling the item is probably not a big issue in your life, nor buying it in theirs. In most relationships where we sell or buy *Seller* and *Buyer* are pretty much equal parties in the deal. Neither is the other's *boss.*

It's different when the buyer already has many of what you are selling. Then the ***seller*** needs the deal more than the ***buyer.*** People might say, oh this is a buyer's market - it's well known. But people need to see how it works when workers sell themselves in unregulated, unorganised, so-called 'free' labour markets. We need to see how, while a buyer's market might be ok for selling or buying goods, it's absolutely not when it concerns people making their living.

Here's a widely known example in the UK -

Marks and Spencer is a chain store that encourages or even insists on the companies who supply the clothes and food they sell in their stores to make them only for M&S. *The suppliers then have, or sell to, only one customer.*

But Marks' themselves don't usually buy only from one supplier. *They have several suppliers for each item they sell.* And each of *them* is encouraged to work only or mainly for M&S.

So when contracts are made and renewed, Marks' can drive a hard bargain on price, quality, and delivery. Because if they don't get the deal they want they can do without that supplier and manage with what they get from the other suppliers. Each of them can supply more goods to make up for what the one supplier did.

But each of those suppliers, in negotiating the contract with M&S, faces losing the one customer they sell to, all of their business. They have to meet the buyer's demands or face going out of business. There've been firms in the news in big trouble from losing their Marks and Spencer contract. In some ways the contract with Marks may be good for each supplier or seller. But as sellers, that's their only or main customer, while M&S have other suppliers.

Union reps from companies who supply Marks have confirmed this practice to this writer. So has a colleague who was once a manager at a company that supplied them with fabrics.

Here's another example. Yours truly once worked in a big GEC electrical engineering factory. My job was getting parts together for electric train switchgear, some of it from outside suppliers. We needed some wooden fuseboxes quickly to be able to finish and ship some switchgear to London Underground. (You might have used them!) GEC once had a works carpenter then made him redundant. He now did exactly the same work as a one-

man business. I said to my manager,

'Alan, d'you think Fred'll make these fuseboxes quickly for us?'
Alan said "He better had. We're his only customer". He did.

Now a last, personal example. This writer has one ordinary motor-bike and another of a radical re-design. There's only a small group interested in them. One was emigrating and had to sell his but he didn't have many potential customers to ask to buy it. I was one. He was asking for £1000. It was a reasonable price for the machine's use value. But how much someone will pay for it, its market or exchange value, can be different, according to how much another person needs it.

I had the standard bike and one of these already. I didn't need *another*. So I said 'Sorry, no'. He urged me to "make an offer then". I said 'Oh, alright, go on - £200.' He was offended - "It's worth more than that". But not to me, because I already had one. He had few customers and this one, me, already had plenty of what he was trying to sell.

Economists know about this. They call it ***marginal utility*** - when businesses buy materials or equipment, the more they have of something, the less needed each extra one is.

In general, businesses have many customers, and suppliers, and losing a few doesn't matter much. But the fewer they have, the more they have to please them. In the UK there are only a few supermarkets, so big that farmers haven't many other customers. There was a whole TV programme about how a lettuce-farmer was being driven out of business because one of the big supermarkets was demanding such a low price that he couldn't make it pay. And *they* don't think it's fair.

How You Sell Yourself .....

To understand what your employer can do to you, and what you can and can't do at work, as just one employee, ***see yourself as a one-person business supplying only your labour.*** That's how employment contract law treats you – as a business that sells labour to a customer business.

Most businesses or public services have many people doing the same job, many other workers supplying the same or similar labour. That's because the efficiency of mass production in industrial society means most jobs are in large workforces. When you apply for a job the employer must have work for you from which they can make money or provide a public service or else they wouldn't be offering the job. But in most cases you and that work is only a fraction of their whole operation. ***They've got many other suppliers, your workmates,*** who sell to them just what you do.

So you can't argue strongly with them over your price in wages and other conditions. Because if your relationship with them breaks down you have to find another job – that is, to re-start your whole business, which is selling your labour, from nothing. That's a big consequence for you. That's why you do as you're told by somebody who is supposedly, in law, your equal. That's why you let them be 'the boss'. It's because, to state it again...

... when you go for a job you sell *all* your labour to just *one* customer who has many other suppliers – the existing staff. Their need to buy you is far less than your need to sell yourself to them.

When You Get A Job

That's why, if being interviewed for a job, they don't like you, they can turn you and others down and even try again, re-advertise, because the rest of the staff can keep the place going without just one person extra. And if you don't like the pay and conditions they offer, the hours, holidays, pensions, workload, safety or whatever, and try to negotiate like any normal, equal supplier of goods and services would, they'll simply tell you to take it or leave it, won't they?

While You Work In a Job

While you are in a job, if you want to improve your pay and conditions, they'll say 'You know where the door is if you don't like it'. They can do that as arrogantly as they do because they've still got the others working.

When You Pack A Job In or They Fire You

If you leave, their operation can function without you while those others carry on working. They'll be short of one worker, who was useful, but they can cover that with overtime for the others or a bit of a delay in production. They'll just do the priority work and leave the rest until later, until the next powerless worker comes along and accepts the terms they offer in this unequal bargain. It's the same if they fire you. They can do that easily if they've still got the rest of their labour supply.

We are strangely blind to this. Workers usually say they are weak because employers can easily get someone from the unemployed to replace them. ***But that's a minor part of what's going on and is looking in the wrong direction.*** The unemployed worker isn't your problem. ***Your problem is all the others who work for them***. If not organised together they, me and you allow employers to easily do without any particular one of us. You *or* the unemployed worker is a small loss or gain to your employer, of the workforce they need.

They've Got A Lot Of Other Staff

As said, economists know that the more a business has of something, the less necessary each extra one is. They are usually talking about buying materials or equipment but it applies to the far more important matter of buying labour. You and I as workers have only marginal utility for our employers.

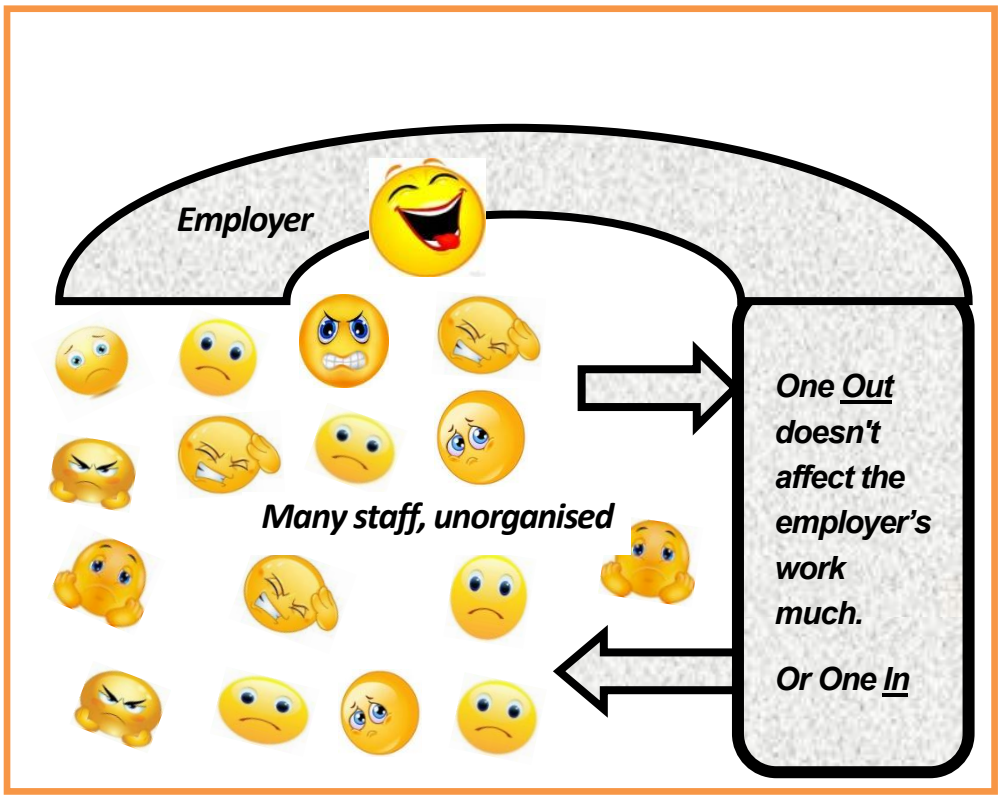
Apply it to your own job –

What percent of their labour supply, their workforce, are you?

When this writer did it, he was just *0.3* per cent. In a dispute between me and them, they could do without me for that small cost in lost output. What percent of their labour supply does your employer lose without you? And what percentage of ***your*** business, selling your labour, is your job? If you turn down a job because you don't like the pay and conditions, if you walk out of one, if you get fired, what do you lose? If it's a full-time job, you lose *all* your business. Next, an attempt to show it graphically .....

The Personal Case for the Right To Unionise -
Weak As A Worker Because Employers Have Lots Of Others

Non-Union 'Free' Labour Markets Mean Individuals Can't Bargain Fairly At Work Because Employers With Many Staff Don't Need Any One Of Them Much



That's what owners and managers are playing on when they say 'There's the door if you don't like it'. Look at it from their position. While you've still got plenty of workers still getting most of the work done, why take much notice of any one of them that wants a better deal? Most of our work relationships are determined under this unequal balance of power and that's why how you are treated is not usually fair and reasonable.

Look at the chart from the point of view of an owner or manager. Then look at it from the point of view of a worker, either starting a job, in a job, thinking of leaving because of how they are treated, or being sacked. Can you see how it makes a ***personal*** entitlement to organise, not an entitlement for 'the unions'?

You and I have only marginal utility for our employers. That's a bad position to be in. Those who defend employers say 'if you don't like it go somewhere else'. But because we live in industrial societies with large workforces, you face the same unfair deal in most jobs.

The job deal in our industrial societies is a very unequal, unfair social transaction. In a decent society, such an important deal, the one where you make a living, shouldn't be. On a political scale, it's no way to run a country for citizens to be in this weak position when doing that most vital thing - trying to get what they need, to get the means to live a decent life.

It establishes a personal right to unionise. Not a right for 'the unions' but for each person's right to organise with their workmates so employers can't treat any of them as badly as they can when they have the advantage of having many of them to do the work.

Of course *you* might not be a worker in this unfair relationship. But you probably are, because that's how about seventy per cent of us make our living. And even if you are not, if you are a business person, some of your family, friends and community must be workers, for other business's or public services. And they most likely suffer from employer's excessive power.

They've Got A Lot Of Others is why employers can treat workers harshly.

It is the main cause of our problems.

The Small Business Case

The more staff an employer has, the more *A Lot Of Others* enables them to boss each of them. So is it less effective for small employers? Each worker is a bigger proportion of their workforce. Isn't their labour more important because more of their business depends on them? Doesn't the worker have more power?

Maybe. But the small employer still has more labour suppliers than just you. If, say, there are four others, if they don't take you on when you go for a job, or if you leave, or they decide to sack you, the employer is 20 per cent short of the workforce they need But you still lose *100 per cent* of your business if you don't get the job, or if you lose it.

The small employer has another advantage. If they can use extra labour, like you or your workmates, it's because the business first of all provided and still does provide enough work for themselves to keep them fed and housed. The business expanded so there's more work than they can do. They can make extra profit from it and they need you for that. But they might have originally started the business with just themselves. If needed, if you threaten to leave, or they want to fire you, they can probably go back to running the operation at a reduced level. They can come out of the office and put on overalls again, or get on your workstation, and do your work. They can do the priority work themselves until they replace you. You're useful to them but you're not as essential to *them* as your job is to *you*.

'Many Others' Even Gets People Like Law, Beckham and Ferdinand

Can't workers with specialist skills bargain more effectively than most of us can under *A Lot Of?* Yes, the rarer your skills the better deal you can get. In extreme cases like top footballers they can get millions of pounds a year. But only a few workers can do that because ours is an industrialised society. That means most jobs need only widely-available average skills. Most of us are just one more standard issue shelf-filler/assembly line worker/teacher/driver/ check-out worker. The usual case is that business owners and public employers can easily get plenty of you or me.

And even for those with rare skills the employer still usually has more power. Take the top-class footballers. They're hardly exploited. But they still illustrate the problem of selling yourself to an organisation that has plenty more of what you supply.

This is going back a bit but I'll bring it up to date. In the 1960's Denis Law threatened to leave Manchester United unless he got more money. Denis was absolutely top-drawer - United's top goal-scorer, European Footballer of the Year, played and scored for a world team that played England. But United's manager Matt Busby publicly turned him down in a major stand-off and offered him for sale to other clubs. He said 'No-one is bigger than the club'.

That sounds good. But Busby was just using the power most employers have through the *They've Got All the Rest* mechanism. Even though Busby was probably Law's biggest fan - though that might have been me - what he was really saying was 'Good as Law is, I can still put out a team of top-class players without him. I've got plenty of footballers. I can do without any *one* of them'.

You might say all that's changed since players got freedom of contract and the top players do have more bargaining power than the rest of us. It's because they have rare skills in an un-mechanisable job (though some managers try to mechanise it.) Excellence is more important than in the mass production jobs most people work in. Even so, *They've Got All The Rest* still works for the employer. David Beckham was sold by Manchester United because he thought he was bigger than the club.

And in 2005 United's manager Alex Ferguson said about Rio Ferdinand, one of their top players, refusing to sign a new contract because he wanted more money "I'm not too bothered, we've got a good squad of players here. We can handle what we have to do. It's up to him". That's Ferguson also saying "United have Plenty of You, Rio". Rio signed.

Any United-hating fellow-workers reading this, don't let the United examples put you off. You could probably find examples from your own club. Anyway, all that football rivalry and hatred between working class people is strongly criticised in the third section of this work, *False Identities or It's Not Where You're From; It's Where You're At.*

You do get some 'good' employers. But ***Competition*** in the 'free' markets of their business system limits how well each can treat us. Rivals in the same trade who treat their staff worse will have lower costs and can undercut your employer's prices. So to stay in business employers often *have* to treat you as crap as 'the competition.'

That undermines the 'model employer' approach of Robert Owen in the 19th century, and the worker's cCo-operatives strategy. It's why we have to have ***Trade*** unions, not just ***Company*** unions. It's why we have the right to picket other workplaces than our own, to take *'secondary action',* when we are on strike. Because we need to persuade more than just fellow-workers in 'our' company not to undercut each other. We need to persuade workers in other companies in the same trade not to as well. We need them to work for not less than ***union conditions***. And they need us to.

To counter employers running rings round us, as they do with globalisation, we actually need that ***world-wide***. That's a big organising job we need to do. You can help by getting this book widely read by workers, globally.

Competition, its benefits, but also the great damage it causes to our lives, and

how to resist, is examined from page 135 to 150.

We Never Decided This In Any Way

Business people claim they deserve the power they have over us, and their wealth, because they invest money and they risk losing it. They also claim it's justified because they are more able and enterprising than the rest of us and they work harder.

Sometimes, some of them work harder, and some may be more able, more talented. And people who take risks and work harder deserve some reward for that. But most of the power and wealth business owners get isn't a reasonable, socially approved and socially-decided reward for working harder and *taking more care of business* than the rest of us.

No - it clearly and conclusively comes from that unseen, un-agreed power they get in jobs through you and me and her and him selling ourselves to them as our o*ne customer who has plenty of other suppliers*. They get power from the inequality of *They've Got Many Other Staff*.

Business class people and their conservative parties might still claim that the power *A Lot Of* gives them over us is fair and reasonable because they create jobs for us with their enterprise and hard work. And if that gets them to where they can play the 'take it or leave it' power game when employing us and exploit our work, why not?

This is why not - we, humanity as a species, have found that mass production is a more efficient way to make things and provide each other with services than pre-industrial feudal and small producer economic systems. We're not going back to small-scale production, everyone being a small trader. But the inevitable large-scale nature of mass production, with large organisations, large workforces, *has* to mean the great majority of the population work in large numbers for a relatively few business owners.

Because of how modern industrialised production <u>has</u> to be organised, with existing relationships employers having A Lot Of dominates invisibly. But we don't <u>have</u> to have such relationships, nor an economy, where most work for a minority under the unfairly-gained control of a minority.

When, like workers, business people have just a few customers or only one, they too complain that the relationship becomes too unequal.

It makes no difference which people are the bosses: whether from inherited class position or whether they are 'self-made' people who 'made it'. However they get there, 'MO' gives them more power over the working class majority than they earn. It's far too much power for a minority to have over the majority of the people in that important activity - Making A Living.

To sum up this important argument - the *A Lot Of Others* mechanism is unfair and has never been chosen or endorsed in political debate and democratic decision-making. We all earn our living working together, collectively, in one integrated, mutually dependent British and world economy. In that most important of across-society relationships it's not acceptable for business people to treat the mass of the population, their fellow-countrymen, as 'a marginal utility'. By making most people very weak in the crucial business of *Making A Living,* it's probably the most unacceptable feature of our 'society'.

It affects many things outside work as well as inside. The social inequality that causes so many social problems comes from the rich having this unfair power and wealth. It's the cause of poverty, family breakdown, anti-social behaviour and many more social ills.

We shouldn't allow this minority to have such bullying power over us, we who are the great majority. We should challenge it. Mainly by organising ourselves together, all of us, in our unions. And by demanding the removal of laws in the UK and many other countries that take away our freedom to organise and act.

Can They Do That ?

Not unionised?

Your Employment Contract, Management Power, Unfair Dismissal Tribunals

That's shown how *A Lot Of* operates for business people against workers when you *go for a job,* when *in a job* and you want to improve your conditions, and when they want to *fire* you.

There's the problem of business owners and their managers everyday authority over you. They're always telling you what to do, aren't they? Often it's something you shouldn't have to do - something not part of your job. That raises a question you'll recognise. It's **"*Can They Do That*?"** It's a big, big workplace question for us. I'm going to work through it and the answer will be, again, "Yes, if you allow the *LOT OF OTHER*S mechanism to operate; but no if you organise and act together."

Actually, it's much easier to see how things work if, instead of *"Can They Do That?"* you say ***"They're going to. How Can We Stop Them?***". Because when they decide to tell you to do something and you refuse, they do have the simple power to tell you that you are fired, stop your wages, and bar you from their premises.

That's why the question is really ***"What can we do to stop them?"***

Take a common example of *Can They Do That* - 'Can they tell me I've got to work late?' A young lass training as a salon assistant in a hairdressers once asked me if she had to, past her normal finishing time, without notice, as her manager had made her do, when she had things of her own to do, like get home, and go out with her friends. At the other end of the scale in workplace disputes, the same issue provoked the great Liverpool Dock Strike of the mid-90's.

It's often a problem -

> Well I went to the boss, said I got a hot date.
> The boss said 'No dice son, you gotta work late'.
> Sometimes I wonder what am I gonna do?
> Coz there ain't no cure for the Summertime Blues
>
> *The late Eddie Cochrane, the Summertime Blues.*

But there is a cure, Eddie ... organise with your workmates.

So... can your manager make you work late, just as one example of things they make you do that maybe you shouldn't have to? Well usually, No. They can't. Supposedly. Unless it says so in your written contract or it's customary and accepted by you, they can't. Your manager can ask; but you can simply say No.

Turn it round. If you ask *them* for more pay you don't expect to get it from them just like that. You and they know there'll be no such *change in your contract* without negotiations and without them agreeing. So just the same, if you, a supposed equal party to the employment contract you made with them, don't agree to a change in your contract if working late means that, you can just go home at the usual time. Should be no problem.

But it feels dodgy to do that doesn't it? Here is this writer's sharpest and funniest experience of this sort of problem.

Yours truly was working as a fitter on lorries in Trafford Park, Manchester, in 1970. Late one afternoon, only half-an-hour before finishing time, the foreman came up to me and Dave and told us to repaint a cab right away as the sales manager had sold it and the buyer was coming to pick it up first thing in the morning. He just told us to do it and walked away - he'd not opened up any discussions, given as a chance to say whether or not we could stay late. He just expected us to work late until it was done - it wasn't a half-an-hour job; (though the way we did it, it almost was.) 'The customer is coming in the morning.' That's a 'must do' thing, isn't it? Dave and me felt we weren't being asked - we were being told. We had to do it. We felt like we shouldn't have to, but felt also that if we didn't we might get sacked. I was going to see United in a big match at 7.30. We grumbled to each other and got on with it as quickly as we could. Finished it about 6.45 and got to the match by going straight there instead of going home, it was only a few hundred yards away.

Can't remember the match now but can still remember getting in the next morning. Dave said 'Eh, Grizzly (my nickname) you'd better come and look at this'. My face was a picture apparently, and so was the cab. It was lovely - the powder blue gloss paint had slid off in great drips like a frozen waterfall. Why? Well, me having been determined to go to United and would never would have made it if we'd washed the thing down and allowed it to dry before painting it, we hadn't cleaned it. We'd just slapped the paint on resentfully, on top of road grime and diesel deposits. We'd painted the film of greasy dirt not the cab, so it just slid downwards while drying. We weren't painters anyway, we were fitters.

The sales manager's face was a picture too. He looked like Gene Wilder in 'Blazing Saddles' but he wasn't actually as genial. And his name was Mr Wilde and he was, a bit; but basically managed to keep calm. He just postponed the buyer's collection until we cleaned the thing off and did it properly.

For fear of being fired we'd not refused to do the job, but had done it resentfully, badly. We could have got sacked for that too. But we put up the defence that we'd had a go at it within the time pressure they'd put us under. But the night before, we'd felt we couldn't refuse to stay late. Yet it wasn't that urgent, it turned out. They had just presumed they could impose their priorities over ours, even though they had no real right to.

So why hadn't the young salon assistant, and me and Dave, just refused to work late? And why did the managers think they could just *tell us* to stay late, completely ignoring our needs and arrangements? Why didn't they at least ask us if we had anything on that evening, if it was convenient, and try to negotiate? Surely, for us, it was straightforwardly outside the *Terms of our Contract* to make us stay late - we could just have clocked off as usual? Unless we felt like doing them a favour. Which we didn't. The same applies to anything else they ask you to do that's outside the limits of your job.

In our gut instincts we know they can get back at us. And the reason is because the hairdresser/manager could sack the salon assistant because she had other salon assistants, and enough work to keep her own money coming in, and could cover the shampooing herself, if necessary. And where me and Dave worked, with a dozen more fitters they could easily sack us even if it wasn't right. They had *Plenty of Us*.

Sacking You

But how? If it's not right to sack us for not working late, why were we worried? We'd just worked to our contract and no more. Don't let your eyes glaze over as we have to look at ***employment law!*** It's easy enough. It's going to made clear. *'The law' is only what some*

people – politicians and judges – have laid down about what people can and can't do to each other. And what happens if they do different. In particular situations politicians and judges have said someone can or can't do something, or else there (might be) a penalty. If you find employment contract law doesn't work how you think it should, that's because the politicians and judges are under much more influence from the well-organised business class than they are from you and me, the poorly-organised working class.

The way it works - from being offered and starting a job you've always got ***Contract Law***. If nothing was agreed or is customary about working late you don't have to. It would have been *'wrongful'* to sack me and Dave on the spot when we hadn't done anything except worked to our contract. It would be *Wrongful Dismissal,* a breach of contract, by them.

Now here's why they *can* sack you for it. You'd think you could get an *injunction* stopping them doing it, a judge's court order stopping someone doing something illegal. But judges generally don't grant them to sacked workers. Employers are allowed to sack you instantly, to exercise the practical power of barring you from the workplace and stopping paying you. You are expected to go to the trouble and expense of starting a court case and wait until the courts get round to hearing your case. And if you win in court they still won't order your employer to give you your job back.

The reason why, and why they won't give an injunction stopping them sacking you in the first place, actually makes sense. *It's because as long as they give you your Notice your boss can sack you for any reason or not even state a reason*. So if they did sack you on the spot, wrongfully, without your due notice, whatever yours is, the court can later make them pay you some money in compensation. It's normally just the pay for what your notice period should have been. You get your notice paid up. So even if it's wrongful, they can easily just sack you and eventually pay up your notice. Or they could just pay it to you as they sack you and you'd have no case to go to court with.

We'll get to *Unfair Dismissal* shortly.

Is it fair and reasonable that as long as they give you your notice they can sack you for no reason? Well, it works the same for you when *you* want to leave a job. You can do the same - *you* only have to give them your notice, with no reason needed. So since it's the same for you as for them, that's alright, surely?

Well no. Because of having *many other staff*. When they fire us or we leave a job they're usually only losing one of something they've got plenty of. Someone with rare skills may be a significant loss to them and might get sued if they go without working their notice. For most of us leaving the job is not much of a problem for an employer because -

While it is just one of us, it doesn't affect ***production****.*

But if *they* want one *us* to leave, to sack us, for us it is a problem.

A whopping great problem. *We lose all our business.*

So with ***Having All The Rest*** they can easily get rid of any one of us just by giving us notice or by paying our notice up. If they're prepared to go as far as that, contract law that treats each of us *on our own* as if we're equal traders with our employers, is useless. With *MO*, the notion of us being equal before the law is nonsense. It leaves us very unequal in a relationship of the greatest importance in our lives, *bargaining*

with our employers over the terms on which we *Make Our Living. It's the biggest problem we've got, all of us, all over the world.*

Nobody Knows This

Yet workers don't seem to know about it – the relationship where -

I've just one customer, they've got lots of other suppliers -

The A Lot Of relationship you have with your employer.

Think about which other people you can tell about it.

Practice describing it. Urge people to read this book.

Did you work out what proportion you are of your employer's staff? What percent of their workforce they'd be short of if you turn down their offer of a job? How much they'd lose if you left the job? What they'd lose by sacking you? How much of your household income you would lose? The figures are going to be very much in their favour.

This is a big political issue, probably the biggest. It's an unintended consequence of mass production and *Industrial* society. We shouldn't allow power and wealth to be decided by the overpowering, unseen, unfair, unapproved, mechanism of *They've Got Many Others.*

As said, their usual justification for their power and wealth is that they invested money, took the risk of losing it, took the responsibility for running a business. And so they claim they deserve everything they get. Sure, they deserve *appropriate* rewards for what they do and the risk they take with money. How much they get could be decided by a fair mechanism, decided by all of us through the political system, of how much incentive they need to be as enterprising as we need them to be.

We could use Job Evaluation. It's firmly embedded in UK and European law, notably through the Equal Pay regulations. It is used across the Civil Service, including the top civil servants who run the country, and in the NHS. How much business people should get is looked into more thoroughly in the section *The Wealthy or Are They Worth the Expense?, page 327.*

In summary, we could do with getting every worker to :

- see how *They've Got All The Rest* works.
- see how it is unfair and unacceptable.
- agree that business people's bargaining power and the wealth they get from our work must be decided in an equal relationship.

We could do with workers agreeing :

- that universal union membership and independent union action is socially and politically right.
- that if we organise ourselves to get closer to being equal to them, as the law daftly assumes we already are, and to act together, there's nothing wrong with that.

We could do with it being clearly understood in public debate that :

- there's nothing wrong with *unions.*
- there's nothing wrong with *striking.*

Can you do something to convince some other workers of all that?

Use this book. That's what it's for. Use the emoji diagram.

Business people could argue that they don't only treat workers harshly in their system of *'free' trade* and *'free' markets*. They trade with each other pretty harshly on price and quality and withdraw their custom when they don't get what they want.

But that doesn't matter so much to businesses. Most have lots of customers and are

not much damaged by losing one or two at a time out of hundreds or thousands. It's not instantly ruinous like it is to workers. We all have experience, and tell each other as customers, ***consumers,*** of bad service and faulty goods from electricity and gas companies, internet service providers, washing machines, car makers, and so on. And we read the complaints of other consumers, people writing in to the consumer complaints pages in the papers, on internet sites.

Yet those companies - British Gas, NTL, BT, and others – still have lots of customers. If they are providing bad enough service and lose custom they get plenty of warning, as they lose them one by one over a long period.

By the way modern, mass production has to work, millions of us, the majority of the population, workers, can only live by selling all of ourselves to business people or government departments who've Got Plenty. It's too harsh for such a basic need to work in this way.

These relationships are the biggest political issue. How they work is the reason why 'anti-union' laws are brutally unfair. They are not truly anti-*union* laws. They are *anti-you-and-me-as-workers* laws.

Can They Do That - Unfair Dismissal

Now briefly back to the everyday problem in your job - *Can They Do That?* You, and all of us, have no protection from managers breaching your contract by making you do something outside your conditions of employment. If you won't do what they say they just have to give you your notice, or pay it up if a court eventually rules in your favour. It will usually cost you far more than that in advance to even fight a court case. It costs them a few weeks of our pay. It's not much of a deterrent to them. Because *They've Got Many Others* it only affects their business a bit.

There is an extra legal right in the UK, extra to your contract rights. After a year (at the time of writing) sacking you is ***Unfair Dismissal*** unless for a good reason. The main 'fair' reasons are – you've behaved badly, or you're not capable, or you are redundant, or they claim the business is a dire state and they want to cut your pay or conditions and you won't accept it.

Sacking you for just working to contract isn't one of these. So it would be *unfair*. But if despite that, they do sack you, all that happens is they have to pay you more compensation than your notice period. They can't be forced to have you back. Well below one per cent of people do get their jobs back. They often sack people knowing it's unfair and just take a chance on how much compensation they'll have to pay. It doesn't usually amount to more than a few months wages. Paying that out to just one worker, it's a bit of a deterrent to them, but not a huge one. *If All The Others are still working, their business still isn't much affected. But yours is.*

And of course they can sack you, really for not working late, by finding fault with something else about your work. There's things they could have a go at anyone about but don't, until they see a reason to. In the popular expression they can 'pick on someone'.

And *Unfair Dismissal law* is no use where they pick on someone. Managers can sack someone and employment tribunals judge it to actually be fair, for doing something loads of other people *also* did.

As a union rep I've argued ***comparability*** as a defence for someone, saying 'You're not having a go at others for this, why are you having a go at this person?' and I've heard other union reps argue it. But managers can just insist on dealing with the

evidence and the case in front of them. And you can hardly start arguing that your other members are doing things they too could be dismissed for.

There's no mechanism in *unfair dismissal* law for this argument of comparability. But it's the essence of natural *Fairness* to argue - 'Why are you having a go at this person about this, everybody does it?' *You won't get comparability in law. But you will get it from fellow-workers. If you're all organised.*

People make a whopping big mistake about employment rights when they reduce them to argument based on the law. Employers are eager to say '*it's legal',* under *Contract* or *Unfair Dismissal* law, to sack someone or to impose something on them. People go 'Oh, well, it's legal…' But that only means this - that the rights or protection concerned are reduced to what we've got from the remote, business-friendly arenas of Parliament and the Courts.

Through our own organisation, in unions, we give each other much better rights. *We decide among ourselves* what's fair and what's not and enforce it **through *Collective Action (acting together),*** to far higher standards than the law gives. And it's legal to do that, even though laws against our union freedoms put obstacles in our way.

An example - a company was going to sack a worker because they'd found an electrical extension lead in his locker. They said he was stealing it. He wouldn't have stood much chance of winning an unfair dismissal claim at an employment tribunal. Even if he did, he'd only get a few thousand pound compensation – they rarely award you your job back. His workmates, strongly organised, believed his claim that he was only borrowing the lead for a bit of DIY work at home and was going to bring it back. Managers do this sort of thing all the time - use company gear at home, massage their expenses and so on. Even if he was stealing it, if it was only a one-off, not part of a systematic fiddle, did he really deserve to lose his job for it? His workmates started to ballot for industrial action and the company backed off. Organised, we set our own standards.

One More Time

A re-cap - ***They've Got All The Rest*** explains why we feel oppressed at work. Most of us have just the one, full-time job as their main income. In a 'free market' business economy, it's *your* business. You sell all your labour to just one customer. To possibly lose your only customer - as M&S suppliers, Fred, the hairdressing salon assistant, and myself and Dave, and probably yourself, have found, is a big problem. You put up with all that you do from employers because you're scared of losing this sole customer and all your income until you find another customer for your labour. Which you do from the same weak bargaining position.

It's easier to just walk out of jobs you don't like if you're in a household and not the main earner. Or if you've *several part-time jobs*. And if you're *self-employed* with several customers, you are in the same position as a business with many customers – losing one isn't so disastrous if you've got others.

Unemployment benefit and other state benefits can reduce the problem of losing your job and income. But your benefit can be stopped for months if you just walk out of a job. Yours truly was very poor for six weeks for that reason after walking out of the lorry job in 1971. Had to sell my records, including my Robert Johnson album. But it was a crossroads in my life, to walk free of *the boss* for the first time. I gained my soul.

Sorry to repeat but it's such a big, political point - ***there's nothing fair about employers having such power over you and all of us.*** This ***only one customer but they've got other suppliers*** effect is not the way for fair deals between them and us to be worked

out. Don't you agree? We're talking about our livelihoods here. For paying your way in the world to be governed by a set-up that is very unequal for no good, socially-approved reason is just not on.

When the business class attack union organisation and demand laws against union freedoms and 'free, flexible, deregulated labour markets' it's simply so we have to bargain with them where -

We've only one customer while they've got many other suppliers. It's not fair to us, the majority. But we let them get away with it.

How to Counter 'They've Got All The Rest' - How To Get Even - The Need And The Entitlement To Organise

So how do you ***Get Even?*** How do you and all of us match up to and counter their power and negotiate with something closer to equality? Earlier it was said that looking at your weakness as being because they can replace you with an *unemployed* worker is looking in the wrong direction. And looking in that direction, the unemployed worker is someone you don't know and can have no influence over, leaving you powerless. *But that's alright because that's not the problem. The real problem you, your existing workmates* ***and*** *the person off the dole all face is that the employer doesn't need* ***any one*** *of you very much*. If you all sell yourself to your employer separately, bargaining on your own, unorganised, you are all weak. You all weaken each other. Your workmates weaken you. You weaken them.

Here, from an unusual source, nearly out of this world actually, is a clear demonstration of how to deny business owners and managers their main privilege of being able to tell you what to do because they can easily get someone else. It's from 'The Right Stuff', the film of 'the space race' when the US and Russia were enemies in 'the Cold War' and the space race was part of that.

Who're You Gonna Get ?

It's the early 1960's. America is desperate to get the first man into space before Russia. The American space organisation NASA is training just seven astronauts - Scott Carpenter. Gordo Cooper. John Glenn. Gus Grissom. Alan Shepard. Wally Schirra. Deke Slayton.

Glenn, played by Ed Harris, is assigned to be the first one to orbit the earth.

That's a pretty big deal – to be the first man in Space.

(Although Russia's Yuri Gagarin beat him to it.)

Lyndon Johnson is the US Vice President. Hungry for publicity, he wants to visit Glenn's wife at their home and get the press and TV trucks there for a big 'VP meets astronauts wife' paparazzi scene. He sends his aides to pester Mrs Glenn to allow him to visit. Glenn is away at Cape Canavaral in training. Mrs Glenn is very shy. But she is also quite strong, in being her own person. She is pretty panicked at the idea of meeting LBJ, and with a horde of press present, and refuses to meet him. Johnson rings NASA, telling them

Get Glenn to ring his wife, get him to make her co-operate.

We see the seven astronauts walking back together from training in their space suits and a manager comes up, telling Glenn he's to talk to his wife and sort her out. With manager-man and six fellow astronauts gathered round, Glenn rings her. She says she's terrified of meeting Johnson.

Glenn says ' Honey, if you don't want to meet him, you've got my backing. 100 per cent.'

Manager-man goes berserk –
You've got to tell her to do it!
Johnson is in charge of the funding of this whole Goddam programme!
No dice, says Glenn.
Manager -
Right then - if you won't tell her to do it, I'm changing the order of flight assignments round here.
That's some threat of being sacked – from being *the First Man in Space*!
NASA have the six other astronauts .....
... can use any one of them instead of Glenn... *They've Got Plenty of Him.*
But then one of the others says .....
Who else are you gonna get ?
Who am I gonna get? splutters the manager,
his face and tone puzzled and surprised.
another astronaut **....**
Yeah, who're you gonna get ?
And another.
Exit manager, defeated.
Glenn *was* the first American in orbit.
If we can just stick together like that, all over the world, we'll be sorted.

That scene might only be a Hollywood version of the truth. But it shows neatly how business owners and managers can only bully and abuse us because *They've Got All The Rest* and how ***sticking together*** stops them doing that, and makes them treat us with *respect* as the equals to them that we really are. I've experienced it on occasion. Not as often as I'd have liked. But it feels good when you've organised and stood up to them and they meet you across a table and deal with you with respect in the same way they do with a valued customer. We all need just a little bit of 'the right stuff', being prepared to stick by our workmates and for them to stick by you so whenever they threaten one of us, they can't fall back on the advantage of *Having Plenty of You or me* still working or taking over your work.

The Case for Taking Action Together - Striking

Employers get their power from being able to stop any one of our ***separate*** businesses without much affecting ***their*** business. *So to get equal you have to act together to stop or threaten to stop* ***their*** *business.* To all withdraw all your labour all at once.

For that we need strong collective self-belief expressed in strong trade union membership and belief in our right to act together, to go on strike. Free from laws outlawing our activity made by and for the business class, acting politically as the Conservative party.

We should speak up for our right to do that and reject their branding of us in our unions as greedy and unjustly powerful. That's them, not us. We are the great majority, of reasonable, civilised people and when we stand up to them we should have no fear of criticism from the business class, the media they own most of, and the politicians.

They Do It To Us Everyday

Every day, all over the world, employers threaten to sack, or do sack, many millions of individual workers. Each time they do it *they're stopping a worker's business*. Us going on

strike only puts them in the same position - we stop their business just like they stop ours when they sack one of us.

I once heard a Conservative MP on the radio speaking in Parliament against some improvements to our protection against Unfair Dismissal. He complained that they were *a burden on business*. Well, pal, it's a bit of a burden on *a worker's business* to get sacked unfairly.

Sacking us stops our business. Striking just stops theirs.

It's Not Us Who Are Too Powerful. It's Them

But it's commonly said that *'the unions'* were too powerful in the 1960's and 1970's: that until Thatcher's Conservative government shackled us, we were *running the country* or *holding the country to ransom* when we went on strike. That was indeed the strongest we've ever been. But this view is crass, absurd, complete *nonsense*. By organising strongly we can get nearer to being equal to them. But we don't ever actually achieve quite that or even get as close as we are entitled to be in a decent, fair society. That's because employers often keep some production going by some labour suppliers betraying their fellow-workers and carrying on working. They get strike-breakers and managers to do the most urgent work and work extra hours and so are sometimes able to starve us into calling off strikes and going back to work.

Amongst all the other arguments being made here, the argument for loyalty to your fellow-workers also need making. There's far, far less of it than there is to things like 'country', that don't make sense. The argument is thoroughly made in the middle two sections of this book.

But on your side you should be able to get support from millions of other organised workers who see the need to support fellow workers in struggle. As was famously done in the great Miner's Strike of 1984/1985 in the UK, and A Lot Of. It's not enough of us, usually, but it easily could be. If enough of us do it we can easily support large numbers out on strike for very long periods. And if other workers who might be offered our work – wherever they are - take the loyal, long-term view of their own interests instead of the short-term, and refuse to take over work stopped by the strike.

Even if everybody is out on strike, an employer can sometimes do enough work themselves to cover their basic need to stay fed and housed. That's not the case in the big firms where the directors don't have the skills or numbers to do that. But they'll get by personally during a strike a lot better than those striking because they have lots of spare personal wealth stashed away. That, after all, is what they do. So even when stronger like in the 1970's we are a very long way from 'running the country'. We are merely, at best, approaching equality with our particular employers. What's wrong with that?

The absurd 'running the country' allegation comes from the media and business class politicians always commenting on strikes from the perspective of ***the consumer or service user***. They never comment from the perspective of ***the worker***. Yet it's obvious that most consumers are also workers - the same people in different roles. As a consumer but also a worker, I'll accept a lot of disruption in my consumer role if it's because fellow workers are fighting for decent conditions *as* workers. And

I expect them as consumers to do the same when my action as a worker affects them.

And we shouldn't be held responsible for the effect of a strike on consumers. Our direct relationship is only with our employer. They're the people with the direct relationship with the consumer. If us acting together in our valid interests affects consumers, then it's up to management to manage - sort out their relationship with us, *the labour suppliers,* just like they would with any other supplier and arrange the supply by negotiating an *agreement* with us on *union conditions.*

It just shows how much they resent us being able to stand up to them, shows what self-serving bullies they are, that when we've done that best, as in the 1970's, they've succeeded in branding *us* as too powerful, as greedy bullies, holding the country to ransom. That's sick. *At best union organisation and action only enables people, as workers, to get closer to equality of power with managers and business owners. There's nothing at all wrong with that and everything right about it.*

But you've got to hand it to the business class. They take care of business so well that across the media, in politics and even in the minds of many workers, unions are never a good thing. 'The press' is almost all owned by politically active business people and they and conservatives set a viciously anti-union agenda that is followed by radio and TV and, cravenly, by centrist Labour politicians. The image of 'the unions' they create and their use of language about them is absurd.

'The Unions' Are Their Members

Many people see 'the unions' as free-standing institutions different from actual workers. They see them as union officials based in union headquarters. This is wrong, annoying, and damaging. The officials are not, in themselves, 'the union.' They are elected or employed as support system by the members organised in the workplaces. They are a civil service, a leadership, a public face. But the union is ***the members.***

The media, mostly run by business people who oppose workers being organised, promote this view of the institutions outside the workplaces being 'the unions'. They talk of them as if they're external to us, intrusive on workers, illegitimate. They promote the image of unions as outside bodies that mislead workers.

Or as just a service an individual can buy, or not, like buying car or house insurance, or gas and electricity from an energy company. It *is* insurance, insurance on your job, worth insuring same as your house and car. For any one worker, being a member is worth it for just that reason. You get information, advice and individual representation, including legal representation.

But a union is far, far more than *that.* Properly, fully and accurately, the union is workers joined together at work, committed to help any *one* with individual problems. And to counter employers great power over individual workers by negotiating and maybe acting *together* for better pay and conditions. Unions are those many workers who are organised together, in their workplaces, in their trades, in the various industries. They're not '*the unions*' but millions of ordinary decent citizens, workers, organised. Of course, the fish cartoon sums it up.

Organisation, Organisation, Organisation

Because of *They've Got All The Rest* it should be obvious to workers, to everyone who 'goes to work' and has a 'boss', that we should organise with our workmates, be a member of a union with them. Just as a sensible, clued-up seller of labour who sees how the 'free'

'labour market' works against us and takes the obvious steps to even it up a bit. Maybe it should mean more than that. But a level-headed, unemotional, appreciation of your position would do. Yet *expecting union membership* of each other is *not* part of everyone's everyday consciousness, everyday talk, part of political discussions, that being in a union is the obvious thing to do if you are a seller of labour - your own.

It can be so at times and in places - San Francisco, perhaps parts of Australia; in some UK industries in the 70's. 'You don't get me, I'm part of the union'. It can happen. That's why this work has been written, in the expectation that it can be. It should be far more common even if only in a wised-up business sense, without the brother, sister, emotional stuff. Not that there's anything wrong with that. ***But just to make the case soberly, sensibly – persuade everyone to see organising with work colleagues as the obvious, normal thing to do***. If people are worth going out with on works 'do's' and worth collecting for when they leave and going for a Xmas drink with, isn't it important to help them out with problems like *excessive workloads*, or getting sacked? And to expect and receive their support in return? A normal *social* thing? Take *organisation* seriously, contribute to it, argue for it.

Going on Strike - Acting instead of Being Acted Upon

One reason some are shy of being a member of a union member is the possibility of being drawn into strike action. Going on strike can be a big step. It's not always an easy thing to do. But one main thing is, look, if people won't do it, then they have to carry on being powerless with their boss, have to keep on taking crap. Sometime you have to decide not to take it, simply for self-respect. People often argue that it's a waste of a day's pay. (Most strikes are only one day). They are not wasting the day's pay but are spending it, on personal dignity and loyalty to their workmates.

People sometimes argue against being expected to take part in union action with 'Nobody tells me what to do.' Well that's bollocks. Day in and day out, and on nights too, the boss tells you what to do. And when you strike it's not people *telling you what to do.* You do it as an equal part of a democratic union where you get your say on whether to strike or not. You may be '*told what to do*', if you like, by a majority of your workmates voting to do something you are against. At least you'll have had an equal chance with everybody else to argue for your position. And you might, on occasion, want to argue *for* action and get them committed, by democratic decision, to support what *you* want doing. (Elsewhere in this book, the point is made that governments have many times committed us to the mass carnage of war without democratic process.)

You will always get told what to do by 'the boss' and you put up with it.
Why not also, sometimes, be 'told what to do' by your Work mates?

Another argument that's been put to me for not taking action for better conditions is that you knew the conditions when you started the job and accepted them. But it was from that pathetically weak and no-way fair bargaining position of *They've Got All The Rest*.

There's a fear of going on strike. (Although it's rare, most union members are never involved in one.) Mostly it's the problem of not being paid or fear of being sacked. But is it also the strength of the media and politician's condemnation that makes some people feel they're being - naughty?

If so, we must spread the view that with the inequality of the Only One Customer But They've Got Other Suppliers mechanism, union organisation and strike action are absolutely fair, normal, civilised, respectable, acceptable. All they do is bring working people closer to equality of power with business people and government employers. We've no need to apologise for that.

Going on Strike is a big step for many of us. But the great thing about it is, all those low-voiced, tight-voiced intense grumblings that we have with each other at work, in corridors, canteens, out of a supervisors earshot – they stop. All the moaning, whingeing and frustration stops. *Because at last **we** are **acting,** not being acted upon.*

As for the fear of striking, it's understandable. Yours truly is no fearless militant. There's braver people than me. Although in all the times I've been involved, although sometimes a bit concerned, I've done it. What people have to recognise is that employers push you into a position where you just have to stand up to them, have to decide to fight back, or carry on being mistreated. *This is simply how it works*, dealing with them. Stand up and fight. Or get treated like a child. If *all* of us do it they can't hurt us. This writer hasn't done such a lot of it but what he has done was a great personal experience and, because it's an important one, he'll be recounting the first time shortly.

It's not the organising of a strike and the actual picketing that's been great. On strike, *you have to get up for 'work' even earlier than usual* to get on the gate before strike-breakers with low loyalty and short-term attitudes arrive. You have to do it in all weathers, join the hardy few who'll turn out to picket. And because of the need to picket a number of works entrances and at varying times of day, you'll often be on your own challenging fellow-workers who show no loyalty. Much of the time it's cold and boring, nothing to do but stand on the pavement and shiver. So for me, not actually a great experience in that way. *But in finally standing up and resisting. Yes.* You get the dignity and comradeship of not just being 'one of the staff' but of being one of those who stands up to managers and business owners. It can feel good. Once, in the cold early hours of the morning, yours truly was the only picket on Morrisons supermarket in Eccles. The drivers of lorries making deliveries stopped, listened to the case and respectfully, solidly, turned their HGV round and went away without delivering. That was a little experience of power at work to set against all our experience of being powerless. And when there's a good picket and you get into it over a period, it can be a good, comradely thing.

Going on Strike - "A good experience for a young person"

Have you ever heard anyone say that? Or heard anyone talk positively in any way about striking? The only person other than myself that I've heard say *Going on Strike* is a good thing is Alex Ferguson, manager of Manchester United. In three separate TV interviews separated by years, he recalled his time as a young apprentice in a Glasgow engineering works, where he took a lead in the apprentices joining a major strike. Unprompted, in each interview he *said it's a good experience for a young person to go on strike*. How refreshing for *anyone* to say that, never mind a public figure like Ferguson.

Of course we shouldn't worship 'celebrities' like him or make too much of celebrity endorsement. And many non-United fans, maybe you, hate him! But if 'celebrities' have 'owt to say about public matters then they should say it or sing it, same as anybody else. We should take notice or not according to whether it makes sense, not just because of who says it. And although this is a United fan talking, I'm more of a Union man and I'm relating to that here.

It's just noticeable that nobody ever says striking is a good thing and he has, three times. You might say, Ok, he said that but how would he handle a strike against him at United? There's no great need to argue a case for him here, but that's what you'll be thinking. But he was managing United when he said, in the three separate interviews, that going on strike was a good experience. He did play the manager's favourite card *'We've Got A Lot Of Others*' when Rio Ferdinand was re-negotiating his contract. Rio got plenty out of it anyway, of course.

Most likely Ferguson would refuse to concede the power to make decisions like who is in the team – I've managed football teams, that's not an area for democracy. But he won't see the players as just workers to make money from. He wouldn't simply condemn their rights to have a case and take action on things like training facilities. There's genuine team work involved in running a football team. Probably, he'd negotiate, toughly perhaps, but accepting the players right to organise and put their case forward, without that outraged hostility that managers - and 'the media' - often express against workers organising and taking action. And he's active in the manager's union, the League Manager's Association.

Oh dear, he's taken United to Saudi for a game that women were banned from – as they are from all public events there .....

The Bottle Problem

But striking - a good thing for your personal development. Grow up, fight back. Stop letting your managers and business owners treat you like a child. It's your 'worker's rite of passage'. It was for this worker the first time he did it. And trivially but have to say, only a few hundred yards from Old Trafford where, many years later, Ferguson said something similar.

This story is about only a small dispute. But it was the first time this worker had the bottle (guts) to seriously take on the boss. So it's here as an example for talking about the *bottle* issue, about standing up, and about how workers and management behave when you try to organise yourselves together in a union in a non-union workplace. We should be telling each other more tales of these efforts to organise and drawing lessons from our experience of doing it.

For anybody who isn't familiar with it, 'bottling it' or 'losing your bottle' is when you haven't got the guts to fight, and wimp out of a conflict. I'm capable of it, we all are, so we need to talk about it.

In 1976, working again at the same lorry repair company in Trafford Park, a few of us got fed up with the working conditions – like being made to work on wagons in the yard at 8.30 on a winter's morning. The steel tools, the wheel braces and jacks, were bloody cold on the hand at that time, outside. The canteen and toilets were filthy. It was unsafe - I damaged my back working for them, doing an unplanned lifting job in a very unsafe way. That was another *Can They Do That* scenario. Some of the guys refused to do that job, some did it. I played football for a dozen years crippled with sciatica because of it.

There were about a dozen of us fitters. Some of us joined the engineering union. But that isn't enough. You have to get the company or employer to ***recognise*** the union. ***That means they accept the staff organising themselves and are prepared to negotiate with the Union Representatives - Departmental Reps or Shop Stewards - who members elect to speak for them over their pay and conditions - holidays, safety, discipline, etc.***

We started recruiting people to the union one by one. In these situations, where some attempt to stand up to management, you find there's roughly three groups of people, but not necessarily equally divided. There's those who want to do something and will get together and make it happen. Another group don't do much themselves but are sympathetic, believe in organising, understand the benefits, and will support those who take the lead. The third group includes those who think they're doing all right, the 'one-man bands', maybe because they're on slightly more pay or better work than the rest; and others who are timid in the face of management authority. They include 'company men', management's favourites - or those who would like to be.

Management heard through this last group of people that we were recruiting people to the union. So they put about a rumour that we were about to lose a major contract servicing OCL's container fleet to a rival trailer company. The message was that there was going to be less work, so you'd be better off not associating with the union agitators. So I asked one of the rumour-mongers - Woody, we got on Ok, but you shit - where this rival company was, and looked there. There was no rival trailer company. It didn't exist. Just anti-union mind-games.

They also tried another thing managements will do when threatened by independent union organisation - they revived a *Works Staff Committee*. Nobody had heard of it, it hadn't met for years, but they put on fresh elections for Staff Reps. We thought about standing for election to it. But the 'reps' weren't *really* reps, accountable to the workers on the shop floor. They'd just be put there and then could speak for themselves for a few years. So we kept out of it and carried on recruiting for a real, proper, *independent Trade Union*.

A couple of weeks after we started signing up a few people to the union, preparatory to *claiming recognition*, they sacked one of us who were organising. He'd had time off work. Then he damaged an oil seal surface on an axle. It was an expensive thing to do, either unfortunately, carelessly or deliberately. Management claimed it was deliberate. They had no evidence for saying it was, just saying that 'it had to be'. So Dave (a different one) was sacked and even I thought perhaps that was reasonable, and that was that, Dave was sacked.

But Dave was in the Socialist Workers Party. They believe in actively supporting workers when they are *in Dispute* with employers, to assist in the dispute and as a way of building workers organisation. It's more definite than just sticking leaflets through neighbour's doors at election time. Next morning they'd organised a picket of four of their members who were union activists from local workplaces, who argued we should organise and support Dave. Les, the SWP organiser, came into the canteen at morning break without management knowledge or invite. He argued that the sacking was unfair because Dave had no representation to help him put his side of the story. His case wasn't considered. Now that is a *big* issue - the ***Right to be Represented***. In fact, it's the biggest. It applies in courts of law, the right have somebody on your side. Even murderers as guilty as hell get that right. So Les convinced me and a few others.

Next day the small but plucky picket consisted of only two young women, Maxine and Debbie. They gave out a leaflet as people went in to work calling for us to come outside at morning break to discuss the sacking and the need for a union. Five or six of us did. It was a big thing for me – it felt risky. I'd been estranged from family for a decade, had no other income than what I got myself. It was a lifetime significant thing to take the risk and to go out and do something, instead of carrying on the whingeing and moaning about conditions

there.

Every walk-out I've ever been on it's been instructive to see who'll go out. Some of the people with the biggest mouths, some of the toughest sounding, fold when it comes to actual action. Others, often the quietest people, turn out to be the strongest, and act. I like that – one of my biggest discoveries about people, ever.

So five or six of us were out, after break had finished. The business had three owners and one of them, who wasn't involved in day-to-day management of the works, was more decent than the other two. He came outside to discuss the issues with the picket. People are often scared of going out because they feel, often with good reason, that managers will then treat them even worse, perhaps sack them; there and then or later, for some trumped up reason. No confidence in winning. You do have to weigh that up. But, what I found was, he was prepared to discuss things, listen to our arguments, prepared to discuss the rights and wrongs of Dave's sacking, and even - sweetly! - to claim some Socialist credentials because his full name was Robert *OWEN* Parker! - the factory owner in the 19th century who tried to treat his workers fairly and thought everyone could. But it doesn't work since you've got cheaper competition from those who won't.

The people who'd come out gradually drifted back in but me and another guy stayed out through to dinner-break. If you're talking to a director and him to you, it must be Ok to be there, surely - it's *Negotiations*. My first experience of them. In the end he actually conceded our argument – said if we really wanted a union they'd have to accept it. Back in the canteen where the rest were now having their dinner we tried to announce the good news. But were they all up for it? Afraid not. Some were cowed by the situation, just kept their heads down eating their chips and playing cards. Including some who you'd think, and they liked to think, were tough men, hard-drinkers. There was a dead sound Polish guy, though, who would mimic their attitude as that of mediaeval peasants, wiping his cap off his head as if deferring to a feudal lord. Others said they'd join but what was the point unless most people did?

So it didn't happen. It was disappointing. And Dave stayed sacked. But personally I survived the scary bit about standing up and fighting and found I didn't get victimised but instead got respect from management, and, more importantly, from myself. And those of us who'd tried got a feeling of satisfaction and comradeship that is worth a lot, a real good feeling. At least we'd had a go.

Millions of us do stand up, organise, and the sky doesn't fall on our heads. Managers often recognise, Ok, these people are serious, civilised, have a case, we'll negotiate with them. You get respect from them. You get it from yourself too, for having got off your knees. You're no longer just an operative, one of the lads or lasses off the shop-floor. At least in being able to sit down and argue cases with them, you *are* their equal.

I've only just realised, writing this thirty years later – we didn't save Dave's job but on getting a union there we actually won!

I left there soon after to work at GEC, then the biggest UK industrial company. The factory was one of the biggest, best union-organised factories in the world, well-known, built by Westinghouse and variously owned by Metro-Vickers and AEI. Became a union activist there and learned about *Trade Union Organisation* from some very fine, strong, civilised class-conscious working class people - Manchester

Engineering workers of that time. From the Shop Stewards and Reps, in particular, who aren't the wild militant troublemakers of media myth but just wonderful, lovely, tough people who see the unfairness and oppression at work and get up and do something for everybody.

The final piece on Recognition is 'Workers Denied The Right To Associate' and 'Associating - Getting Union Recognition' at pages 253 - 260.

More Bottle

That was using this writer's first, small-scale experience to talk about the bottle issue when standing up to managers. As well as feeling it myself, I've seen the bottle issue in a lot of us workers. In many cases, with leadership and clear backing from the union *officials*, it's not a problem. People will readily act if given leadership. And many have no problem anyway. You're confident people and have no qualms about standing up for yourselves. *But many will only act with a lead from the officials*. *

* boring-jargon-buster – union offic***ials*** are paid employees of the union.

- union offic***ers*** are ordinary members with ordinary jobs, chosen by members from amongst themselves to represent them in the workplace.

And the officials too have a bottle problem. It struck me once – when we're having a national ballot for strike action to defend our conditions from a well-planned, nationally co-ordinated, openly aggressive attack by college managements, why isn't our National Secretary touring the Branches, speaking to meetings of ordinary members and asking people to vote Yes for the strike? You don't see that happening in other unions either.

Our officials get brow-beaten by the business class's media, business class politicians, and business-cowed politicians into being ashamed of backing and openly encouraging strike action. That's even before you take into account the complexities of the laws limiting union freedom that put them in fear of losing the union's money in legal penalties. But they shouldn't be shy of us sticking up for ourselves in the self-proclaimed dog-eat dog world that the business class are such strong believers in. We're just protecting ourselves and acting in our interests, same as they are. Maybe that's why American trade unionists are so solid – they can see it that way and have no shame about fighting rough with roughneck owners and managers.

But when union officials so often don't actively support strike action it leaves each member with the burden of deciding to act or not. And without leadership, there's many a workplace dispute where many a worker does not have the strength, the bottle, the conviction, to come out. I'm not the super-hero either and it's a major problem for us. That's why I've related my personal experience, as a way of discussing it.

So, ***Striking.*** A good life experience. But this writer has only been involved in it a day or two at a time. Does it take a lot more guts to stay out a long time? Could I do it, as readily as I've made out we should? I don't know. In North Wales while writing some of this, I sometimes visited the picket line at Friction Dynamics near Caernarfon. It was once a Ferodo factory and strongly organised with the other big Ferodo factories, but had been sold off to a union-buster. They stayed out on strike for *three years* opposing worsened conditions and *de*-recognition of the union. How would you and I do, being out that long? But they seemed cheerful enough, none of them starved to death or anything. Seemed to survive it Ok. They were very strong amongst themselves and got a lot of support from their communities - here in Wales there's more of a community spirit still than in other parts of the UK where consumerist Thatcherite individualism has weakened the notion of supporting people in struggle.

They eventually won their long-delayed tribunal case for Unfair Dismissal covering all of them, and stopped picketing. Management then played games with the law and company ownership – the owner sold the company to a mate who then wasn't liable for the Tribunal award. Then bought it back half a day later, or some such trick.

People Do More Serious Things Than Going On Strike – They Go to War, Kill, and Die

Many workers, in many countries, are easily persuaded to do something much more serious than going on strike. *Repeatedly, millions of working class people are persuaded to leave their normal life and go away to war. There, they kill other working class people, or get maimed or killed themselves, fighting for the people who treat them brutally in work and politics – the business classes of each country.*

This writer, a post-war 'baby-boomer', was brought up by and amongst people who had experienced the awfulness of the First World War, the Depression and the 1930's, and the Second World War. Then in his early working life, in the 1960's and 1970's, many of his workmates were people who'd been through them too. They impressed on me the poverty and desperation of the 1930's and the extreme experience of the two World Wars. My great-grandad was gassed in the first one. I lost an uncle in the Second. For those who weren't sent to war, war came to them, in the form of the Blitz. My early life was saturated with these impressions of the poverty of the Thirties and the wreckage of the Second World War. That was literally so – there were bombsites all around me. And many poor guys with missing legs or arms or eyesight or sanity. Many of them, being poor and poorly educated, hadn't been the most able at coping with life to begin with. After being maimed, their lives were ruined.

Yet these working class people of Germany, Britain and the other countries shouldn't have fought each other. The First World War was just a clash between the rival business classes. The Second was a follow-on caused by the First, and by the worldwide collapse of the business class's system. These enabled the Nazi and other Fascist movements to fool people into thinking nationalism was the answer.

As this book was being written people saw the truth about what these wars are about. They saw that Bush and Blair's criminal attack on Iraq was for oil, not for our freedom or our democracy. And not for that of the Iraqi's either.

Yet workers do go to war against each other on the side of 'their' business class, despite them being far more their enemies than their opposite numbers, the workers of other countries. People get convinced into doing these things by a huge attitude-fixing job based on *national identity*, on *patriotism,* on *the nation.* That is examined in *Real Identities - Work and Class* section 2. (People might say 'Surely the Second World War was right, fighting Fascism?' It's a question dealt with in ***Digressions 1 on page 351***)

But the main point here is that when the rich and powerful tell them to, people are prepared to take on the much greater risks of war, much greater than going on strike. The risks and sacrifices of striking, when your workmates and fellow-workers ask you to, are far less.

And people put a lot of fervour into supporting footballers or cricketers; or someone you've never heard of doing some event you've never heard of, in the

Olympics; or whoever, in whatever sport - just because they reside under the same government.

Striking is the contest that makes real sense for you, when it's needed.

(More on how dubious national identity is in Section 2.)

Wars 'for Democracy' In Contempt of Democracy

Some workers won't 'be told what to do' by the union. Yet there's nothing wrong with accepting the collective, democratic authority of your workmates. Unions are the most democratic institutions in existence. Thatcher's Tories made our union voting methods illegal and forced us to vote only in ways that weaken worker discussion and collective action, atomising us with postal voting. But *they* had no democratic method *at all* of doing the equivalent thing to striking, waging ***war***.

Yet we workers even, at times, allow the business class to not only start wars but to *conscript us* into them, into their wars for oil and access to markets, without us having any vote.

Recently, over the Iraq war, Tony Blair declared what I'd noticed from when Thatcher's crew made laws obstructing how we decide to strike - and yet started the Falklands War with no democracy. The British Prime Minister claims the right to declare war *just on his or her own say so*. And they feel themselves fit to make law enforcing supposedly democratic methods on us about how we 'declare war' when deciding to strike!

As it happened Blair was forced by massive anti-war campaigning by this writer and many millions of others to put the decision to go to war at least to a vote of MP's. But did they vote democratically according to the wishes of their constituents? Most of them, no. In contempt of d*emocracy*, and disastrously, a majority of them voted for war.

It gets worse. We always did have some sort of vote for strikes. Now, unless we do it in complicated ways laid down by that less democratic body, Parliament, they've laid down that *the other side* - the business owners and managers we are fighting - can stop us with legal action. The other side! When the business owners and managers take *strike-like action,* closing mines or factories, and their board doesn't put it to a vote of all their shareholders, in a prescribed way, do we workers have the right to take legal action to stop it? No, we don't. But they can do that to us. Blair and Brown have kept these Tory, business class anti-worker laws in force. Yet if Blair was in our position, Saddam Hussain could have got an injunction stopping him, because he'd not had a ballot of the citizens of the UK, who he involved in this awful war and exposed to terrorist attacks.

How do they get away with these absurdly obvious double standards? Well, by the pro-business class, anti-union class bias of political, media and intellectual circles. *But also by our own, people-as-worker's lack of self-conscious awareness of who We are, who They are, which loyalties serve us best*, and *what Rights we should have.* Those subjects are gone into a lot more in the later sections of this work.

Think about all this and about how you talk everyday to other workers, your family, mates, relatives, workmates, about *Union Membership.* And more than that, about *active* union membership. The bosses are where they are not because they are really an awful lot better than us or because they work that much harder. But they do *take care of business* better than us. We have to be as business like as they are. Or stay under their thumb.

The Members Are The Union

People often have a reservation about all this - they've had a problem at work and 'the union wasn't much use.' Well surely it was more use than no union? You'll at least get *information on your rights.* And you'll get ***representation.*** And if 'the union' hasn't enough power to actually stop the employer doing you in, remember that the activist Reps are not *'the Union'* much more than you and all of your workmates are. 'The union' is just other workers just like you, trying to organise the lot of you to support each other. So if, when you got your problem, there wasn't enough strength there to help you, the question is this - how much building of communication and organisation had there been between your workmates to develop enough feeling that they'd take action to support you? And how much did you do? Managements only take notice of unions according to how strong they are and that depends on you and your workmates being active, not just the reps. A union is people associating, a shared, mutual activity.

They Can Play As A Team But We Can't?

This section has explained the main moral and political argument for the right to unionise - the unseen, unfair advantage employers get from having a lot of you.

There's another one. These are industrial societies we live in. Large scale activity in making things and providing services outperforms small-scale, and few people work for (or sell themselves to) a one-person business. ***You*** sell your labour as an individual, but it's not usually to ***another*** individual. Most of us sell to ***organisations.*** Most ***businesses*** are organised groups of people, starting with the owners and then many highly organised managers. A '***company***' *means* an organisation. ***Public sector employers***, the Government and the Council, are organisations too.

Yet employment law treats each of these ***organisations*** of people acting together, as a make-believe ***individual*** - 'the employer'. It sees you as making your employment contract with an equal, individual ***person***. Obviously - you would think - that's nonsense.

Employers are people organised and acting together but they usually oppose workers organising and acting together. And anti-union laws obstruct us. *It's like we're playing them at some team sport and they can play as a team but we can't.* We can only act as individuals - each of us has to play them on our own. We can't wear team kit, we can't pass the ball to each other.

When you dispute something with them, or they have a go at you, you'll be in a manager's office, on your own, often with several of them present, and the whole organisation behind them. That's as though we can only even go on the pitch one at a time. Any one of us, all alone against eleven others, who are organised. We know the feeling.

In the UK, you have a right to have somebody in with you, on your side; but they have no power. Only being organised with your workmates gives you that.

The response is, of course, to have our own team, of organised workers, and to have union officials, officers and workplace reps who will represent you in that manager's office. *On page 365 is a two-page re-working of the above called 'Work & Politics As Football'.*

Let's conclude this section with a bit about actually standing up to manager's

in your day-to-day workplace situation. From discussing workplace problems with some workers with no experience of organisation, it seems there is woeful ignorance of how to go about it. The following points should be common knowledge. They need to be made so.

Facing Up To Managers As A Team - The Fairness Of 'Collective Bargaining'

Business people see no wrong in exploiting us and in getting the best price and biggest profits they can from their *customers*. And they expect their *supplier* companies to bargain for the best price they can get.

So why shouldn't *we workers* get the best deal we can? After all, their conservative politicians say the dog-eat-dog world of the free-market business system is the only way the world can run, just natural, that greed and selfish motives are human nature. They say that in order to justify their wealth and so do the various layers of middle-wealthy people. *Yet when we workers do the same and try for the best deal we can get,* including the right to be idle, like many of the rich are - suddenly there's something very wrong about *us* doing that. *The Rich, Conservatives, go all socialist* and argue that we should behave according to the public good! But by their own arguments that they use to justify their own wealth and greed, it's a perfectly normal, acceptable thing for a worker or a group of us to try to get the best deal we can for ourselves, by striking if necessary.

But that doesn't mean we are just selfish like them. *Union bargaining* isn't just the business class's unfair greed on a broader scale. It *has* to incorporate fairness because you can't get people, union members, to fight for or agree to Union Conditions - *Agreements* - made with management if there's not fairness in the pay scales and in who gets the better jobs, if they don't reward people fairly. Fairness allows for people being rewarded differently across the range of jobs, when the differences are for fair reasons like different skills and effort.

You get a nasty little argument from management and weak workers that you lose more in lost wages by striking than you gain in a wage rise. (If it's about pay.) I dunno, you do the arithmetic. It's unlikely to be true long-term because the rise keeps being paid, year on year; goes on your pension if you've got one there. *And anyway you've not had to work for the period on strike*. You've not earned, but you've not had to work either. Treat it as unpaid holidays. And they've lost production. That's a great educator for them and a lot of better conditions can be negotiated without strike action once they're convinced by action to take you all seriously. Union conditions are almost always far better than non-union.

In some rare cases non-union conditions might be better. Some employers will use temporarily good conditions – although it's likely to be only the pay that's better - to keep out the union where there's an attempt to organise. IBM once did this in Scotland. But in general union-negotiated conditions are better paid, more civilised, you are treated with more respect and can treat yourself with more respect. You are no longer a powerless serf, you have some backing and they have to treat you less like a child and more like an adult.

How To Stand Up To Employers – The Practicalities

The usual scenario workers grumble about (often only outside work) is that a manager is proposing change that worsens the job for staff. They are disgruntled about it but feel powerless. In one such example, a manager did an e-mail survey of staff's views on the change – a shorter dinner-break for teachers – then called the staff together and gave them a dressing down for the objections they'd made. The worker telling us this had the common attitude – we all object but it's going to happen, he or she is going to do it.

Common Knowledge 1 – Organise Independently

One worker in this social discussion away from the workplace thought the staff's only chance was for somebody to be brave enough to stand up and oppose the manager in this meeting, that the manager had called. But this is not at all the way to do it. We can't rely on individual bravery. '*MO*' rules that out. They can 'get rid of the troublemakers', the 'ringleaders', by attacking them personally for their job performance, selecting them for redundancy, and other sorts of victimisation. There's nothing much to be gained by responding individually, in their meeting. Unless, maybe, to gather some information about the plans from the manager.

What you have to do is call your ***own*** meeting. Preferably as properly-organised fellow-union members. You first need to develop an attitude common to all or most of you, that instead of looking to brave leaders, you each have the self-respect to stick up for yourselves, but knowledgeably, in the knowledge of how *A Lot Of Others* works, and do it collectively. Then discuss and agree on a common response, that everybody should stand by outside the meeting.

In the social discussion we had about it, one of those who argued that we had to hope for leaders objected that in such a meeting the loudest mouths would dominate. That's an opposite argument! In fact, in workers meetings, there are common rules of conduct to ensure equality. One of them is 'No-one speaks twice until everyone has had the chance to speak once'.

There is some need for leadership. But leaders can't be effective unless there is, behind them, a group of strong, confident workers with an equitably-developed, collective stance. The leader(s) main job is then to meet management and present the staff's decision to refuse to accept the changes, using the main feature of union recognition – recognition by managers of the staff's right to negotiate collectively, through their chosen representatives.

Common Knowledge 2 – No Change Without Agreement

That should be that. Management should accept the decision. Why? Because we don't expect to be able to make changes favourable to us – like increasing our pay – without *their* agreement. So they shouldn't be able to impose change on us. 'No change without agreement' is how they respond to our requests for change and it's the essence of our rights too. Contract law appears to grant you exactly that. But it's made meaningless by *A Lot Of Others* allowing them to sack refuseniks individually. Because of *A Lot Of* it has to be asserted jointly, collectively.

In union negotiating agreements - the procedures for bargaining with management - the traditional statement of this was 'in case of dispute, whatever practice was carried out prior to the dispute shall continue until agreement is reached.' It was generally called 'the status quo' clause. In the factory where this writer learned workplace organisation, once one of the biggest factories in the world and one of the best organised, there was a meeting with management in which the status quo was being fiercely discussed. One union rep, a welder who'd probably not been to a school where they taught Latin, put up with it for a while and then said "I don't know what all this talk about Status Quo is about and I'm not interested. As far as I'm concerned, everything stays the same until you get our agreement. Right?'

Managements response is to asset 'management's right to manage'. Well, they might have such a right when it comes to decisions about the product or service.

But where a worker's conditions of employment are concerned, it simply doesn't exist. According to the business class's own assertions about 'freedom', conditions of employment are agreed between equal individuals and, like any contract, can't be changed without both sides agreement.

To challenge again the idea that what we need are leaders, it is the biggest complaint of those who are prepared to lead, those several million people who are prepared to be union reps and officers, that they are unable to properly defend everybody because so many ordinary workers are too easily cowed by management. They can't do much without solid adherence to a common line.

So, to repeat, what we really need is for the *lot Of Others* effect to be common knowledge, with the understanding that organisation and acting together is absolutely essential; for it to be common knowledge that there is no change without agreement, and that we respond to management proposals by having our own meetings and electing spokespersons or representatives; that they will meet management on our collective behalf and negotiate with the understanding that no-one will work to management's proposed changes until our collective agreement is obtained.

And if anyone is bullied into doing any of it, or our representatives victimised for doing a job on our behalf, then we immediately act in response.

Of course, at present, in many or most workplaces things are quite different. Management walk all over people. That's because people need to be convinced of the above way of responding to management. That's your job.

The argument that workers must oppose *A Lot Of Others* by joint action or else everyone gets bullied applies also to convincing workers from outside who might take your jobs if you go on strike. And it applies to workers in other workplaces belonging to the same employer who are often compliant in enabling mangers to re-locate production to other sites, in taking on your work.

As said at the beginning of the book – they are organised, we are not. We get nowhere by just moaning about what they do to us. The point is to argue to each other – fraternally if possible, fiercely if necessary – that we need to organise, make collective decisions, and abide by them. That's the alternative to being constantly bullied and stressed-out by employers and their managers.

Refreshingly, the teacher from whom I heard about the case described above went on to become a union rep and led a successful rejection of the head teacher's plans to break up the pay scale by introducing individual performance-related pay. With this, some people can be tempted by the possibility of earning more for their (possibly) greater ability. But in the long run they lose too, because it dismantles the group strength that gets everybody, them included, better pay and conditions.

To sum up this section - Three Ways of Challenging Your Employer –

in order of effectiveness, with some advantages and disadvantages -

Be organised as workmates and act together

Negotiate everything collectively, including individuals being represented by the union. All for one. The great advantage is - you set your own standards. Whatever conditions and pay and defences of individuals you want to assert, you decide them for yourselves. And you can achieve them with your own power. Employers and their managers are organised and active by department and section. Union organisation requires matching that with a representative in each department, section, office or job

group. The reps are able, daily, to organise a response to management's actions.

Disadvantages of organisation mean you have to tackle the attitudes of many fellow-workers. That includes some who have not realised how *A Lot Of Others* works and are unwilling or afraid to join together and act; and some who see themselves doing Ok outside our organisation, succeeding to some degree by being 'company men' (and women). These people undercut the effectiveness of organised action by giving owners and managers a strike-breaking labour supply. What you also have to tackle is employer's ability to use other workers instead of you, like recruiting non-union labour; and transferring your work to be done by workers in other plants, sometimes in other countries. You have to tackle that by organising together widely, globally. That sounds like a big task. But *they* do it.

Use legal minimums established by the state - statutory rights.

There have been some cases, often using equality laws, which improve things like equal pay and pensions for up to half the workforce at once, that have made real gains. But in other cases the standard you are trying to enforce is often far less than what we really want. And you can't usually assert whatever right there is very clearly because the meaning and application of laws is not available until you actually take up a case. You'll assert one thing, the employer will assert another, and it's not you who decides. With many legal rights, it can only be decided after you've lost the issue at work, no longer have that job, and are just trying to get some compensation. Employers have the resources to pay lawyers who find numerous ways to obstruct the process. Cases are massively time-consuming. The time union officials have to spend fighting one case is usually way out of proportion and their time would be far better used on promoting more and better union organisation.

Use contract law

This has already been shown here to be largely a waste of time, against determined employers, because of *A Lot Of Others* and the employer's right to fire you as long as they give notice. And where employers attack everybody's conditions at once, and present the issue in terms of individual contracts, many wilt under the pressure. Often the change is linked with a pay settlement and the rise is denied to those who refuse. When those who stick it out are a small enough proportion of the staff for the employer to be able to manage without them - until they take on new people who can only accept the worsened conditions - they'll sack or threaten to sack people, legally, with notice. It happened to this writer and his workmates and is covered later in this book. In these cases the proper response is to strike and see how you get on, because their threatened mass sacking amounts to an employer-provoked strike, known as a lock-out.

The point of union organisation is as a response to the ineffectiveness of contract law and statutory law.

This section has explained the job relationship, how it gives employers unfair power over workers, and how to fix that. Let's end it by explaining how it enables business people to make money out of workers, how it explains where 'their' wealth comes from:

Exploitation - Selling Your Work For More Than They Pay For It

However harder working, able, enterprising and the rest of it business owners might be - or might not be - their wealth is made from our work, not theirs. They use

their 'Many of You' power to e*xploit* us.

'Exploitation' might mean simply being nasty to workers. But it means something much more specific than that. ***Exploitation and Profit come from business owners paying you less than the value of the work you do, less than what they sell it on for. They keep the difference for themselves. That's what profits are***. In fact most of the money they invest is originally *ours*, made from exploiting us and our work in an earlier phase.

Here's how it works. I was discussing politics once with the window cleaner and put this analysis to him. His typical business view was that he ran his business, couldn't see how he was *exploiting* anyone and was entitled to the profits. So I said,

OK, how much do you charge for cleaning the windows on a house?
His answer – three quid (GB Pounds)
If you took somebody else on, how much would you pay them?
Answer – well, I'm not sure.
Wouldn't it be as little as you could get away with? As little as they'd accept? Yes.
Maybe only two quid per house? Yeeah, possibly.
How much would you charge the house owners for the houses your employee did?
Answer, the usual price, three quid.

Why not two quid? What you're doing is charging customers full price for his/her work but keeping one pound for yourself. That's Exploitation. You're entitled to some of the pound for buying the ladders, advertising, doing the books, running the business and so on. You would be stealing the rest from the worker.

In practice he wouldn't pay the worker two pound for each *house.* He'd pay them for *each hour worked*. That separates two transactions - the *Buying* of the other person's labour; and the *Selling* of it to customers. It hides the exploitation.

So *Making a Profit* means more than balancing the books and adding a bit on top. It's exploitation of our labour.

This analysis is covered more thoroughly in 'It's Our Wealth Not Theirs' at page 15.

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The Right To Unionise 1 continues to page 120

Class and Work - Real Identities

When asked what class they are ***70 per cent of people say 'working class'***. That sounds about right for what I maintain ***'Working Class'*** means. It means *you* are probably working class, as I am. But few mention this in everyday talk. Few identify themselves as workers, nor do they group themselves with, and identify with, other workers politically.

Not as readily as they declare they are from some city, town, county, region, state, or country, and make many supposedly meaningful references to it. Later, this common practice of seeing great meaning in 'where you're from' or supporting a football or other sports team, and using it to define 'identity groups' will be analysed. It will be argued that it's nothing like as meaningful as people think it is. And that it is bad for us.

Going to Work

But what do people *mean* by *working class?* And what other classes do people speak of? Before going into what other people mean, here is the definition I maintain we should be using. ***In going to work each day, working for someone else, you are a Worker.*** It

doesn't matter what kind of job as long as it is 'a job' and it comes with 'a boss'.

Being called a worker because of this doesn't say everything about you. It's not putting a label on you, not stereotyping you, neither negatively nor positively. It doesn't deny any other things about you. It's not to limit you in any way. You are still a person with lots about you that have nothing to do with work. ***It just means that as you go to work, each day, in doing that you are a worker***. It just means that when we go to work we ***become*** workers. You are also one as, needing a job, you claim unemployment benefit, or incapacity benefit as a worker not capable of work, while you are in education preparing to be a worker, or when you are retired from being a worker.

It's just that going to work, or needing to, or intending to, makes you a worker. It makes you a member of the Working Class. And you are a worker whichever else of the 'where you're from' and other identity groups you are in – whether you are from Essex, Cardiff , Yorkshire, Edinburgh or Wyoming; whether you are also Afro-Caribbean, Anglo-Saxon, Asian, or Welsh, Scots or Irish; whether you are in your teens, twenties, thirties, forties, fifties or sixties; whether you are straight, gay, lesbian or trans.

Common Terms For Class

To discuss how to define class more generally: there's much talk of opportunity and social mobility, of *meritocracy,* as if with enough opportunity there's no classes. But even if there was a lot of social mobility – which there isn't, much inherited power, wealth and privilege persists – there will still be classes. Most people do think that. But how do they define the classes and how do they put anyone in one or another class? The terms are used a lot, with casual authority. But where's the definitions?

Many see class as being about upbringing – parental status, education, culture, accent. That's a useless definition. These are secondary attributes to what people actually are and do, themselves. This definition is from when the ruling class was the big landowners. They, *aristocrats,* the *squire-archy,* awarded themselves a permanent position as a superior class, from birth, for life, between generations, as nobles and gentlemen – *the gentry*. The rest of us were labelled from birth and for life and between generations as a lesser class, as *commoners.* This was regardless of what they and us actually did or became. It was, and remains, pathetic, self-promoting nonsense.

Nowadays, it's seen in how they attempt to pass their wealth and privilege on from generation to generation. That is a bit of an issue but it's not the main one. The real issue is how they *get* that power, wealth and privilege. And to examine if they deserve it or not. Some people say class is out-dated. They mean *that* contemptible practice, of fixing social position at birth. Agreed.

Class is most easily, accurately and usefully defined by people's own*, active* role in society*,* whether it's inherited, or from them taking opportunities available to them. Let's group people, class them - define classes and the main identity groups - *by what people* ***do*** *in their own live, functional role in society, now, defined by their current, active relationships with other people.* Above all, by their roles in the most important relationships they have with other people – in making their living in business and work, in their *economic* roles.

There's No Middle Class - It's The Muddle Class

People talk mainly of 'the middle class' and 'the working class'.
(Some, pathetically, evade the issue and instead say working class***es***.)

Most people use the term *'middle class*'. But what does it mean? Partly, it's grouping people by minor, personal things like speech and education they got in childhood. Or it's grouping people by spending power and lifestyle, as consumers. And 'middle class' means those on mid-range income. Or it's grouping by culture and attitudes. But using upbringing, income, consumer power and personal tastes to ***class*** people is flimsy and misleading.

We need to define class by more than this. Instead of upbringing, we should class people by their present-day ***active role in business and work,*** and by their role as a ***producer*** not as a ***consumer***. How do they relate and inter-act with other people not just in the *consumption* of goods and services but in the *production* of them? How do people *make* their income, make their living? Upbringing can help people *get* to positions with higher income. But we still need to need to know the everyday *relationships they* have with *us* in their current, active roles, that gets them that income.

These mean more than how people were brought up or income and role as a consumer and the lifestyle they can afford. Income is interesting as an end result. But the ***process*** by which people get it, or don't get it, comes first.

The universal use of 'middle class' based mainly on upbringing and income obstructs this. Basing it on income comes from the intense attention that business people's marketing operations give to people as consumers. They even get us to see our role as a consumer as the main expression of our humanity! It comes too from government's interest in income levels for the purposes of taxation and provision of public services and support.

But it comes also from not giving enough attention to ***roles in the production of goods and services and in making money or a living.*** *There's far more to who we are and what we do than our spending power, isn't there?* Our role as *consumers* does not define a *class*. This, and upbringing and culture, are of secondary interest to the practical reality of *how* we make our living and an income. Income and status as consumers usually *depends* on people's role as *producers*. These are the roles and relationships that *determine* the allocation of money and spending power. And they are crucial to understanding the big things that go on in society, including political power.

We need to focus on the *process* by which people get their higher or lower income, not simply the *outcome*, their spending power. Just 'classing' people by that blanks out their *relationship* to you and others in production. It means the only thing you are interested in is how much money they have. Aren't you interested in how they got it? Because that involves their relationship to *you* and it also relates to how much or how little money *you* get.

We need to define class by people's definite, unarguable roles in the key public activities and relationships – business, work, the production of goods, the delivery of services, jobs, making money, making a living.

Base class on producer roles, and it is clear that there are two main classes. There are business people - the business *class* - and the rest, the working *class*. The *business class* organise most of the production and sale of goods and services and organise most of our jobs. *Workers* - the majority – are the *class* who earn their living working for them, or for a public body.

'Middle' class based on upbringing or income *muddles* these key definitions of class. It divides the working class by putting better-off workers into the so-called 'middle' class. Calling workers on middle *incomes* middle *class* merges better-qualified and better-paid workers - technicians, engineers, admin staff, sales staff, designers, managers, teachers and lecturers, with self-employed professionals and small business people.

They aren't middle *class*. They are just ***better-off workers.*** Their living – their income - depends on them getting and keeping a job. When unorganised, they are at the mercy of business people and state employers just as much as worse-off workers, those usually called working class.

All 'middle' class means is people on ***middle incomes***. That doesn't make a *class*. Most so-called middle class people are workers. We should class them, they should class themselves, as working class.

*'*Middle class' ***muddles*** the real, practical, useful meaning of class. Grouping people simply by income is ruinous to our understanding of economics, work and politics. It is disastrous for our understanding how society operates, what is done to us and what we can do about it. It masks the ultra-important, economic roles people have as *producers, making money either as business people, or as wage-earners.*

There is no middle class. It is hereby *abolished!* There are just the ***business class*** and the ***working class.*** *But 'middle class' is so deeply-embedded, and so undermines the meaning of 'working class', we need another term for working class, that we will come to.*

There's another, ***very*** damaging effect of how people use the term 'middle class'. Who are they middle *between?* If there's a worse-off working class *'below'* them, what class is '*above'* them? From how no-one speaks of one, you'd think there wasn't one. ***This hides the most powerful class.***

If pushed, they might say 'the ruling class'. But which class *is* the ruling class? Which people does *that* group together? What role do they play in the key economic and political activities – the production of goods, services and jobs, and making money?

The answer is ***business people, The Business Class.*** (It can include big land-owners, the ruling class before industrialism.) They are ***the ruling class*** because they own and organise the production of most goods and services, organise most of our jobs, and run the financial system. They run the economy. They *are* 'the economy'. And that helps them to dominate politics. They are the class that dominates human society all over the planet, but 'middle class' achieves the remarkable feat of making them invisible!

So when people say 'middle class' - say ***:***

- ***'There is no middle class.*** *It includes small business people and professionals but most are better-off workers.* ***Say 'It's the muddle class'.***

Be clear about classes: ***Base them on producer role not consumer role:***

- ***The business class - financial and corporate down to small business.***

(And, strictly speaking, self-employed professionals and traders).

- ***The rest, mostly workers, grouped by sharing the same basic role in earning their living and in the economy.***

We can't rescue 'working class' from the confusion caused by 'middle class' so :

- ***Let's speak of, and call ourselves, the Worker Class?*** *White collar as well as blue. The 'middle class' issue is dealt with by speaking of* ***better-off workers and worse-off workers.***

- *You can add qualifications to that with better-off, better-qualified workers; worse-off, less qualified workers.*
- *There's cultural variations between Bows and Wows. But there also are within them.* ***Don't talk of Bows being middle class. They are just the better-paid members of the worker class.***
- *If talking about just income and consumer power, just say better-off, comfortably-off, well-off or rich. If talking about culture or lifestyle, isn't 'middle class' intended to mean just sophistication in language and tastes in entertainment, choice of products, holidays, clothes? They aren't important or clear enough to describe a* ***class****. And certainly not to obscure the real classes – the business class and the worker class.*

Note: 'Muddle Class' was inserted here. Some points will occur again, below.

Working Class - What Most People Seem To Mean

Beyond those loose definitions based on what your parents did or your accent or what kind of school you went to, what most people really seem to mean by 'working class' is those who are low-paid, and maybe who are manual workers. But manual work is less of an indicator these days. But really, don't they mean *workers who are less-educated?* Most people come out of the education system aged sixteen, eighteen or twenty-one years old either better-qualified or not and that explains the distinction, nowadays. The key thing that has some people defined as 'working' class instead of 'middle' class' is not having A-levels, not having the articulate speech, information-handling skills and confidence that you get from that level of education and not having the kind of jobs you can get with those qualifications. (But plenty of workers who don't get A-levels or a degree when young, do, later, as adults.)

That was trying to explain what other people, not this writer, mean by working class or middle class. But there's no recognisable definitions and plenty of vagueness in the use of the terms. For example some think of themselves or would be called working class *even though they're not selling themselves to employers as workers.* People such as many of the *Self-employed* - small builders, plumbers, electricians and people running very small businesses in those sorts of trades. People who were brought up in working class families, haven't got A-levels or university degrees, whose family are mostly workers. Although running small businesses they're maybe not so well-off and they share social life, culture and attitudes with the poorer people who everybody calls working class. They may work for themselves for only part of their working life. At other times, if their business fails, they sell their work to another business - that is, they do become a worker.

But while Self-employed or running Small businesses, they're not workers. They get their income *selling their labour directly to customers*, working for themselves not for somebody else. That's a big difference between them and workers in their actual, active role, in how they relate to other people in the key activity in life, *Making a Living*. They relate to other people as customers not as fellow-workers. There's a big difference in what suits their interests in the world of *trade*, of *business* - the making of things or the providing of services, the buying and selling them, the *Economy*, in what suits them about Government policies in things like taxes. They might be against government regulations to protect consumers and workers; are probably anti-union. They're quite likely to have Conservative attitudes.

Being Working Class - How To Class People

Leaving aside personal relationships, or maybe not - *Making Your Living* is the most important thing in everybody's life. We should class people by how they *Earn Their Living, Make their Money*. The plain fact is that in this most basic relationship a minority do it as a *business owner.* The rest, the great majority, do it as *a Worker,* working for them.

Most so-called 'middle' class people *get a job* and *go to work,* don't they? Most 'middle' class people work for 'someone' else. And so they are ***Workers.*** Most are just people-as-workers in better-paid jobs. *As said, they are just a better-off, better educated sub-division of the working class.* If you look at any redundancy or pay dispute you'll see that their relationship with their employer is the same as that of someone who wears overalls. They have disputes with their employers about their pay and conditions. As this was being written, university lecturers were taking action, refusing to mark exams and having pay stopped for it. So despite the higher incomes and the confidence, why aren't they called workers?

Even *managers* are *workers*. They are supposedly middle class. But I've noticed how even middle and senior managers talk in hallowed tones of fear and respect of 'the boss' or of 'the MD' - the managing director. Because '*the Suits*' know and fear, the same as the rest of us, the power 'the boss' has over them. Their self-image, attitudes, loyalties may be towards the employer's side and that's not to be ignored, but *workers* is plainly what they are. They depend on their *employment relationship* with their employer in the same way as any worker, and are equally insecure, because their e*mployer has Plenty of Him. Or Her.*

And they organise. This writer was once a rep. in the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs - *ASTMS*. Now part of *Unite*, it got quite big – half-a-million members big - organising and representing managers as well as technical and admin workers. They are often treated harshly by employers and are workers too. Hundreds of thousands of them got made redundant in the 80's and 90's and are losing their jobs now, in early 2009, just like other workers. It's not all that difficult to treat managers as the opposition when they are acting as managers; and fraternally as fellow-Workers when they've a problem with their own job.

Call all those who go to work, not in their own business, Working class.

Some are better-educated, in better jobs, better-off. But they are *definitely* workers. In how they earn their living most are in the exact same position as the poorer people usually called working class. The casual use of working class and middle class confuses this. It's important to clear it up. So I'll continue, a little, or very, repetitively? – to try to do that.

It's Not About Your Accent

Classing yourself and others by your and their actual, current role in that key transaction in life *getting paying work*, making *money*, is far more important, far more useful, than by what our parents did, by our attitudes, by whether we talk rough or posh or by what school we went to. Those things might be of some interest. But they're of no use in defining mine and yours and his and hers real, live class relationships in that most basic human activity – making the money you need for the basic necessities of life, making sure you can *live*. *Making Your Living.* How and where you were brought up and cultural things to do with that are far less important than

how ***you*** relate to other people, ***now***, in the world of work, in *you* getting the means to live your life. So what class we are is best defined by our work relationship, the one we are in now.

You can *feel* the importance of it. At work we all know we are under the boss's thumb. We are not *free and equal citizens* to them, as we can feel we are, at least partly, outside work. You're unusual if you don't feel subservient to 'the boss' at work. For an awful lot of us, let's be honest, it's *fear*. Fear of their power over us in that ***so***-important activity, *Making Your Living.* I've seen some hard-looking lads, people who look like they're probably nasty or in people's faces outside work, behaving themselves at work because *it's their job*. And some workers accept 'boss's' authority so readily that they don't actually feel fear or resentment - they accept their own lowly, powerless role and defer to them and admire them.

Whoever you are you need to be pretty confident about selling yourself somewhere else in '*the labour market*' to be free of the boss's power over how you get the means to live. Mind you, employment law pretends we are equals to our 'bosses'. So let's take a little something from that and resent that expression 'the boss'.

For business owners as well as workers, defining our class by how we Earn Our Living and our Role at Work bass it on our vital interests. Business class people do this. They're very aware of status in their *trade* and are always interested in and respectful of the other 'players.'

For us, defining ourselves as *Workers* focuses us on the key issues for us in that role - being able to get a job, a decent job, with good conditions; with decent wages, working hours, holidays, pension. Not being easily sacked. Having big differences with business class people over these things while working for them; and when they take away our living by relocating our work to places where they can treat people even worse and pay them less than they do us.

What Do You Do?

We all ***do*** see ***How You Make Your Living*** as a most important thing about who we are, about ourselves, about our life. At parties we ask each other *What do you do?* That's how it's asked at posher parties (I believe), because there, the answer might be *I run my own business*. But at most parties we simply ask each other *Where do you work?* or *What's your job?* That is, *we **assume** each other are workers*. We assume correctly because most of us ***are*** workers. If you work for some'one else' – not usually in fact a *person* but an *organisation*, a business or a public service - you are a worker. You make your living by working. Look at how we talk about *looking for a job,* about *looking for work.* We say *I've got a new job.* We say *I left my job.* We might say *I lost my job.* We might say *I got sacked from my job.*

If you, and anybody else, normally talks like this, you are *Working* class.

If people call you *Middle* class, correct them.

Class The Relationship, Not the Person

A lot of people who it is argued here are working class might not like to be so described and classed. But there's no need for it to be a problem, no need for it to carry any assumptions about them beyond describing the *fact* that they have a key relationship, properly described as being a worker, with a business or a public service. We have other types of relationship than work - sometimes buyers, *consumers*; sometimes *sellers*, of articles, on E-bay for instance; sometimes we are *parents*. And so on. You have personal

and cultural identities. This is about how to class your actual, real, work relationship but not your soul! As far as work goes, you're a worker; but what class we belong in is only part of life.

But still, *How You Earn Your Living* is so central it should be the main identifier of your social position. Class defines or describes your function and place in society in relation to m*oney* and p*owe*r. It should strongly influence your *Politics*.

Being a Worker Means Being Working Class

You are a *Worker*. It's got nothing to do with what your parents did, with how you talk or how you dress, or if you live on an estate. It simply means *you are a worker if you 'go to work'* and it's not for a business of your own but for *someone else's* business. Or for a *public body* like the Government, the NHS or the Council. *Going to work* makes you *Working Class*.

It doesn't say everything about you, doesn't define you as a person, label you, or put you in a particular box. It just means that in going to work each day *as you do that* you are a person-who-is-a-worker. How people earn their living is such an important thing. Not in what job you do, but in how you get work and *how you relate to the people who organise work*. Only a small number of people earn their living through self-owned and self-controlled work, *running a business* or being *self-employed.*

Most of us earn our living as workers. Most of us talk about 'getting a job' and 'going to work' don't we? Look at all the big organisations we work for - the companies, government departments, schools, health service, construction companies, supermarket chains, telecoms companies. Most of us work not for ourselves but for one of them. So we are workers.

Yet people say 'Nobody's working class these days'. The next time you hear that, why don't you say - '***Oh. Why do we have to go to bloody work then****?'*

But we don't clearly identify ourselves or others as workers. The common term m*iddle class* confuses us. It wrongly groups better-educated, better-paid workers with small business people and professionals. But business people do clearly identify themselves by their class. You can see it immediately in how they dress - they've actually got a uniform! – the business suit and tie. Although their political party, the Conservatives, are clumsily trying to loosen up a bit on this, *the business class* still identify themselves to each other and to us by their dress code. And their role in *the system*, in *the economy,* as business people, strongly influences how they speak - the words and sentence structures they'll use, their accents – and their attitudes, what they do, their social relationships, and their politics. Senior people in public bodies too, are expected to conform to the business dress code and speech norms.

But how clearly do we workers identify as a group? You work with lots of other workers, your ***workmates.*** *Y*ou know, those people you'll sign a card for when they leave. All those people you see on the car park when the fire alarm goes off. You recognise some group identity with them when you go for a drink, a night out, a meal, a curry or a Xmas 'do' with 'the people from work'. But there should be more to it than that. You should identify with fellow-workers more than most people do. And outside your job there's all those other fellow-workers - the guy or girl, the bloke or woman, who's on the other end of the phone, maybe in a call-centre, when you ring a company or a public body; or when you ring a supplier or customer of your employer; the person stacking the shelves at the supermarket; the bar worker, the

bus driver. The nurse, teacher. Your mates outside work too. They're fellow-workers as well as mates.

We let ourselves be transfixed by more common but less meaningful group identities. People have stronger feelings of shared identity in shallow groupings - town or city, regional, national, football-based. (There's more about this in the ***'Where You're At'*** section of this work.)

At times we do identify strongly as workers, as a group. But nowhere near enough. In terms of attitudes, it's why business people run the world, to their own benefit and to the detriment of the worker majority. And to the detriment of the planet itself.

Maybe see it not as classing the *person* but the *relationship*? To sometimes say we are *people-as-workers* to counter the problem of people thinking that being called 'working class' defines their lifestyle or culture and habits and self-image? But while not wanting to label or limit people, when any of us sell ourselves for a wage in ***a Worker-Employer*** relationship, *in doing that, we* ***are*** a worker. It's not something you can decide to be or not be. It's defined by you doing that, not by your attitudes or self-image. Think about a work problem you might have had then look at how an Employment Tribunal would handle it. Whatever self-image you have, you'll find you are, in law, defined as being a worker. Not that we should too readily allow ourselves to be labelled by that mechanism. But it does, as it happens, usefully match reality.

For me I just recognise that in the most important 'public' thing I do in life, earning my living, I *am* a worker. So in most discussions about politics, I declare early on that I'm working class, because that's how I've made my living and it influences what I'm going to say. It's not attaching any reverse snobbery to it, it's just a straightforward fact. It takes the *They're all the same* nonsense out of discussions about the political parties and who you might vote for. Like if you're a worker, why, despite New Labour betraying us by going over to the business class, would you vote for the *authentic* parties of the business class, the Conservatives or the Lib Dems? Or for the class-denying, colour-based misdirection of racist and nationalist parties?

How To Class People - Slight Return

Excuse this further recap but the argument runs counter to most people's use of language and ways of seeing themselves and others in society. The argument is simply *We should class everybody by how they Earn their Living.* Isn't the key question about someone's class and about class in general – ***do they own, run or control a business or a public service,*** buying and controlling other people's work and selling it on to customers and service users? ***Or do they sell themselves as a worker*** *to the business or public service*? It's important because there's a big difference of interests between owning and running a business or a public service, and working for one isn't there?

We should define class and group ourselves with others by our role in *Trade* and the *world of work*. By how we take part in *the Economy*. It's the most important transaction you make with other people in that absolutely important activity of *Making Your Money, of Making your Living*. Because it's how you get home and food and clothing. It makes absolute sense to define class by our relationship with employers, business people*, and with each other*, in that so-important activity, that key activity.

Think about all that's been argued here, for us to see most of us as being *Working class*. And next time you hear someone say "There's no working class anymore" or "Nobody's working class these days" why not say – again - ***"Oh is that righhht? So why do we have to go to bloody work?"*** (Like Billy Connolly)

We Exist !

Of course there's a Working Class. There's all you Bus Drivers and Anaesthetists and IT Technicians. All you Call-centre workers, Hospital Porters and Lorry Drivers. All you Admin workers and Parks Maintenance workers. You Shop workers, you Delivery van men. You Electricians, Baggage Handlers, Gas Fitters. You Roads Maintenance workers, Motor way builders, Lighting maintenance workers. You AA and RAC Patrolmen. You Council workers, Social workers, Planners, Student Loans staff. Lecturers, Teachers, Canteen Ladies. Cleaners. You Bar staff, Department of Work and Pensions Staff. You Inland Revenue Staff, Department of Trade Staff, Department of the Environment Staff. You workers on Magazines, you Newspaper workers. You TV and Radio workers. You Coach drivers, Food Factory Workers, Sheet Metal Workers, Welders, Drillers, Fitters and Machinists. You Textile Workers, you Mail Order workers, you Pickers. All you National Park rangers and Wardens, you Water Bailiffs, you Pilots. You Meteorologists. You Research workers. You Train Drivers and Ticket Office workers, you Line Maintenance workers. You Air Traffic Control people, you behind the Fast-food counter, you Motorway Service Station Staff. You Warehouse workers, you Dockers, you Fire-fighters... Have you been left out? There's such a lot of us, see.

Probably not, quite, you self-employed Builders, Plasterers and Plumbers, Electricians and Taxi drivers. Strictly speaking, you're Traders or Small Businesses. But *Big* business people screw you as they do us so you should stick with us politically.

People don't realise it but fellow-workers are all around you. On the crowded pavements of the cities and towns, in the shopping precincts, most of your fellow shoppers are workers. So are the shop workers, all those young lads and lasses. In the motorway hold-up most of the people in the other cars, lorries and coaches are fellow-workers. On the bus, the train, the Tube – most fellow-passengers are fellow-workers. When away on holiday most of your fellow-holidaymakers are. We're all around each other but don't know it.

End of The Right To Unionise 1. The Right To Unionise 2 is page 135-150.

The Business Class Exposed, Defined and Named

We workers aren't very class conscious. We identify by many other false group identities. *These next people, the most powerful in society,* ***are*** *very class conscious, very well organised. Yet they manage to remain largely un-named and invisible!*

Look again at how people speak only of the working class and the middle class. You'd think there were *only* these two. *But if there's a 'middle' class, which two classes is it middle between?* 'Below' them there's less-educated workers, known as the working class. But what is the class, who are the *people,* 'above' the 'middle' class? Is there anybody there? We've no everyday term for a class 'above' the middle class.

We do know there are people who are very, very rich, who live luxurious lives, have expensive town flats and houses and big country homes, go to Ascot, Henley regatta, Badminton, to gymkhanas, who've been to public (private) schools, are socially linked and share unpleasant accents and arrogant manners. Or is that the other way round? You see something of them if you look in the newsagents or the dentists at magazines like Country Life. They are the sort of people who are in 'Who's Who.' But how often do we look in there?

We Don't See Them

One reason they're invisible is that we don't actually *see* much of them, do we? We see other working class people, small business people, and managers, at work, in our districts, on our streets, in the shops, socially. But we don't see, meet or talk to the *very* wealthy and powerful. They don't live in our districts or use the same shops, pubs, clubs or restaurants as us. They've got their own world of 'posh' districts, security-gated mansions, expensive shops, exclusive clubs, VIP lounges, and executive boxes. If we did see them in our districts we'd spot them by their pretentious clothes and accents, their arrogant manner, and the sheer snottiness of many of them. But they don't mix with us do they? They occupy a different world to us, buffered from ours by their flunky class, ***management***, and by the obscure relationships of company ownership.

We see a lot of those of 'the Rich' who are music and film 'celebrities' (yuck) in the papers and on TV because they live on their fame. But the rest, the rich people who own and run Big Business, the large shareholders, the directors from the boardrooms – what do we see of them? We can't see inside their boardrooms. We are oblivious to what they do there. Yet that's where they exercise the power that runs our lives.

They slime around from boardroom to boardroom, from repulsively luxurious homes to repulsively luxurious offices in repulsively luxurious cars, private jets and helicopters, to their London flats and second homes in Scotland, France, Spain, Switzerland and the West Indies, New York and LA, and we hardly notice them and haven't got a name for them.

We Need to Name Them

Some talk of ***posh*** people or ***toffs.*** But we need to identify them by more than just their social awfulness. It's of pressing importance for us workers, as a class ourselves, to identify them accurately and have a useable everyday name for them.

Some talk of them as ***the wealthy*** or ***the rich and powerful***. But these terms don't say anything about the big issue of *how* they get wealthy and *how* they get to be 'the rich'. From what activities do they get wealth and power, in relation to the rest of us? How much do they deserve their position? Do they get it *fairly?* Is it from their own effort and skills? Is it a *reasonable reward* for what they do? Or is it not? Is it from screwing us?

Or people speak of them as ***the upper class*** or ***the 'ruling' class***. But neither term gives us a useable image of any group of real, recognisable people. And '*ruling class*' says nothing about how there can *be* a ruling class in what's supposed to be a democracy. People sometimes talk of ***the Establishment***. But that only describes the political and legal and military organisations that support them - it doesn't describe ***them,*** as a class.

Some - my fellow-Marxists - call them ***the bourgeoisie.*** That's off-putting jargon. *Bourgeoisie* is only, originally, French for burghers, townspeople, *merchants,* to distinguish them from the older class of *landowners*. It *means* ***business people***. So *say* business people.

Some call them ***capitalists.*** But that term has been available for a long time and we've not become comfortable with it, not taken to using it for everyday discussions of the world we live in. Nor the ***capitalist class.*** With our better understanding of the problems of (their) globalisation and with the September 2008 financial crisis, maybe we'll start using it? But I doubt it, doubt that we'll ever use the term amongst ourselves, on the street and at work.

The suits are just middle management. ***The bosses*** or ***the Fat Cats*** are the best everyday terms we've got for the invisible class above 'middle' class. But they're not good enough, not accurate enough to define *a class*.

The fact is, we've no useable, commonly agreed, everyday term for those above 'middle' class. Most people use middle class as if to mean everybody 'above' the poorer working class. The really rich and powerful are pretty much invisible to us. ***They run this show but they're invisible and un-named!*** We've not even got a word for them!

It's like science fiction, as if there's some all-powerful un-knowable 'force' ruling us! What's going on when there's no word in everyday language for the most powerful people in our societies? It leaves us unable to identify them and talk about them in everyday talk and in serious political discussions. Since we don't clearly sense the people 'above' the 'middle' class we can make little political judgement of them and what they do and don't do. But there is a way of describing the class that runs the country, that would do fine for everyday use. It's actually very easy to name them.

They are ***the business class. The people who run businesses.***
The two main classes aren't the working class and the 'middle' class.
They are The Business class and The Working class. The working class *are those who sell themselves to them or to a public service.*

There's other useful ways to group people but these are the primary ones. The others are only modifiers, sub-divisions or exceptions to them.

Why We Haven't Named Them

How is it we've no everyday word for the people who run the economy and who own most of the country? Do *you* have a clear image of them? Do you recognise them as people, *as a class?* You don't hear people talking about them so it seems most of us don't. How come they're invisible? There are two main reasons. .....

Reason 1 - "Anyone can make it if they want to"

Business people argue that *'We're all free to start our own business*', that they are no different to the rest of us, that they only do what anyone and everyone could equally well do if they wanted to. They just take the trouble to start and run businesses, be enterprising, take risks with their money and work hard. And the rest of us don't bother or haven't the talent.

So if you don't like being *a worker* they'll say "Nobody's forcing you to. You can always go into business for yourself". This is a big political argument, used to justify business class *free market* or *free enterprise* economies and anti-working class laws and policies all over the world. It convinces many of we workers. Even though a lot of workers know full well they are being mistreated, they accept the business owner's power over them and their wealth because of the apparent openness of the system to anybody. Many workers know or know of people who've *'made it,'* sometimes from having been ordinary workers, and simply admire their success. I know some. Do you?

But this key argument of theirs is very easily countered. *Modern industrial society runs on* ***mass production*** *and has to, because mass industrial production outperforms small-scale production. There can never be an economy of small producers.* Them saying 'You can always go and start up for yourself' ignores industrialism. It makes *them* the Luddites. Whichever people 'make it' and get to be ***the business class,*** most of us, all of the many millions of us, the vast majority, can't. Most people are *always* going to be workers, working (for the most part) for business

or government. *And even if they all 'made it' from the bottom - which they don't - it doesn't justify them treating the rest of us harshly*. We should insist on them treating us fairly and decently as workers *whoever* gets to run the inevitable mass production. Without our only alternative being to go off and open our own pet shops or start our own airlines.

***Their** power comes not as a fairly-determined reward for being harder working and enterprising but from abuse of the 'They've Got All The Rest' mechanism that mass production accidentally gives them.*

*So **we** should, all of us, the great majority, respond to 'They've Got All The Rest' by acting together, insisting on making deals with them only on a fairer basis, insisting **on our right to organise**, in unions, and doing it. Then say 'OK, you're enterprising, take risks with 'your' money, you're due some reward for business talent and energy. But how much you make, which is from o**ur** work, we'll decide by fair negotiation between equals'.* How much fair and equal bargaining they'd accept without severe political dispute is another matter.

Reason 2 - They Come In All Sizes

That argument that we could all start our own business confuses the view of them as a separate class. The other thing is ***there's all sizes of business.*** From the smallest they get very gradually bigger and bigger, all the way from ***small traders***, our relatives, neighbours and friends who are Self-employed electricians or plumbers, on up through ***small businesses*** employing just a few of us to ***medium-size businesses*****,** and on up to the ***corporations, multi-nationals*****, and** ***the banks***. There's no obvious point where you can draw a line and say people who run or own businesses bigger than *that* are a definitely a distinct class, clearly different to us.

So for example in the retail trade - there's the working owner of your corner-shop off-licence like Apu in *the Simpsons*; and a range of small and local shops, then the medium-sized and larger and larger ones, on up to the size of Morrison's, Tesco, and the multi-national Wal-Mart. Computer businesses range in size from the owner of your little local computer shop, up in size to Dell, HP and Microsoft. In the building trade there's the small builders who do the work on your house; then all sizes of bigger building companies way on up to the mega-construction companies like Laing's, Costains and Balfour Beattie.

It can be hard to see some small business people as a separate class. But the importance of ***how*** you *Earn Your Living and Make Your Money*, to them as well as us, means we have to see business people as a main class and need to name them clearly in everyday talk and politics.

Identifying the Business Class (<u>They</u> Know They Are a Class)

Despite us finding it difficult to identify and name them, *they* identify themselves clearly. They talk of *being in business*, of *being in business for themselves,* of being b*usiness people, businessmen, businesswomen.* This very significant *economic* role affects their thinking, how they speak, what they do, their social relationships, and how they dress.

As said earlier, they've actually got a uniform, the 'business suit' and tie! They are far more class conscious than we workers, have a far clearer view of the arguments for their business rights and freedoms and of arguments against our rights as workers than we have of ours. That's how they are able to mistreat us so much, and get outrageous things like anti-union laws made, for their benefit.

In politics they identify themselves as a class. In the UK many or most of the business class organise together as the Tories/Conservatives and so are visible that way. You sometimes see interviewed on TV at their Conferences local Tory party activists, nasty

selfish people, viciously attacking the taxes to pay for welfare and health and education for their supposedly-valued English or British fellow-countrymen and women. This is from a Guardian article about the 2008 Tory annual conference – " I'm at the Tories" a startled reporter texted me before I arrived; "There are THOUSANDS of them..... From the ... peachy skinned young bankers and frosted trophy wives, to the impeccably groomed elderly couples, the overwhelming first impression was one of money." Clearly they are business people, members of ***the business class.***

If business people aren't themselves Conservative activists they are usually Conservative voters. *The Conservative Party largely is and exists for the business class*. Some, usually smaller, business people are Lib Dems and they can even be New Labour now. But the Conservative Party is their natural home. Labour politicians sometimes say, mildly, that the Tories want certain things done 'for their friends in the City.' But that avoids a blindingly obvious thing - business people and those in 'the City' are not the Conservative's ***friends - they are their class.***

Are All Business People Capitalists?

We and they can easily identify all business people as a class. But do we need to, and can we, distinguish between the sometimes-worthy *small business* people and *big business* 'real' *Capitalists?* Many traders and small business people are often just able and energetic types, do some of the actual work of the business, and are mainly just following some enthusiasm or skill they've got. Like my sister when she ran a restaurant in Llandudno. At first, they just try to get enough sales to cover costs and take an income for themselves. Even when they expand and become *employers* and are then, in their relationship with us, properly business class, we can hardly call some of them *capitalists*?

What makes someone a 'real' capitalist? *Capital* is surplus money above someone's immediate living needs, above what you need to live, that they invest to make more money. *Capitalism* is just *investing* it, *'putting money to work'* to *'get a return on capital.'*

And whatever the size of the business all business people use capital. All 'returns on capital' are made by business activity in all sizes of business. Putting *Us* to work on invested money / capital in some sort of business is what makes new money. Except for the self-employed, all 'returns on capital' are made by exploiting our work in some business. Even those who just exploit price changes in commodities and property really draw it from the only real generator of new money, business activity. *Business activity is the process that makes capital.*

And of course, small business people as well as big business people use and make capital. They might borrow it from the bank; invest money made in their business back into it; invest it in a new business; or through banks and investment funds, in other people's businesses, from which they get *interest* or increased *share value*.

So whatever the size of business we can describe all business people as capitalist. They all exploit our work to make money and then they put us to work on it again to make more still. And again and again. That's ***capitalism***. So business and capitalist activity are the same thing.

Most of the capital they so bravely risk doesn't come from mortgaging the family home or the family cat. Most investment capital is made *in business,* as *profits,*

by *paying staff less in wages than they sell their work to customers for'*. And if the business fails - as they do - they may indeed lose money. But so do other people, like their creditors, the people they owe for supplies, who've also risked and lost money without the possibility of profit that the owner got if the business was successful. Business owners, so sainted for taking risks, easily escape responsibility for the risk other people took by just going bankrupt.

As said - we urgently need to name the class 'above' the so-called 'middle' class, the 'invisible' class with most of the power in most countries. It is the ***business*** class. But obstructing us from usefully and satisfactorily identifying and naming a recognisable *capitalist* class is, as said, the *infinite range of sizes of business.* Business people grade up seamlessly from one-person small businesses, through medium size, to big business multi-nationals like General Motors, Mitsubishi, and the rest, and the banks. Are they all capitalists? Are they all 'business class'? Can we divide them into small and big businesses? Where exactly do you draw a line? An attempt will be made below, as follows. But really, the conclusion will be -

We should call them all the Business class, not the Capitalist class. *Capitalist class* isn't an everyday-useable term. ***Business*** *class is.* It fits our everyday language. As said, they and we commonly talk of them *running a business, being in business, being a businessman or a businesswoman. Business people* and *the Business class* roll off the tongue and fit into sentences and conversations easily. Capitalist doesn't and *capitalist class* even less so. And neither we nor them normally talk of them being *a capitalist.* And there's too many syllables anyway.

Self-Made Small Business People

But let's attempt *to distinguish between and sub-divide them.*

Self-employed people and independent ***Traders*** are, technically, small businesses. But if they make their money from selling only their own work, not from ours, we can pass them by for this analysis.

In ***small businesses*** that do employ some of us the owner might have built the business up through their own efforts. They might still do a lot of the real work themselves. The notion of them earning their money and power fairly has some merit. We might know them personally. I know some. You probably do. Their kids might go to school with yours. Some did with ours.

But you also know from your own experience of work, and that of family and friends, that small business people employing even just one or two of us are no longer simply the self-made, hardworking, enterprising, worthy, individuals of conservative political mythology. Many of us experience and see them mistreating workers in any small business, like hairdressing salons, pubs, nurseries, garages, shops and so on.

And once a business owner employs even a few workers, their wealth doesn't come from ***their*** *work. It comes less from theirs and more from* ***ours.*** It comes from them exploiting us, our work. Although the owners might still do some of the ordinary work, they also make 'their' money from we who work for them. It's good that we get a job and an income, sure, but we also put money in their pockets. We literally *work for* ***them,*** for their benefit. That means their wealth isn't only earned worthily from their much-trumpeted enterprise and hard work, but from their unfair power and control over we workers, that was explained thoroughly as *They've Got All The Rest* in the first section of this work.

Big Business

Going up in size, beyond a point not easy to exactly identify, but certainly when the business employs dozens of us; when there's a chain, of shops or factories or warehouses; when the owners manage *our* work rather than do any of the real work themselves; and when it's a large business organisation employing thousands of us, and most of the work including design and sales and key management decision-making is done by employed senior managers - the owners are probably capitalists.

One reason it's difficult to *talk* of them as capitalists is that we rarely know how much money a particular person has. How much those who own large sums of capital have and what they do with it is private information, far removed from the our everyday lives. Except it's our work that generates it. It might be possible to identify them starting with, say, the Sunday Times Rich List - which the writer has a copy of to hand as he writes - and maybe somebody should do the full job of cataloguing the business class?

Real Capitalists

There certainly are real capitalists, people with huge amounts of money, who invest it - *put it to work* - to *make a return on capital* - wherever it can generate more money/capital. And that's all their involvement is about. They've nothing to do with the actual work. A small business person might own a flower shop and actually be a skilled florist. A 'real' capitalist buys, owns or sells *chains* of flower shops according to how the return on capital compares to investing in something entirely different like an airline or somesuch. These people own *the merchant banks* (those who mainly loan to business) and *the High Street banks*; operate in *the City*, on *Wall Street*, and in other *Stock Exchanges* and financial centres around the world; own large *shareholding*s of big Industrial companies. They have big shareholdings in this and that, are on the Boards of many companies, use capital for *take-overs, asset stripping* and *re-selling.* They've no skills in any particular trade, no personal enthusiasm for or interest in the product or service. They just want their money to make money - that's capitalism. They are capitalists.

It's getting easier to see some of them as individuals as they show up more publicly to take over what was once our game, football. Well-known examples of people who clearly *are* capitalists are those who've taken over both Manchester United and Liverpool football 'clubs' and many others in recent years, purely to exploit the club and the players to make more capital. And there's quite a few of them.

Some *are* interested in football, the actual game. But the point here isn't about them buying the 'clubs.' *The point is seeing how many people there **are** who have hundreds of millions of pounds to spend on buying football clubs*. Like Jack Hayward at Wolves, Mike Ashley of SD Sports at Newcastle, the late Jack Walker, steel dealer, at Blackburn Rovers; the Thatcherite anti-union Dave Whelan of JJB Sports at Wigan Athletic; Abramovitch at Chelsea; and the brutal dictators of Abu Dhabi who've bought Manchester City. But although there's many of them with hundreds of millions to buy our clubs, we can't name many non-football examples, can we? Richard Branson? Alan Sugar? Any others?

Even in football they manage to evade our scrutiny. You'll know how the business-class owned 'news' papers criticise footballers for their high earnings. That's one of their main aims – to wind up the masses about somebody other than themselves. But millionaire footballers and music stars, the Rooney's, Henry's and

McCartneys, are just very well-paid workers or self-employed people, with rare skills, who we are prepared to pay a lot to see. They don't make their millions from exploiting other people's work. But the business class owners of the clubs do. Recent owners of Man United, Manchester City and Newcastle United made far more - 80 and 100 and 50 million pounds, I think – by *owning* the clubs, than the footballers and managers who at least do the real work, yet get all the media criticism.

The 'real' capitalists can seem invisible. But they are actually all around us. The Bank of Scotland, now HBOS, ripped off my wife's 85-year-old widowed mother for most of the value of her house in one of those schemes to release some money from its value. I wrote on her behalf to all the people on the Board. They're not just 'the Bank', they are real people.

One - a woman, let's not think male stereotypes – was also a director of a pub chain. It includes the local half-timbered Olde Worlde pub that people see as part of the fabric of our district, where our son was working behind the bar, and being mistreated in the usual ways.

It would be useful to be able to separately identify this sort of very rich and powerful capitalist and name them as a class, distinguishing them from the sometimes more worthy small business class with a suitable term that we are prepared to use. But it's unlikely that *capitalist* will ever really catch on and this writer himself doesn't want to start using it.

It is common to speak of ***Big Business,*** and Americans talk of the ***Corporations*** and ***Corporate power,*** to distinguish big from small business. That's useful. But talking of their organisations, their *businesses* and *companies* and *corporations* and *banks* as if they are free-standing entities, not even human, is one of our biggest mistakes. It allows the *owners, flesh and blood humans*, to hide behind the name and the institutional fronts. So saying 'Big Business' or 'the Corporations' still doesn't name the business class ***people*** who they really are and actually hides them from us. People also talk abstractly of *'the City'* and *'Wall Street'* and *'the markets'*. Let's name the actual *humans*.

They are People and we need to identify and name them as a class.
Business Class does it, is the best overall term. Don't you think?

Look at Them Not from Below but from Above

In trying to divide the business class into big business people and often more acceptable small business people and take different attitudes to them, there's still the problem of the infinite variety of sizes of business, going up from the self-made small business to the genuinely capitalist corporations. Where to draw the line? And they are all capitalists of a kind.

But the whole analysis fits. There is a clearly-observable Business Class.

We can confidently see that we, ***the Working Class***, have a major and very problematic relationship with all of them and the economic system they prefer. (But it goes against even their own interests, if they'd get clued up about what's important in life.)

And let's not do as they and their defenders, which is to look at them from below, conferring on them all the imagery of the plucky individual small business person starting up on their own from the bottom.

Turn that view round, look at them from the other direction, from above.

Start with and centre the analysis on the Big Business people.

Any analysis of *business economies* shows the big players have most power. For instance, for all the many small businesses in the retail trade, it's said that one pound in every eight spent on shopping in the UK is spent at Tesco. In the US the hundred biggest

firms own half of Industry; and it's the same in the UK. The 500 biggest Transnational corporations control as much as 66 per cent of world trade.

As said, at the centre of the definition of the business class are the shareholders of the merchant banks and the High Street banks that spectacularly collapsed in September 2008, the people in the City, Wall Street. Then there's the majority shareholder owners of the multi-nationals; then those of other corporations, and big companies. They don't run their firms, they just own them to get a return on capital. They employ senior managers to do the real work. In football, compare the work of former Chairman of Manchester United Martin Edwards and that of the current owners, the Glazers; to the Managers, David Gill and Alex Ferguson.

The products and services sold are not the owners work, but that of many design engineers and technical workers. They don't sell anything, employed sales teams do. Production and delivery is done by thousands of us working as a team. Any original self-made small business owner has long ago sold out to the bigger company, and maybe retired. Clearly, then, these are capitalist operations.

But still, *can we* clearly and separately name these people? As Capitalists? Masters of the Universe? Fat Cats? 'The Man'? Plutocrats, Oligarchs, Multi-millionaire businessmen, Entrepreneurs? Their media sometimes calls them *Magnates* or *Tycoons*! *Elites?*

Maybe they're genuinely Big business people when they have *chauffeurs?* Own private jets and helicopters*? Maybe it's those who travel … business class*?

Back to Small Business People

From looking *down* from above, from big *down* through medium-sized to small business people and traders, although still unable to draw an exact line, let the analysis of the business class tail off. The problem of where to draw a line that we get when working *upward*s in size matters less. Probably small business is where the work of the owner is still central, where there's not many of us *staff*, and no multiple sites or chains of shops.

So what attitude should we workers take to these small business people, with some of them being closer to us than big business, often being involved in real work, maybe able, decent, enterprising people personally involved in the business, not just distant exploiters. Like, for example, the commercial printer who helpfully scanned the picture of the fish cartoon at the front of this book, as a one-off job for somebody who just walked in the door and asked for his time as a non-commercial favour.

But as said, small businesses exploit us, and many bully and mistreat us just as much as bigger businesses. Many of them identify strongly with the big business members of their class and ally with them politically, enthusiastically, as nasty little grassroots Tories, backing anti-union laws that hinder us from organising ourselves together to be nearer to being equal to them.

And even if some don't *want* to mistreat us, *competition* in their '*free market*' system *forces* each of them to drive our conditions downwards.

Big businesses and owners of big capital have such power in 'free markets' that decent small business people get shafted by them like we workers do. Small business people are always being put out of business by the real capitalists and the big firms re-investing capital - such as small shops in town centre shopping areas being replaced by the big chains. And they suffer as we all do when the insane practices of 'real' capitalists throw *the Economy, their Free-market Business System,* into crisis.

We workers can make common cause with small business people in challenging the stupidity and brutality of the whole business system. Maybe we can look favourably on small business people who'll treat us decently as employees, recognise ***our right to organise ourselves*** in unions, and observe ***Minimum Labour standards*** like a proper Minimum Wage. And we can try to educate them in the stupidities of the business system, and to be our allies against the Big business owners. Even in a Socialist economy, there'd still need to be a place for enterprise and small businesses.

The Business Class Not The Boss Class

To conclude in a practical way this backwards and forwards discussion about naming the class who *run the country* - all business people employ and exploit us. Calling them all Business class fits our everyday experience and use of language, and corresponds with how they and we do already talk of what they do - run businesses.

So let's call them all the Business Class. Use 'Business class' as the overall term. Then, ***Big Business Class*** and big business ***people***; or the Rich Business class, Rich Business Class people. (Make allowance for the worthiness of small business people.) *Calling them the Business Class cuts out a lot of confusion in everyday political talk*. We can talk to each other about them much more clearly, about what they do and what they don't do, and what we do or don't do about them. Let's start using it. *Try it.*

Some workers argue that we should call them ***the 'Boss Class'.*** But that misses out something very important. It misses out *why* they are allowed the power and privilege to be bosses. It's because they play a key role in *the Economy.* They organise the provision of the *Goods and Services* everyone needs as *Consumers*. Providing us with *Jobs* comes after that and jobs only happen if they are successful in that. There's no point naming them bosses, solely by our job/worker relationship with them, by the fact that they *employ* us, when they have stronger and prior relationships with *Customers* and *Suppliers,* running their business with or without us, making money for themselves or for shareholders. They run - or *are* - the Economy.

And that's why they get all they want from governments that are supposed to be representing all our interests, but don't.

The Business Class are much better organised than us. Every day, in the very activity of running their businesses.

Their claim is that that justifies their wealth, and it's true, to a degree. It doesn't justify their brutality and ruthlessness, but they do take the trouble to be organised in their own interests. We, the Working class, need to do the same, to all be organised in our interests. It's because we're not that we have to put up with so much shit from them.

Business Classes of the World

There's a business class in most countries. There's a Thai one, an Indian one, a Pakistani one. An Australian one, that Rupert Murdoch comes from. There's a Turkish one, a Russian one, a French, a Spanish, a Moroccan, a Nigerian. A South African, a Chilean, an Argentinian, a Venezuelan. There's one in the USA of course. And pretty much everywhere. And they always organise themselves together in at least one business-supporting *Political Party* capable of getting into government. The really big ones don't actually have a national identity of course - they are multi-national or they choose a nationality to best avoid paying tax.

The Free-Market Business System

The term *Business class* enables us to name those who bully, exploit, and discard us

better than the nerdish term *Capitalists*. But their *system* has problems aside from misusing us. It is unstable, helter-skelter madness. It fails for reasons unconnected with anyone's real needs, disastrously for the billions of us and even for some of them. So *Capitalism* remains a useful term for their system and for analysing and explaining how it operates and fails. That's not being attempted in this book. This book is about explaining how, through our basic relationships with them and with fellow-workers, we unnecessarily allow them the power to run this system.

Some key points of how Capitalism works can be stated here though

Invest money mostly made from workers in the first place into new equipment and new materials for a new product or service.
Employ us to use the equipment on the materials and make new products.
Our work 'adds value' to the money spent on equipment and materials. The added value results in the product's sale price.
The price is mainly determined by how much of our 'labour time' has to be put into making it and not just by supply and demand.
Use the obscene imbalance of power business people are allowed to have over we staff to pay us less than the value added by our work.
Keep the rest for yourself. That's what profit is, what 'return on capital' is.
What you can't spend on a luxury lifestyle, re-invest to make money again by paying us less than the full value our work adds.

Justified by risk-taking? By enterprise? Maybe.
But also by treating the majority, including me, my family, friends and workmates, and you, brutally. And it's unstable. And it wrecks the environment.

Here is a book that does the full job on Capitalism's failings –
'Economics of the Madhouse' by Chris Harman, ISBN 1-898876-03-7.
It may be out of print. An alternative - 'Explaining the Crisis', same author.
Both published by Bookmarks **www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk**

To summarise, we should talk of -

- ***the Business Class,*** of big and small business people.
- ***the Business System.***
- Use it in everyday talk about what's going on. It all becomes easier.
- ***Capitalism*** to talk of how it works - or doesn't - ***as*** a system.
- Or use its full name - ***the Free-market Business System, Capitalism***.

You Can't See Them but They're All Around Us

Later, let's look again at ***us,*** the Working class, and why we're not as well organised as they are. But first let's develop our everyday awareness of business class people. Here's some simple everyday ways of spotting them ***as a class,*** a separate class to we workers.

As you go about your daily life just look about you. In the shopping areas, the town and city centres, the industrial areas, look at the business premises and commercial and industrial property. There's a lot of it. On the streets and motorways, look at the buses and lorries. Clock the business names on the lorries, the names of

the big companies. How many lorries do you own? The business class own them. Look at the trains and boats and planes.

Look at all this commercial property and think ***Who owns all this?*** It's not me and probably not you. The seventy per cent of us who are working class own a bit through our savings but mainly it's not ours. Most belongs to, is under the control of, is used for the benefit of, a small number of very rich people. The big Shareholders. The people on the Boards of Directors, the Managing Directors (MD's.) Many of *them* are big shareholders. The Chief Executive Officers (CEO's.) The Financial Directors, the Marketing Directors, the Manufacturing Directors; the non-executive Directors. Many of them have directorships in many companies. We don't see much of them as people but there's their business property out in the streets right under your nose. Use it to confirm their existence as a class.

Run through a list of big companies in your head. I'm doing it just off the top of my head while writing – Vodaphone. BA. Virgin. Nestle. NTL. ICI. Pfizer. Astra-Zeneca. Esso. Glaxo-Smith-Kline. Bose. Wimpey. Costain. Laings. British Aerospace. P&O. Littlewoods. Top Shop. Northern Foods. Eddie Stobart. United Utilities. British Gas (Centrica.) Arriva. Stagecoach. Ticketmaster. EasyJet. Morrisons. B&Q. Tesco. HMV. You can just go on and on. Why don't you have a go, now? And think *Who owns them*? Wouldn't you agree we can call the owners *the Business class?*

Another way of confirming their existence is to look in the newspapers, especially the ones they read. Don't just read the sports pages first (as I do), but *look instead at the financial pages*. You won't really want to read them, it's often incomprehensible if you're not a business and financial wheeler-dealer. But just glance over the pages and reflect on the sheer size of the coverage of business deals, wealth and big money. It's often three or four pages. Who reads them? Not most ordinary people. But somebody must do, or else they wouldn't be in there. *They* read them.

Judge Them by Results

Look at the dramatic ***inequality of wealth*** *that is the end result of all the relationships we all have with them*. There are a lot of ways we inter-act with them through work and government - production costs, sales, prices, shares and dividends, wages, savings, taxes and benefits and tax breaks, that determine Income and Wealth, each an issue of political debate. So look at how it all pans out in the end, at where the wealth ends up – look at *the financial end result* of all the economic and political activity – the figures on *wealth distribution*.

It's so obviously wrong it's all been over the half-decent media. From the Independent on Sunday, 2 September 2007 – "In the City, fat-cat pay awards, with top executives earning 100 times more than their employees..... In the US, the average Chief Executive .... Now earns 364 times the pay of a typical US worker ... The average take-home annual Income per head of the population in England is around £13,500 ... "Increase in basic pay of directors over the last five years averages well over 7 per cent; that of technical and professional staff, 3.5 per cent."

Note that there's a difference between income inequality and wealth inequality. ***Wealth*** inequality is almost twice as high as ***Income*** inequality. That's because most people spend most of what they get as soon as it comes in, and have to. But try though they do, the rich can't spend *that* much more than us on the basics. So a lot of their Income sticks to them as a surplus, retained as wealth, as *capital.*

The end result - 1 per cent in the UK own over 20 per cent of the wealth.

The top 10 per cent own 53 per cent. Which leaves 90 per cent of us sharing less than

half of the wealth. The ***United*** Kingdom, eh?

Another piece of evidence is the *Rich Lists* that appear in the papers. They often pick out the star entertainers prominently amongst the top 50 or so. In highlighting star performer's high earnings the papers aim to impress us with their achievements – that people can 'make it' - not to criticise them. But we shouldn't have as much of a problem with them – they're rich off their own abilities, not from exploiting us. We could tax them more though. But though they feature amongst the richest, entertainers are a minority. The full story is the accumulated wealth of the business class. Look at The Sunday Times Rich List of the wealthiest at **www.timesonline.co.uk/sitemap** and search for Rich List, *isn't* all 'celebs'. Most people shown there are *Property-owners, Industrialists, Financiers,* people who get rich out of *our* work.

People sometimes say that through life insurance and small savings and pension funds we own a lot of business so 'we all own the Economy'. Well, most workers haven't got a pension fund, it's a big political problem. And that figure above, that showed most wealth to be in the hands of a few, will include savings and pension funds. Pension funds and savings are heavily owned by business people and their better-paid lackeys, less so by the majority of us. "A wealthy elite accounting for only 4 per cent of savers holds 40 per cent of all savings by value" (the Guardian, October 2008.) And if to some degree we work *and* also own capital we're just exploiting ourselves as workers, probably losing more as a worker than we gain as a capitalist.

There's more on all this in 'Rich Britain – the Rise and Rise of the New Super-Wealthy' by Stewart Lansley, published in March 2006 by Politico's.

There is a Business Class

So to sum them up - they own the businesses we work for, own a great share of the wealth, made from our work, they own *the country* and are clearly a distinct class. They are *in power* at work, in business, in finance, and in politics. There's maybe 3 or 4 million of them. There's a lot more of us workers, 55 million in the UK, including our kids, those unemployed, ill and retired, but we're not as organised and active as them.

If each of the 55 million of us got involved in class organisations and did just a bit more than we do at present, we'd easily be able to negotiate with them at work and in politics on a much fairer and more civilised basis. Saying, as ***the Working class***, organised - look – it's *you* who want this business system, not us. It creates great unfairness, insecurity and poverty and over-rewards you. So let's regulate you - with strong unionisation across each trade; and through democratic government.

That's if they'd be prepared to accept such regulation. On the historical and present day evidence of how vicious they get when we get strong, they won't. And that's a big issue that is called up by all that's written here. But if we could persuade them, things would be a lot nicer than they are. For everybody, including them. We might even have something worth calling Civilisation, which, at present, we don't.

Class Isn't Fixed But It Gets Most People in the End

Defining class isn't an absolute science. There's people with a foot in both camps and some in neither. And since some of us worker *Wage Earners* also have savings and even shares, people sometimes say they can't be working class. But if someone depends mainly on wages and their savings are small compared to wages,

they're still working class. Combined circumstances and minor overlaps like this needn't stop us from drawing an accurate and important conclusion – *that there's a fairly small percentage of the population, a class of business people, who own and control a huge proportion of the businesses, property and the wealth*. And we, the majority, *the Working Class*, work for them in the important matter of earning our living.

Most of us, including most 'middle' class people, are workers, are working class. The other main class is people who own and run businesses. But someone's class isn't permanently fixed - some move from being a worker to being self-employed or a business owner and back again if the business fails, while remaining much the same person with the same friends.

But give it time as a member of one class or another and almost certainly someone's political attitudes will change. *The way people, both business and working class, do that most basic thing, Make Their Money, Make a Living, defines their trading and political relationship with other people. It tends to determine their needs and therefore their attitudes*.

Business people are keenly interested in customers and it influences their behaviour to them. They're very polite to them - before making a sale, if not always afterwards when there's a problem. It's very different to how they are to people who work for them. They are keenly interested in *the state of trade* in the markets they operate in. Interested in Government protecting that market for them, interested in prices and the costs of materials. They see staff, workers, mainly as a cost. Our ***employment right***s are, to them, unnecessary, unacceptable, burdens. And their most obvious class attitude is their hatred of us getting something like equal to them by organising together in unions.

Some of Them Are Alright !

Traditionally, we organised workers and socialists can talk a good line in class enmity and this work criticises business people as strongly or even more than anyone does. But it's important to say that you can't call them ***all*** complete bastards, because it's simply not true. It doesn't fit with reality, with mine, and probably your, experience. You can't completely pre-judge any of them from their class role in society. We should allow that some of them, as people, are alright, socially, in the right setting. Even in business some of them are nice people, are positive, energetic and enterprising, work hard and are very capable. More so than some of the rest of us, perhaps.

They get the business going initially, think of products and services to sell, find customers and get the orders in that keep us in our jobs. This is less true of Big business, really Capitalist people. Their role is far more parasitic, as analysed earlier. They make decisions. And for us in our role as consumers they organise the availability of all that stuff we buy.

They persuade us to consume too much. But that's another argument.

Business class people make a lot of the important things happen. They take responsibility; they *Take Care of Business*. They organise much of *the Economy*. That gives them enormous power *even before they organise politically* and is why Labour, set up by the Working class to make things better for us, constantly fails. We leave it to the business class to make or run the economy and so Labour politicians like Blair and Brown come under immense pressure from these people, to which they give way, to do things their way. Electing Labour governments with only the extremely weak form of class organisation that just voting every four years develops, it will remain so. That is examined thoroughly in the last section of this book.

So give *some* credit to the business class for organising work for us. Business people probably deserve more for what they do than some of the rest of us. How much that should be, and how it could be worked out, is explored in ***The Wealthy – Are They Worth the Expense? at page 327.*** But they give us jobs only because it's the only real way they can make more and more money. They only employ us if they can use us and won't if they can't – it's not a social service they run, except as a side-effect

Although *some* of them are nice people, ***their system*** pressures – forces - them not to be. ***Competition*** is a key element of their system and forces harsh treatment of each other.

One argument for competition is that it's a free, democratic thing – anyone is entitled to have a go at winning some of the market in any particular trade. (Although public ownership is far more genuinely democratic.) But competition puts each business person, nice person or not, under pressure to out-bastard each other, particularly in mistreating us workers. Competition may be good for us in another role *as Consumers*, by getting things made cheaper and maybe better. But *as Workers*, it forces the business owners we work for to threaten, abuse and mistreat us and draws us, too, into going for each other's throats, threatening each other's ability to get the means to live and survive. That stops us living decent, secure lives. A section on Competition is next.

And though, because of their enterprise and hard work, business people may deserve more than the rest of us, what they *actually* get, and the excess power they get over us too, isn't for such good, socially and politically agreed reasons. *They get their wealth and power not from their own hard work and ability but from* ***the pernicious Job Market relationship – They've Got All The Rest***. That unagreed, unfair, mechanism enables them to make money out of your work, not theirs. They strenuously defend it by opposing us organising and acting together as trade unionists.

This book is written to and for you *as a worker*. *They've Got All The Rest* showed how business people become bosses. Accurate definitions of Working class and Business class have been given.

So - use ***Working class*** for your own group identity (if you are working class).
And ***Business Class*** for them.

(The Right To Unionise 2)

Free Markets, Competition & Your Work

Free Markets

The dominant social system, globally, is the ***free market*** system. Some call it 'neo-liberalism'. There's no need for such obscure jargon. It just means traditional freedom for business people, as practiced in the West for hundreds of years until interrupted by the Second World War, where the needs of the war effort forced more state regulation of business people. They've been freeing themselves from it since 1980 onwards. It's best called *the Free-Market Business System.* It's often called capitalism but that is a narrower term that covers how business people accumulate money from their staff's work and constantly re-invest it in expanded or new businesses. The whole thing is best called *the Free-market Business System or simply* ***the Business System.*** That fits everyday experience, perception, and common usage.

What It Means

The free-marketer's argument goes like this : Economic activity is best left to free individuals making decisions between each other according to how best each sees their interests. They are best placed to do that. Interference by the state obstructs the efficiency of such economic transactions and decisions. People are selfish by nature so the system will run more dynamically if you allow them the freedom to act like that.

It sounds convincing at times. Using the magic term 'freedom' helps. But examine it and it's flimsy in the extreme, merely self-serving, partisan arguments that suit the interests of business people, who are the most powerful actors in free markets. Many of their claims about overall economic management are demolished by Ha-Joon Chang in his book '23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism'. There's also 'Twilight of the Money Gods: Economics as a Religion and How It All Went Wrong' by John Rapley.

Free-market theory isn't borne out by what happens in the real world. It doesn't take into account the actual relationships that exist between people in markets. They rarely operate like the ideal of 'free relationships between equal individuals' that free market economists assume. The single most obvious thing about our modern world is that it is industrial. This means many people work together in large organisations, and 'the economy' is highly collective. The most powerful economic decision-makers are not individuals at all but are organisations. Namely, businesses, from small firms up to the multi-national corporations. And being organised makes them much more powerful than the rest, either as consumers or as workers. Because aside from a minority who are organised as consumer groups or as trade unionists, the other main players are not organised. So the free and equal players of the free-market myth actually consist of hugely powerful firms on the one hand and fragmented genuine individuals on the other.

Because of this, state regulation, portrayed by free-marketers as intrusion by arbitrary authority, is really, in essence, collective, organised, democratic action by people otherwise atomised and weak in relation to businesses. It is a collective response to businesses collective strength. However, it is very weak, as people only act together at election time, and then are still essentially atomised and unorganised.

I will show here some examples of how free markets are heavily biased, almost always toward business people. The biggest, most significant case of imbalance of power in free markets is the labour market. It's a fundamental one. It affects most people in that most important trade, selling their labour in order to make their living.

It's common to talk about 'market rates', for instance when talking of interest rates. ***We need to introduce the term 'Market Ratio'***. I will show the bias towards business people by explaining this term. The ratios as explained here are not too thoroughly worked out and won't cover all significant ratios. They just show how the free-market model usually put forward is absurdly simple compared to real world transactions. But the labour market ratio *is* covered thoroughly here and in several places in this book, mainly between pages 80-111 - 103 and 135 - 150. And we will also come back to it here.

Note that businesses normally have many *customers* who buy their goods or services. And they normally have many *suppliers* of the equipment, materials and services they need for whatever they make or provide. They also engage in many *transactions* with these customers and suppliers. They are not dependent on the success of any one transaction, they can bear risks and losses by setting them against general success.

The High Frequency, Low Cost Market Ratio. If a buyer buys something that doesn't cost much, and buys it frequently, like a loaf of bread, if they are dissatisfied with it, they don't lose much each time and can then try other loaves or other shops. They can shop around. The same applies to services. If they buy a meal at a restaurant and they don't like it, they can go somewhere else next time. Lots of businesses, in buying materials, are in this reasonably equal position. In business-to-business buying, they will often do repeat orders, and if they are getting a bad service, they'll go elsewhere for the next order.

So the free market argument can be valid for small value purchases of simple things, repeated, frequent. It is probably the only way in which it is valid and it doesn't cover a huge number of the transactions people make.

The Infrequent Market Ratio works less fairly. You buy some goods or use some services only *occasionally*. The buyer's knowledge of service providers like builders or car repair shops is less than with frequent purchases. You won't know the traders' reputation as well as if you bought the service often and know how well they do the job, how trustworthy they are.

The High Value Market Ratio. If buying something of high value, not bought repeatedly, the buyer is at a disadvantage. If they get it wrong, it's a big problem. Like buying a house. They have to put a lot of work into verifying the standard of the house and can get it wrong.

The High-Tech Market Ratio. Another flaw in the free-market argument is when you buy complex, technical items like washing machines, cars, or any of a multitude of technically complex articles or services. The manufacturer and seller will know the goods or services intimately. The buyer won't. Against the inequality in knowledge, we need state regulation to apply expertise and regulate things like quality and safety. Though we don't really have enough democracy, regulation is, in principle, all citizens acting collectively, democratically, instead of, weakly, as single buyers. It is simply the buyers acting collectively, organised, to match the selling

business's organisation. Business people and conservative politicians rage against this, calling it 'red tape'. The free-market market, alternative mechanism of regulation is for people to make compensation claims in court. This is no way to regulate. It's after the event, which is particularly useless when people have been injured or killed. It is massively expensive in time and money. Regulation is for preventing problems, better than compensating people for them after the damage is done.

Usually, in the consumer transactions cited, it is the buyers who have the problem. The *seller* has more knowledge so the *buyer is weak*. They usually have many buyers or 'customers', so they can mistreat or lose a number of customers before it affects their business. Upsetting one or a few doesn't hurt their sales much, they can afford to do shoddy work for some. (This is changing with internet forums and reviews, and consumer groups, where buyers can pool their experience). Everybody faces this problem as a consumer, when trying to get recompense for faulty goods. The *sellers*, usually business people, are OK. On their side of the trade that has been made, money doesn't usually go wrong.

Most businesses have many of each – many suppliers to buy their inputs from, and many buyers or 'customers'. The trade they make with each supplier or customer isn't crucial. When not satisfied with price, delivery or quality, they can shop around for alternative suppliers. In these cases, the free market model makes some sense. Free-marketer's make exactly this argument, for competition, against monopolies and public services. With public services, though we have democratic control as a superior alternative to competition.

But it can be the other way around. A *buyer* can have many alternative suppliers and the *sellers* not have many customers to sell to. Then the seller is weak. It applies to some businesses, when they are in that position of having few customers, and many other businesses sell the same thing. The fewer customers you have, the more you have to please each them.

So political debate about markets has to be more sophisticated than the simplistic arguments normally made by free-marketers. ***We first need to put aside the nonsense about 'free individuals'.*** From small traders to vast corporations, the most powerful players are never individuals. Organisations, not individuals, dominate markets. And above all, ***whatever Market Ratios are operating has to be central to any such debate.***

The Most Important Market Ratio – The Labour Market

This ratio is the most important of all, more than all the others shown above. Because they are all just about inequality in buying a single commodity, which usually only represents part of what you do, part of your costs and requirements in life.

What about when you are selling the entirety of your labour power, your work? Your ability to make your living? It is much more important, it is the biggest ratio effect, the biggest inequality, because it affects almost everybody, everyday, in the most important piece of buying and selling people take part in – selling their labour to earn their living. Finding work.

It is fully explained in *How We Relate At Work*, the first section of this book, page 80-111. But it's so important – the most important relationship in public life – that it is worth just running through again here, in this assessment of the free market argument.

It's worth repeating - the fewer *customers* you have, the more you have to please each one.

And when you only *have* one, you *really* have to please them.

And the more *suppliers* they have for what you are selling them, your self, the pressure to please them is greater still.

This is what you encounter getting and keeping a job, as a worker.

And that's how it is in this industrial world - most employers, even small ones, have many other staff.

It's the biggest ratio effect for business people and public employers too. It's what gives them power over workers. You know that – you feel it every day. It's how they make money – it's what enables them to pay workers less than the value of the work they do and pocket the rest, calling it profit. In this industrial, globalised world, this is how free markets operate on people. It's not right, it's not acceptable.

They argue that if you don't like what you get from an employer in the free-market, the labour market, you are free to go elsewhere. But look, you numpties – this is an industrial world. That means wherever you go instead of your current employer, most potential alternative employers *also* have many staff and you face the same unfair market ratio.

This biggest ratio – that I call *They've Got All The Rest* – gives people at work the *right* , the *entitlement*, to organise together in trade unions. I'll not say more here because I do cover it so fully at pages 80-111 and 135-150. Do make sure you read that material. It covers the most important relationship in human life – how you make your living, how they make money.

Competition Drags Each Other Down In Earning Our Living

That was a piece on *Free Markets*. It leads on to this major feature of free markets – *Competition*. The business class and its political parties and economists constantly argue the benefits of competition. They claim it benefits everybody.

It does force constant improvements in the production and delivery of goods and services. Look at that only as a consumer, as you are encouraged to do and as most people do, and it seems good. And business class parties – conservatives - use competition to promote attacks on public services, arguing that Privatisation is good for all of us because the competition it involves forces improvements in public services (or so they claim.)

But look at it as a worker – which, as well as being consumers, most people are - and competition also means we're after each other's jobs, we threaten each other's ability to make our living. Do we want that? It's a huge problem. It has us all in fear of losing our jobs, in fear of *each other.* Is that how we want to live? Is that right, when we call ourselves 'a society'? And expect national loyalty, respect for the law and general good behaviour from each other? To compete with each other and put each other out of work doesn't fit.

Business class people are generally confident enough in their own abilities and ruthlessness to say they don't mind that. They get enough out of the business system to make it worthwhile, to them. Well, they can suit themselves. Do we, the worker majority, really want to live in a society structured around us all threatening each other's livelihoods? Business people's preference for (supposedly) taking the risks that go with competition should not dictate that the rest of us should live insecurely too. Do you want it to be like this? And, if you don't, we should not put up with the law of the jungle, dog-eat-dog system that business people like.

They argue that competition is simply human nature. 'Survival of the fittest'.

This isn't so and hasn't been for most of human existence. Co-operation is a stronger feature of human nature than competition. Primitive humans existed in supportive communities. In the Middle Ages in Europe, although the feudal system was brutal and run by a ruthless land-owning class it did still contain the notion – expressed through Christianity - that humanity was co-existent. As well as the serfs owing duties to the lords, the lords owed duties to the serfs. Unlike today where, without the welfare system, you'd be left to die and your fate is of no interest to the successful. (And that is how many conservative people in the UK and the US would prefer it to be). More later on how human nature is more than the selfish individualism that free-marketers claim.

Arguments About Competition

Competition does force improvements in price, quality, quantity. It forces business people, capitalists, to constantly invest in the economics of mass production, in better methods, to keep up with each other. It's a dynamic system, constantly revolutionising productivity. But it also forces us to work and live at an increasingly frantic pace *without us choosing to*. And it does it through putting us in fear each other, in fear of losing business to competitors.

"Yessir, the US of A, greatest country in the world." No it's not. There's some good things about it, and a lot of decent people. But that's true of any country. The way the USA works though, everyone's scared of losing their job to their fellow-citizens. And when that leaves some unemployed, sick, or starving, the others don't give a shit. Greatest country in the world? No. To those who say this, you should say 'If you really want to be patriotic, you'll look after your fellow-citizens – the people who make up 'the USA' – a lot more. You'd support a proper health service for them. You'd support the worker majority against the power of industrialism – the power of business people to mistreat workers and lot more besides.

Fear can motivate people to work harder, more efficiently. Yes. But *We shouldn't live in fear of each other,* of losing our jobs to each other. We can decide we don't need to. More on how to do that later.

But yes, competition improves quantity, and drives down cost. What about Quality? Often, but not always. How often have you bought something that appears to be the same as a competing brand, but less expensive, and it turns out that it's cheaper because it's of poorer quality or not really the same? It's where the saying 'You get what you pay for' comes from. You have to do a lot of research sometimes to not get gulled by shoddy gear.

Generally, though, competition does bring constant improvements in products and services. Computer programmes and mobile phones and games machines and TV, Video/DVD, satellite gear, constantly changing. It's astonishing, really. Look inside a disc drive with associated circuitry, and or a DVD player that costs just £30, and marvel at how much there is to the thing. And yet so cheap. Since I was a kid in the 1950's the availability of consumer goods and services has exploded.

But business people's position on competition doesn't add up. (It's common with their politics. They maintain completely contradictory positions, depending on what suits their immediate purpose. Like, pursuit of individual greed results in the best collective outcomes for all. That's obvious contradictory nonsense. And they assert aggressive individualism and lack of concern for fellow-citizens whilst pressing patriotism on us).

And this - they are *against* competition, when it is from foreigners. But why you are supposed to tolerate losing your job because of competition within 'your' country, but it's

bad to lose it to those nasty 'foreign' competitors? They expect 'us' to support them against that.

They'll say it's to protect yours and mine 'British' jobs. That might work in practice sometimes. But they'll make us redundant at the drop of a hat to maximise profits. Then when they are in trouble suddenly it appears they do it all only to give us jobs, and want our support.

Again contradicting themselves, ruggedly independent business people who want 'small government' are quick to bleat about the need for government support when things get tough for them. Take the farm industry in the UK during the foot and mouth epidemic in 2001. They made the problem themselves, then expected taxpayer support - mine and your money, that is, to get them out of it. Or take the subsidies American farmers get. Or take the hauliers bleating about the price of fuel in 2001.

And though they say they're for competition, most of them wouldn't mind destroying their competitors and being totally dominant in their trade. So why do they support competition politically? Maybe it's because where there is some democracy, a few giant companies who would want things run just for themselves simply couldn't form a political party. There'd not be enough of them, there'd not be enough votes. Maybe their policy *has* to be some degree of free competition, to allow for a big enough business-friendly class to form a party and win votes. I can imagine there've been Tory conferences where the corporate people have had to compromise with small-business people on competition policy, simply through the need to have their political support. And it explains the anti-Trust laws in the US, which broke up Standard Oil (Esso). And the legal action against Microsoft in 2000.

And maybe they're smart enough to have noticed that when one giant monopoly company emerges with almost all the market as an industry develops, which is a normal part of capitalist development, it might as well be nationalised.

Competition forces each business to constantly re-invest in ever-greater productivity, to produce more goods and services, cheaper than their rivals, simply to maintain market share, and to increase it. It means you, and I, can, and do, lose our jobs *through no fault of our own*. You don't have to be lazy, inefficient, bad at your work. Nor do your workmates and your business owners and managers have to be. It's just that some company somewhere gets better, and your company *has* to push you harder in many ways – driving down your conditions, increasing your workload, hours, holidays, cutting pensions (though they do that anyway to get more profit from you). And then close your works down and make you redundant. And whether the competitor is in Tamworth or Taiwan makes no difference.

All the extra output produced by competition they then foist on us with high-pressure advertising. But do we really need all this huge production of goods, all this cheap travel? It's costing us the planet.

People ask -

Why is it that 20 or 30 years ago a discussion raged on how we would spend our leisure time when, thanks to computers, we would need only to work part-time and could retire early? And now there is a big discussion about the opposite – working until we are 67 or 68?

The question only arises because we don't bother to look at how the system

operates, and link things together. The answer is *Competition.* We'd like to work less. But at the same time, we'll buy the cheapest goods and services, as consumers. Competition makes them cheaper; and makes our conditions worse. That is the main reason.

As said, we'll buy the cheaper option. So we force all employers, including our own, into selling as cheaply or go out of business. That means getting more output from us, with longer hours, increased workloads, less pay, no pensions, and so on. And they insist on being able to carry out their business wherever, within a country or globally, workers can be made to work cheaper and longer. We, acting as Consumers, buy them.

Another reason is that those who own and control capital are always looking to 'get a return' on it. They, and many with small savings, insist on the right to invest it to earn more. They demand to be able to 'put their money to work', to 'get a return on their money'. They usually do it by investing in business activity, making existing products or services more efficiently and more cheaply. That is another thing that forces each employer to become more efficient. It might be by investment in better methods, in other parts of the world, and that also puts you under pressure to compete by having your conditions worsened.

So competition and investors put is in this situation of never being able to say 'that's enough', and work shorter hours and retire earlier. People and businesses and 'countries' (like us in the UK) who might want to use increased efficiency to work less are threatened with being put completely out of work by cheaper competition. To stay in work at all, we and every other society are forced to continually compete downward on working conditions and working lives. So despite increased efficiency enabling us to work less or more comfortably, we get the opposite – working conditions and wages being constantly forced downwards.

This sort of change could, should, be done in a measured way, accommodating the effects on us. To use increased productive power to work less, we'd all have to decide we have enough goods and services, of acceptable quality, and share out the work of providing the same amount, so we can all work less. That means we need to organise more rational societies, and that requires that enough people get organised, globally, to agree on the terms of that and exert the political power necessary to stop people competing with each other to each other's detriment.

Organising around the world like that sounds like a tall order, and it is. But business people do it all the time, for opposite aims.

How to Regulate Competition

Free-marketers and others claim it's all just human nature, nothing to be done about it. But there's lots of evidence and examples that show it's perfectly possible to limit it according to what we, as a society, want to do. We are capable of limiting how much we work against each other. For example, in wartime, in order to get everybody to pull together, fair treatment and planned economies suddenly become humanly possible.

As workers, when organised, we can, and do, limit how much we work against each other. When not organised, the business class have us competing against each other ***inside*** the firm or public service, undercutting each other, under-bidding each other on wages, on working longer hours, on doing whatever the owners and managers want with no respect for a life outside. By organising ourselves in our Unions and negotiating fair pay scales and fair opportunities, we get rid of competition ***inside*** the workplace. We formalise better conditions for some by negotiating agreements that allow differences, but on fair grounds.

Outside the workplace, we also fight to limit competition between us by fighting for industry-wide agreements that set standard conditions, in all companies across the Trade, as far as possible. That is why we are called *Trade* unions, and why company unionism, though better than no organisation, isn't enough.

Business class politicians are outraged by us doing that. They argue that "unions" (us), by stopping us competing with each other, are 'in restraint of Trade'. To them, that is a killer argument. They claim that free markets, in labour as in everything else, are always virtuous. They say it as if free markets are laws of nature. They think that challenges our very right to unionise, and justifies laws against union freedoms. But it's nonsense. We, as humans, can decide for ourselves how we relate to each other. We managed to exist without free trade in primitive communities. And under the feudal system. Free Trade has advantages but it's not a law of nature that you have to obey or else you're defying reality.

So yes, when we organise, we are in restraint of trade. And proudly so. Because *competing against each other when We Each Have Just One Customer Who Has A Lot Of Others* is madness. And wider than just our own workplace, we recognise that competition between our employers sets us all at each other's throats. It forces us to compete downwards on our pay and conditions. While that enables some to have cheaper goods and services as consumers, job conditions get worse. It's not sane and it's not civilised. For that reason, we trade unionists try to get all workers in a Trade on as similar conditions as possible. That stops us under-cutting each other and allows the strongest, best-organised workers to drag up the conditions of the worst-off.

In the UK, the Tories in the 1980's made laws that limit our struggle to limit industry-wide and trade-wide competition between us. They gave the people they represent, business people, rights to sue us for damages for 'Secondary action' and in particular 'Secondary Picketing.' (When you go and picket a workplace to either help or persuade the workers there to join a strike that is trying to improve standards in their Trade; or to help them to organise; or to stop them under-cutting conditions in the trade). The Tory, business class argument for their laws against this was "why should a firm be picketed when it's not involved in a dispute?" That can sound reasonable.

But here's why - because of your precious markets. You say we are all individuals, separated from each other. *But because of markets, you know we are not*. That is a relationship where we compete with each other in the same markets. And from that, *we* recognise that fighting for decent conditions just with our own employer doesn't work, long-term. It's still worth doing, but in the long run, a non-organised competitor will undercut us and force us out of our jobs. We may have to work in the business class's competitive markets. But by organising in our unions and taking what they call 'Secondary action' to establish industry-wide conditions, we are saying *we* are not competing. You, you enterprising business owners and managers - you do that, if you wish. Compete using all your managerial skills and your smart decision making. By setting common labour conditions across the industry we're not getting involved in that, as far as we can help it.

We can and do organise to reduce how much we compete against each other. Trade-wide Agreements on conditions like pay, holidays, bonus schemes are key to our protection at work. Before industry-wide working conditions in the UK were

reduced by the old industries being run down and by us not organising in the new ones, there were – and still are, in some cases - agreements setting common conditions, made by us through our Unions with Employer's Federations across whole industries. Like Shipbuilding and Engineering; the Paper and Fibre Board industries; Federated Bakeries; and so on, many of them. Across Local Government and the NHS and the Civil Service. I mention these examples as they're not the stuff of everyday discussions. But many workers and even employers *are* familiar with the idea, and the fact, of things like pay, holidays, and other basics, being decided across a trade. Even business people will talk of 'the going rate', meaning an accepted pay rate in a trade.

On top of organisation in single workplaces, these agreements are why work in the 50's, 60's and 70's was more civilised and enjoyable than work in the 80's, 90's and 00's. Yes, they may hold back innovation and efficiency. But why should we be slaves to the mad rush for constantly increasing productivity? It's not natural.

It's not easy to organise like this, obviously. *But any serious discussion of what's wrong with the world has to recognise this issue and work towards tackling it*. It has to be global - everybody knows competition is increasingly global. Jobs from 'old' industrialised countries are increasingly being lost to competition from companies all across the world, wherever labour – working people, that is - is cheaper and more easily bullied.

But even within one country, the UK for example, many of us aren't even organised on our own site. If we are, workers at other workplaces and sites run by our employer might not be. When business people make us redundant, close our site and move our work to somewhere else, we rarely have links with those other workplaces where our jobs might be re-located to. Where we do have links, even when union organisation was stronger, even then there was a failure to link workplaces (with a few exceptions where 'Combine Committees' operated). And even where there are links, the workers where business people move your work to don't often have the long-sightedness to refuse to accept the work, to refuse to co-operate in the abandonment of their fellow-workers. That is the huge weakness we have, that very often we betray each other and in doing so, betray ourselves in the long-term.

It's worth emphasising that jobs lost to 'foreign' workers are often not lost to 'foreign' businesses. It's 'your' employer in the UK or USA re-locating, exporting its production. And capitalists investing in factories abroad that will compete with domestic producers. We need to call them out on this and their claims to 'patriotism' before doing down 'foreign' workers or migrants.

Of course, workers in those other countries need jobs and have to take them even with the awful conditions. But they don't really welcome the conditions - they'd rather have them better, same as us. They try to organise. They're in the same position as UK workers were in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. *Our big problem, is how to help them organise, how to organise with them, so we are not played off against each other*. It's not rocket science, it's only the same old organising job we've done for 200 years, 'domestically.' But there's an awful lot of work to be done.

Yet look at the business class and their managers, at how much global organisation they have, how much contact and collective working, compared to the small amount between workers. They've got conference calls; reports and plans exchanged globally; e-mails. Transatlantic flights to meetings and to conferences. Flights to Milan, to Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney. Meetings all over the world. Remember the red-eye advert? Think

about your work and that of your family or friends – are there any recent global connections like this, that 'your' managers and owners have made? And people you know making them on their behalf? No wonder they run the show. It's not individual flair and enterprise - it's organisation.

It should be getting easier for us to match them. We travel to and from these countries now so much, as part of our job as well as for holidays. So we should be able to break out of dubious and divisive nationalisms and see that we have things in common with people all over the globe. Many people from all over the world now work in the UK too, but have links world-wide. And not just the 'classic' immigrant groups, but also Aussies, Malayans, Greeks, Poles, Brasilians. We can do it. Travel, e-mail, the internet - it's just a question of catching up with business people, and taking care of what we need to do.

That concludes the key arguments against Competition and for workers to organise to regulate its effects on them. Next is a more general discussion about the 'human nature' arguments conservatives and free-marketers put forward to justify their brutalist positions.

Public Services or Private Business

Briefly, for now – the topic is worth more coverage - the arguments about Privatisation. Conservatives and free-marketer's claim privatisation is done for efficiency gains forced by the discipline of competition. Actually, much of any 'efficiency' gains are not from actual efficiency but from simply attacking the workers pay and conditions. But the real reason is business people resenting large parts of the economy, when publicly run, being denied to them and they miss out on opportunities to make money out of them. On the efficiency argument, there could be a case that the monopoly that public services have can result in complacency. In my former trade, public education, my union, the lecturers union, was actually Ok with competition between colleges. There was a claim for protection for one to do a certain course and another not being allowed. A maritime, ship's-management and navigation course, I recall.

However, there's good evidence from the UK governments privatising education, health services and railways that privatisation can be disastrous. As I understand it, the evidence on this is strong anyway. But we can also ask 'Why, exactly, can we not run things collectively, efficiently, as democratic governments? Public or private, it's usually the same people doing the work, people cross over from one sector to another during their working lives. The public service ethos is probably as strong or stronger a motivator as the fear induced by competition. At base, privatisation is really just a way to make money for business owners rather than a better way of running public services.

Have We Really Got To Be In Fear of Our Jobs Before We'll Work?

Now, back to the general arguments the business class free-marketers use for competition. They say fear is a necessary motivator for us all otherwise we'd all just sit on our arses and do nothing. That is plain historical nonsense. In Europe and the USA, before industrialism, people worked on the land, often had a small family farm or holding, taking produce to market, and a small manufacturing operation linked to it, maybe weaving. They worked bloody hard. Even today, in large parts of the world,

maybe Africa, they still work in that format and work bloody hard. Go back before that, to primitive communal societies, maybe hunters and gatherers, they worked bloody hard.

But yes, fear, pressure, can be a factor in motivating some people. I've worked in a number of trades - building, engineering, education - and come across a few slackers. But everybody knows that business class people aren't all hard-working, enterprising types. Quite a few are slackers too. Back in the 19th century they were quite unabashed about living lives of total idleness and hedonism on money made from workers. This exposes a flaw in their world view of people, human nature and individualism. They claim it's justifiable to disown those of us who are slackers or not very able and say just let 'the fittest' survive. But they can't live totally without human closeness, like having a family. And they often have to face, in their personal lives, the truth that many of themselves are useless. That should lead them to concede that we look after each other, according to our needs, and contribute according to our abilities..... It's called Human Society, y'know.

But yes, fear of losing your business or job to the competition can be a motivator, can get people who don't work to a commonly accepted standard of effort to work hard or harder. I've seen it in jobs I've been in. Maybe it's worked on me at times. But how much of it do we have to put up with? Do we want to live like this? Can't we live and work efficiently together, can't we get by without fear? According to the business class, it's the best, the only way, of organising society. Really? Is that the best we can do, live by threatening each other? Does it have to work on the assumption that we only work through fear? Can we not work as a civilised society, with some trust, mutual respect?

People do work hard. It's in our nature. Outside work, we do all sorts of things, hobbies, enjoy telling each other on internet sites about how to do all sorts of things, give out all sorts of freely given information, collect all sorts of things. Marx said that work is the highest thing we do - it's something we like doing – using our conscious creativity. The fact is, the business class use fear of losing your job mostly not to tackle the slackers but to make normally hard-working people accept working longer hours, accept pay cuts, intensified workloads.

Co-operation – the Human Side of The Arguments

Fear isn't the only way to motivate people. Free-marketer's claim it's human nature to slack, so we need competition to keep us on our toes. (But do we want to be kept on our toes? Again, what happened to all those 1960's projections of a relaxed future with short working days, weeks and years? As said, the dragging-each-other-down effect of competition happened to it.)

Fear has as much to do with keeping us on our knees as on our toes. It does have a role in human life. It's been so in much of our history. Team sports are popular because they give us little competitive war-game to take part in, that has the excitement of winning - and the fear of losing. But that's where competition now belongs – in sport, not in business, the business of making your living.

And this - look at the entire course of human history and you'll see it's as much, or more, about ***Co-operation*** than competition. Co-operation is what makes us more highly developed than other animals. It's because we co-operate that been able to eliminate rival creatures and turn others to our needs. It's why we have language – telephones - the internet, and other animals don't. Although you do hear stuff about ants and penguins and whales co-operating.

We've become able to produce so much not because we compete *but because we*

co-operate. We learned how to work together in groups, to capture and kill animals to eat. In doing that we developed *Language*, the central tool of co-operation. As in "You chase those deer up the canyon, we'll wait at the top and do them in when they get there". Because of co-operation we've advanced far beyond our uncertain existence as animals and become (up 'til now) in control of our environment. Communication by Speech, Writing, Education, even Trade itself - *it's all Co-operation*.

Even the competitive, war-mongering business class value co-operative peace too, as it's necessary for trade and business to operate. War is only about sectional control of land and resources, oil, markets. It doesn't help in producing more goods. Its overall effect is complete waste.

The business class's business system itself isn't as much based on competition as they make out. Globalisation, the global economy, is essentially a *Co-operative* system involving great world-wide exchange of finance capital, designs, plans, materials, products and services. And all the inter-action between billions of us-as-workers, fixing up shipments, phoning, faxing, e-mailing, travelling - it's all co-operation. That's why there's the G8, the World Trade Organisation, trade agreements. Sure it involves ruthless competition too, but competition is constantly under attack from Co-operation. The benefits of co-operation are the reason the world is no longer divided into little feudal princedoms and dukedoms, it's why larger states and the European Union have been developed. It's why there's tension between Washington and state's rights in the US. It's why there is a United Nations (limited though it is by continuing national interests).

I'm not recommending here any of these organisations in particular - just saying they are a result of the pressure for co-operation and co-ordination because it makes human life more effective. Co-operation works better than competition. And is even more basic to human nature. What we need is to develop co-operation and regulate private ownership of what is actually collective production, and develop more co-operative political relationships.

Moving back to the personal level of the argument - is fear and competition so necessary as a motivator? Do you think you and most other people will only work effectively if driven by fear? I've worked with many people who were paid crap, treated like crap, yet were as conscientious and hard-working as anybody. As much as many of the business class, for one thing.

And not because of fear - many were in public-sector, relatively secure jobs (at that time, before privatisation was brought in precisely to use fear on us). I'm thinking of particular workers, office staff in education say, who'd work past finishing time to get things done for you, and treat working conscientiously as such a core part of themselves that the idea of them needing fear is absurd.

People's attitude to work owes far more to upbringing, social values, notions of social duty, and natural gregarious-ness than it does to fear of job loss. As an atheist and a humanist I've found you can raise kids to be socially responsible, reasonably hard working adults, without any sort of fear or recourse to external authority, whether deities or absolutist texts. So have millions of other parents all around the world. You just need decent social values.

Are we really such a bad lot that we have to be scared into pulling our weight?

Yes, according to a lot of right wing business people. Like my one-time dentist, but not for much longer, who summed up his employment philosophy as "shape up or ship out." It's a common employment philosophy amongst the many arrogant brutes you get amongst business people. Since they get the power to say that from being organised and having other staff, if we get organised we can apply it to owners and managers - and Rich and 'Royalty' too - and say to them - *YOU* shape up or ship out.

Many people do a huge amount of work voluntarily, my wife and I included, we each work or have worked for different voluntary agencies helping the general public.

The real problem of people slacking is caused by the alienation and exploitation we face in most jobs. And let's blame the right-wing's own philosophy, that infects workers too - the false idea that looking after yourself and sod everybody else - getting away with doing as little as you can for as much as you can get - is human nature.

In so far as we do have slackers, organised workers often don't like them either. There's often cases where somebody's letting their own workmates down and we don't mind disciplining them. But that's only acceptable where we have really good union-agreed conditions, and work that doesn't alienate and injure you. Only then can we can say 'Pull your weight.' And it applies only to a few slackers. It doesn't follow that all of us have to be put in fear of our jobs, all the time.

Getting People to Work Without Relying On Fear

The business class themselves have pulled off some amazing feats in getting people to do more than just work hard, using other methods than fear of the sack. They've got people to believe stuff quite contrary to their interests. Even while treating workers with contempt and brutality they've convinced whole populations to believe deeply in, and have great loyalty to, a society - the country - that treats them like dirt.

In the UK, look at the whole period from 1750 to 1939, say. Starting around 1750, they enclosed the common land, driving people off it with no means of living. Then they imprisoned people, deported them without their families, and hung people – including starving kiddies - who then stole from them in order to survive. They outlawed free speech. Tom Paine had to escape to Dover and France to escape a death sentence, just for criticising the rich, brutal aristocratic oligarchy who ruled Britain at that time. They outlawed unions, deporting the Tolpuddle martyrs to Australia; refused the vote until we finally forced them to concede it in 1926; had little kids working all hours and days down the mines, to pay for fancy great houses with wonderful gardens. There's been many periods of mass unemployment, and for the loyal subjects, only the workhouse or great deprivation and no health care.

And straight after millions fought and were maimed or died for them in the First World War, mass unemployment followed in 1919 and the early 20's. The miners were forced into poverty after the defeat of the General Strike. There was the unemployment of the early 30's and the disgusting slum housing.

And yet with all this, they've had stunning success in convincing many millions to work without complaint, to accept all the shit treatment and, by promoting deference to the rich and through national identity, to actually be proud of such a cruel and uncaring society!

They've convinced millions to recognise the Windsor family as heads of state, apparently 'above' us. The very existence of the unelected Windsors as a so-called 'Royal'

family should offend every self-respecting citizen. It demeans us all that we should be called the Windsor's 'subjects' and not citizens. Yet when Charles Windsor's marriage was announced, I heard on TV and radio a number of people from 'public life', themselves very successful and capable and self-regarding people, 'the great and the good', being interviewed and talking deferentially, in awe, about the doings of this odd, unexceptional man. Let's have some self-respect, please.

Using the myth of 'the nation' they've even got millions of working class men and women to go and fight, get maimed, and die for them. Members of my family, and possibly yours. I'm named after an uncle who got killed at the end of the Second World War. My grandfather was gassed in the First World War. When I was growing up in the 50's I saw lots of men on the streets with limbs missing, and otherwise mangled, mentally and socially. They suffered like that for the class that treated them like dirt.

Most wars have been about business classes disputing control of territory, and the resources and markets there, with other Business class's. The First World War was that - rival business classes disputing control of their empires. The organised working classes of Germany and the UK recognised this and tried to oppose the war, as we and the German working class had no quarrel. But in both countries the working class leadership caved in to the business class's intense pressure on them for national loyalty, and in the UK, to lying anti-German propaganda. (Just like, more recently, a lot of people did with Blair's lies about weapons of mass destruction to justify his Iraq war). To their credit, the German working class came closer to rejecting the First World War in 1914 than the UK's, on the grounds that it was a business class war setting worker against worker. Taking a working class view on this, our German brothers and sisters did better than us in resisting that war. Before the Second World War, they also fought Hitler and the Nazis before 'we' did, and many went to the concentration camps for it.

British people talk of 'the Germans' and the war. It wasn't – it was the Nazis, and through being in power, they dragged millions of ordinary workers to their death .I saw some war photos in a weekend newspaper supplement recently, in June 2004, of German troops caught up in the D-Day landings. They looked like just ordinary guys. Not 'Huns', 'Jerries', or 'Krauts'. Just frightened young men. (See ***page 353, 'Don't Blame 'The Germans' for the War'.)***

You might say the Second World War wasn't just rival business empires - that it was a war in defence of democracy against fascism? Well, I'll come to that. It certainly clearly applies to the Iraq war, where the US invaded Iraq to get control of a key resource.

They'd argue we all benefit in the UK from what they do to the rest of the world. But we're not the sort of thugs who *want* to do that to other people. It's not our decision to do it that way, it's theirs. Looking at our wealth compared to the rest of the world, I don't see how we need to slaughter people to get oil and other resources more cheaply. If we just paid the price those countries want to charge, we'd sort world poverty out by just paying our way honestly and peacefully. And if we do in some ways benefit from the business class's exploitation of workers in other countries, we often have to fight them to get it.

I'm arguing here that the business class and their state don't use fear to get

people to fight their wars, they use loyalty to the nation. Well of course, fear *is* actually used as a motivator, as it was with the lies about Saddam Hussein and the 45-minute WMDs. But in the two World Wars that fear was mobilised, magnified, by appeal to the threat to 'the country'. It used the previously-existing and continually developed notion of nationalistic loyalty, with such things as King George whichever calling on masses of people to defend 'their' country.

Yet people were also afraid of unemployment and poverty. But with respect to those who did fight against that, many more millions of working class people didn't have the class identity or guts to fight these evils. Not as readily as they fought for the business class when it wanted war. Fighting unemployment and poverty should be easier and less demanding than taking part in the awful mass slaughter of those two world wars. Most people did far less in that easier struggle yet were mobilised for war by notions of duty and self-sacrifice to a bunch of people who treated them with contempt.

The Second War is always cited as a case where the fight had to be had not for nationalistic reasons but for democracy and against fascism. Ok, yes, it did come down to that. But first, it was also a sequel to the First World War, which *was* a war between rival imperialist business classes. And one of the causes of the 2nd War was the resentment of many of Germany's nationalistic troops at the defeat of the 1st and the reparations Germany had to pay.

The 2nd World War mainly grew out of the mass devastation caused by the crazy operation of free-market capitalism - the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the mass unemployment early 30's that followed. The Nazis got into power out of the political turmoil of this collapse of the basic systems on which we depend to live. For no apparent objective, conscious reason, no reduction in people's need for goods, services, jobs, the whole thing can fall apart and leave hundreds and thousands of millions of us with no means of existence. (Capitalism? It'll never work). When that happens, people don't understand the system and are not in a state to fight the people who run it. So they are turned by bombastic demagogues like Hitler, and now Trump, to blaming outsiders and supporting nationalist parties, who then drag them into war.

But yes, when war came, there was a case for fighting the Nazis. But many people, brave though they were, only did it when called upon by the huge social authority of the British State, the 'King and Country' pressure. Only 1500 British people did it voluntarily, to really fight for democracy. That was the International Brigade, who went to fight Fascism in Spain. At that time, 'our' British business class was unsure whether to support Fascism and join with the Nazi's to attack what they saw as the greater menace, the Bolshevism of the Soviet Union; or whether to fight the Nazis as a competitors.

There might be a decent case for war, say if the American imperialist class ('hawks') attack left-leaning Venezuela or Bolivia or Cuba. And 'our' UK business class want us to intervene to protect these countries against America – as if - let's say, Ok, we will fight alongside the British state; but in separate worker's armies. Like the Polish and Free French forces did in the Second World War, we should maybe fight in worker's armies, under strategic command of their generals, fighting *alongside* them. But not *for* them. I'm not sure how brave I'd have been if it came to war. (Hopefully, too old now). But if I was brave enough, I'd not fight under the control of their military, like those disgusting people, the Sandhurst-trained British military officer class. They're awful. Smug, arrogant and brutally decisive about dishing out violence and death. Of course, you'll find this idea fanciful. I'm

just saying, if people want to argue it was right to fight in something like the Second World War, that would be the way to do it, for the organised working class. It's pretty much what Russian troops did in the First World War, after the Revolution. In the six months before the new Bolshevik government made peace with the Germans, they kept troops in place and resisted German advances. But the Generals were only allowed a limited role, applying their military expertise.

To conclude the argument about whether Competition, that is, fear, is necessary as a motivator - and you might be surprised at where I've gone with it – *business people and their political representatives have persuaded people to do extraordinary things, to make the ultimate sacrifice, death. Or ruining their lives if they don't get killed. They've done it not mainly by fear but more by successfully implanting in us the most misdirected, self-defeating loyalty to the business class's system*.

So if they can do that, use loyalty and the notion of greater good to get people to go and kill and die for them, where is the problem in getting our lazier elements to pull their weight in a planned economy, using a bit of social encouragement, instead of the sack, as the motivator? And perhaps they could do the same with their lazier elements too.

Does my claim stand up - that we can get each other to work effectively, without using fear as the motivator? Maybe we'd not work at the pace that is forced on us by free-market competition. But do we want to? Again, what happened to that rosy picture of ever-shorter working time and relaxed living that was predicted in the 60's? Again - under free-market capitalism, competition constantly drags us down whenever we attempt to improve our lives and take more leisure.

Tony Blair, an arch-appeaser of the business class, condemned the French and German 'Social Models' and said "we have to face up to the global challenge". *The real global challenge is to make a conscious political decision that fear based on cut-throat competition is unnecessary, we don't want to live that way, and the constant growth forced by competition is unnecessary anyway*. We don't need the constantly increasing consumption, more stuff, more services. There's living to do that doesn't require consumption. We don't need to base society on working in fear of each other. Instead of competition in 'free-markets' , we can get people to work Ok, with peer pressure, collective working, in decent, union-approved conditions, with union representation.

End Of The Right To Unionise 2. The Right To Unionise 3 is at page 182

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No National 'We' With The Business Class

Widely-held false identities obscure the reality of class identities shown in pages 111-134. It's necessary to challenge them, and, along with that, many people's self-image, maybe having a go at your own thinking and attitudes. That might annoy you. But it's being done because of how harshly business class people treat you and me, workers, and what we get out of life. Because while too few of us see ourselves in an identity group with *all other workers*, most everybody does place themselves or allows themselves to be placed, in other social groups that are mostly meaningless; that stop us identifying our real group selves; that hinder us in

defending ourselves and promoting our interests. And some of them are nasty and dangerous.

The main problem identity is the 'the nation' - the idea of us all being English or British together. The notion of the 'the country'. It merges Working class people with Business class people even though they are the problem people in our lives. Not just in 'England' - there's the Welsh and Scottish variety. And not just 'Britain' - there's American, French, and all the other images of 'the nation'. Other ways we group ourselves will be examined later. But nation is the biggest and is examined next.

They 'Look After Number 1' While Some 'Die for their Country'

Most people believe in the idea of nation, of the ***We, Us and Our*** of the English, Scottish, Welsh, British or other group Yet these ideas are never examined. Here are two big questions to ask about them -

How do 'the British' actually behave towards each other ?

What kind of society is this 'nation'?

The answer to both questions is that business class people's most firmly held political belief and practice completely negates the idea of 'the nation.' Clearly stated, often defended and practiced, you know it. It is -

"Self-Interest is simply Human Nature. I just look after Number One. That's all anyone does. I make as much money as I can for myself, look out only for myself. What happens to other people is nothing to do with me."

They're wrong about self-interest being all there is to human nature.

We're actually strongly social, very co-operative.

And they themselves say that, say the exact opposite to 'Look after Number 1', when they talk of Britain, of England, of being 'British' and 'English'. They demand such strong mutual support that they even expect people to fight and kill and die for each other, for 'the country.'

How can they promote and enforce the ultra-social duty of going to fight a war for a country they claim is based on nobody caring about anybody else?

There's no bigger scandal in UK (and German*) history than the horrific slaughter of working class lads and men in the First World War, that followed the misery of 19th Century industrial life; and was immediately followed by the business class treating workers with utter contempt, with more poverty and mass unemployment between the wars; and then *again* expecting them to fight and die for 'King and Country', as my uncle did. * and the Holocaust.

Thankfully, those workers who fought the Second World War were smart enough to not be fooled again and in 1945 voted in a Labour government that made this writer's life as a post-war baby boomer a lot better than it would have been otherwise. *But that 30 year 'post–war settlement' is the only time in UK history when they've treated us at all reasonably.* And it ended in 1979 with the return of the old relationship, re-launched by Thatcher's Conservatives - basically the same old business class philosophy – which is, sod you people; we'll get rich from your work; and when we don't need you, we don't care what happens to you. And the New Labour project has to been to cravenly go along with them.

Together with Them ?

There's a bit more to say about this. But the very well-known business, Tory, capitalist philosophy of raw individual greed and uncaring self-interest, and the employment practices and the politics they use against the working class, is the key evidence against belief in *'the country'*.

You'd think being *'British',* sharing '*the country', 'the nation',* would mean all sticking together, supporting each other in the things that really matter, like incomes, jobs, houses, health services.

So how come the business class treat their *countrymen* and women and kids as harshly as they do – directly as our employers at work; as the Conservatives, in politics? How come there's their obscene anti-social inequality in wealth?

In business they treat us as just a commodity - a cost, a resource, to be used to the maximum (intensive working, long hours, short holidays etc) and discarded when not needed. Most of us are just decent, reasonable people, just wanting to live reasonable lives, without being aggressive and greedy like them; but when we have difficulties in their selfish, competitive, uncaring, chaotic, dog-eat-dog system the business class, conservative view is a callous "You're useless, or idle." In politics, as Tories and Republicans, they try to treat us as an underclass whose problems are nothing to do with them.

Despite the Union Jack waving image of all-Britons-together, many of the business class and the Tories - including those self-obsessed local ordinary Tories - regard the three-quarters or more of their 'fellow-British' who are working class with contempt. Most of them, and certainly them as a class, behave at least uncaringly, sometimes brutally, to their fellow-countrymen and women. Their selfish, greedy *Individualism,* oppressing their fellow-'Britons' as workers, and leaving people to sink or swim, are key features of *the country.*

Conservative political speakers and writers are *weird* thinkers. They defend these selfish, uncaring, relationships towards fellow-citizens while also enthusing about the social unity of 'the country'; and even that strongest of social duties, military service.

That's arguing against wide social obligations. Then arguing the exact opposite. Maybe different parts of their brains aren't joined up. Or else they do see the big contradiction in what they say and just hope we don't notice. We appear not to. We do all know how badly they behave towards us at work and politically and it should be obvious that the business class's system is no basis for 'the *c*ountry'. Yet most people feel and speak with a strong sense of British and English identity. Let's argue against it, to each other. You get about twenty opportunities a day.

Seeing yourself as British together with the business class is nonsense in their dog eat dog, look after only yourself, you're-on-your-own system.

To have any chance of getting enough votes to get into government they have to pretend to care for other people, for their fellow-British. But there is this plain and obvious opposing practice of theirs - how they actually run the country. Openly, when the Conservatives are in government; indirectly as the business class when Labour is in office, when they refuse to be commercially active or invest here unless they get hugely rewarded, which New Labour, scared of them, concedes.

Freedom - to Neglect fellow-Countrymen and Women

How ***do*** they get away with it? Answer - they have some superficially powerful arguments about how society should be run that carry the political argument with a lot of us.

They promote uncaring selfishness and extreme wealth as ***Individual Freedom***. They argue that we can *all* can all be alright, can all 'make it' if we just take care only of ourselves, ignoring each other's needs. The financial crash of 2008 showed the crass nonsense of it in a world of market anarchy. But the idea is so effectively presented in the UK and even more so in America that huge numbers of workers are fooled by it. American workers fly the Stars and Stripes on their lawns in a country with the most ruthless business class of the lot, who've cut working class incomes drastically in the last thirty years to make themselves ridiculously wealthy; that doesn't even have a Health Service, far less job security or decent unemployment benefits.

The idea that everybody could 'make it' is a nonsense. Because all societies around the world are now based on Mass Production. With mass production most of us *have to be* just ordinary, insecure, disgruntled workers. You know that, every time you go to work. You do have a freedom, to move from one job to another. But that's overwhelmed by your lack of freedom in each job when working for any particular one of the business class, because of the *They've Got All The Rest* relationship.

So 'making it' is simply not going to happen for the vast majority. Enough do, either in business or in successful careers as workers, to buy off enough people for the business classes to get away with what they do, globally. But in that most important activity *Making Your Living*, the majority haven't got individual freedom -unless organised. Even though you may be hard-working, well-qualified, or talented, you're insecure, under-rewarded, under-recognised, oppressed.

Conservatives also promote as something good about *the country* is *'the freedom to Do What You Want with Your Own Money'*. That's their argument for low *income tax*. With that, they tap into ordinary folk's obvious wish not to pay tax. It induces in some workers short-sighted 'little Tory' views so that some even, for that reason, vote for their bosses' party. But taxes are just *collective spending,* necessary for mutual support between the citizens of 'the country' - when properly spent.

And most of *'Their Own Money'* the business class keep from being taxed isn't really *their* money. They get it by paying staff less than they charge for their work. So Working class people who support them on low taxes don't support their own right to 'spend their own money' – they back their bosses robbing it off them at work, then turn down the opportunity to get it back through tax-funded spending on public services.

Freedom, huh? Everyone is for it. But what does it mean?

When business class people like George Bush and Cheney talk of *freedom* they mean only *business* freedom – freedom for business people in unregulated trade in 'free' markets. One key market is *the Labour Market* - the trade in labour, the trade in you and me. It's a market where business people dominate individual workers and have the freedom to make money from their work.

With many other freedoms like *political* freedoms and the freedom to do what you want in your *personal* life, the business class are and always have been, repressive. ***Right-wing*** means business freedom with political and personal repression.

If They Cared More About Us

There *are* some supportive things about 'the country'. But they exist because the decent people have worked hard politically to get them and to retain them. They are under constant political attack from our most selfish and powerful fellow-citizens - the business class/the Tories.

A strong sense of the nation, the country, would make sense if this was a very different, more caring society, with real, thorough systems for supporting each other. Maybe a Socialist society. If the answers to the questions asked earlier *'How do we behave towards each other?'* and *'What kind of society is this?'* were solidly *'supportively'* and *'co-operative.'* That's not only the relationships between the business class and the working class but also those between ordinary fellow-citizens - if we were more supportive and co-operative in ordinary daily dealings with each other. But it's not like that is it?

You can allow that some business people are alright as individuals. You can't judge any in advance simply because they are business class. But you can judge them *as* a class by what *most* of them say and do to us, individually. And by what they do to us together, *as a class*.

This is not an abstract political work. It comes from my experience of life. You should use yours too. Think about your experience of them, and that of your parents, children, other relatives, friends, neighbours, and other people you know. Judge the business class by the presumption and harshness most of them show to us at work and in politics. The actual *owners* are often hidden from us by remote ownership and their management hierarchy. But where we encounter them indirectly or directly, the whole everyday ordering-you-about "You're sacked" 'boss-man' role makes sharing the national identity with them a nonsense.

You do get some decent ones. And they often try to manage us with some decency simply because it can be more effective. But the full picture includes all this - they won't pay you the proper rate for what you do; make you do tasks that aren't part of your job; make you work late, work long hours, work evenings and weekends and split shifts, impose shift changes, on-call working, that wreck family life and social life.

They cut staff, impose health-destroying workloads and targets, re-organise you out of your Job. They neglect your safety. They employ us on temporary contracts or as agency workers because we are cheaper and more easily disposed of that way. They sack us. They sometimes sack those of our fellow-workers who stand up for us against them as union Reps.

You know from your own experience and that of people you know or have known that the usual experience of how business class and Tory people treat us makes laughable the notion of being all one community together with them as 'the British'. (Or as 'Americans', or whatever, in whichever country.) Them bossing us about is out of order. As people, and as fellow-citizens, We are or should be their equals. We should tell them - business owners, the CBI, the Institute of Directors, conservatives - what to do with a national identity shared with *Them*, until they behave towards us with more respect, as fellow-citizens.

Capitalism? It'll Never Work

That's what *they* say about socialism. But it applies to their whole *Free-market Business System*. Despite the claim that their free markets run by individual decision-making, it is actually a very *collective* economic system, one that we all depend on and take part in. It's unstable, prone to collapse, with ridiculous events where huge sections of the population, many millions of decent ordinary people, willing workers, are thrown out of work, for no rational reason, nothing to do with anything they've done or not done. Ok, it's dynamic (but too dynamic - they persuade us to consume so much that we are destroying our habitat, just to keep them in opportunities to make profit.) But discarding people wholesale in such numbers means the business class and the Tories can't claim that the country is any kind of society worthy of our loyalty. In anything worthy of the name *society* that couldn't be allowed to happen. Or if it did we wouldn't be blamed and abandoned, we'd be looked after.

Let's be clear about this problem with *their* Business System. We – all of humanity, including them - go to work, make things, sell things, buy things, to meet our needs and wants. Although we are too readily mesmerised by their promotion of living by consuming, our *real* needs, and even the false needs and wants they foster in us, don't go up or down all that much year on year. Yet at times their system collapses, for nothing to do with our needs changing. We need to grow up as a species - to go beyond the business class's dynamic but chaotic methods, and organise our production of what we need so that it can't collapse irrationally and unnecessarily, ruining our lives.

The ridiculous, unnecessary world-wide financial crisis of September 2008 underpins everything argued here. Their crisis exposed their system, showing it to be not so much about enterprise but a greedy madness, harming all of us, collectively. But it's likely *we* will pay the price, in unnecessary unemployment and hardship. To resist that we need much greater awareness of class, theirs and ours, much stronger working class awareness and class organisation and readiness to act to defend ourselves.

They Even Stop It Working Deliberately

In the early 80's, in government as the Conservatives, the dominant faction of the business class *deliberately engineered* a partial economic collapse in order to teach us a lesson and to change the balance of power between us and them. They knowingly, deliberately used 'monetarist' policies that destroyed much of the engineering industry, much of Liverpool and Coventry and other cities; attacked public education, public health services, Local Government; and dumped a million unemployed school-leavers on the crappy YTS (Youth Training Scheme.)

Such anti-social behaviour had serious consequences for decent people and their lives and relationships - poverty, broken homes, dispersal of communities, lasting to this day. Their abandoning of people, coupled with their encouragement in them of 'self-importance by consumption', has made too many working class people into nasty ***little*** Tories - those who have adopted the Tory individualist philosophy so fully that, selfishly aggressive, they rob and assault other workers on the streets, behaving brutally, horrifically to their own class. Blame the numbers of dysfunctional, anti-social poor people on the business class - and on New Labour, Blair and Brown and Mandelson for conceding business people everything they want.

So judge the idea of loyalty to '*the country*' by all that. And by the grossness and depravity of their personal consumption; by the way they're ruining our planet. As a class,

they are self-centred, nasty, stupid people. What they do to us is far worse than anything that *'foreigners'* may do to us. Most of *them* - as they get called - are just decent ordinary people, just like us.

Hating ?

Many people hate, or feel hostile to, groups of other people. Many 'British' people hate large groups of *other* 'British' people. Such as, many football fans hate those who support other teams. Some '*northerners'* hate or despise *'southerners.* I've known *'English'* people who don't like *'the Scots'*. Many of these *'Scots'* feel antagonistic to *'the English'*. Some men feel antagonistic to women. Some women, to men. Some people hate or fear 'black' people; some hate Pakistanis; some hate or fear Muslims. Some 'British' people hate *'the Germans'* or *'the French.*

There's no sense in hating any of ***these*** people as groups, because their group-ness is trivially-based, not based on anything they ***do*** or anything they do ***together***. But there is some sense in hating *the business class*. Not all of them. Some are alright. Since initially writing this book, I've got to know one or two wealthy people through a shared hobby, and they're just very able people, people who enjoy being productive and enterprising. Nice people. And not to the extent of attacking business people personally, not being brutal, like they are, with their callous treatment of their fellow-citizens and their bloody wars. It's not what we, workers in the organised labour movement, are about. We're about building decent, civilised, non-hateful behaviour.

But with their spectacular wealth compared to the poor kids from the estates, who make that money for them staffing the call centres and the check-outs; with their expensive and under-used yachts that could, instead, be hospital wards; with their stupid Ascot hats ...

This isn't 'the politics of envy', as they say. We wouldn't *want* to live lives so shallow that their sort of gross wealth, so inhumanly obtained, meant anything to us. It's not *envy*. It's *contempt* for such anti-social people. Pretend spitting on the floor? Small beer, sure. But that's better, expressing valid feelings, than, like some, being deferential to their wealth or envious and admiring of it.

They say you shouldn't hate - it hurts you more than the people you hate. Hmmm. Could be. They say 'See the good in everyone.' Hmmmm. Maybe. But that's difficult when you look at what the business classes have done and caused to be done to me and mine, you and yours.

Wars are always presented as being for freedom and human rights. But always, really, they're about business classes getting or holding onto resources like cheap oil, and access to markets. And look at how brutal they are - bombing and slaughtering people in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq to defend their wealth and power. You have to reflect, that's an *awful* thing do - bomb innocent people, blowing them to bits; or condemn them to live on, maimed. You and I would never consider doing that, would we? Bush and his imperialist crew clearly waged the Iraq war for the benefit of the American business class, for cheap oil and also to prove their power to the rest of the world.

Consider also the brutality of what they've done in Vietnam, Chile, Nicaragua, Iraq, and what the British business class has done over history, and look at what happens every day to millions around the world as a result of them cornering so much wealth, unfairly.

So, is it right to hate them? Maybe. Maybe not. I'm not sure. But when you look at the common hatreds spoken of above, like the extreme, virulent hatred and violence football fans, like those of Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester United and Manchester City and Everton and Leeds and the rest, throw at each other; at whole political parties being based on fearing and hating people on grounds of skin colour, provoked by a constant blast of hate-inducement from the business class press; and note that these hatreds express some deep-seated frustrations - then we have to point at the people who cause those frustrations and at whom the frustrations and demands should really be directed.

Hate them or not, we can, for sure, feel superior to them. Me, for instance - I'm a decent person who's done right by my fellow-citizens and workers. Despite their 'success', their wealth, the suits and posh accents, the presumption of superiority, *they* aren't. Any of us who behave decently and civilly towards others - you perhaps - should feel superior to them.

They're Not Like You and Me

They *are* different to us, you know. In some ways we're all the same. But have you ever been close to wealthy businessmen or women? When I have I've noticed they really are different. They are so pink and well-scrubbed and groomed they look like puppets from Fireball XL5.

Once, in the early 1970's, we travelled down to Kent on my bike and sidecar and slept in the sidecar in the car park at Heathrow. In the morning, in my greasy Barbour jacket - when only motorcyclists wore them - and with my long hair, I wandered about exploring Heathrow and into the VIP lounge. VIP eh? – what a vile expression. It was so plush and the people in there looked so odd it felt like being on another planet, amongst aliens. And I looked odd to them - one of their flunkies made me unwelcome.

We carried on, on our way to spend Xmas with a friend's parents in Kent. Through them we spent Boxing Day in the company of a very rich Tory family in their opulent country home. How arrogant they were! What cocky presumption! What casually-delivered hatred for us in our unions!

When around these people, *the rich Business class*, Conservatives, I feel the kind of seething resentment racists must feel when seeing Black or Asian people. For those many of them who are just arrogantly all for themselves, get rich off our work, and attack our ability to organise in unions and defend ourselves against them. Like those Tory activists at their conferences. I can't see these selfish people as *'fellow-Britons'*. Can you? The callous way they behave to their fellow-citizens, it's no exaggeration to call some of them barbarians.

Sometimes they show signs of humanity, so we shouldn't *completely* give up on them. Some can be alright as individuals. David Gower is Ok. Nice chap. People born rich like Paul Foot and Tony Benn can come over to the side of decency and *Decent People*. 'He's got no side' is a nice expression about those of them who aren't snobby. On UK TV there's a programme called 'Dragon's Den' that features 'self-made entrepreneurs', most of whom show some signs of humanity.

Interestingly, despite their claim that we are all really about self-centred individualism, they seem to need other people - family, friends, football clubs to support. Walt Disney was nasty, anti-union, right wing. But his films were sentimentalist. It's been noted that Fascists balance their political brutality by being over-sentimental, over-doing their feelings in other areas, like family or childhood. We have to leave open the possibility that we could civilise them.

Are they Stupid or just Dishonest ?

The business class and their conservative parties and the writers who defend the free-market business system must be either stupid or very dishonest.

Because they argue it's just unchangeable *'Human Nature',* just how people are and must be, to be individualist and greedy; and therefore that their competitive, dog-eat-dog, uncivilised, business system is the only way our world can be run. So they argue it's right for them to be aggressively self-interested, to make as much profit and income from shares as they can, millions-of–pounds-a-year salaries. And they accept the people who run their supplier companies doing the same. They justify super-wealth and the incomes of various layers of middle-wealthy with this claim. Even when some of them get wealthy from property-dealing and speculating on the stock exchange without doing anything useful, they think it's smart to get yourself into such positions.

Yet when we workers do the same and bargain hard for the best deal we can get, maybe even including being idle like many of the rich are - ah well, now suddenly there's something outrageous about that! When we try to get as much as we can from 'the system', *Business class Conservatives go all Socialist*! *Our* selfishness and greed 'ruins the country'! *We* should behave according to the public good. But if we humans are all self-centred, as they say, *why shouldn't we workers be like that too?*

They are thoroughly nasty and vicious about *us* standing up for ourselves or trying to be as hard as them. *But by their own arguments,* that they use to justify their wealth and greed, it's a perfectly normal, acceptable and respectable thing for us-as-workers to get what we can. Including messing about on the InterNet at work to break the tedium of the day; or pulling a sickie on a Monday. Or striking to get the best deal for ourselves.

But they resent and obstruct even our weak Individual rights like Unfair Dismissal. And they pass anti-union laws that *prevent us organising* to be more nearly equal to them and also obstruct us from organising *politically.* As said earlier these are not really anti-*union* laws. Because unions are just us - *'the staff'* - organised. So they are anti-*me* laws, anti-*you* laws, anti-every-*worker* laws. They're *class law*, made by and for the business class, to prevent the working class from standing up to them.

Admittedly, they can be hard in their business dealings with each other (in B2B trade, as they call it - Business to Business.) But that has far less impact on businesses than it does on workers. Because businesses make multiple purchases, have many customers and contracts, so don't depend on any one of them. Workers don't have many customers. We – you - as a worker, have just one customer – whoever it is you work for. And they've got plenty of you.

Just Minding Their Own Business?

Many business people will think they just doing what they're doing, harming no one, minding their own business (sic), being self-reliant, running their business, without ill-will towards us or any responsibility for us. As far as they can see, what other people do to look out for themselves, or don't bother to, or if they struggle to get by, is none of their concern.

To repeat, you can't pre-judge any particular one of them just because they run a business. Many business people are just working hard at running their corner shops, café's, garages. They can be decent people, and often fail through no fault of

their own.

I've some good friends who run small businesses and they're Ok as people and as employers. And I recently bought a car from one of those most suspect of business people, a second-hand car dealer. He was a lovely bloke. In buying the car then getting him to replace the radiator, he was shrewd but reasonable in negotiations. He was a pleasure to do with business with. And I told him so. Many business people are just people with initiative, energy and ideas who don't want to work for someone else. Many of them work harder than some of us and deserve more reward because of that, because they 'take care of business'.

But a big question is *How Much More?* That's examined in

The Wealthy - Are They Worth the Expense? at page 327.

And although you can recognise how they 'get things done', that's easier when their reward is great wealth for personal luxury consumption. A primary school teacher's efforts are just as admirable but done for only ordinary wages.

There's something in the view that they are just doing what they're doing and mean no harm to anyone else. Some people do take more trouble than others and some (only a few) don't take much trouble at all.

But as an overall view of society it's simplistic, self-serving, business class, conservative nonsense. It doesn't stand up to looking at the real, everyday world and the plain fact that they and we, all of us, operate with a huge amount of inter-action. Even the self-employed and individual small business people operate in close, definite relationships with the rest of us. What all business people do and what we do is inter-linked - as sellers and buyers of articles and services in their precious markets; and particularly as sellers and buyers of *our labour*, from which they make '*their*' money. And we live in integrated economies linked by their markets and their financial system - or lack of one. It's one economy, one society, a global one. Everyone knows that, especially after their financial crisis of late 2008 onwards. We're so inter-linked it's unbelievable. That's why the state of the economy is always a huge political, *collective* issue.

What is 'the country' ?

Despite all the nastiness of what they do ***to*** us, and what they don't do ***for*** us, the expectation of sharing *'British'* identity with them is all around us and almost universally assumed. Isn't it? It can seem odd but it's explained later.

When people expect it of me, I reject it. They'll sometimes say '*Surely you feel loyalty to your country?*' My answer is no, why should I? How is it mine? I was just born here, a baby with no choice in joining it. There are many ways in which 'it' and some of the people in it work against me. And I get very little say in how it works.

And then, what exactly do they ***mean*** by '*the country*' ?

The way some people boast nationalistically about the landscape, it seems we are supposed to feel loyal to the hills and streams and towns. The countryside is nice, for sure - the Highlands; Northumbria. The Lake District - Great Gable. Langdale. North Yorkshire. The Yorkshire Dales; the Peak District. Cheshire. Cornwall. Snowdonia - the Carneddau, the Glyderau, Tryfan, Snowdon. Kent. Shropshire. Some of the urban stuff is Ok too.

But they don't really mean the landscape, do they? If they do, it's daft – it's mostly just there - we didn't make it. We can enjoy it but not be proud of it or loyal to it. Anyway, lots of the rest of the Earth is nice - the Rockies, West Virginia, New England; South Africa, Thailand, Australia; Patagonia; the Alps, etc etc. The Himalayas. Coral seas.

So what *do* they mean by *'the country'?* Is it the *people?* Maybe. But I and you don't actually know most of them nor have any real supportive links with them. *And some of them cause me all my major problems*.

Do they mean a shared British culture? There isn't one. There are many cultures, even amongst white people. We don't *all* like football; or Eastenders. And there is a huge cultural difference between the ultra-expensive lifestyle of the very rich Big Business class and that of the poorest Working Class.

The basic thing is, 'the country', any country, is just a part of the globe where power in human society, political power, has, over history, become authorised and regulated in particular ways by particular institutions.

All *'the country'* or *'the nation'* means is that on this piece of territory, certain classes of people have established *enduring political institutions* that control how people inter-act. You can follow how they actually did it on the History Channel - how Wessex and Northumbria and other bits that were first separate, became England, and Wales, united brutally by barbaric thugs like Edward 1. How Scotland was created by similarly barbaric feudal warlords like Robert the Bruce. How, between 1640 and 1688, such dictators were brought under some democratic control in the form of Parliament.

Through power exercised in these political institutions certain people make rules - laws - governing our behaviour towards each other. Strong identification with it and allegiance to it is being questioned here. But it's all very meaningful in practice. The British State, made up of Parliament, the House of Commons, the House of Lords, the various Government Departments, the Monarchy, the Courts, the Police, the Military, is *the established a**uthority*** and authorises all the subsidiary 'authorities' like the Councils and the fire brigades. The answer to the question "What *is* 'the country" is - it's these governing institutions.

So when people expect me to believe in 'the country' *they must mean these institutions*. But me for sure, and surely most people, don't feel so intensely loyal to the institutions of Government, the law-making systems, Parliament, the Courts and so on, as people seem to be when they talk of 'the country', fly flags, and support national sports teams? Why identify with 'the country' as fervently as so many do?

There's a Government, That's All

'The country' could and should mean how we, *the people*, work together, with a high degree of concern and support for each other as fellow-citizens. *But plenty of people, especially business class people, work against their fellow-citizens*. The country is a very real set of political relationships; but that's *all* it is – ***political*** unity, the rules that control power and people. That's not the same thing at all as ***social*** unity. How could it be, with the Tories being a prominent part of it? And with quite a few other people who work hard to promote social *dis*-unity - like those who own and run the Mail and the Sun; and the people who write for them, such as hate-promoting nasties like Melanie Philips, Richard Littlejohn; and with their race-hate promoting headlines and anti-working class bias?

Yes, the fact of the country, the *State*, means we have some things in common. Even with business class people. But you can have something in common yet not have a common interest. The prisoner and the prison warder have something in common - that they are both there in the prison with a definite relationship to each other. But it's hardly a common interest, is it?

So take the laws against union activity - being UK law, 'we' all have them in common. But for the business class, who made these laws, acting as the Conservative party, they are a good thing. For me, you and any other workers they are a deliberate, direct attack, by them, on our ability to organise together for a decent life.

This is not abstract political debate. This writer has bitter experience of trying to defend his vital interests and being defeated by their anti-union laws. The biggest and most important strike action I've helped organise was a national strike to oppose our employers ending our *union-negotiated contracts* and replacing them with much worse ones with drastically increased *workloads* and *working time*. Our strike was ruled illegal by a judge whose decision was laughably wrong in law, in favour of our employers. Yours truly experienced the bitterness of going round on the morning we were to have started our strike putting up notices calling it off. We held out for years but that caused us to lose that fight in the end.

That hard experience is something I have in common with those supposed fellow-countrymen of mine and yours. It's one example of many things some of my fellow- British do to me that makes me scornful of national identity. You must have examples too. What are yours?

They Believe Only in Themselves

They talk of loyalty to 'the country' and give you Union Jacks to wave. *But surely 'the country' includes you and me?* Yet they've little loyalty to *us,* have they? They argue that the uncaring system that suits them is actually good for us all! To get votes they pretend they do care about us. But they don't, not really, not at all.

To make money, they need us to make their products and provide their services. And they need some of us with enough money to buy them. And they need us to fight for them in their wars. Yet when their unplanned economic system goes into crisis for no reason to do with any of ***us,*** as it does, and we have *mass unemployment*, do the business class accept their responsibility and argue for, and support, and provide, strong social security and other necessary backing for their fellow-British? No, they find reasons for blaming the crisis on us. Like we don't work hard or long enough, or cost too much in wages or pensions. They attack the Unemployment Benefit that is the supposed to be '*the country',* a *National Insurance* system, protecting us from the instability of their system. And they work hard and viciously to persuade us to blame various kinds of innocent, harmless 'outsiders' – immigrants, foreigners.

And for all their *talk* of 'the nation', aimed at smothering the differences between them and us, when you look at what they actually *do*, in their own interests, *they can be pretty* ***Inter****national* - global, even, clocking up the air-miles. They close our workplaces to re-locate to other countries where they can get people who'll work for worse wages and worse conditions than us. They'll claim cheaper competition forces them to re-locate or the business fails. But competition is *their* system, it's not ours. And in fact they often re-locate to other countries not from necessity but just to make more profit.

Do they loyally even keep their money in the country? No, they re-locate that too, move it to wherever in the world they can make the most out of paying workers the least. One of the first things Thatcher's goons did when getting into Government in 1979 was to remove controls on her class moving their capital outside the country, that had enforced on them a bit of loyalty to the rest of us, so that they could invest abroad instead of in the UK. And they don't bring it back into the country for our benefit – they put it in developments in Hong Kong, Malaysia, wherever; and in tax havens like the Channel

islands, the Isle of Man, Bermuda. So much for their real belief in 'the nation.'

Traitors in Exporting Our Jobs

But belief in it blinds many of *us.* The business class use the image of 'the nation', of 'us', against *'foreigners'* so that many of us don't even *see* ***them,*** far less challenge their lack of loyalty to 'Britain' and their fellow-Brits. Their 'news' papers tell us about the 'British' jobs supposedly being taken by immigrants and 'foreign' workers. But at least as big a problem as foreign workers coming *here* and 'taking our jobs', and maybe a bigger one, is British business people ***exporting '***our jobs'. As said, they re-locate our existing jobs and invest abroad, locating new jobs in other countries. We shouldn't attack our 'foreign' fellow-workers when we don't attack disloyal British business people.

The main reason some people do is because British imagery dominates their thinking. But then there's also the problem of the British business class's power. Taking them on is no small matter. They are serious people. Racists, and racist parties haven't the sense or the strength to attack them for their anti-British-worker *exporting* of jobs or over jobs lost by all workers when their business system goes wrong.

So instead, from weakness but dangerously, they attack weak minority groups, of other, innocent workers. The slogan 'British Jobs for British Workers' is weak because it ignores the central role of the rich *British* business class in there being jobs or not, lets them off from their British social responsibilities and turns instead on other workers.

But those weak workers who fall for the anti-outsider diversion aren't the real problem. *The real problem is that* ***most*** *people believe in 'the country', accept the imagery and the notion of being 'British' and express it every day in many ways.* ***And that's the base, the framework and the platform for the really racist, anti-outsider views and politics.***

We don't, most of us, clearly identify the business class, nor their responsibility for our problems, like their economy going wrong and millions of us losing our jobs; feel weak and powerless in relation to them; lack a clear understanding of working class identity, and a sense of loyalty to other workers; have instead a strong image of being English or British that smothers *class* and leads straight into anti-outsider attitudes that get us nowhere in tackling the real problem, of the business class and their crazy system.

We need to be clearer in our shared thinking on these issues so that those workers who fall for the delusion of the 'British' (or American or other) nationalist and racist approach are challenged everywhere they go by relatives, mates, and workmates, and get some sense argued into them to counter the misdirection they get from the business class papers and politicians.

Using Us

Another instance of them using the ingrained mental images of 'the country' and 'foreigners' to get our support is in the internal dispute they have over Europe. Since liberating themselves from the obligation to the rest of us to keep their capital in Britain, many British capitalists invested heavily in Europe. But some invested more in the USA.

So when Murdoch in 'the Sun', and the Tories, use nationalist imagery to pose

as defenders of good ol' British independence, of 'the Pound Sterling' against the European Union, the *real* reason is that they speak for those capitalists who are more involved in the US economy than the European one. (But this is not to promote Europe.)

Writing in 2009, some of the Conservatives - the Cameron leadership - are trying to appear nice instead of nasty. They're all for public services and looking after the poor before the rich now, it seems. We're not that easily fooled, are we? Take it as a compliment to our good sense – they've realised in losing three elections that they can't get away with being such bastards as they'd really like to be (and were when they were in power) and still expect to win elections. We've pulled them leftwards – but it's not sincere now, is it?

Business class and Tory ways don't provide what you should expect from 'the country'. If we had decent social and work relations with them and between each other, if we had more mutual care and respect and freedom, then there'd be some sense in it. But we don't. *The image of 'your country', so strong' widely held, is a trick to dupe us into accepting the uncaring, free market society that suits them.* It obscures our view of *Them* and our view of *Ourselves* and generates in our minds a set of political assumptions that misdirect us, at great damage to ourselves. That includes separating us from 'outsiders' - 'foreigners', workers who are in the same position as us in 'their' countries. Like French workers, German workers, American workers, Chinese workers, and so on.

Why share an identity with these 'British' business class people? Why believe in *the nation* and *your country* and an immensely strong with-them-to-the-death-in-war bond with *them? They* don't really believe in it. They believe only in their selfish and class interests. We, the non-business people, should do the same.

Not by being as selfish and vicious as them but by -

Putting decent politics and our real, Working class identity
above the class-denying myth of 'a country' shared with Them.

There is Such a Thing as Society

Actually, there isn't. But it's handy shorthand for the key issue of how we all relate to each other. And when we mostly relate to each other in 'free market' conditions we are reducing human society, human relationships, humans themselves, ourselves, to just commercial items. You can't do that. People are more than that - people sing, dance, laugh, joke, cry, have kids, partners, love the same things as you. We're all that, not just things that create wealth or cost money. The key philosophical and political argument that decent *civilised* people have to have with the business class/conservatives is that uncaring, even ruthless *selfishness is no way to run a 'society' or a 'country'*. Sure, we should allow each other as much freedom as possible; but their rich-person's exploitative selfishness is too much - it's simply deeply anti-social.

Why Compete with Each Other?

Capitalist ***competition,*** already criticised*,* is no basis for a country. As said, as well as most of them treating us harshly to make money from our work, their system of competition forces even decent employers to be as bad as their worst, cheapest competitor. Competition sets us all, supposedly fellow-countrymen and women, at each other's throats over getting the means to live. Where's the social sense in that?

It's partly our own fault. When we buy things only on price, we do better as consumers. But that does each other down as workers. We should buy only from union-organised firms, and Fair Trade shopping.

They tell us '*we've got to match up to the competition'* as if there's no answer; as if

'competition' is like a law of physics, beyond human control. But we, Humanity, can choose to co-operate as well as compete and we do. Competition is just a humanly-implemented feature of *your* system, you lunk-heads! 'The country' itself is *supposed* to be a co-operative thing.

And even for them competition is something that can and should be controlled when it's that nasty kind, *foreign* competition. Then, the nationalist mind-set dupes us into joining together with them in 'Blame the Foreigner'. *But 'foreign competition' putting you out of work is no different to your 'own' countrymen and women doing it - which happens just as much.*

It wouldn't be so bad if they admitted that competition is a major problem in their system and tried to reduce the worsening of our conditions that it causes. If they agreed to the things that limit that - strong legal minimum rights at work applying to all businesses across all trades, like the Minimum Wage, effectively enforced (which the minimum wage isn't); and *strong union organisation bringing union conditions* across all the competing businesses, *world-wide*.

And yet - for all that business people bang on about competition, using the pressure of it as an argument to reduce costs by attacking your wages and conditions – despite all that, don't they manage to extract monstrous private wealth out of it all? The luxury homes, cars, holidays, private jets, the second homes in Scotland, Wales, Switzerland, New York, the Caribbean. The walled and gated houses, the revolting expensive cars, the yachts, the grotesquely expensive lifestyle. £10,000 watches! They're only for telling the bloody time.

Freedom and Free Speech - Won Here. From Them

The argument people often make for believing in 'the nation', in Britain at least, is that *'It's a free country*'. '*We've got Free Speech.' 'You can say what you want'.* That's broadly true and free speech is a great thing. But people need to realise that free speech and things like it, the good things about 'Britain', weren't won by being passive loyalist subjects, weren't freely given. They were won by being dis-loyal, challenging things as the rich would have them be, by brave rebellious types.

And for all that it's boasted about, does anyone know exactly how and when we actually *got* Free Speech? We didn't have it at the time of the French Revolution, 1790 onwards. Tom Paine had to flee to France for his life for arguing for democracy against the oligarchy who enslaved Britons then. And Thomas Hardy (not the writer) was tried for treason for organising the movement for democracy, his life saved only by a jury who, influenced by mass support and demonstrations, acquitted him.

But a loyalist mob stirred up by the government attacked Hardy's house and Mrs. Hardy, pregnant with her sixth child, had to escape out of a back window. Soon after this she died in childbirth and the child was still-born.

And there was no free speech for those British people demonstrating for the vote who were killed by *British* troops at Peterloo in Manchester in 1819.

Maybe somebody should research and write up how we got what free speech we have. This writer thinks we maybe got it by agitating in outrage after Peterloo, and the (openly) ruling class of the time conceded it to us in the 1820's by repealing the Sedition Acts they'd tried Paine and Hardy under?

(But look here - in March 2009 the Observer newspaper reported that an MP was trying to include in an Act going through Parliament an amendment to get rid of the 1819 Sedition Act. It seems it's *still* an offence punishable by life imprisonment to

publish 'any seditious libel tending to bring into hatred or contempt the person of his majesty or the government and constitution of the United Kingdom as by law established, or either House of Parliament'. How do I stand on that, with some of the things said in this book?

And you're not safe either because any house can be entered to retrieve copies of material containing seditious libel. It's said they'll not actually do anyone unless they're advocating violence against the constitution and I don't think we're doing that.

As said elsewhere, anything said in this book is arguing strongly for more fairness and *more democracy*, so you'd like to think you're safe in doing that, wouldn't you? All the same - what's all this about free speech? The definition given below says it's mainly for criticising Government and it seems the right to do even that is a bit of a myth.)

What was done to Paine and Hardy is ancient history now, of course, and there's not now a tyrannical ruling class in such a clearly identifiable form. (I said before reading the Observer piece.) But free speech is put forward by their 'Establishment' and their 'news' papers as if it's somehow been given to us by 'the country', by that apparently free-standing entity. They do that to persuade us that we're doing alright, better than people in other countries. And yet their predecessors brutally *resisted* free speech - as they did at Peterloo. It's 'No you're not having that'. Then 'Oh, you've forced us to concede it'; 'Now look how lucky you are, isn't this a great place, don't complain, it could be worse'. Anyway, all somewhat-democratic countries have much the same free speech – France, Germany, the US and so on. It's hardly a unique thing and nor should it be. It should be the most basic right, not one they should expect us to be grateful for.

Free Speech - For Criticising Governments, Not Skin Colour

But *what is free speech*? Many people - Government, Christian and Muslim religious zealots, racists and fascists, and decent people, Trade Unionists and Socialists, all use the term to say certain things or in arguing against other people saying certain things. From how these various people put their arguments it seems we haven't got *a clear definition of free speech*.

Free Speech is, mainly, the freedom to criticise those in government. It's the right to criticise the institutions and workings of the State, the Law, 'the country' itself. To criticise and challenge those people who are in power. To comment on and criticise ***what they do or don't do****.*

It does also include criticising each other, fellow-ordinary citizens, for what we promote or do that affects each other. But it's not the freedom to say just whatever the hell you like. *It's not, never has been, never will be, and shouldn't be, a freedom to say anything about anybody*. Particularly, it's not the freedom to criticise, attack or discriminate against people for characteristics they were born with and are stuck with and that have nothing to do with their voluntary behaviour towards others. Things like their gender; their race; their age; the country they 'come from'.

So making sexism and racism illegal isn't a denial of free speech. We've just decided, rightly, that although you can have go at people for what they say or do, you can't have a go at them, or whole groups of the population, for their basic physical characteristics. Free speech includes critical debate about beliefs, and therefore, *criticism* of religions. But doesn't allow *discrimination* on religion.

As well as free speech there's other good things about 'the country.' The *vote*; the freedom to *assemble and demonstrate*; the freedom to *organise,* politically and at work - though that right is severely restricted, in breach of Human Rights.

But there's a big myth about all this - the myth that when '*fighting for your country'* you are defending such freedom and democracy as we have. That is simply not true. Fighting and dying 'for King and Country' or for 'Uncle Sam' is usually just fighting for the rich and powerful business class of Britain or the US in wars of competition with rival business classes in other countries. Or helping them get control of resources and markets.

Doing that didn't win or help us defend what freedoms and democracy we've got. Such freedom and democracy as we have was won by struggle *inside* this country by some people who won it for you by challenging *other* British people, namely those rich and powerful business class people. *They* fought mass democracy all the way. Free speech and the other freedoms and the vote were won by hard political struggle by the heroes who fought the Civil War, by the heroes of the Workingmen's Corresponding Association, by the Chartists and the Suffragettes. They were strenuously and often viciously opposed by the very class of English or British people who most want us to believe in *the country*. Freedom was won and is still being defended, by some 'British' people against other, anti-democratic fellow-countrymen.

The Second World War might be different. That war did appear to be about defending democracy (what little we have of it). But in *Digresssions 1* it was argued that the British business class didn't fight that war for freedom and democracy but to challenge an imperialist rival, Germany.

Digressions 2, page 353, says more about what their wars are really for. For example, the war in Iraq was typical business-led imperialism, isn't it? Sorry about the jargon term 'imperialist' but that's what it is, empire-building. It's not about anyone's freedom, not ours nor the Iraqis. But about the US business class's insistence on having cheap oil.

All Together in a Democracy ?

The joint decision-making of democracy could give meaning to the collective notion of 'the country' and 'the English' or 'the British.' But democracy is very weak in the UK. What we've got is worth having but really, it's a hardly-developed democracy.

You know it is. Think about how much influence you feel you, me, and the mass of ordinary people have. When they talk about footballers, cricketers and athletes and the like, ordinary people speak of what *We* and *Us* are doing or are going to do.

But when they talk about the use of real power, not just sporting achievements, it's *They.* It's the Government, the a*uthorities*, the Council, not 'us'. That confirms by how we speak that it's not 'our country.' It's not in ownership of the economy, and it's not in exercising political power.

This British *we*, supposedly all together in a democracy, don't even have an elected and accountable head of state! We're called not citizens but *subjects.* Of the Windsors! That, fellow-citizen, is a big insult to our adult dignity. "Britons never shall be slaves" goes the song, doesn't it? When do we get to be citizens?

There's No White 'We' With Them Either.
Because Business Class Whites Don't Care About Fellow Whites

So, there's a lot been said there about how business people don't care about their fellow-British, the working class and how that makes it daft to share a strong,

class-obscuring national identity with them.

There's another way of looking at it. When their headline writers say *We* and *Us* they don't only mean fellow-***countrymen.*** *They really mean fellow-**whites***, consciously winding up white people against non-'whites'.

It's funny, it seems to read very naturally, all that is written and said about *'whites' or 'white people'. But have you ever found anything about anyone being white-skinned that means anything?* I haven't. I'm 'white' and so are most of the people I know and have known well in my life. But this is the first time I've ever thought or said it. I kind of notice when people *aren't* 'white'. But *being* 'white'? So a lot of people have similar colour skin to mine. So what? It means nothing. Not just to me - it means nothing to most whites, judging by how many white people have behaved towards me and others. Don't you find that too?

But all round the world 'race' and skin colour can divide people and be used to divide people. Where's the sense in it? In pre-industrial times and societies, identifying as a group by *'ethnic origin'* made some sense because it usually corresponded closely with the *real* social groupings, ***Tribes,*** groups with real common economic inter-dependence. But there's more to tribes than common *colour.* In Africa, tribes can be hostile to people who are of the same colour but not members of the *tribe.* There's been some brutal behaviour between people who share black skin colour in Uganda, the Congo, Zimbabwe, Somaliland, Darfur. Same in Asia – in Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia under Pol Pot. *Skin colour is not significant as a positive social unifier.*

Whatever colour it is. Being together with people on colour makes no more sense than it does being against them.

And ethnic and tribal identities that do have some meaning lose it when the business class industrialises us and most people have no practical alternative to being not tribal or clannish, but *Working Class*. Ordinary English white people found that out in the Agricultural revolution when the *white* English Land-owning Squire-archy enclosed the Common Land and cleared tenants, demolishing age-old village communities, so they, the big landowners, could operate large-scale farming. The tribal groups of the Highland Clans found it out by being defeated at Culloden by the Lowland-based modern business class; and a century later in the Highland Clearances, abandoned by their chieftains, cleared off the land for more profitable sheep farming.

Despite this obvious fact of the lack of any sense in *colour* and of the importance of *class*, the business class very powerfully and successfully promote in people's heads the idea of a white '*us'.* And a '*they'* that means non-white people of only recent immigration. They create the belief, strongly held by many, that the country ***is*** white, is for *'whites.'* Just look in the newsagents now and again at the front page headlines of their 'news' papers. They're repeatedly about *We*, *Us* and *Our*. You'll see for certain that they do it deliberately and consciously to promote a *white* group image to obscure the *class* image that reflects our real relationships with them.

But those expressions of *We* and *Us* and *Our's* meaning whites don't square with the business class's individualist, self-centred, *uncaring politics.* Nor with the politics of hundreds of thousands of ordinary members of the Tory party and the millions who vote for them. White/British images, attitudes and loyalty make no sense in industrial, class society. They're outdated by at least two centuries - and didn't make sense even before that, under the monarchy-led dictatorship of aristocrats.

But an awful lot of us *do* fall for the Us-Whites-English-British identity myth. The business class do soak your brain you with the imagery, from the earliest age and

relentlessly every day of your life. *People falling for it need to adjust their heads to the real, class-based groups operating in the society they're actually living in*. They should catch on to how *Industrial* society works and realise that ethnic and colour-based groups make no sense at all in it. They have no basis in reality, because being 'white' doesn't mean 'white' people actually care about each other.

Of course there's no reason why they should, not for that reason. But nationalist, racist and fascist politics assumes they do, or should.

Ethnic feelings decline amongst immigrant groups eventually. *Real* group identities are based on how we *actually* relate to each other. That's why this work argues for a clearer view and stronger image of *working class,* based on reality; and for us to name *the business class.*

Attack Your Foreign Fellow Workers, Not Us (They Say). But Let's Not

In their 'news' papers mainly, and as the Tories, the business class push strongly at working class people the myth that immigrants or foreign workers are 'taking your jobs' and are favoured over 'whites' in the use of public services. And they succeed, with some workers. To counter that and to tackle racism in general, on union courses this writer did in the 1980's we'd look at 'the Facts About Immigration', that challenge the racist myths that exaggerate the numbers of immigrants; that take into account how many British people ***emigrate***, to Spain and France and Australia and Canada (I could name half-a-dozen easily); that look at figures this writer saw then, that showed there were more Americans here than Pakistanis (Americans are just more dispersed and don't look much different to the mainly-white natives); that highlight how Black and Asian people keep the NHS going, do the crap jobs. All that anti-racist stuff.

But we were doing this as the *white* Tory Thatcher government was viciously attacking *her fellow-whites.* Yours truly got thinking - why even *look* at immigrants, 'black' people or Asians as if from a view of a white *us?* Why look at '*them'* at all, at whether *they* are a problem, taking *'our'* jobs and benefits, ruining *our* culture? Or, alternatively, a help, taking the crap jobs, staffing the Health Service? Never mind all that, one way or the other. It's a minor issue. *Where is the 'Us' anyway?*

Turn It Round

Look in the other direction, at 'white' people. *Who* ***is*** *this* ***us*** *that we are supposed feel part and to see others as outsiders to?* ***Who Does It Include and What Are They Like*****?** Once you just ask that question it's obvious that too many of 'us' are people who are against me and you and our chances of a decent life. They're a minority but they're still too many. They - the white *us* in Britain - includes Thatcher and the people who put her in power - the Tory party and those who voted for them. They are some of the nastiest people on the planet, some of the most ruthless and barbaric.

They don't really believe in the British '*Us'.* Thatcher called people like me, decent ordinary organised workers, trade unionists, 'the enemy within'. But we work for a decent life for all our fellow-citizens. Her and her selfish, anti-social, business class don't. They are more truly an 'enemy within', enemies of decency to other citizens.

To some people younger than me Thatcher and Tebbitt will be old, unknown enemies. Their successors aren't so easily named – those kinds of Tories are being

kept in the background at the moment while the Cameron leadership tries to present themselves as civilised. But there is still their Press, still showing us the ugliness of raw business class Toryism. The '*white*' English or British '*us*' includes we-worker-hating people like those who own and run the Express, the Daily Star, the Daily Sport, the Telegraph, Murdoch's Sun and his Times. They virulently oppose benefits, public services and unions. *That is opposition to their fellow-whites, and non-whites, getting any support, any common welfare, from 'the country' or being able to organise for their own self-defence*! The owners, editors and the columnists and probably some of the readers are my – and your – most serious enemies. Not 'the French' or 'the Germans' or other 'foreigners'.

They are our enemies not just because of their direct nastiness to us. But also because they brutalise many of our poorer working class people, especially young working class men who, feeling a need to assert themselves, make some of our streets unsafe to walk on at night.

The Business Class Make a Lying Promise to 'Whites'

Jobs again. For jobs we depend on the business class needing our labour in their businesses. But that's only because capitalist industrial production *forces* us into that relationship. Before early capital owners organised industrialism our forebears didn't sit around helplessly unable to support themselves. They ran small farms and trades. The famous Luddites opposed industrial production because, it being more efficient than their small-scale production, it forced them out of business as independent producers and into having to be factory workers instead.

And so it is for us - mass production is so much more efficient than independent small-scale production that we all now effectively *have* to work in it. *That's* how we are going to work and produce things. With some room for small production, especially in new products. If we could get more mature in how we organise ourselves, our society, we could run mass production and services without depending on the business class. That would be Socialism. But we haven't grown up enough to do that yet. This book covers enough ground already, without exploring that. But if we can do it in war time, we can do it in peace time.

So at present, We, the masses of workers, depend on Them and their Free-market Business System for our jobs. And they depend on our work to get rich.

But the Business class deny this truth that we live in an industrialised world where jobs come from *collective* activity, with all the many millions of us necessarily depending on *the system* that they own and run, for work. Instead, they present themselves as independent, freely-operating, entrepreneurial individuals (that's nonsense, they themselves operate as collectives, *companies*), denying overall social responsibilities. And they don't *set out* to provide fellow-white 'Britons' with jobs. They only do it to make money. They avoid employing us, as far as they can. Cutting staff is one of the key skills that keeps 'the suits' in BMW's. In this set up, they say they are on their own, looking out only for themselves, and so is everybody else.

Fair enough, maybe, if that's a consistent political position. But while denying society-wide responsibilities, their leading activists and politicians also promise all the other mostly white, English, British people that they are **not** on their own. That 'Britain' will look after 'the British', will solve their problems. That 'Britain' is an institution they should believe in, be loyal to.

Yet although they own and run *the Economy* and most jobs come from their businesses and their system, they've no intention of doing anything for British people and fight very hard to avoid being forced into any contribution. Look at the attitudes of the

Conservatives and business people to any policy that actually involves caring for fellow-white 'Britons'. They're against all forms of welfare and mutual, social support, in Health Services, Education, Unemployment and Sick Benefit and Pensions. They stress *the individual,* because, with them having the wealth made from our work, they are rich enough, strong enough, independent enough, to get by on their own, to buy private health care, to buy private education for their kids. They make gestures towards public services because they need votes from at least some of the rest of us. But they work hard in politics to minimise such support for their fellow-country(wo)men, and what it would cost them in taxes.

So 'white' workers who base their politics on the notion of 'the country' and 'it' doing much for ordinary whites are being taken in by a lying promise. They are ignoring that key fact about business class British white Conservatives – *they don't care about their fellow-whites*. That their most basic political belief is "Selfishness and looking out only for yourself is human nature; and it justifies not caring about other people". Whenever this view is put, it's overlooked that most of the other people not cared about are fellow-whites.

But the lying promise that 'Britain' will see you right convinces and shapes the world view of many, too many, working class people. Let's be absolutely clear - *the Business class and their system are responsible for the shortage of jobs and other necessities like housing*. But 'Britain' and 'the British' creates in many people's heads a primary political image that masks the key role of the business class, and insulates them from being held responsible. Most people haven't got a clear image of them and their role, so they leave them unchallenged. The 'British' ideas direct many working class 'whites' away from class awareness and any antagonism to them.

Through their press and their party, the business class urge people instead to blame their problems on each other, with press campaigns demonising people on benefits as scroungers on the rest, and on one kind of outsider or another.

They make a lot of headline points about what working class 'white' people are not getting and should get. But it's white and other colour anti-racist trade unionists and socialists who *do* far more for 'whites' than the news paper owners and writers of racist headlines do.

But they succeed, and we get ridiculous but strong racist political views, that, amazingly, *ignore the fact of the business class's role as 'the economy',* ignores their most basic beliefs and the irresponsibility of their system. Taken in by a half-made lying promise that 'we British' are due jobs and houses as of right (we should be but without strong class organisation and action, we aren't going to get it), many people in need of them and other public support plead to be placed before *'outsiders'* - recent immigrants or foreign workers. *But they don't make that claim directly on the business class*. The notion of 'the country' leads them to place the demand instead on 'the Government'.

The Government then could and should take on the business class, pressurise them and legislate for them to take care of the mass of the British population. *But because Business **is** the economy the Business class has the power to refuse to co-operate, to be less active or take their money and business activity elsewhere. And when threatened with having to behave with society-wide responsibility, that's what they do.*

So when New Labour, in government, give business people whatever they

want, it's for that reason, that they own and run the economy. Labour should say they *have* to do that because the business class are so much better organised than us, and that we need to be better organised so there'd be the political force to negotiate with them more equally. To open up the big political debate there should be around the issue. Blair, Brown and Mandelson have actually openly said it. Except they are so defeatist they don't say the second bit – that we need to be more organised.

New Labour seem to actually believe in allowing them to operate with minimal regulation. Look how soft they've been with the Banks since 2009, after bailing them out with mind-boggling amounts of taxpayers' money. The Lib Dems would do the same. When the Tories are in government, that's the Business class themselves in government, so obviously they'll not 'take on' themselves.

Instead, talking of what people are owed by 'the country', not by themselves, they say a lot about what working class whites should have, and use 'Britishness' to whip up victimisation of outsiders, immigrants, asylum seekers and foreign workers. For non-organised workers, and New Labour, *acceding to the racist argument, blaming outsiders, is easier than taking on the Business class*. Labour Governments only try to do things *on behalf* of ordinary, mostly-white working class people, without a strongly-organised working class *demanding* they do, so are limited by what the business class will accept.

Pleading to the government for *'British' jobs for 'British' workers'* ahead of *'foreign'* workers is really pleading, weakly, for the Government to ***make*** the Business class support their fellow-British. They sometimes do if it only involves victimising outsiders. But then what? If racists and fascists got their way, if there *were* no coloured or any other kind of immigrant, would this British business class, of mostly white rich people, deliver on 'the country's' promise? Would they voluntarily run the country, the economy, to ensure jobs and houses and so on for their fellow white, working class, British? Have they ever? Do they now, when they could? Of course not. It goes against their most basic and fiercely-held 'individualist' beliefs.

As said, their *Free-market Business System* is so unorganised and chaotic it collapses for no good reason, nothing to do with human needs changing. But when it does, when their system fails to deliver jobs and houses, the business class won't accept responsibility. When it goes into recession, depression, slump or crisis, do they spend their many billions of pounds of accumulated capital on their fellow-whites, keeping them in work, paying wages to do socially useful work? Do they propose, support, or accept strong Social Security for their suffering white fellow-countrymen, and the taxes needed for that, giving those made redundant enough in benefits to carry on living properly, pay the mortgage and so on? Of course not. In the 2008-on financial crisis, it's being done the other way round - ***we're*** **bailing *them* out!**

Forcing these tough, wealthy, mainly-white 'It's human nature to be ruthlessly self-interested' business class people to look after fellow–whites based on such an empty thing as being the same colour is an unlikely project. Have racists never *noticed* how opposed white business class people are to supporting their fellow-whites? Pleading to them on the flimsy basis of shared colour and living under the same government is weak and ridiculous because *the Business class believe much more strongly in self-Interest, individualism and class, their class, than they do in loyalty to fellow-whites*.

Getting our needs met will be a difficult enough task for a Working class united across gender, nationality, origin, colour, regionalism and religion. Politics that just pleads, weakly, for white workers to be put above other workers has no chance.

It's an unlikely project also because most 'whites' actually have far more sense than to go along with racist politics. They can see that point, that it's daft to beg from the selfish white business class rich on an empty argument of shared colour and meaningless 'British' ethnicity, that ignores what should be the obvious need to unite by *class* to develop the strength to challenge them and *demand* jobs, houses, health and education.

It all just does what it is intended to do - divides us, splits off some of us, deluded into not challenging the business class but, irrelevantly and weakly, attacking weaker workers, minority group workers.

To repeat - the Lying Promise the business class make that 'the country' cares for 'white-English-British' people is exposed by their most basic political and economic belief - that we're all On Our Own and the Strongest can get rich while the weak go to the wall.

And Many Ordinary White People Don't Care About Each Other

That's been showing how there's no 'white' ***us*** or ***we*** together with Business class people, the rich and the Tories. But the image of *whites*, of *the British,* has large numbers of ordinary 'whites' thinking there's a *'we'* of *ordinary* working class people and small traders, a meaningful group who should treat non-whites as the cause of our problems. But again, turn that around - instead of looking at immigrants, foreigners, foreign workers and whether or not they are a problem *let's look in the other direction.* Let's look at 'ordinary' 'whites'. What sense is there in talking of ***ordinary*** white British people as 'we' and 'us'? Is concern for the needs of other 'whites' common amongst those who are 'white'? How much do your fellow–whites *care* about *you*? How do they actually treat each other? Is there a meaningful group based on colour?

Many 'whites' don't care about *anybody* else much, other whites included. They just *'Look after Number 1.'* It's a reasonable view in a sense - white or 'British' is only a vague association based only on living under the same government system. And then many who claim to believe strongly in *'their country*' - Conservative voters and Republicans in the US - don't *care* much about their fellow-countrymen. They say "Why should I be taxed to support somebody on welfare?" Well, with your belief in 'Britain' or 'the USA', surely that really means 'the people' - so shouldn't it mean you have concern for your fellow-countrymen and your fellow-whites?

So the *'we' of* 'whites' are ***not*** all one, caring about each other. Nor should they, not for that superficial reason. Yet nationalist, racist politics makes a whopping big assumption that they do. Without actually saying so. But it's not true, it ignores real people and real relationships. *We just happen to live on the same piece of territory under the same law-making institutions and have similar colour skin.* It's a flimsy basis for grouping us together and it doesn't mean anything in reality.

Many, most, 'whites' or 'English' or 'British' people are ***alright,*** and do care about fellow-whites - and people of other colours. They do it from shared universal *human decency* and shared *Working Class* identity and solidarity, not from meaningless shared *whiteness.*

And although a lot of 'white' people don't care about other 'white' people, a lot of the Black and Asian minorities do. Here's a small example from the writer's experience.

During the Miner's Strike we had to pick up a load of Geordie miners, doing a tour of meetings to raise money, who were stranded on the motorway when their

coach broke down. Actually they were stranded because they wouldn't wait near the coach for it to be fixed but went across fields and found a pub and by the time they got back hours later the coach had been fixed and the driver had given up on them and left. We got a few cars out there and found about fifty of them sitting on the embankment. An unlikely number crammed themselves into our medium-sized Fiat. Taking them back to our district where we were putting them up, and driving through a neighbouring district with some black people - but actually mostly white – one young Geordie said, disapprovingly, 'There's an awful lot of they 'blackies' round here'. I said 'Yeah, well, some of them give to the collections we have for you on the precinct on Saturdays. And some white people don't'.

And Some Are Actively Bad to Each Other

But it's not just those 'white' people who don't ***care.*** There's too many white people being ***actively bad*** to others for identity based on skin colour to make sense. Plain and obvious on a daily basis - millions of fellow-British people hate each other viciously as football fans. Where's the white or British identity in that?

In ordinary everyday life you get various kinds of behaviour, some offensive, some dangerous, from some white fellow-countrymen and women to others. Some of them are straight-up selfish pigs as drivers, causing danger, congestion and stress with their cars. They park on pavements where I'm trying to walk; at junctions, making it dangerous and awkward for me; on double yellow lines, blocking off my progress and yours and that of hundreds of others every minute. They're people who think they own the place and don't give a monkey's about inconveniencing others. And if you ask them to behave you'll get a mouthful from many of them or an invitation to a scrap. And I'm supposed to feel a common identity with *these* people?

There's worse crimes than the next example. But is there anything so *casually* anti-social to fellow-countrymen, so disgusting, as shitting all over public places? Millions of 'British' dog-owners *shit in public*. They do it all over the pavements and roads. You step on it going to your car. So it gets on the carpets in your car; on the wheels of the push-bikes your kids bring into the hall (so they're not stolen.) Many times, I've had to wash dog-owner's filth off my shoes and the wheels of the bikes. They shit in the parks. When I was running kid's football I'd have to wash crap off a dozen balls. Think about how we'd see it if it was really *people* really doing it. But it is. Back in the 70's racists used to claim Asian people were dirty. Try your fellow-white British dog-owners. (Dog-owning readers – most have been behaving better since me and others complained enough; but what a thing to do) .

And you get vicious, brutal behaviour from some ordinary white people. There's a lot of good ones; but when a lot of people, like my old Mum, daren't walk the streets or parks, especially at night, for fear of being attacked by fellow-whites (and other colours) what sense does it make?

Some - *some* - white people, fellow 'Britons', and some non-whites too, have done things to me and mine at street level that show that there's not much caring by skin colour amongst ordinary folk. At ***page 347, Anti-Social Behaviour,*** , now just briefly covered, were a few examples of robbery and street attacks just from my experience that hit me hard and are easy to recall. I could also easily recall instances where some people who were white and British did bad things to other British people than me. You too will have experienced some bad treatment from some bad white-English-British people. My experience and probably yours shows no sense in grouping by colour with quite a few ordinary white or any other colour 'British' people.

The *we* of national identity includes some *'white' 'British'* people who've robbed from

my kids and yours; stolen my motor-bike; broken into your car, or stolen it; bullied us at work, sacked me and you and your relatives and friends. 'Fellow-countrymen' and women have done you over - they've sold you faulty goods in shops and so have ordinary people you bought things from; 'done' you with shoddy central heating and building work. I'm sure you've had problem neighbours? Been burgled, robbed, assaulted? All of that is enough to sharply reduce the power and significance of being *English* or *British*.

Many 'British' people *criminalise and imprison* other 'British' people just for putting substances of their own choice into their own bodies. How cheeky is that? How outrageous. A 'free country', is it ?

Some substances can harm people. It depends on the substance and the person. tobacco, alcohol, crack, cocaine harm. Others don't, or don't much. Even heroin is Ok if it's clean and you put up with being dependent on it. But harmful or not or a little, it's insolent, arrogant and outrageous of some 'British' people to do this to their fellow-countrymen. *It breaches your Human Rights to invade your freedom by criminalising you for what you do to yourself.* It's also absurd – *it's a victimless crime.* The criminal and the victim are the same person!

And although substances don't directly harm anybody but the user, the failed, stupid policy of prohibition *does* cause immense damage to millions of us, non-users and users alike, causing huge amounts of crime because people can't get substances legally.

Then, to repeat, there's attacks on the street. The business class, the Conservatives, can be pretty brutal. But they don't generally attack you at random on the street, at night maybe, and rob and maybe stab you. But a number of poorer working class people, particularly young lads, do, and are psychopathically brutal to each other. This was analysed more in *Anti-Social Behaviour or Some Organise; Some Go Under; Some Turn Nasty*, at ***page 347****, now mostly removed to cut down the size of this work.* It is/was argued there that it's mostly caused by the brutalisation, the *You're On Your Own, Look Out only for Yourself* philosophy and social relationships engineered and fiercely defended by the Business class/ Conservatives. But whoever causes it, since some ordinary, working class people do brutal things to each other, it's another fact that shows the group 'white' national identity to be a myth.

It's not *outsiders, 'foreigners'* doing these bad things to me and you – it's fellow-British people, often white. It's a fact that most of the people who've actually done bad things to me and probably to you are white and English and British. (And some have been Black or Asian British.) I've given some examples of fellow-British people being bad – what are yours?

In politics, at work, and on the street, mine and your most serious problems come not from the foreigners and immigrants and asylum-seekers that we are encouraged to see as causing our problems; but from substantial numbers of our supposed fellow-British.

But most 'whites' – most people of any 'colour' – **are *alright***

Of course, that's nowhere near saying ***most*** white British / English people are bad. You or I could just as easily list, at greater length, the decent acts done to or for me by fellow-white citizens. *It's just saying that when you take together the business class, the many ordinary people who just 'look after number one', and the actively bad people, there's no sense in the commonly held images of colour and nation.*

And now we're travelling and holidaying abroad can't we all see the decent people amongst other *'nationalities'*? I could for some French people, Spanish, American, German I've met. You could too - you know some nice people who aren't British or white. They're just ***decent people***. Let's use that as the first way of grouping people, wherever they're 'from', instead of the nationalist and colour-based ones.

(Though there's a disadvantage, the tabloid papers use 'decent' for an assumed group who follow their pretended moral(istic) standards.)

Most People Are Alright. Maybe that's the term to use – *'People Who are Alright'*. Most, including most of us 'whites', are mostly good people.

Of the generality of people who are alright we can easily name particular groups. Like all those people, maybe you and your workmates, who support Red Nose days for raising money for the world's desperately poor; the actors, musicians, writers and other artists, and everybody else who perform at Make Poverty History concerts; people like those who run all the charities and staff the charity shops. And just ordinary people - like all them on 'Who Wants To Be a Millionaire', a TV quiz show - seem Ok.

It's been argued here that even some of the mostly white business class are alright. *A lot of people, the majority, mostly white (as it happens) are civilised, decent people*. If you add Labour and Lib Dem voters together, there's clearly a decent-ish 'Social Democrat' majority in the UK. We should always remember that the Conservatives, even when they ruled us thuggishly under Thatcher, never got the support of more than thirty percent of those entitled to vote.

But the problem is that although most people are *alright,* huge numbers don't actually *do* much, are not active politically, with and for other people. The numbers *doing* anything consciously and actively to tackle the not-alright business class people and to build decent support systems for each other are nowhere near enough. Some do. But lots don't.

And many decent people, particularly those called 'liberals', are confused. Their political thinking is a mid-way muddle between the two main political philosophies –

- the Conservative individual free-market view

  if you can make it, you can keep it (and sod everybody else);
- and *the support-each-other* civilised view, once Labour's.

Too many decent people aren't sure what balance they want between these two positions. New Labour and the Lib Dems both try to present a package balancing them and decent people vote for one of them or the other. That results in a split in *the majority civilised vote* and allows the anti-social Tory minority to be the largest party. That's how they got in to government for eighteen years; and it's how they might get in again.

Another weakness of liberals like the columnists at the Guardian newspaper, Polly Toynbee and others, is that they too believe the Lying Promise and write as if this ***is*** actually a caring society, when in its essentials it's not. They write intelligently on social policy to influence politicians, showing how things could be better *for* the real *us*, the masses, as if there's really *'a nation'* that genuinely cares about the citizens.

But they don't see how the business class, with their central role in '*the country*', in *the economy*, have far more influence over politicians than liberal newspapers. They don't see that because politicians defer to the business class it isn't enough to make a reasoned, civilised case to the decent politicians. It is necessary to seriously challenge the Business class itself. Which they don't do. And they, 'liberals', don't see an active role for us, the masses, in getting organised and making that challenge ourselves.

To sum up - most white 'British' people are alright. But there aren't at present enough organised and active together for us to achieve a decent society, that wouldn't be based on colour. And there's so many who aren't alright that 'whites' just doesn't work as a group. It's nonsense when you look at what rich white business class people do to you; and also what some selfish and even vicious ordinary white people do to you.

And just to be clear - not all people from ethnic minorities are nice people either. Most are, because most *people* are alright. But you can't tell by the colour of anyone's skin.

If You Dig - Whites Are Mixed Race Anyway

It's common knowledge that there's no really racially pure 'whites' anyway. Here is a useful exercise done on union representatives anti-racism classes, called 'Dig Where You Stand'. Reps are asked to find out and report on where their parents and grandparents lived, what they'd done for a living, if they'd moved, and why. That uncovered some *real history*, stuff you normally learned from the history books, but here it was coming from real people's stories.

It turned up all the usual 19th Century Agricultural and Industrial Revolution stuff, of people having had to move to the towns because the Landowners enclosed - robbed - the Common land, and the mechanisation of agricultural work; then having to move again as industrial jobs kept collapsing too. We got all the Irish and Welsh immigration – as with my ancestors. And also people descended from all sorts of immigrant groups. One rep was descended from the Huguenots who were expelled from France by a Catholic King for being Protestants. And there was Tony, descended from White Russians, the landed and business class who fought against the Bolshevik Revolution, who emigrated to the UK when they lost. But Tony was a Shop Steward in a factory and therefore now on the right side.

Dig Where You Stand always showed what a mixed bunch we are and how '*white-British'* identity is shallow, as is fairly common knowledge. Everybody must have some fairly recent immigrant people in their family. But if your skin is 'white' you're soon lost in the mix. Black and Asian immigrants aren't simply because they're more of a different colour. But that's all it is – a different colour. Yes, some come with different cultures. *But the white British Rich have a very different culture to most of us.*

No National Identity Shared with Conservatives

Summing up the argument - national identity means putting yourself in the same identity group as a self-obsessed, anti-you, and often thuggish class – Business class people and the Conservatives. We can say the business class are thugs, as a class, because of the poverty, brutality, race hatred and wars that they, the UK one and other business class's, consciously create. And it means being in a group with some uncaring and even vicious ordinary people.

Yes, the existence of *'a unified governing system for a piece of territory'* – a country - has some definite, significant meaning. And there is *some* real, definite, mutual interest between all of us who live in the same country, at least because we do actually live under (under?) the same law-making and economic and financial systems. You might argue that *the country* provides us with mutual support through the National Insurance system, the benefit safety net, the health service, education.

But they have nothing to do with nationality. *They are not fixed rights guaranteed by your Britishness and not guaranteed to you by all your fellow-British*. They've been won by some of us ***decent*** British people organising politically and fighting against the opposition of the ***Rich*** British and by enough of us voting for these things. They can be and are taken away as the business class, as the Conservatives, try, as ever, to escape any responsibility for us, their so-called fellow-countrymen and women.

There's nothing like the kind of mutual support guaranteed to British people by fellow-British people to justify the easy assumption of national common interest relentlessly pumped out by the rich and the business class, and accepted by most of us.

The argument needed to be put at length, as has been done.

But it can be put in just two words – The Tories.

Maybe with a third word between those two.

That might all have seemed like a class-war rant. It challenges the established view of 'the country' more than is normally done. But the Tories actually realised it themselves, way back in the 1880's. After conceding the vote to the better-off of the male half of us, they started talking of the need for 'One Nation Conservatism.' They meant, as has been vigorously argued here, that the way they really want to do things shows the idea of 'the nation' to be nonsense and they would need to treat the worker majority better if they were to get any votes from us. *So they themselves agree with all this.* But they've never foregone their selfish greed enough to do enough about it.

National identity obscures the ***real*** main identities:

Business Class people. Decent people. Working Class people.

A note - this work obviously argues on the side of the working class. But as said when talking of some ordinary people's bad behaviour and street thuggery, working class people are not *guaranteed* to be decent. However, they are generally more civilised, not being amongst the aggressively selfish who self-select themselves into the business class; they're on the wrong end of the business class's ruthless uncaring ways of running society, so they have an interest in *decent, collective* ways of running it. And *our working class ways of organising are as decent, fair, collective, civilised as we are yet capable of.*

It's the Same All Over (but needn't be)

It's not just 'the British' who get taken in by being grouped together as a '*nation'* with people who don't, many of them, offer you much help and support in life. People fall for national identity all over the world.

And people generalise about supposed *national characteristics* of 'the French', 'the Germans', 'Aussies', assuming *they're* all together more than they really are, and more different to the British '*us'* than they really are. But examine these collective stereotypes made about 'foreign' people just because they live on the same piece of territory and you'll usually find they don't stand up to the examination. The *'Welsh',* the *'Italians'*, the *'Spanish'*, the '*Americans* (or *Yanks*) and others aren't necessarily all the same and aren't necessarily nice to each other.

'The Welsh'

Quite a lot of the writing of this was done in a caravan in Wales. People here in Wales have a strong group identity image. They're mostly lovely people but some are hostile to *English* people. It's because (they say) *'the English'* are buying second homes here, driving up house prices so 'local' or 'Welsh' people can't afford them. *Or that's how it looks to those who hold strong perceptions of people as 'Welsh' and 'English',* who use those easily

available notions of national identity that make people ever-ready to identify some as outsiders.

But it's not *ordinary* English people who are driving up house prices in Wales. It's *wealthy* people. Many of them are indeed 'from' England. But why be hostile to every English person because of what English *wealthy* people do? I'm not one, and I'm not responsible for them. They are as much of a problem to me as they are to the Welsh would-be home buyer. And if (some) Welsh people are going to be hostile to the *'English' buyers* of houses there for driving house prices up, why not also blame the *sellers,* their fellow Welsh? They take the money offered by a wealthy English person instead of selling for less to a fellow Welsh person. It could be racist to do that so I'm not actually recommending it - just pointing out how badly-thought out the nationalist attitude is. It's casually used to attack the *outsider* but it's not noticed what little it means between themselves. The nationalist myth readily makes (some of) them hostile to 'the English'; but ignore what they do to each other.

Maybe they'd argue it was excusable for the Welsh seller to take the money as they'd be less well-off than the wealthy English buyer. Ok then – it's about *wealth inequality*, isn't it? Not about Welshness or Englishness.

And there's some Welsh people who'll rob and attack their fellow-Welsh; or maybe drunkenly assault them on a hard-man's Saturday night out. So how much sense does being 'Welsh' make? Some, maybe. They were colonised, back in the years around 1300 CE. But not by *'the English,* but by ***Norman*** Kings and aristocracy - the same people who'd invaded and oppressed 'the English'. Maybe the Welsh are colonised by the English rich now. But they've got their own rich too, with big houses and estates. As with other national identities, too much is made of it. Thankfully, many of 'the Welsh' are in fact firmly socialist before being nationalist.

The 'Italians' ? Lombards – Romans – Neapolitans – Communists - Conservatives – Fascists – and more

People who live on that bit of territory we call 'Italy' do share a language and a law-making and government system. But they're not all big supportive pals together. Many (although not all) Northerners feel superior to and despise and hate the poorer Southerners. There's a political party – the Northern League - based on a Northern self-image and hatred and contempt for Southerners. Romans too have a strong regional identity thing.

We talk very readily of *Italy*, of *the Italians,* as if Italy is clearly united and defined and uniform. But it's not been one single, unified country for long, only since around 1870 when, led by Garibaldi, some small mini-countries joined together. Doesn't that just take the biscuit, to treat them *so* much as one people? And as well as regional divisions, there's plenty of 'Italians' with a clearer sense of class than of nation. On the working class side, they've had a much stronger Communist Party than anything we've got in the UK; and on the business class side, people like Berlusconi, and the neo-fascists.

And people talk of Italian stereotypes, such as them all being supposedly demonstrative and stylish. But though there's a lot of nice things about Italy and 'the Italians' there's not much style about their cynical, boring defensive football, their callous attitude to the Beautiful Game.

The 'Spanish'? - Castilians - Catalunyans - Basques -

Take for another example *the Spanish*. Again, they're not the single, clearly-identified group that people have in their heads when they say 'the Spanish.' They've deep divisions between Castilians – from around Madrid - and Catalunyans. Ask someone from Barcelona. Ask a Basque if they are Spanish. In the regions they pretend they can't speak Spanish because they resent centralised rule from Madrid, and speak local languages.

Mah Fellow-Americans, I Don't Care If You Die

Take the USA. Americans are friendly enough people in conversation, but are deeply divided in wealth and power, from the neo-Con Republicans in their antiseptic plastic shiny luxury to the poor-white 'trailer-park trash'. And deeply divided between White and Black - the New Orleans disaster illustrated the point. They care so little about each other they've not even got a Health Service!

Indians and Pakistanis

Indians and Pakistanis are not as united as you'd think from the way people just call them all '*Indians*' and '*Pakistanis*'.

In India Hindu Nationalist extremists do awful things to fellow-Indians; and the *Caste* system, a medieval class system, is divisive and means un-caring treatment of fellow-countrymen and women.

Pakistan is a cobbled-together state, a result of the disastrous way the British Imperial ruling class (or, more accurately, the business class in politics) got out of India, which until then included what was made into 'Pakistan'. In 'Pakistan' there's serious differences between people with different class and regional interests.

Anti-Colonial Nationalism

You can make exceptions for nationalism in countries in South America and Africa and Asia where the people have a common fight against the imperialism of the US and it's flunkies like Blair. Their national identity often represents something worthwhile they're doing together.

But most countries aren't the sort of caring Socialist Republics that might make sense of national identity. That's fact. Most, all around the world, are business-dominated. Very rich business-class people successfully, and sometimes brutally, obstruct the poor trying to get their countries run for the benefit of the majority, but run them for themselves and their US backers instead. For example, the way Brasil play football is one of the most beautiful collective human artistic achievements ever. But where's the substance in bigging it up about being 'Brasilian', when there's been murder squads killing poor fellow-Brasilian street kids? When so many live in those awful slums, the 'favellas', without basic hygiene? When the poor farmers union leader is assassinated? When Brasil is the most unequal society on earth, last time I read?

In Argentina there's plenty of class rule and inequality. In the 1970's and early 80's fascist generals secretly murdered working class activists, *the Disappeared,* dropping them from planes over the Atlantic after torturing them. They used the nationalism generated by the Argentina football team to boost support for their regime and tried to use Diego Maradona for that. But Diego, being a poor boy from the barrios with loyalty to his working class community, wisely kept his distance from them.

Agreed

It often feels like it's going against the stream to argue these unusual views against

national identity. But we internationalists are not alone, you can get agreement, and I did with two of these examples. One Welsh guy I got talking to came up, unprompted by me, with that same argument made above - that you could blame rising house prices in Wales on the Welsh *seller* for not selling to a fellow-countryman but taking the extra money from a wealthy English *buyer* instead. And once when starting to say to an Italian guy 'Italians are all supposed to be stylish but what about the boring football?' he responded to 'Italians are all supposed to be stylish' with *"Oh, that's not **us**! That's **the Rich**".*

In conclusion - *where, really, is the substance in nationalism in any country where the Business class have a free rein to run their uncaring, selfish, brutal Free-market Business System?* This work says a lot about the lack of meaning and the dangers of believing in Englishness or Britishness, because that's the nationalist myth most apparent around me. But it's a common problem around the world.

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Identity Politics - National And Other

Expressing Your Individuality.....

There's a lot said in this work about grouping by class and not grouping by national identity. But we identify ourselves in more ways than those. How do *you* define yourself? Maybe you are, just, ***you*?** Many people invest a lot in their personal life, in their sense of identity simply as themselves, *an individual*, often expressed through buying things and having things through consumerism or through their appearance, what they wear, how they look. Through their social lives or their houses and their cars, in improving the house or customising the car or motor-bike. In taking holidays, travelling. Around their jobs, 'their career'. There's a lot said about 'the individual'. Marketing and advertising emphasise 'you' and your individual needs and desires. And politicians bang on in a variety of ways about *the individual*, or *individualism*, in business, in culture, in identity. They maintain it is the be-all and end-all of existence. You, you, you. You want to be yourself, right? Don't we all?

Individual self-expression through consumerism is one of the things, along with celebrity-dazzlement, Britishness and being football-mad, that you are allowed and encouraged to indulge in; while you are discouraged and prevented from exercising any power at work, and in all the decisions made in politics. Much of consumerist individualism is shallow and insubstantial but although we're highly social, we are indeed individuals with varying personal interests and tastes. So self-expression as long as it hurts nobody else is a human right.

And for people in well-paid work in the UK, the US, Europe, Australia, a few other countries, individualism expressed through what you own and consume obviously makes some kind of sense, certainly to many people. Because although work is often boring, meaningless, oppressive, with harsh workloads, long hours, not enough time off, and is insecure, *outside* work most of us can enjoy a lot more stuff, consume a lot more of everything, express ourselves through what we have and do, than we did a couple of decades ago. Consumerism in the UK today is *amazing*. When this poor boy was growing up, the rich, the business class, enjoyed lives of excessive consumption, but only let us have just enough to get by. Not now. Now,

they throw consumer stuff at us and easy credit so we can buy it. Because 'the economy' is so productive it only works by force-feeding us iPods, HDTV, fast food, DVDs, flights abroad, and on and on.

They need us to buy their stuff, much of which we don't need, because of their crazy need for constant *economic growth*. It's consumer heaven if you've got enough 'disposable income' (as their marketing creeps term it.) Even if you haven't, they recklessly throw credit at us to keep growth going, keep retail spending ever upward. For many, that's good enough, and I understand consumer individualism without agreeing with it.

*But for all the talk of the **individual,***

*a lot of people have strong feelings of **group** Identity.*

What about all the talk of We, Us, Our and Them?

What about all the talk about Local identity -

of 'Where You're From' ?

I bet you're not simply an ***individual.*** Despite the talk of individualism, people have an awful lot ***of Group identities***.

I bet you also identify as one of these, or things like them:-

English or Welsh or Scottish or African or Asian-English? British?

Or French or German. Italian or American or Argentinian. Whatever.

A lot of you see yourselves as Northerners, in England. And in Italy too.

If you're from Merseyside you probably see yourself as Scouse, a Scouser.

If from Manchester, a Manc.

Maybe you're a Yorkshireman? (what about Yorkshirewomen?)

Maybe you're a Londoner.

Maybe see yourself as White, or Black, or Asian?

Do you see yourself in and accept other people placing you in one of these many identity groups that are mostly based on *Where You're From*, some based on what colour you are?

For myself I don't. But almost everybody else seems to accept them as meaningful. Every day, in one or more ways, people expect me to identify myself as being in one or another of these groups. Here are some of the group identities that I could claim for myself and that people try to use to and about me:-

A Scouser, Northerner, English / British.

White, Middle class. A bloke.

A Manchester United supporter.

(Those of you reading this who are ABU - Anyone But United - read on, the whole argument of this section is that it means little in the real relationships we have with each other and that we have a lot in common that football support gets in the way of.)

I reject all these group identities. People often try tag me with them but they don't mean much to me and I ask people not to apply them to me with any great meaning. They don't describe or define me or anything I think is significant about me. Maybe there's some little significance in some of them. But nothing like as much as is usually made out.

Here are some of the things about me that *actually* mean something, things that matter about me :-

There's all sorts of personal stuff, that come from upbringing, emotions, likes, dislikes.

Me, what I'm good at, what I'm not good at. What I'm like to other people. What I like about other people, what I don't like.

I'm a *decent* kind of person. One of the *good guys*.

I'm *Working class*. That's not just a self-image, not something taken up voluntarily. I'm that because I've lived by working not owning a business. I'm a trade unionist, *a union man*.

I'm a *feminist* even. Yes, really. You can't properly be a trade unionist without being for Women's rights (as well as men's.) I've achieved stuff on this.

I'm a *Socialist*, a Marxist. I'm a revolutionary, by belief. Not much by practice. I just think it'd be a good idea but only when an awful lot more people do too.

I'm a lot more things – a husband, a lecturer (retired), a Dad, a motorcyclist, a football man. And so on – things about me that have real meaning.

None of that is meant to sound boastful in any way, as if they somehow make me superior because of any of it. It's just to say these things describe my *real* identity, far more than all those more readily-used *where you're from'* identities.

And from my real personal qualities there are far more significant groups you can put me in than any based on *Place,* on *Where I'm From*.

Couldn't you do the same exercise for yourself? Think about what your real qualities are, and see whether they mean more than 'where you're from.'

Go on - Do it now!

The Right To Unionise 3 –

Organised In Our Unions – The Real 'WE' - and <u>Really</u> Looking Out For Each Other

Later, this work will argue for you to think of ***Working class*** as your main group identity. That means more than just thinking "*I'm* working class", an identity tag for just you. It should mean that you also identify with all the other working class people and support them, at least in spirit, when they're in trouble or 'having a go'. It should mean you feel a sense of loyalty to them - like some of you feel for that ever-changing bunch of guys you don't really know who play for 'your' football team.

If you already do identify with other workers, can you try to persuade somebody else to do the same? The arguments put here should help you to do that. That's the aim, anyway.

Plenty of us do have that sense of having things in common with other *people-as-workers*. In the UK solid working class attitudes have been stronger at some times than at present (2009). From 1980 onwards they've been greatly weakened by the destruction of older, union-organised industries and the dispersal of the workers and their communities; by greater job mobility*;* by attacks on our rights to organise together in unions; and by the culture of fake self-expression based on consumerism. And that's why all this has been written, because things won't get better until we re-build.

A lot of you reading this will only know the national and local group identities being criticised here. *You won't have experienced the feeling of being one of the 'us' of a group of workmates organised and acting together in a union.* You might even be influenced against unions by the anti-union bias that the business class, it's so-called 'newspapers' and business-friendly politicians (that's most of them) pump out.

But in place of the fake group identities where you support sportsmen and

women and teams just because they're 'English' or 'Scottish' or 'Welsh' or 'Irish', ***Union*** activity gives you a real solid group identity based on *real* links and *real* action together. When you organise with your ***Workmates*** to stand up to the boss, to challenge their unfair power, to take that risk and seriously act together, you get a real nice feeling of togetherness.

It's nothing magical, not as exciting as your team winning a trophy. But it's more meaningful, more real, more satisfying. It's good for your dignity and for your workmates dignity, for your collective dignity. It means you can look each other in the eye and see mutual respect. It sounds lefty pretentious to call it *comradeship* but that's what it is. Old soldiers and football team mates who've been through struggle together and stood by each other use that word readily, unashamedly. I'm not going to make much of it, here. But it's a good expression, really. It means you respect each other not so much for being funny, chatty, or such like less important 'sociable' attributes; more for the support you give each other in difficult, dangerous situations, for your common humanity and strength.

There *is* quite a lot of comradeship and *solidarity* about. There's just not enough, that's all. You get it even in the USA. You can get the impression that all Americans are seekers after the American Dream – you know, the full development of the personal success, selfish individualism, "I've 'made it', sod the rest of you" approach. But that's not the full story. American workers are, in their union attitudes, pretty solid, those who are organised.

End of The Right To Unionise - 3. The Right To Unionise 4 is from page 195.

It's Not Where You're From, (that matters) It's Where You're At

People are always making assumptions about you being in lots of *Where You're From* identity groups. But these identities are mostly nonsense and they're often *dangerous* nonsense. They're not usually based on anything very meaningful and they cause major problems for you. Yet they are so readily assumed, adopted, used, by so many that you can feel out on a limb disagreeing with them. But there's actually a fair few who disagree with them too, it's just not often written down like this. Let's see about getting your support on it .....

How They Put National Identity In Your Mind

The biggest example of people expecting you to feel part of a big social grouping is *national identity, 'patriotism'.* A lot was said earlier about how, because of the selfish and sometimes brutal actions of the business class and even some ordinary working class people, it just doesn't make sense. Now let's take a look at *How It Gets Us* and after that : How they deliberately put it in our minds; How they use it against us; and Why we help them to do it.

'British' somebody-or-other wins Gold for Under-Water Wellie-Chucking !

You're expected to support and rejoice in the triumphs, and be downcast at the failures, of any sportsmen and sportswomen from 'your' country. Take any day, today, or yesterday perhaps. How many times, in the papers, on TV or radio, or in ordinary talk with friends, neighbours, workmates, have they and you assumed that you should support some

person or team, maybe an athlete, maybe a cricket team? ***And isn't it simply because they live in the same country as you?*** Even though you've never heard of them, know nothing about them as people? They're often doing some obscure sport you've never heard of, like under-water wellie-chucking! But the media present it like you're going to fervently identify with them.

While writing, some bloke called Henman is trying to win Wimbledon and I'm supposed to be interested. But I don't know the guy. He could be alright, or he could be a Tory. (A real one – don't be fooled by the pretend-cuddly Cameronians of 2008.) If he is one – I've no idea if he is or not - it means he doesn't care about me and is hostile to me. He doesn't care if I've got a *Job* or *Income*; if I do have a job, he'll want me on the lowest pay possible, working the longest hours, with fewest holidays, no pension. If I don't accept that, he'll want to sack me. He'll support laws that stop me organising with you and other fellow-workers to protect each other from the boss's power at work. He won't care about my health or whether *the Health Service* can look after me. He'll not care about the *Education* me, you and our kids get.

So if he is a Tory, I hope he does terribly at his tennis. If he's not, then I just don't care how he does. Who is he to me? And who is Andy Murray? Mind you, Jenson Button, the Formula 1 car racer, seemed an Ok bloke in one interview I saw. But Lewis Hamilton – good on him for being the first black guy to win the car Formula 1 title; but what kind of fellow-countryman is he, going to live in Switzerland to get out the payments to support public services that 'the country' has decided he should pay?

You get bombarded with the assumption of shared national identity. Motor Cycle News, 'MCN', would be better called Motor Cycle Nationalist because every week there's some feature or headline that assumes we care how 'British' riders are doing in MotoGP racing.

But do we really know enough about these sportspeople to support them? How does them and me or you being born in the same 'country' give us any reason to support them? *The country* is only a piece of land with a unified law-making system. It doesn't tell us a thing about whether these people are worth supporting or not. Who are they to you and me? And we usually have had no role at all in their development of their sporting qualities, either the individual sportspeople, or the national football, cricket and rugby teams.

It's not just in sport that you get this expectation. Motor Cycle News assumes I will favour Triumph motorcycles because 'they're British'. But the owner, a man named Bloor, gave £100,000 to the Conservative party at the time Thatcher was cutting public services, attacking our Health Service, and attacking my Union. All of which means, not to be too politically abstract about it, he was attacking *me*. And it hurt. So fuck him, his motorbikes and shared nationalist identification about motor-bikes.

Every minute of every day from being just a toddler, you encounter expectations of shared identity about the country or 'your' country. Or negative ones about someone else's country or the people themselves – the *Germans* ..... the *French* ..... the *Yanks* .....

It's a dominant feature of the attitudes expressed to you and expected of you by parents, uncles and aunts, primary school teachers and the 'newspapers' and TV. Yet it's never explained or examined. In the UK, it's about being English or British'. But it's the same in the other countries, being French, Greek, American, whatever. It's so

firmly established and so ingrained in most people that challenging it is a big job and that's why this work goes on about it at such length.

Some progressive people are timid about criticising national identity, and the patriotic myth. Rather than oppose it, some decent progressive people argue we can 'reclaim' 'English' identity from the Rich, the Tories and the far right by highlighting decent English things. Like celebrating, for example, the English (and Scottish and Irish) folk music traditions, that were built around decent sentiments of caring for people, of social warmth; like celebrating the history of English Working class people's struggle for democracy.

But how much is this worth picking out as *English*? Isn't it simply *democratic, decent and Working class culture and struggle* of the sort that people have done, and do, here and in other countries all over the world? We should identify with that *wherever it is done by whoever does it*.

There's no problem at all in identifying strongly with the English heroes like the Diggers and the Levellers who fought for democracy with Cromwell. With Tom Paine and Thomas Hardy, who fought for it and were tried for their lives by the Rich at the time of the French Revolution. With Cobbett, Tom Mann, Sylvia Pankhurst.

But you can identify equally well with James Connolly, the Irish socialist who the British Rich executed for fighting for Irish liberation; with Danton and the rest, in the French Revolution; with the Viet Cong. With Nelson Mandela. And so on.

*And it makes no sense to identify with the democratic progress made in Britain **as** 'British' when the people who viciously opposed it were **also** English or British.* The brutal ruling propertied and business class of the 1700's and 1800's opposed free speech, the freedom to organise in unions and politically, and the vote.

And *they*, those who opposed, and still oppose, democracy, have always been the people in the positions that really define 'the country', the people who actually embody the British state. The Establishment - the Kings and Queens, the Magistrates, Judges. Their Generals and admirals, their armies and Navies. The Chief Constables, their Lords in their unelected pomp(osity). Parliament when only the Rich had the vote.

Even Parliament now - the people we've managed to get to be able to elect – the MP's – get seduced by the prestige of being at the heart of the system and rarely promote any further *'Freedom and Democracy'* for us. So the freedom and democracy we have isn't *British*. It was and is '*Us-the-Ordinary-People'* winning and defending some freedom from our powerful and oppressive fellow-British.

People in all countries do the same against 'their' rich and powerful. There's probably a distinctive 'British' local flavour to it here that varies it interestingly from the similar struggles that have gone on and go on in other countries, France, Germany, Spain, Mexico, wherever. But the thing to identify with is the across-the-world struggle for freedom and democracy by the mass of ordinary people against rich and powerful people. It's the same struggle, whatever country it is fought in.

But why, anyway, should anybody in any country be boastful and claim status or pride from what 'fellow-countrymen and women' did in the past? You may be living in the same country as them or even directly descended from some of them. But that means not a thing. Because *they*, real live people, did what they did; and fine work maybe it was; but since it was all done before you even existed, *you* contributed nothing to it. If you respect what these people did, then fine. Respect it and try to emulate it. If you do, if *you* have a go at improving things, then be proud. But not because of what was done earlier by some people who happen to have lived before you on the same patch of land as you. People

should only be proud and boastful of what *they* do.

National Boasting Messes Up Our Thinking

For an example of the problem, take the often-expressed claim about Britain that "this is the best country in the world". It undermines criticism, challenges those of us who believe things should be improved – it means "you've got the best, shut up". But is it *really* the best? Who's ever done a real comparative study on this? In other countries they get a direct vote for the leader of the government and for the head of state. The French have better transport and pensions. Have we really got a better society overall than any other? Have we really house-trained our rich and powerful business class more than any other working class has?

Even if it is the best, which is unlikely to be provable, there's a hell of a lot of room for improvement. The struggle for democracy against the rich in the UK and in other countries goes on. What about us not having a say in Blair waging war in our name? And we need to fight *reductions* in freedom as we've had with ID cards, and other reductions in our freedom and increased state powers brought in for 'anti-terrorism' by 'our' own war criminal terrorists.

This next piece was written on the morning of the terrorist attacks on London in 2005, known as 7/7. We get ourselves into terrible trouble by allowing people in other countries to associate us with the British business class. There's no question about it, the terrorists are responding to the attacks made on their people every day by 'western' Governments acting in the interests of the western business class. The unfair trade; being lumbered with Governments of 'their' local business class promoted, funded and armed by the USA; the direct military imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq, the indirect in Palestine.

And because national identity is so strongly promoted, we, all of the 'British' people, are seen as the people doing it. Because of the powerful image of a single British national identity that we allow, in so many ways, sporting and political, to be presented to people in other countries all around the world, *we* are seen as oppressors. Terrorist attacks are us getting blamed for the vicious things the business class do to control the world and its raw materials, like oil, and to get access to markets for their goods and services.

Not just now, but over last 100 years in the Middle East. It's not actually *us*, is it? But by allowing ourselves to be grouped together as 'the British people' with the Business class on whose behalf it is all done, we invite being caught up in brutal reprisals to *their* brutality. And the nationalist identity is the main thing that enables them to get away with fighting their wars in our name and with our money, and risking our lives, particularly those working class lads and lasses who are short-sighted or desperate enough to fight for them.

Terrorists should have enough sense not to blame us, since so many of us do make it clear that we oppose what the British state does, on behalf of the Business class. And the terrorists are almost as brutal as Blair and Bush, even though on a much smaller scale.

But we could do more for ourselves over this. Given the terrible nature of what the thugs in Downing Street and the White House do in our name, and the consequences for us, not enough of us do enough to stop them. I don't. We talk and grumble to each other but the great majority of us are pretty much passive about Blair implicating us in his terrible crimes. Many of us did and still do protest,

fantastically. But many more don't. It can be done - look at how people in Eastern Europe got very big political changes since 1990 simply by *loads* of them turning out for massive, really big, weeks-long demonstrations and strikes. If we'd done that sort of thing over Iraq Blair would not have been able to get away with his criminal slaughter and we'd be less likely to get caught up in the slaughter he caused.

The least we should do is challenge every day, wherever we can, this *we*, *our country* stuff in all its forms, so it's clear to the terrorists and the world that it's not *us*, the millions of decent people who live in the UK, causing their problems, but the brutal idiots who are in Government here.

National Identity - Business Class Mind-control?

But until we do that the widespread assumption of national identity will remain common and unquestioned. You grow up with it, it feels completely natural. It comes at you from just about everywhere, it's possibly the strongest social influence you experience. It comes at you from your own family. From school, neighbours, sport. Particularly from 'the papers' and TV and radio; from Prime Ministers, the other parties; from media coverage of the Windsors. That's how it gets so many of us. It influenced me for ages, until finally it clicked while Thatcher was viciously attacking me and mine yet at the same time expected us to be 'all British together' while she attacked the Falklands on behalf of business class interests. Me, us, and the Conservatives, all together on the same side? It just suddenly didn't make sense.

But if national identity is as dubious as is argued here, how is it so strong in so many people's heads?

First, on the next page, how rich Business class people actively *promote the association*, *consciously and deliberately.* (later - *How They Use It Against Us* and *How We Help Them Do It).*

How The Business Class Mesmerise With The National Mindset. How Their Press Promote False Identities

Their main tool for mesmerising and misleading so many of us is cheap, mass circulation 'newspapers'. They started them after we won the vote (for some of us) between 1867 and 1888 (roughly). Before that the business class, then clearly and openly a *ruling* class, taxed newspapers to restrict mass readership, so they could afford to keep themselves informed and we couldn't. But after we forced them to allow us the vote they started their cheap tabloid 'newspapers' to 'educate' us in how to think and vote.

It's bizarre how 'the Press' is often spoken of as if it's a respectable institution, as if it's part of *the country,* part of the democratic system. It's sometimes called the *Fourth Estate* (which are the other three institutions – Parliament, the courts, the monarchy?) That's absurd. Most of the 'news' papers are simply the political activity of a few very rich and powerful business people - Murdoch for example - independent of the Tory party,

It *is* important that Governments are scrutinised by a '*Free Press*', free of government itself. Journalists in Russia are having to be very brave, some are being assassinated, possibly with government complicity. *Free Speech* is for monitoring what those 'in power' do, and challenging them to justify what they do.

***But almost all of 'the Press' is owned by rich business class people*.** They certainly do scrutinise and challenge what Government does, but it's with their powerfully Business-class, anti-working class, anti-progressive arguments. They print blatant mind-bending propaganda every day to pressurise governments, and get voter support, for the kind of

government that does what they want – like low tax of the rich, like laws against union freedoms - and to undermine opposition to themselves. The way they influence governments and voting we need not so much a free press to scrutinise government, but governments free of being relentlessly pressurised by the business class's press.

And easily overlooked is the fact that each of the 'news' papers is a business in itself. So they will, of course, exploit their staff and be anti-union and business- biased on most issues.

It is ridiculous that they are talked of and respected as *new*spapers. Newspapers accurately *report* what's going on in the world. It doesn't take much observation of what 'the press' prints and the way they present it to see that they are simply pro-business class, anti-working class, nationalist and racism-provoking rants, not ***newspapers*.** But it's our own failure as a class that we don't have our own papers.

The Guardian/Observer and the Independent are probably the only UK papers that could reasonably be called *new*spapers, which requires factual reporting of 'the news' without mutilating it with their own agenda. But even the Guardian isn't as left as it's made out to be. It supports progressive policies and causes but not the necessary tool to achieve these things - strong self-organisation and self-directed activity by working class people.

The business-class-owned tabloids or 'Red Tops' – the Sun, the Express, the Star, the Mirror; and the Mail, the People and the News of the World – use these well-tried and successful techniques, below, to divert our attention and steer us away from criticising their class – and from even identifying them.

Divert People

They present as 'news' a vivid diet of scare and scandal stories about minor or 'moral' issues – ***Shock! Horror!*** They present such stories as if they've great significance when they're often only about people's private behaviour, most of which is nobody else's business. They attract, entertain and distract people by dramatising almost every item in the paper. They systematically present the meaningless private doings and partnerships of 'celebrities' as if it's *news*, so readers can feel they are in touch with lives more meaningful and fulfilling and apparently 'successful' than their own. They titillate and excite workers with that stuff and, of course, over-excited sports coverage, treating that great game, football, as a matter of far greater significance than it really should be, being *only a game.*

Divide People

Having got workers to buy and read their so-called 'newspapers' for the titillation and sporting coverage they create the news agenda for them, and for the media in general, with a daily, relentlessly pursued range of stories about supposed threats to *Britain, the British, Britons*, or *Whites*, or to a mythical British *'way of life'*. At times, it's internal threats - drug use, family breakdown, gays, young people. Or supposed faults in the education system, using education as a scapegoat for the failings of the economy and society whose faults are caused by the power *they*, the business class, have over it and the way they run it.

The Daily Mirror isn't as guilty as the rest – because they recognise there is a market amongst many us for a paper that is not as obviously anti-working class as the others are.

Don't Blame Us - Blame These People

They attack workers on benefits to make those in work feel virtuous and so to split workers from each other. They attack *'the Unions'* as if they are unacceptable, intrusive outside agencies that are against the interests of *the country*. Yet *the Unions* are simply those of their fellow-countrymen, who they pretend to care for, who are *organised, just as business people are*.

Your Real Enemies Tell You To Blame Outsiders

The most obvious use of national identity to divert attention from the business class's uncaring and exploitative ways of running the country is their inventing of threats to 'Us' from various kinds of 'outsiders', inducing in people notions of superiority to them, fear of them, and antagonism to them.

They do it to outsiders of all kinds - always cranking up hostility to '*Foreigners*' - the *Germans*.... the *French*..... *the Poles* .... Brussels ... with derogatory terms for them to help you feel antagonistic - Frogs, Huns, Eyeties, Dagos, etc. (Maybe there's less of this these days ....)

And they promote fear and hostility towards *'outsiders'* who 'come here'. Over the last fifty years they've successively and successfully demonised West Indian immigrants in the '60's; Asian immigrants in the '70's; asylum seekers in the '90's and 00's; then Muslims; and most recently, East European workers. Huge headlines spread fear and antagonism to *'They'* and *'Them'*.

A banker, a Daily Mail reader and a Romanian were adrift in a lifeboat. The only food they had was a ten-pack of Mars Bars. The banker said "I'm an expert at resource management, it's best for everyone that I look after them' and grabbed the Mars bars. He then opened it and gobbled down nine of the bars. He gave the tenth bar to the Daily Mail reader and said "I'd watch out for that Romanian if I were you – he'll be after your chocolate".

(Credit to novelist Chris Brookmyre)

The plain fact is that most of these 'outsiders' – Polish plumbers, for example – are just ordinary decent people trying to get by. (Unless you know any dodgy Polish plumbers - there must be some.)

There may be problems from immigration like strains on health services, housing and schools. But there are anyway. And if the immigrants are working – which they usually are – they're paying taxes. (They'd probably say they avoid tax but Thatcher transferred a lot of taxation from Income Tax to VAT. You can't avoid paying that unless you are her class, Business people fiddling VAT.) And the very last supporters of good public services, and jobs, are these 'newspapers' and their rich, business-class owners.

It's obvious from this 150-year long practice of scare-mongering campaigns against '*outsiders*' that the business class owners of 'the papers' deliberately provoke anti-outsider nationalist race hatred to divert the thinking of millions of us away from them. And yet to those millions, it *isn't* obvious. Many people accept 'what they read in the paper' as reliable information, and do actually perceive these 'outsider' people as threatening; when as groups they are no more harmful, possibly less so, than many of the ordinary 'British'; and definitely less harmful than those who tell them the scare stories, the rich business class people who own these 'newspapers' .

They defend themselves against the charge that their demonisation of outsiders is racism by claiming to be merely 'speaking up for' the poor oppressed white Brit. But them pretending to support (often white) workers ahead of '*outsiders*' should make them a

laughing stock amongst us because the business class exploit or discard British white workers ruthlessly.

Their use of the commonly-accepted *we* of the national identity to delude millions of workers into seeing *asylum seekers* as a major problem was an impressive stunt. The Mail and others spent six or seven years banging on about asylum in a quite clearly anti-outsider, race-hate promoting attempt to wind people up about what is basically a minor issue and deflect them from having a go at the Rich. It worked. Several times when discussing politics with fellow-workers, even a Shop Steward once, talking about jobs or the health service or some real issue, they've brought up asylum, saying that's what really worries them. But it's nonsense.

Because even if asylum seekers were some kind of problem, there's *much* bigger issues to attend to. Just list them – *Wealth and Poverty; Health; War, Jobs, a decent Minimum Wage; Pensions, Transport, Climate Change; Education, University fees, Hospitals; War, Rights at Work, Crime*, and on and on…. There's no way asylum was or is an issue worth the place the business class press gave it at the top of the political agenda. Yet papers like the Mail and the Sun made it so because they know people find it ***easier to attack the outsider than to tackle those real Issues.*** To understand the real issues and take a position on each of them you have to do a lot of fact-finding and thinking. Like on pensions; or on housing policy. It's much easier to simply *blame outsiders.* That's also easier than challenging the Rich (which includes the 'newspaper' owners) on these real issues.

Although the owners of 'the Press' take care to position themselves independent of their main party, yo*u can readily spot from their headlines that they know exactly what they are doing* - diverting people's attention from bigger issues like the inequality of power and wealth, creating a news agenda that doesn't cover issues like taxing the rich, providing jobs and houses and pensions - where their wealth and power and what they do with it would be questioned. They create instead a news agenda that diverts the spotlight from them. And they shamelessly crank up racism amongst their readership that even results in innocent people being murdered.

It's the whole national identity myth of 'Britishness', the pretence that we are all one together, that enables them to blame 'outsider' groups. What nonsense. Look at *the wealthy*, that very much includes the owners of the tabloid papers - the Sun, the Daily Express, The People, The News of the World; and the Mail, Telegraph and the Times - *they* cause most of working class people's problems, not desperate ordinary people escaping from desperate circumstances in other countries, often from war-torn countries.

At ***page 356*** are two examples, from the Daily Mail and the Daily Express, of stories with deliberately provocative, race-hate provoking headlines and slants being put on stories that don't merit it.

They do a pretty good job with their scare stories, distracting many of us, much of the time, from noticing how badly they treat us. And they make a good job, to be fair, of putting the nationalist image into your head - taking every opportunity, sporting and otherwise, to implant in us the imagery of *We*, *Us*, *Them* and *Your Country*. Seventy six per cent of people read the business class's mind-bending papers. That explains a lot, doesn't it?

It's easy to slag them off. But what they do is fair enough in a way. What *else*

would you expect them to do, those rich, ruthless people, but to mislead us with mass propaganda that promotes their interests? Of course they'll do that. *It's up to us to see through them.* But we don't – people allow them to get away with it. People talk about things having 'been in the paper'. I read it in the paper…. It was in the paper…. But these are not *news*papers. They are *Weapons of Mass Distraction*, used by the Business class on the Working class. (WMD's? A bit obvious, sure. But true).

We Need To Tell Each Other Not to Read This Mind-bending Stuff

Sometimes when you challenge a class-conscious worker about them buying the Sun or another of the business class mind-fixing 'newspapers', they'll agree they're rubbish but say they only buy them for the horse-racing tips or the football. Yet those same people always say things about politics that they clearly got from that 'paper'. They get you with the scandal and the sports coverage. Then with the rest of the 'paper' they put stuff in your head.

But more usually when you put to a working class reader that their nationalistic and sometimes racist views are shaped by rich business people to fix their heads, they don't easily accept that. It's not an easy thing to say to anyone, to challenge them like that, without being rude to people we want to work with. But we have to challenge people reading them. People when challenged in an argument about anything, often don't change their minds on the spot. I don't. But later, when our ego's have calmed down, we'll accept what someone told us that we disagreed with at the time. So let's all make it our habit, a normal thing, to scoff at and challenge what people get from those 'papers' and challenge fellow-workers who read them. It's about time we, you and me, talked of them as WMD's instead of giving them the status and authority of *newspapers,* which they're not.

One way to challenge them is to say at the very start of those many discussions with fellow-workers about what's 'in the news', 'Look, the reason this is even in the news, and the way it is being presented, is because *the business class* owners of 'the papers' want to attack public services/benefits for workers suffering from their system/create scapegoats to exercise your outrage on what's wrong with the world/divert you from attacking them and their system'. And that's an example of how very useful the term *'Business class'* is.

We don't often get the chance to tell them what we think of them. So this writer was pleased that when he did, he was sharp enough to use it well. I picked up the phone once to be asked by a plummy voiced person who introduced himself as journalist *from the Daily Mail* if my wife could help them contact her old classmates. They wanted to do a 'schooldays' article on one of them who was a New Labour politician.

My wife was out. I thought "Wow, the Mail! The *scum*! The very worst of the business class *asking **me** to do something for **them***! Opportunity knocks! …. how to handle it ? …… just tell him to fuck right off ? No, listen, think, wait….". My wife wasn't actually in contact with old class mates. But to put myself in a position where I could refuse to help, I said she was. And then said that I wouldn't help and she probably wouldn't. (Which was correct.)

Why not, he asked? "Because… we both think you and your organisation, the Daily Mail, are a foul bunch of barbarians, attacking and whipping up hatred against single mothers, trade unionists, people on benefit, racial minorities, immigrants, asylum seekers". He tried again, saying it was to be a human interest piece only, not hostile to the politician.

(At that time they'd given up on the Conservatives and were cosy-ing up to New Labour in an attempt to influence them.) Thinking about the hell I'd endured at work in education after the Conservatives attacked the Colleges, and about all the laws against union activity that I, personally, had to struggle through to organise our defence against

these attacks I said again - "your organisation contains some of the vilest, most disgusting people on the planet and actively works to attack and worsen my life. So no, I'll not help you".

In his presumption, he kept at it, not taking 'No' for an answer.

A good ol' factory floor insult that came in handy -

I said -

"Look, mate, I don't seem to be getting my point across here -

I wouldn't piss in your ear if your brain was on fire".

'Oh. I suppose I'd better leave it there then' he said.

"You do that" I said.

We should take every chance we get to challenge these disgusting, anti-social people. How do people as bad as those at the Mail even have the nerve to ring decent people, as if they believe themselves to be an acceptable part of society? We should let them know they're not. They are the lowest of the low. With their fear-mongering and pro-wealthy politics, they cause a huge amount of injury to millions of innocent people, poor people, young people, working class people, Immigrants, people descended from immigrants, foreigners. And to all of us, attacked on the streets, suffering from the brutalisation of working class youth that they and their class cause.

We can take encouragement, though, from how they work so hard to stoke up fear and resentment of relatively harmless, or even innocent, people and things. And to stoke up nationalism and anti-outsider racism. To put so much effort, daily, relentlessly, into weakening our ability to see things in class terms, they must be right worried about our potential to rumble them and challenge them. And that's right – most of us, most working class people, aren't fooled by them.

The problem is that they don't need to fool *all* of us, just to part off a minority of workers from the majority, just to divert a significant number of our class. And to confuse some others so they give up trying to develop a coherent political view - like those thirty per cent of people, the majority of whom must be working class, who say, daftly, of the political parties 'They're all the same' and don't even vote. It all helps make us not strong enough to take them on.

But in them, the business class owners of the 'newspapers' – the Harmsworths at the Mail, and Murdoch, and the others - making that effort to distract us, let's remind ourselves that it's an acknowledgement of our real strength and, if we can do it without being rude, we should challenge those many people who read them.

Educating Their Masters (that's us)

The argument is that they *consciously* use their press to manipulate us. It *is* obvious if you just look at the news stands, their front pages, their headlines, and ask *Why?* are they highlighting that story (whatever it is) and not others. *Why?* do they write their headlines as they do.

They were certainly doing it consciously when they started to do it, after 1867 – not all that long ago in the development of a society. My grandparents parents would have been alive then. In the UK, the organised and active Working class had forced the property-owning and Business class to concede the vote to some of us - the better-off of the male half of the population. A business class politician then famously said ***"Now we must educate our (new) masters".***

He was saying **"*we've given them the vote: now we have to control their thinking*"**. As said, before this they'd restricted mass readership of newspapers by taxing them so we couldn't afford to keep ourselves informed. But after we forced them to allow some of us the vote, they started the cheap tabloid 'newspapers' to 'educate' us.

Another way to educate us was - education. They brought in mass education in the 1880's and why and how they did it was clearly told in a TV series shown in the late 1990's by Ian Hislop of Private Eye. He showed how they used flag-waving Empire days and other propaganda stunts in the schools to indoctrinate little kiddies into loyalty to the monarchy as a symbol of national unity that masks the power of the business class.

Education isn't used quite so blatantly now, to socially engineer us into national identity. Good. But it has been proposed, in 2008 .

Another thing they did after conceding the vote to some of us was to wheel Victoria Saxe-Coburg out of pampered idleness, to revive the ritual of pompous and ludicrous buffoonery called the monarchy that continues to this day to bolster the myth of national unity, and to undermine working class people's consciousness of their own class.

'The monarchy' is a massive insult to all of us. We should be seeing ourselves and being seen as ***citizens, adults, equals.*** This writer is proud to say that even when at primary school in the 1950's Mrs Windsor toured our town and we were let out of school to see her, a few of us resented being expected to be impressed, looked with scorn as she cruised by in her limo, and wagged it off school for the rest of the day as an act of rebellion.

There is one thing to be said for the Windsors though. There's nothing wrong with their being of German origin. Until the Reformation, Roman Catholicism (this writer was brought up Catholic) was enforced on everybody, on pain of torture and execution. It is an authoritarian belief system. Just one person, the Pope, is in ultimate charge of everyone's beliefs. The development of Protestantism, although that too is authoritarian, was, in terms of our whole history, a big, progressive step forward for *Freedom Of Religion*. And in the UK, winning the right to *religious* freedom was a major reason for the struggle to get some degree of *democratic* control over the monarchs.

Over the period 1600 to 1745 in the UK a lot of people died to win this struggle for freedom of religion (within Christianity) and some democratic Parliamentary control over the monarchy. In that period some of the Kings and Queens tried to force everybody back to Catholicism, and to re-claim the monarchy's dictatorial powers. Parliament eventually ejected one would-be such dictator (a Stuart whose son and then his grandson 'Bonnie' Prince Charlie tried to get back in power in 1715 and 1745), and from then on would only allow Protestant monarchs who accepted Parliament as the real authority. Kings and Queens William 'n Mary 'n Anne did that. After Anne died the nearest relatives they could find in the family tree for the succession to the throne who would accept the democracy of Parliament (though democracy only for big landowner's) were the Hanoverians. They were about 48th in line but never mind, they agreed to behave themselves.

How They Use National Identity Against Us

The Business class's relentless nationalist brain-washing with their 'newspapers' pays off all the time, day after day. But it's particularly useful when they face a crisis and we are strong. Here are a few examples from history -

The Zinoviev Letter is a clear example of them using *national identity* and its partner, antagonism to *foreigners*, to weaken our ability to see ourselves ***as*** a class and to act independently of them. Around 1920, after the horrific experience of the First World War, workers who had sacrificed such a lot for a better life organised in unions and as Socialists

for a fairer society in the UK, in most other countries in Europe, and in the USA. Russian workers and peasants were temporarily successful, overthrowing the undemocratic Czar. Along similar though less radical lines we in the UK voted in the first Labour government.

The UK business class was outraged and alarmed. Because Labour's majority was tiny, they had to hold another election.

Now many of us quite rightly supported the Russian workers in *their* struggle for freedom and democracy and socialism. And they supported *us* in ours. The business class twisted this mutual support into 'foreign interference in our country' by the evil foreign revolutionary Bolsheviks. Our Labour government, formed by political organisation and struggle by politically class-conscious working class *British* people, was demonised as *a foreign-inspired threat* to the British way of life. On the eve of the election that most vicious of business class newspapers, who else but the Daily Mail, published a letter that they claimed had been intercepted, from the Soviet Foreign Minister, Zinoviev, to the Labour Party and 'British' workers. It said something like "Let us know as soon as you get back in and then we'll send our troops in". That letter caused Labour's defeat in the election. It has since been proved to be a forgery.

That was a particularly cheeky lie by the British business class because just five years before they had ***really*** sent troops, to ***Russia***, to kill and maim Russian workers and peasants in the civil war started by the anti-democratic, Czarist and Business class forces of Russia against the Revolution. You might have seen the films 'Dr Shivago' and 'Reds', set in this civil war. Churchill tried to get the British forces to use poison gas against Russian workers and peasants. Organised British workers eventually started planning a General Strike against the intervention and that forced the British business class to stop it.

But under the pressure of the British-assisted military attack the Bolshevik government had to put aside their democratic processes for the sake of the military discipline needed to defend the Soviet state. They did defeat the counter-revolutionaries and their British business class allies; but the abandonment of their Soviet democracy, forced on them by military necessity, left it open for Stalin to establish his dictatorship, that retained the name Communism but was nothing like the Worker's Democracy that it was meant to be. The Revolution was effectively defeated.

The BBC was set up by the British government on behalf of the whole business class after our General Strike in 1926. It's job was to fix our heads with the notion of national community, a one-nation mind-set, to weaken the radically independent working class consciousness we had developed around the General Strike.

(Although these days the BBC is a valuable haven of balance and intelligent broadcasting, under attack from media business people like Murdoch who want to establish the kind of rabidly biased business class commercial broadcasting that he and others run in the US, with Fox 'News'.)

The Right To Unionise 4

'The Unions' were too powerful in the 1970's'? No. Business People Were. And Are

Next, some more recent examples, from the 1970's, of them using *national* identity to smother *Working class* identity and challenge working class success.

A few pages follow here about some important things that happened in and around that decade and some readers have been funny about it, saying "Oh I'm not interested in the 70's"'. Nor me, particularly, not in that glib stereotyping of decades way that you get like 'the 60's', the 80's', from people like TV programme makers and disc jockeys. But what happened in UK politics in and around the 1970's is interesting because it was the high point of Working class organisation so far and the business class decided to end the wartime and post-war settlement that had meant they treated us half-decently. Led by Thatcher, *They* took us on and won and *We* need to draw some lessons from that. That's what most of this book is about.

Challenging Democracy ?

Throughout *'Us, Politics, The System And Class'* you'll find that although it challenges the existing order, which they like to portray as us being subversive, it's for more democracy, not less.

The Miners Brought Down the Government (allegedly)

In 1974, so the myth goes, *the Miners* made an unacceptable challenge to *democracy*. According to the often repeated, widely-accepted story, they brought down the elected Conservative government. But that's a class biased, propagandist distortion of what happened. The miners wanted better pay. That's a normal thing. They went on strike for it. That's a normal thing for organised workers to do. The Conservatives called an election on the issue and lost it. *The electorate voted them out.* Not the miners. It's *Democracy*. They don't really understand it, y'know.

They Really Attacked Democracy

But they *were* worried about us being as strong as we were back then. It was no Golden Age, mind, it didn't feel like we or our unions were *running the country* as they put it. That they exaggerate our influence so absurdly only goes to show how bitterly they resent us having any say at all.

But we *were* better organised than currently, and a retired general and other business class rogues set up a political organisation to launch ***a coup***. The BBC showed a documentary about them in March 2006. They owned up to having *planned to depose the Prime Minister – Harold Wilson – who we had voted in; and to murder trade union leaders.* Arthur (Scargill) no doubt; and probably Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon (leaders of the two biggest unions.) How's *that* for a challenge to democracy?

And the reasons they gave were - that their stocks and shares were going down in value, there was high inflation, and 'the unions' needed taming. But they way they put this was '*the country had to be saved'.*

So what they mean by *'the country'* is *their* wealth, *their* power. *Our* wishes, the wishes of many millions of Working class people and progressive people to have as Prime Minister the man we'd elected – Harold Wilson - and to try through our union organisations to bargain more fairly with them, the business class, didn't fit in with their idea of what 'the country' means. To them *our* needs and wants were not part of *'the country'.* It meant

something different, above and separate from our working class ***us***, and ruling over us. *Us* looking out for ourselves was and maybe still is, to them, subversion of *the country*. They drew on the hoary old images of 'this green and pleasant land' and 'serving queen and country' to justify a planned m*ilitary coup*, that they actually rehearsed by sending troops to Heathrow. So much for us being all together as 'Britons', as fellow-countrymen. And women.

A bit of musing at ***page 357*** whether that planned coup was the last gasp of a crusty old ruling elite who for centuries arrogantly assumed that they were themselves 'the country'; and whether today's trendier, less stuffy business class wouldn't consider it now.

But it shows how much political coverage is class-biased, that our union strength then, and how supposedly outrageous it was, and the miners having supposedly brought down the Government, is far more prominently and repeatedly highlighted than plans made by a group of business class people for political murders and a coup against Parliament.

Again from that period, there was a documentary on TV in 2006 about *the decline of the British car industry in the late 70's*, based on the familiar theme that we-in-our-unions were supposedly too strong. In the documentary, a pompous 'industrial relations correspondent' spoke about when management at British Leyland (the biggest UK owned car firm) couldn't tell him about their production plans because they hadn't yet cleared them with the unions. The 'industrial relations correspondent' spoke about it with quivering outrage. But what's wrong with it? In planning their car production, didn't British Leyland managers agree the terms of trade and supply with their outside *component* suppliers, with Dunlop, Monroe, Girling, Triplex, SU, Lucas? So why shouldn't they have to negotiate with the workers, the labour suppliers, just the same, as equal partners?

In that same period when we were strong the business class and their Establishment wheeled out *the Royals again* to make us feel part of one big harmonious national family. In the 60's society had, thankfully, become more open and democratic and egalitarian and the Windsors had been left to wither into a state of gradually increasing and well-deserved nonentity. But around 1976, at the end of *every* bulletin of the 10 o'clock evening television news they began to have some stupid 'news' item about the pompous, meaningless doings of one or other member of the Windsor family. That looked very much like a deliberate act, a conscious piece of head-fixing done to make us feel part of a *'national family'* at a time when our strength had them worried. Through what network of TV heads, business people, members of 'the establishment' – whatever that is, exactly - politicians, military people, at which weekend gatherings in which stately homes, was this decided? It doesn't happen now, does it? Was it quietly dropped when it became unnecessary, in the 80's? Or when the Windsor's behaviour became so embarrassingly bad?

In 1977, for the same reasons, they organised another piece of nationalist mind-fixing, a ridiculous *Jubilee* to 'celebrate' Elizabeth Windsor having been 'queen' for 25 years. Almost the entire population debased themselves by having street parties. Sanity was saved by the Socialist Workers Party organising in opposition a *Stuff the Jubilee* campaign; and by the Sex Pistol's monster-selling classic album *Never Mind the Bollocks* with the song 'God Save the Queen' with lines about 'fascist regime' and 'she ain't no human bein'.

If you find the anti-monarchist ranting offensive, I suppose she and her relatives are human beings. If they'd just drop the offensive and absurd claim to be 'above' us as in being a 'Highness', got proper jobs and behaved, we Republicans would let them be. It's nothing personal against them, it's just that the pretentious role they are prepared to play insults us.

Holding the Country to Ransom?

Media commentators and politicians always talk critically of our strength then in the 70's when we *were* more strongly organised, in our unions, and more active in defending and promoting our interests. They coined expressions like us *holding the country to ransom* that are still current and form part of younger people's perceptions of the time, that just show how much they resent us challenging their power to bully us.

As with the talk of the miners 'bringing down the government', that is such a huge exaggeration, it just shows up how much they resent and fear us standing up to them on anything approaching equal terms. But all we are doing when strongly *organised* and *acting for better conditions* is getting nearer to equality of power with them. In striking, we lose all our income but also make them (nearly) lose theirs. That's just us getting nearly equal with them *as our employers*, bargaining with them about the pay and conditions we'll work for. How is that holding *the country* to ransom? It's got nothing to do with *the country* unless, like them, they see *themselves* as being the country and *us* not being.

If you really want to see people holding the country to ransom, look at them. At various times in post-war history they've organised the collapse of the currency, the pound, to bully elected Labour governments to cut public spending. They export their capital, opening businesses in Poland, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Pakistan, the Czech republic, anywhere they can get workers cheaper and more compliant, absolutely in their own interests and regardless of the needs of *the country*.

They've threatened not to invest here, to successfully bully Blair and Brown into having *'de-regulated labour markets'*. But 'de-regulated labour markets' simply means your boss having immense, unfair, bullying power over *you*.

So we were 'Holding *the country* to ransom', were we? Well, de-regulated labour markets means *'Holding **the people** to ransom'*.

They go on about how awful it was in the 1970's when we were stronger. Yet it's often stated that up to the late 70's *wealth inequality* in the UK narrowed continually, historically *and has worsened since*. Well now isn't *that* a coincidence? That when we were most strongly organised, with a peak of union membership and *collective* instead of weak *individual* bargaining, our society was fairer? And that since they battered us and shackled our organisations and actions with legal sanctions, our society has become less fair?

End of The Right To Unionise 4 The Right To Unionise 5 starts on page 228

They Actively Promote National Identity

Sometimes it can seem that their nationalism isn't just some cynical ploy, consciously used to create in our heads a mind-set that obscures our real relationship with them. Maybe they *do* actually believe in it, in all that *This England, this Sceptred Isle* stuff?

But then look again at the deliberate, relentless eight-year onslaught of the Mail, the Sun, the Express, the Times and the Telegraph on asylum seekers, blatantly, unashamedly stoking up sometimes-murderous race hatred with the notion of *outsiders* threatening 'us.' It's obviously business class newspaper and TV owners *deliberately* fixing our heads.

They seem to have dropped asylum since finding East European workers to demonise. But they went on and on about the issue for all those years, blowing up what is a minor problem (for the 'country', though a major one for the refugees) into a huge, huge thing. It's a joke. The fourth richest country in the world getting a few of the people whose lives have been destroyed in some troubled country, almost always with some Western i.e. British business class interference. Last time I saw some figures, about eighty per cent came from Afghanistan; Iraq; Burma; Somalia. All troubled places with British involvement. The numbers of asylum seekers the UK gets - about 100,000 a year applying (at the height of the scare-mongering campaign, down to about 25,000 in 2007); maybe half of those getting refugee status in the end; are trivial compared to a poor country like Pakistan getting millions from Afghanistan; or the countries round the Congo, Rwanda - millions.

And if 100,000 or so asylum seekers get £39 a week until they get work - that's not a huge cost. It's only about the number of extra people you'd get on benefit if some stripe-shirted Hooray Henry financial chancer sneezes in the City of London. It's not a big issue.

It's easy to show how the rich, the Business class, *deliberately, consciously*, *actively* promote the myth of one national identity. Even, ludicrously, claiming they care about Working class people by attacking outsiders. They constantly *talk* of a national *we* and *us.* But in everything they actually *do* they oppose and repress anything that involves a *real* we or us, like State Education and Health, or any notion of a Right to Work. They promote instead competition, individual greed and uncaring exploitation.

But enough about them manipulating us. You have to expect that.

The real question is - ***How Do They Get Away With It?***

We Do It To Ourselves

Here, after all that, is the main point I want to make to you, my fellow-workers, my working class readers, about 'Where You're From' identities

The false 'We British' imagery doesn't just come from the business class manipulating our view of ourselves and others. They do start it.

But many of us are so enthusiastic about it, we do their job for them.

Football & The Tebbit Test

An obvious example is the mass hysteria over the England football team every two years in the football championships, the European and the World Cup. All that mass public display of *Englishness,* with workers displaying 'the flag of Saint George' (whoever he is) all over the place. Is that all manufactured and put in your heads by a manipulative business class? Sure, they do give it an almighty push because it does help them get us all over to their side and it sells beer, satellite subscriptions and papers too. But it's not all their idea - almost everybody seems only too ready for it without their pushing it.

You can get called a traitor for arguing against supporting the England football team. Let's look at that. First, the relationship we have with the players is empty of real meaning. Who is Steven Gerrard to me? Or any of them? Yes, we see them play football a lot. But that's all, we just know them as players of a magnificent but only-for-fun bloody game. Stevie seems a nice enough guy but does he, or any of them, care about me and mine and yours? Does he support good public services and

welfare? Maybe he does, maybe he doesn't. We don't know - it's not that sort of relationship, is it? That's what's wrong with it. I don't keep tabs on them all but recall that Terry Butcher, one-time England captain, was a Tory. Which means he *attacked* me and you. And some say the current one, John Terry, is dodgy in some way. Seb Coe, a great runner, turned out to be a Tory.

Apart from the lack of any real links between fans and players, does supporting the team mean anything *between the fans themselves*? In real life, in things that matter? Outside the heady moments of supporting-our-lads and the goals going in – Yeeeeeeeaaaasssss!!!!!!!!! - do the fans *care* about each other? During the footie tournaments there's a short-term New Year's Eve type of broad sociability, which is Ok; but what does it mean next day? Are we in a Socialist Republic, where all those millions of people getting off on the flag of St George care about each other having a job, a decent job, decent housing, health service, education? Do they care if you're handling life or if you've got problems? If it was so, maybe there'd be some sense in it. But it's not like that, is it?

Real Support

Quite a lot of so-called British or English people do, to a degree, care for each other, support each other on some things that matter – the National Health Service, Unemployment Benefit, Sick Benefit, and so on. *But that's not a British-English thing. It's decent people and working class people organising and campaigning* for these things, in the face of bitter opposition from a significant, large, selfish, brutally uncaring section of the same British, represented by the Tories, who oppose these services and work to undermine and dismantle them every single day.

Supporting anybody because they're *English* or *British* has no real meaning. It means you are allying yourself with people an awful lot of whom are complete bastards to you. And to me. Supporting English sports teams, you betray yourself, and your class, the Working class, by allying yourself with the grossly rich and powerful who do you in, daily; and by allying yourself with those others of your ordinary '*countrymen'* (and women) who, away from the football, would rob you or otherwise mistreat you.

To join in that national identity *with* those bad people, but *against* many decent people and workers in other countries, I'd feel myself to be a traitor, and an idiot to myself. A traitor also to those many others in this country who are either decent or working class. *I'm* not a traitor - I'm very loyal, to decent people and working class people and their organisations.

The rich, the business class, are unbelievably, cheekily confident in expecting us to be all-one-national-family with them. Norman Tebbitt, Thatcher's chief fellow-thug, challenged the loyalty of British Asians and Afro-Caribbeans with the question "Who do you support at cricket?" Most commentators accepted it as if it was a valid question. But there's a plain and simple answer to give to Tebbitt, that *anyone decent, of whatever race or colour*, should give him – ***"I support nobody that includes you and <u>your</u> kind"***

Yet we hear white working class lads and blokes singing 'God Save the Queen' and 'Rule Britannia' at England matches. Are they really so fervently devoted to the British state, the Windsors, Parliament, the Courts? Or are they just boosting their feelings of power and social significance by identifying with the strength of the British state? It's terrible. It just shows up the state of us, the real Us, *as a class*, the Working class – prepared to abandon our self-respect and share a shallow, boastful sporting identity with the rich and powerful who we are subservient to in daily life. Sharing the 'English' imagery with them, like this, with bugger all class awareness, is one of the things that lets them get away with what they

do.

What's 'St George' and his flag about anyway? What's he got to do with England and 'the English'? He was a Lebanese guy who knocked about in what is now Turkey in about 500 CE. He had nothing to do with England. Have you ever wondered how he got to be the 'patron saint' (whatever that is) of 'the English'? Here's one explanation - the 'flag of Saint George' is all over the place in Genoa, Italy, it's on crests on all the buildings. It's on Barcelona's club badge too. One story is that in about 1500, English merchants (business class people) paid the Genovese for the right to use the flag on their own ships because the Genovese were the most feared sailors and merchants in the Mediterranean, the only people the pirates left alone. This might explain how this bloke became 'the patron saint of the English'. But where's the meaning?

We're easily fooled by national identity into being on the wrong side of an argument. For example, on BBC TV's 'Question Time' programme in 2005 they discussed the 200th anniversary celebrations of '*the British'* beating '*the French'* and Napoleon at Trafalgar. *But the Napoleonic Wars were started by the anti-democratic Ruling classes of Britain, Prussia and Austria, who attacked the democratic French Revolution.* It's a good example of the Land-owning, Property-owning classes acting in solidarity *across* national identities, far more than we do. The Question Time discussion showed how the notion of *the country* misleads us, puts us on the wrong side of a debate, taking positions contrary to our own real interests. Tony Benn was good, as usual, arguing against celebrating the awful slaughter of war. But Otis Ferry, the fox-hunting enthusiast who invaded Parliament to protest against his way of death being abolished – I'm sorry, his way of life - said "But Tony, if it wasn't for Trafalgar, we'd all be speaking French". Tony, like a lot of people who go along with the myth of *your country* and the casually accepted *we* that goes along with it, had no answer.

But in 'our' ruling class's war against the French Revolution, which side should democrats and ordinary workers have supported – the vicious anti-democratic property-owning class who controlled us and Britain? Or the democracy of the Revolution?

The answer is easy. And our kind of people *did* support the revolution. And it wasn't just for solidarity, to support them. Nor is that why the Land-owning and business class rulers of Britain interfered, with the terrible bloody violence of military action, on the side of the French monarchy against the democracy of the Revolution. It was because *we, the People,* wanted democracy here and they didn't.

We fought this British property-owning class for nearly three centuries, from the 1640's to 1926 – from long before Trafalgar to long after it - to get the small amount of democracy we have, to get the vote and the freedom of speech to criticise them and what they do. *At the time of Trafalgar we ordinary folk had no democracy at all.* More on this and how the British ruling class's threat to execute the Revolutionaries caused 'the Terror' in the French Revolution in ***Digressions7, page 358***.

National Identity - the base for Racism and Fascism

Enoch Powell, a once-notorious racist politician in the UK, said "What's wrong with racism? Racism is the basis of nationality". He said it in defence of racism. But it works the other way round - it shows up what nationality is - racism. So racism isn't

the problem. Britishness is. It's what successive racist parties – the National Front, the BNP, UKIP – are able to base themselves on. These parties aren't the problem. Britishness is and we need to constantly challenge it and persuade people to not to see themselves as British. (Except for essential stuff like getting a passport and using what rights and services we have).

Nationality also creates two other big problems for us. ***First, it creates a false sense of unity that obscures the divisions inside a country.*** It creates a damaging sense of unity between the business class and those of us who are workers. It puts us on the same side as the people who cause most of our real problems. It means we unite with them. It bonds us with them as, for example, '*the British'.* It disarms us.

We are as a matter of fact stuck in a political formation with them – the country – at present. We can't disengage from the practical realities such as public institutions, services, benefits and passports, any more than we can disengage from them in our jobs. But the least we should do is to keep our distance from them, disowning 'Britishness' publicly, frequently and clearly, because it includes them.

The second problem is that nationality divides workers by country and by country of origin and that obstructs real unity. The national image means many people see a strong divide between themselves and 'outsiders' even though *they are mostly also workers,* or at least decent people.

National identity is instilled in to our heads in so many ways, such as by football and the rest of the national sporting mania, and plays a big part in people seeing things in terms of *the country* and a *we* and *us,* where those who live in it have a lot in common, and those outside of it are *foreigners*, readily referred to as *them*. You see it happening with the debate over being in the European Union. People just casually say *us* or *we* meaning the British; and *them,* meaning, mostly, French, German and Italian fellow-workers. National thinking makes people see 'foreigners' as competitors, feel antagonistic to them, even fear and hate them as enemies. Racists and fascists blame them for all our problems. Yet most of them are mostly just ordinary, Ok, mostly working class, people; just trying to get by, same as the 'British' members of the working class.

And when some of '*them'* move from one country to another, to here, as many workers do, racist divisions follow directly from the national group self-image. You can see it in the hostility to East European workers 'coming here'. People write letters to newspapers attacking *them*, European workers*,* for working for low pay and conditions, bringing down *our* pay and conditions or taking *our* jobs. The business class press use headlines such as "Britons lose out to cheap East European labour".

But it's not only immigrant workers who cause workers to compete downwards on wages and conditions, and attacking them does nothing to solve the problem. *'Britons' lose out to cheap 'British' labour just as much as they do to foreign labour.* Under the duress of finding work, or as anti-union scabs, native-born British workers undercut each other and bring down conditions for everybody.

The solution is to fight together, here and in 'their' countries where British workers work, for everyone's *entitlement to union organisation;* for the right to bargain *collectively* for union rates of pay and for union conditions; and for such government enforced rights as a higher Minimum Wage, effectively enforced by workplace inspections by a stronger Wage Inspectorate.

'Blame the outsider' racism against migrant workers comes from the nationalist mentality, of being united with our bosses. Yet while we workers allow ourselves to be

divided by nationalism, the business class co-operate quite a lot internationally when it suits them. They trade goods and services, export investment and production, and make political deals with each other.

To counter the accusation that nationalism leads to racism some decent people try make a case for what they call *Patriotism.* It's claimed to be different to and more civilised than nationalism. They claim you can have a harmless pride in 'your country' without the aggression, ugliness and plain nastiness of nationalism/racism. But 'patriotism' still separates decent people from d*ecent people* in other countries. And patriotism, just as much as nationalism, groups you with some right bad rich bastards and some bad poor bastards, people who you have terrible relationships with. And it's still the foundation identity myth upon which racism and fascism is built.

And with patriotism just as with nationalism the *us* of the English or the British really means *white* and is meant to exclude 'immigrants' or Black or Asian British people. In their 'news' papers the business class consciously use the language of *We*, *Us*, *Our*; and *Them* with devastating effect on many, many people. It's amazing, the strength of image of 'the British' they create. And ridiculous, given the unsupportive attitude the business class take to their 'fellow-Britons'. Yet strong enough to delude some white working class people into the attitudes that lead them to vote for racist, nationalist parties; whose politics consist of a mindless ignoring of real relationships, of the business class and what they do, of their wealth, their financial crisis, the role of the bankers, and says -

"Just blame this group of other ordinary people - they're a different colour."

Many of those with different colour skin to the long-standing 'white' type are joining in with the *our country* thing, supporting the English football team for example. And well-meaning people and ethnic minority people are trying to make the 'British' identity inclusive of all groups. But whatever your skin colour or origins, *whites included*, Britishness is the Business class rich ***de-identifying us*** as workers. *None* of us should be including ourselves in it. Certainly not as strongly as people do.

Why People Over-do 'Where They Are From'

National identity is the strongest of the *Where You're From* group identities. It's clearly promoted by the business class and clearly by joining them in it we de-class ourselves.

But it's not *just* them messing with our minds. *We do it to ourselves*. National identity is just one amongst many *Where You're From* social identities. Look at how people identify themselves by ***Place.*** Almost everybody adopts some place or *local identification*, by town, city, county, or region. People talk about *place* and use it to group themselves and other people daily. And most fervently in supporting a local football club.

And Working class people believe in these ***Place, Local, 'Where You're From'*** *identities without any noticeable business class head fixing.*

Class identity can be strong at times but it's way behind, almost invisible, compared to *Local* identity. Isn't it? Unless they're asked, almost nobody *declares* Working class identity. There's none of the daily expression of it. And when there is it's just people identifying *themselves* as working class. They don't say anything that shows any group identification with *other* workers. Most workers don't, in any

everyday way or at all, express sympathy, support, or hopes for the successes, of fellow-workers who are defending themselves or trying to get better conditions, at work and in the community. And don't feel hurt at the defeats, like they do with their football team.

Why People Do It To Themselves

Yet place identity, localism, is so strong, frequently expressed, many times each day. Let's examine that; understand why it happens; and see how it's nonsense. Understandable nonsense, because it fulfils a need that people have to belong to something big and significant. But having understood it, the argument will be that we don't have to agree with it, because it's nonsense, and because it harms us. It means having a go at yours and many other people's dearly held beliefs and identities. Hope you don't mind that. I'm doing it because these beliefs help the Rich make the world a much worse place to live in than it needs to be. It helps them to divide and rule us.

Here's just one of many examples that made me realise how *Where You're From* is nonsense. In the 1980's there were over a million school leavers who, because the Tories deliberately created mass unemployment, were put on a crappy government scheme called the YTS – the Youth Training Scheme. Far from identifying with each other by their role in the economy as unemployed workers, their main way of getting a group identity was in their support for 'their' respective football teams. Being from Merseyside but living in Manchester, watching football, I'd notice maybe more than some the daftness of the hatred and violent attacks the (very like each other) young lads from Liverpool and Manchester made on each other. They were all unemployed, and for the same reason - Thatcher's Tories. They were all on the same crap government scheme, same conditions, working hours, same £35 a week. They could have done with recognising that, got organised together, and bargained for better treatment. Sure, 17-year old kids weren't really likely to. But all these kids in both cities had then, and do today, a lot in common, are actually pretty much identical in many ways, clothes, attitudes.

The hatred between Liverpool fans and Manchester United fans is a horrible case of workers hating and attacking fellow-workers over empty 'place' identity, leaving the Rich to jet around in smug luxury, running our world and getting away with misusing *both* sets of fans.

Teenage lads and gangs sometimes also hate kids from other districts or even *postcodes*. That's ridiculous, that such a dull thing as postal delivery arrangements should give people cause to create a strong group identity and hate each other.

But Don't Blame the Business Class?

But unlike with national identity there's no evidence that Where You're From, Localism and Football identity and the hatred that goes with them is ***created*** *by the Business class*. With national identity you can see how they work hard to promote it. And they energetically boost the partisan fervour around football. That's partly to sell newspapers and satellite subscriptions but it's also because they know it diverts people's aspirations and rivalries and hatreds away from themselves.

But they don't *create* place and local and football identity about your town, city or region and team. At times, in certain places, they *have* consciously used it - in Ireland and India they stoked up religious and regional divisions to *'Divide and Rule'*. But is there any sign of them doing it between cities and regions inside the UK, consciously? It seems to come very naturally from people themselves.

Yet place and football identities don't really *mean* anything. There's no real,

functional, social connections in them. And they divide us (meaning workers) and overwhelm the possibilities of building identities based on real connections, real interests, economic and political interests.

Why Do People Identify so strongly by 'Where They're From'?

Why do people identify so strongly as

- Northerners, Southerners, Mancs or Scousers?
- as Londoners, Cornishmen or women, or as Geordies, Scots?
- or as whatever *you* are?

Each of us has far more significant personal qualities than any we get from place identities. And those place identities include in them people who are your worst enemies. Whatever your locality, wherever you're 'from', your rich, powerful and antagonistic class enemies in the business class are not far away. They live in the better districts, but that town or city identity puts them into that shared identity with you.

A lot of local identity is really working class identity finding inadequate expression through localism. That's what a lot of the tripe about 'the North' compared to 'the South' is about. In letters to the football fanzines, lads claim extra local credibility over fellow-supporters from the leafy suburbs by being from the poorest, roughest - i.e. most obviously working class - areas. But if it's being working class that matters, why go on about locality? Just do it ***as*** class.

At your teams football ground or mine, the rich, the business class, are there with you as fellow-supporters. Sometimes you see the class identity, noticing them in their executive boxes. But fans don't seem to have noticed something more important - how do they get so rich that some of them have *hundreds of millions* to spend on a football club? Are these people 'one of us', really?

Also at the football ground and on your streets sharing the place identity with you are some bastards who are working class traitors, who attack and rob fellow-workers. It's not been Scousers, Southerners, Leeds fans or asylum seekers or some other kind of 'outsider' who've robbed and assaulted my kids on the streets of Manchester. It's been fellow-Mancs.

Of course it needs saying repeatedly that there's many good people too. Wherever you are the vast majority are decent people. Nick Hornby, the writer of Fever Pitch, High Fidelity and About a Boy, said how in touring the bookshops signing and promoting his books he realised that despite all the crap things some people do and all the crap in the world *"Most people are alright".* (Mind you, the kind of people who go to a Nick Hornby book-signing *would* be alright.) But yes, *most people are alright.* That's true in Newcastle, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Buenos Aires. Remember that while you read the criticisms made of a lot of people in this work.

Of people who are alright, in particular there's the fabulous, straight-talking, strong, working people who, when they see something wrong going on at work, don't just whinge about it but stand up and do something about it – ***workplace trade union reps***. And workers generally, they're the best people in the world. As well as the organised, class-conscious ones, there's many millions who are just straight, decent people just trying to live a good life alongside their neighbours.

The trouble is, we just want to live that peaceful life and we let the ruthless Rich and the bad bastards amongst us get away with bad things. Most people are interested in more than just accumulating money and power regardless of anybody

else. But a mean minority are. We, the decent people, are not organised enough to guide and control the Baddies amongst us. We've got better things to do, better ways to be, live a peaceful life. But that leaves us passive and unorganised compared to the aggressive ruthless minority, theirs and ours, and that enables them to dominate, even though they are a minority. We've not got the social organisation between us that's necessary for developing and enforcing civilised living.

The local identification makes no sense. We don't, in the main, have real local *communities*. Some of us are organised, perhaps. *At work*, about 10 million of us are, in unions, and many more would be, given the chance. *Outside* work, where are the organised communities? There are amateur football clubs, Parent-Teacher Associations, civic societies. Maybe religious groups? But really, most of us are just *individualists, consumers*. We're living close together in our towns and cities, but we're actually quite atomised because we spend a lot of time inside our houses watching TV or playing computer games. We now travel widely outside our neighbourhood to work. Friends are often made at work so seeing them means we travel outside our neighbourhood and so don't spend our leisure time with neighbours, don't mix much with them.

There *are* real communities, groups of people who share things like musical tastes or some such interest. But they don't correspond to the *Places* that people identify with so strongly. Yet place is so strong in people's minds and attitudes! Despite having few real links with other local people and despite the disgusting behaviour of a fair few of them, many, many people identify themselves by locality – saying 'I'm from ……' Yet that groups you with many people you simply don't know and wouldn't get on with if you did. With some right bad bastards. Why?

Not Tribalism

It's often said it's *Tribal*. ***But where's the tribe?*** Tribes or clans were, and still are in some parts of the world, real functional social units. A tribe is a real working social organisation in pre-industrial societies. It's members lived together, doing the necessary work collectively or by specialised roles. They protected each other. They were *Society*.

Place identity is not tribalism. There are few real links between people who identify by place. It's not me, or you, and the neighbours we hardly know. It's not me and the thugs who rob me and my kids. It's not the people in the local Conservative club. It's not me and the rich in Bowdon and Hale Barns (places around Manchester where the rich live.) We could all be called *Mancs* but we are not fellow-members of any tribe. We live far too individualistically, with too many inequalities, isolated from each other, with far too many antagonisms, to describe place identities as tribalism.

Feeling Ownership of 'Your' Streets?

Another common explanation is that it's ***Territorial,*** like animals defending their patch. Maybe. It is remarkable how deep our feelings are for our physical surroundings, how much the visible landscape, even including in the inner-city dumps where many of us live, affects us. We feel secure with the familiar physical environment – what you see, knowing where you are. It's your main view of *the world.* For you, it's the centre of the physical universe. That is a sort of territorial reason for place identity, the place where you feel you belong, physically, where you literally know where you are. But it's a lesser thing than with animals, surely? We don't feel we own our patch and have to defend it from outsiders, do we? Though some teenage gangs do.

Being Familiar with the People?

To get through each day we have to accommodate to and find ways of living comfortably with the problem people in our area. Even though we don't like what some of them do, we have to either take on the social challenge of dealing with their misbehaviour, or shrug our shoulders and put up with it. Mostly, to avoid conflict, we put up with it.

Here's an example of that from my experience. It's not local-based putting-up-with-people but it works in the same way. As a trade union officer, I did a lot of negotiating with managers and had what appeared to be a civilised relationship with them. Before meetings between *Union* and *Management,* while waiting for everyone to arrive it's common for people from each side to chat and joke a bit about everyday things, the weather, the footie, holidays and so on. You accommodate to them, accept them as people.

Then the meeting starts and you get down to business over the negotiations. But beneath the social accommodation you make to them, and beneath the business-like manner, I have been in a state of mind to feel almost like killing some of them for their brutality to me personally and to others. But I'm not really up for that sort of activity. So I accommodate to them. They are familiar, everyday problem people. Despite hating some of them, we all accommodate to our bosses, don't we?

And in your *District*, where you live, don't you, and other decent people accommodate to problem people or ignore those you don't get on with, for the sake of avoiding tension? You avoid trouble as far as you can, and put these people out of your mind. Because you have to.

You don't have to do any of that with outsiders. You can feel different to them and make a lot of the differences between them and you and your fellow-locals. You can feel a false sense of superiority, take the piss out of their accents, feel superior to them in a variety of ways. And you can hate them and fear them. All because they are not a familiar part of your locality.

Yet we all know, don't we, that if you actually get to know them, say by some of them moving to live in your town, or work with you, or meeting them on a holiday somewhere, you get on with them? These days we are dealing as consumers or as workers with people from far and wide, far more so than a few decades ago. People travel the world for their employers, we use the InterNet, and realise that many non-local people are actually Ok, not much different to us, and better than some local people.

Along with this civilised mixing and co-operation there's still some 'Where You're From' banter, which could seem harmless. *But why are we always having a go at each other about Where We're From, when there's no jokes having a go at business owners and the rich?*

Knowing Your Patch?

Our feelings about belonging to a locality are strongly based on being comfortable in the actual physical environment. Knowing your way around, knowing where to get the necessities, where home is, we feel ownership of our streets. When we are somewhere else like on holiday or working away we feel the strangeness, the differences. We may *enjoy* the differences but also we might feel a bit of insecurity. Things like just the basic layout of the place are not familiar. And we assume that

because the people who live there are all familiar with the place and each other that they are a stronger group together than they probably are and that we're outside of it. But it's largely an illusion. Just because they all know where the supermarket is or share an accent doesn't mean they are any more of a strong group than the one back home, that usually isn't. But the differences and the strangeness do make us feel like an outsider.

And when there, somewhere else than our home patch, and we meet other people, we feel a sense of ownership about *where we come from,* maybe defensive, or maybe proud. And we trade on our knowledge of it. Don't you, when on holiday, swap knowledge about *Where You're From* with people you meet? You tell people *not* from your area all about it; with people you meet *also* from your area, you swap notes?

This is powerful, because nobody and nothing can dispute your local knowledge. You may not be of the same status, as 'well off', 'successful', wealthy, educated, qualified, as confident as somebody else. But you don't need skills, certificates, wealth, status to get a boost from *where you come from*. You're bound to be good at local knowledge, especially compared to someone not from your locality. Your knowledge is yours. It can't be taken away from you. You are proud of it.

Now that's Ok. Nothing wrong with it. It's a nice way of getting on with people. Those not from your area, you tell them the best places to go. Those that are, you find out the places they know and the people they know, that you know. It's all good stuff.

But it's not as meaningful as people make it out to be. For many people 'Where They're From' is the core of their social, group identity, and dominates the way they see – and often hate - people from other places.

It's done *so* readily, so cruelly, so unthinkingly. I was sat watching United at Old Trafford once with my sons and they sang along with the chant "If you all hate Scousers, clap yer 'ands". I said 'Er, excuse me. Your Dad here who bought your tickets is one, if you don't mind'.

But we do it, we do it a lot, identify ourselves by *Place*. Why?

Here's Why We Do It – 'Where You're From' Gives You Easy Social Confirmation - Easy Validation

They, above, were some commonly put forward explanations for place identity. But they don't explain it.

Here's the real reason you and other people make so much of Where You're From – ***because through Place, through Localism, you can enlarge your own identity, can confirm and validate yourself by including yourself in a big group of many thousands and millions of other people.***

Your city, town or county or region has *Social Weight* because of all those other people who also live there. It's just like effect of 'the country.' (The country is even stronger because it also has the social authority that comes from its institutions having sole control of the exercise of physical power – arrest, detention, fines, prison, maybe even execution).

Social confirmation and validation through place works like this - in any nation, big city, town, county, or region there's loads of other people there. That gives it great human, social significance. People not from there have heard of it, or of things that happen there; or they've been there, or heard of famous people from there. It's significant. *So you hitch a ride on the bandwagon, you make yourself part of something significant*. We like to feel we're part of something big, some human group, something socially significant, that other people recognise. Your country, town or city or region does it most easily, if it's big enough

to be well-known. Notice how people from smaller, less well-known outlying areas attach themselves to the nearest town or big city.

There's very little meaning in the *non*-national *local* connection. What's interesting is, it's the same thing as what people feel about *the country*. But although 'country' is pushed very hard by the business class, the establishment and the media, *local identities aren't pushed anything like as much;* ***yet they are almost as strongly held****.*

And that's why, though we can partly blame the rich for brainwashing us about the country, we also bring it on ourselves *with country as well as the lesser localisms.*

Most of us need to have ourselves and what we do confirmed, shared, validated, by other people. We feel better about what we do if other people are involved. There's a basic human need for assurance that what we are, or what we are doing, is seen by others as being worthwhile. Like, you find out if friends are doing anything, and arrange to do something together, rather than stay in at home on your own. Go round to someone else's, have them round to yours, go to the pub. It's a basic human need. Even when you all end up doing something pretty naff - a bad night out, something boring, you would have enjoyed yourself more staying in – it doesn't matter as much, if you did it with friends. We need validation from others. You're not alone. It was a shared experience. You can grumble about it to each other. You can feel that whatever you did, *and you yourself*, is socially validated.

So for a strong, permanently available social confirmation, validation, for who you are, *associate yourself with the thousands and millions of other people also 'from' your city, town, region or country.* It's dead easy - you don't have to put any effort or abilities into it to be able to boast about being a Scouser, a New Yorker, a Geordie. *You don't have to do a bloody thing except be born near or live near a load of other people!*

So if you're from Manchester, for example, big yourself up. It's partly because of the place, the buildings but really - *it's because of all the other people and what they do.* Some of them are famous so you can proud of *being from* the same place. The Stone Roses are from Manchester. So be proud of being a young Manc. Oasis are fellow Mancs too. It's like supporting a football team – it's the same process. Attach your self to a load of others then you're not just little you. If you're for example ... a Londoner – that's The Capital City. When in London, though I hate the over-developed closed-in feel of the place, I get a funny feeling of being at the centre of things. If you're 'a Yorkshireman' you're from God's own county. Apparently. If you're a Scot, there's a lot of stuff you can latch onto about being Scottish. Or Irish, or American. Even the Cornish have their own nationalistic myth, a flag. They sing about Trelawney, an ancient hero who rebelled against the English monarchy. Good for him.

Everyone allows you to associate yourself with all these other people, ordinary and famous, who live near you. But what real, meaningful links are there between you and them? When there's famous musicians from your town most of us get a lift from being able say 'Oh, yeah, they're from just down the road'. But so what? Maybe sometimes there's a real link between you and them, a shared musical culture developed between people who live near each other, and then some of them got famous. So maybe you did play a part in making that thing you're getting credibility from. But mostly not. Not to the degree that you can go round boasting about *just*

being from there. This writer is from Merseyside and of the Beatles generation. But what part did I play in their wonderful music? What part did most Mancs play in that of the Roses?

Some of my friends did actually do stuff on the Manchester music scene, stuff that has been successful round the world. People whose work you'll have heard. But I can't recall anything much I did that contributed to the music that was successful. Maybe I had some small influence that I could feel good about if I knew what it was? (In fact, I recently realised a big influence I had but it's no big deal anyway.)

And the music my friends made was not solely Manchester-developed - the influences were very much wider. Very American if you want to place-identify it, such as the Blues, Dylan, Velvet Underground and Love. And although many a Manc lad walks with a swagger because Oasis are from Manchester, and hates lads from Liverpool, Oasis themselves allow that they owe a lot, musically, to those very Liverpudlian lads, the Beatles.

It is nice to associate yourself with fame and success. But to build permanent identities and boastfulness and hatreds of outsiders around *Who lives near you*? It doesn't stand up.

Identifying by Colour of Face - as Daft as by Place

It's also common to group people by the colour of their skin, seeing face and race as significant. Being antagonistic to people from different towns and regions; and to people of different colour - it's the same thing. There's a lot of racial identifying about, of various skin colours. But it's all meaningless because whichever colour you group people by *it can't define what any actual person actually is or actually does*.

It's true that for historical and geographical reasons some societies have been largely of one colour and religion for long periods. So there can sometimes be some meaning in seeing them as a group. Most Pakistanis, for example, share a lot of culture and one of the religions, Islam, as well as colour. But as said earlier, there's actually significant *ethnic* and *class* and *regional* divisions inside Pakistan, which is only an artificial state, created by the British (Business class) when they left India.

Whatever things various groups of people have in common are simply *not* fixed by the skin colour, not fixed forever, and there's no sense in labelling either yourself or others by skin, certainly not in today's cosmopolitan global society.

You can sometimes, for convenience, carefully generalise about people in some way, some shared group tendencies, traits. But never so you can make any assumptions about or judge any *individual* person from their 'ethnic' origins. For example a Catholic I know married an Iranian and they had to meet with a priest beforehand because the Iranian wasn't Catholic. The priest, trying to helpfully include something from the Qur'an in the service, started to say to the Iranian husband-to-be 'With you being a Muslim…' only to be interrupted by an irritated a*theist* 'I'm not a Muslim'. His father was in the Iranian Communist Party. '*They*' in the Middle East are not *all* Muslims. You just can't judge and generalise and group people by skin colour and the 'ethnic group' they appear to be in.

Racism is a massive delusion, a complete meaningless nonsense. Yet it is very strong and has a terrible effect on us all. If you actually lived in a society structured round ethnic or tribal community relationships, in the Amazon jungle maybe, it would probably make sense. In today's *industrial* society, with clear *class* divisions of role, it makes no sense at all.

Don't Say Tribalism - say Group Identity

As has been said, many people are content to explain place and football identities by simply saying 'Oh, it's tribalism'. But that sounds as if it's explanation enough. As argued here, place identity and allegiance to a football club aren't tribalism because they involve none of the real social duties, obligations and support that a tribe or a clan has. *Tribes were definite social groupings, meeting people's material and social needs* for support in surviving and living and were usually based on family links. As said, where's the tribe now, in urban, industrial life? It's not really being in a *tribe* to boast about being a Yorkshireman, or Welsh, or a fan of whatever big football club. It's all just bigging yourself up by an empty association with loads of other people you don't know and have little or no real functional relationship with. That doesn't sound like *tribalism.*

Place, 'Where You're From' and football identities enable us to feel more secure, not so alone and insignificant - as each single one of us really is, politically. We are simply fulfilling the need we have for *validation of ourselves by other people* and for a feeling of social strength. It's only psychological, only in our heads, not based on real relationships. But it's important to us. We should understand these identities; understand how they fulfil a need many of us have, as not-so-great individuals, to belong to some significant social grouping. *Then call it* ***Group Identity*** *and, while enjoying the sporting side of it, the tension, triumph and disaster of supporting 'our' team, keep it in check because, unchecked, it is bad for us.*

Just saying "It's tribalism" seems to accept it, to endorse it. Say instead "it's people having a need to get shallow, low-in-real-meaning backing from social significance; it's people wanting to be part of something strong and it's something we should realise and grow out of" enables us to deal with it.

And say further - "It's people using the social significance of the locality or the football team as a substitute for the social significance that should come from real, class organisation – decent and working class people fighting together not to have to work longer for their state pension, for a works pension, for decent conditions at work, for houses, health care".

But place and football identities are much more widely adopted and assumed than real working class identity. People-as-workers aren't class conscious enough and not well enough organised and to be honest, not brave enough, and that includes me. So to get some social weight we turn to *Where You're From* and *Football* based identities as substitutes.

And put the other way round, it's because we take on - and are fed - this easy, undemanding role of place, local and footballing significance, we're not as class-conscious and as organised and strong as we should be.

That doesn't apply to everyone, obviously many do both, are active and also follow footie. But broadly, 'Where You're From' and football matter too much *because* class doesn't.

And so, properly, to Football Identities... Why People Over-do Them

I'd better say in warning that a thorough examination of the practice of supporting football 'clubs' is coming up here. (Apologies if there's a still a bit of repetition, maybe some points could be combined in one place rather than saying something similar a few pages later.)

Football is the most important example of people getting fervently group-minded through sport because many working Class people have extreme, fervent, disgusting, often violent hatred of other working class people expressed through football that they don't show to the rich, the business class, who are far more worth hating.

But it's only the biggest example. People also get fervently chauvinist with cricket and rugby and motorcycle racing. And probably even with under-water wellie-chucking. For any readers who don't subscribe to football mania, read on. You'll find support for your views. Those who are footie maniacs, you also should read on. You'll find it interesting. It'll be saying 'Love *the game*; but hate *the war game between the fans'*.

Football is commonly said to be an expression of the ***collectivism*** of working class people, a self-affirming group response to the powerlessness and alienation we experience at work as under-unorganised individuals.

And so it is. But it's not so much to be admired for that. It's the soft option to *really* organising and resisting and fighting the business class. And it's only a second-hand, vicarious response. In football, as a supporter or a fan you're not actually involved. And what you're not actually involved in is just a game, a war game. It gives you all the tension of a war and when your team scores – Yeeeeeeeeeeeeaaaaasssss!!!!!!!! – it's like the kill, when people go hunting wild animals. It's raw, it's primitive.

It's got its uses if we really have a need to express those primitive urges without actually killing anything or anyone, without being maimed or killed, without the actual blood and gore. Without risking anything real, like your own safety. If you can treat it as just a bit of fun, Ok. Chess, darts, and snooker are competitive too and also give us the tension before defeat or glory. But no-one hates anyone and no-one gets hurt.

But with footie we people-as-workers build false collective identities that do real damage to the possibility of *the real co-operative relationships* we should have with each other in the *real* world of *real,* business competition and political power. And from the extreme fervour, and hatred, and despair, and desperation, that many fans express in supporting their team, it seems to be about something more serious than just a bit of fun – something sick. And we do get real blood and gore, off the pitch, when fans attack each other .

This writer is, though, what they call a Football Man. I've played in and managed adult Sunday League teams, coached and managed primary school and teenage teams. I've Refereed. I've followed the professional game closely for over fifty years as a Manchester United fan. But I'm a *football* fan – the *game* – and which professional team I support is not very important to others.

I talk a lot with football fans, being one myself. And following a team in the way so many do, when you consider the sheer passion of it all, including the angry expressions of discontent with their *own* sides performance and the crude insults aimed at players *of their own side* who aren't good enough to represent them; the angry criticism of team selections, and of referees; is substituting for something. Surely people are expressing something here that they can't express through themselves, through their own lives? *It's because they don't take enough interest in real issues and the real opposition.*

Take the average football fans interest in the game, their knowledge of it - like me, reading the sports pages first every day, before reading the news; knowing all the players, the tactics, the transfer speculation. Compare it with how little interest most workers take in *their own rights, in their most basic need,* ***Making Their Living****, in their* ***Rights at Work***. Because most people whinge plenty about things at their work, like their boss treating them

badly, about their conditions, hours, workload, pay. But how much interest do most people take in really standing up for themselves at work, in having a go, finding out what ***Rights*** they have - how much do most people know about their *Contrac*t, about *Agreements* made by themselves (organised as a union membership, about all the rights they have in Health and Safety, Dismissal, Redundancy, Working Hours, etc? About their union, or unions generally?

Sure, not as exciting as football and it's not easy taking on the business class. The main reason for that of course is *They've Got All The Rest*. But just at the level of being interested in and knowledgeable about what we could do in the important stuff of *making your living* - the fact is that most people are nowhere near as interested in that as they are in football. Much of the passionate interest in football is *because* it substitutes for that more difficult task of challenging the business class.

You could argue 'Yeah, but business class people themselves follow football pretty fervently'. But there's a big difference between the passion business people show for football and the passion working class people show. Business people have far too much awareness of what is in their real interests to ruin the name of their business with excess hatred for fans of other teams. They'd lose *customers* for their washing machines, cars and hotels and airlines by hating and attacking them for supporting other teams. And they won't hate and attack over football other business people they could do deals with and with whom they co-operate in politics to keep working class organisation at bay.

And they come to football having got more out of their own lives than most of the working class fans, who show a desperation about what their team does that goes beyond a bit of harmless escapist fun war-gaming; that goes as far as hating and attacking other working class fans; who support their teams for just the same reasons as them and with whom they actually have far more reason to co-operate than they do to hate and fight.

Unlike what a lot of people think, hating fans of other teams wasn't always part of the game. It only started in the 1960's. Until then, football was about you supporting your *own* team, at home games. Even there, at home games, fans didn't have the group identity they have now. And you were hardly aware of the opposing team's fans. They weren't there at your ground in any numbers or readily identifiable. Any who were, were dispersed around the ground in twos and threes.

Where there were two teams close together there was rivalry and hatred, like in Glasgow and Sheffield. But generally there wasn't and people marvelled at the Glasgow and Sheffield rivalry. Mostly it was more positive – you supported your team, mainly at home, and applauded the other team if they played skilfully and with enterprise.

A few things to do with singing together, and travel, and TV coverage happened in the mid-60's to change that to what we've got today, where fans hate and fight each other. There's more about all that at ***page 361*** along with a few other observations on football. Non-footie people should find it interesting, though, as it explains the development of these fierce but basically meaningless football rivalries.

Football – Love The Game

I am, though, a football man. But that means enthusiasm for *the game.* It's a great game and a great way of communicating, across the world. But it is *just* a game. People often ask me 'Do you like football?' Of course I say *Yes*. So, we've established

a shared interest. The next question is always 'Who do you support?' They always take '*following football*' to mean rabidly following one of the professional teams, to get what is only vicarious, borrowed status. But I said I like *Football* - the game. As said, I've played it and managed it at university and adult amateur level and managed a youth team. I've refereed the game. Saying I like football includes all that, it's not all or mainly about who I vicariously follow. So I say that.

Then they say 'Yeah, but you must support *somebody*?'

I'll say *Well, I still say I like* ***football.*** *But Ok - I support United*.

(Just *United,* you ask ? Alright, ***Manchester*** United.) Then they say

'But you're a Scouser! Why don't you support Everton or Liverpool?'

I've supported United, since 1957, because for all or most of that fifty or more years they've played the game positively, with flowing, attractive, skilful, successful football.

They'll say 'You should support your local team'.

But *Why*? There's no socially meaningful connection between us and the 'club' or the players. Even way back in time when the professional players *were* locals – which is a long way back - the local group identity was shallow. And it still is even where in the a*mateur* game, teams do still have more local players. Because if some young men or women who live near you are good at football *So what*? What connection have you really got with them? Probably none. Why should you support them or get off on their success? How does living near them give you anything to get partisan about, at either professional or amateur level?

But the professional teams aren't local, and haven't been for well over a hundred years. As far back as the 1880's people were complaining that there were too many Scottish players in the English leagues. That doesn't matter at all to me, it's fine. I've enjoyed and admired the play of many a good Scottish or Irish or Welsh player - Law, Brady, Vernon. Dalglish, Keane, Rush.

Now, people make an issue of the number of 'foreign' players, saying there should be more British players. But football clubs supposedly represent something only local (which itself is empty of real meaning) not national. And they haven't done that for a very long time.

Professional players move between clubs so much there's no real club identity. If the team's no good, wheeler-dealer managers 'clear out the dead wood'. Players are just bought and sold. Fans go along with that if it works.

So do I, as it's just a game, a very competitive one. *But where's the group identity*? Take any game you see on TV and look out for the crossovers in loyalties amongst the players, managers and coaches. Take 'my' team, Man United - Joe Jordan, Gordon McQueen, Eric Cantona, Gordon Strachan, Alan Smith, Lee Sharpe all moved between United and Leeds so at one time were 'scum', playing for United's most hated rivals; at another time, our heroes.

It's nonsense to make as much of the club or team identity as fans do. Managers too are hired and fired. These days the whole 'club' is often just a Business belonging to some big business people, capitalists, buying them to make money out of them. Like United, and Liverpool. It's really just a ground and a shirt, and at best a tradition and practice of playing the game the right way. The only really permanent thing about the professional clubs is the fans belief in the Shirt. It's just a bunch of guys playing football and I love it. But to big yourself up like so many do on a local or fan identity through these guys - it's great but really, you know, it's actually bollocks.

Even at amateur level teams are barely *local*. Managers get players from well outside

the locality if they're good enough. Watching a local amateur team once I spoke to the manager, picking out two of his players as being good. He moaned that he couldn't get them to come to mid-week training because they each lived thirty miles away. In opposite directions. In North Wales many or most of the players in the 'Welsh' league are from Merseyside. There's a lad who came through the school teams I started, still living in Manchester, who plays in the Welsh League.

There's no need to be against any of this. It matters not where the players are *from*, it's just a great sporting contest and I love it. But the teams haven't got any of the local significance that so many people attach to them.

In the sort of ordinary amateur Sunday League team that yours truly played in and managed, even *within* the team, the players, it's not usually a real community. Playing and managing, I've been able – occasionally - to take pride in what we've done as a sporting activity on the pitch. But quite a few of the guys I've played with and the lads I've managed have been toss-pots. I could name a couple who would probably say I was one. Off the pitch, there's not been much linking us and we wouldn't have a lot of time for each other. It's just a bunch of lads and lasses pulled together from various friendships, people who know someone who wants to play, to get enough players together to put a team out. You can cheerfully despise some of your team mates. It's not a real social grouping. Sometimes it is, but not usually.

That's true of actually *playing*. So in just *supporting* a professional team, what's really involved? As a supporter, you just shout a bit, sing, buy a shirt. You just watch some players who you don't really know as people. Sometimes you hear things about some of them outside football. It's not always nice.

It is *beautiful.* We express great emotions like hope, joy, triumph, ecstatic fulfilment. Glory, even! Is *Glory* the highest we ever get in this life? Bill Bailey, the comedian, says the idea of God expresses mankind's desire to share a common consciousness. When we follow our team together that's what we do, we bond with each other in our many thousands, all together in a common consciousness. In the big international football championships, in the agonising tension of a game, released by the ecstasy of 'your country's' team scoring a Goooooooooooooooooooooal, that's what you're doing, *sharing a common consciousness with millions,* all together with the same emotion in the same instant! It's one of our ways of putting our hearts into a heartless world. It's heady stuff.

Fans even get something out of their own team being beaten, by criticising the team for not being good enough at achieving things on their behalf, for not living their life for them. Calling the players useless, rubbish, he shouldn't be on the pitch, etc. That, actually, is so crass, that sort of talk. Have you ever played with anyone who has been a professional footballer? I have, with someone who only got as far as the reserve team in the leagues below the Premiership. It's the most impressive experience I've ever had in football, playing in a college team alongside Frank. Get on the same pitch as anyone like him who's been good enough to be paid to play and you'll find they're footballing Gods compared to the fans who call them rubbish.

But..... you've no real relationship with those players and you've no real part in the game being played. The fans make a noise, it makes some difference to the game but it doesn't make a real relationship between fans and players. And not between the fans themselves either. It feels like there's some bond between you but out in the real world it means nothing. You've a shared interest of course, but there's

no relationship about anything significant in life, like in the important matters of health, home, income.

I say it's nonsense but can see where it comes from. It's unthought and short of real meaning but I can see how it works. Bigging yourselves up on your locality, your place, Where You're From; bigging yourself up by associating yourself with the achievements of your local professional team. Competition with, fear and hatred of, people who are different - the Other, the Outsider - the Scouser, the Manc, the Southerner, the Yorkshireman. All explainable, so far.

But .... what about '*derby*' *matches* against your closest rivals? How to explain the rivalry with and hatred of neighbouring clubs and their fans, who you are otherwise supposed to be sharing a local, place identity with? Observations on that at ***page 362***.

But Where Are You From?

Look again at this belief that you should support your ' local' team.

What is ***'Local'***? It's full of nonsense.

Like, for one, everyone seems to think you can support the biggest local professional club. Why? Just because you live in Liverpool why should you be allowed to cherry-pick and support the most successful clubs, Everton or Liverpool? If you live in, say, South Liverpool, why not support your real local team, say Marine, a good semi-pro club? If you live in Chadderton (a district of Oldham) why aren't you supporting Chadderton Town? Why the bigger team, Oldham Athletic?

The response would be "you can support the biggest team inside your Council boundaries." But what's this obsession with the Council about? Is it that important to football fans, who empties the bins!? I'm sure most fans who'd make that argument haven't a clue who their Councillors are or what the council does. Or do they really have fervent feelings of affection, loyalty and support for their Institutions of Local Government? Surely not.

But then people accept that those who don't actually live in but only *near* a town or city, can or even should support the nearest big team, from the town or city. People from all over 'Merseyside', a roughly defined area stretching well outside Liverpool's council boundaries, are allowed to support Everton or Liverpool. But they're *outsiders*! Shouldn't they be supporting their nearest local team even if they're not in the professional leagues? Many Man City fans who make a big issue of City being (supposedly) based in Manchester are not from Manchester themselves! One I spoke with once was from Hyde but he was giving it the 'City are the only real Manchester team' thing. Why didn't he support Hyde United? (Think oil-moneyed City have taken over Hyde United ...)

Although, as said, even with teams like Hyde United there's little real local connection. They get players from twenty or thirty miles away.

Basically and originally football support is about ***place identities***, based on living in or near the town or city the team is based in. But now it isn't just local. People all over the world support teams from all over the world. At Old Trafford on a weekday it's all Malaysian and Japanese tourists. So now for many people, it's not actually local, place identification, but identification with a socially significant organisation wherever it's based.

But everyone is doing the same thing whether local or not - attaching themselves, without any real connection, to the ***social weight*** of a successful team, say Man United or Real Madrid, and using the reflected glory. It's vicarious (indirect, second-hand) glory, association with power and the significance of that club. Just the same as people associate themselves with a place – a city or region or country. But football's much more intoxicating

than ordinary place identity. There's a contest every few days in which you can immerse your sense of self and fulfilment, risking the despair of defeat; possibly achieving heady collective glory.

But it's only a (beautiful) game. The attraction of team games like football, the reason people get so fervid, is the excitement of War-gaming, that mimics the excitement of when we lived in small communities – the afore-mentioned tribes? - and fought other groups. But don't take it seriously now, when we are all (supposedly) part of one mutually supportive society.

It's full of contradictory group affiliations. Like what's happened to the unity of 'the nation' when fans are hating each other over club football? A Glaswegian fellow trade unionist and socialist, and Celtic fan, when asked the question 'How does it work - Rangers and Celtic fans get fervently Scottish together when playing 'the English'. Yet the rest of the time they hate *each other,* viciously?' – said "One, when mixing as Scottish fans, you just don't mention who you support in club football; and two, I've never under-estimated the ability of human's brains to hold completely contradictory positions on things!"

At all levels the actual footballers and the managers don't take it as far as hating each other. There'll possibly be a fierce game on the pitch but they generally shake hands afterwards. There's that wonderful image of Bobby Moore and Pele hugging each other with warm respect after that great game in the 1970 World Cup. Pro footballers often play against former team-mates and have a drink after the match.

When you actually *play* football yourself, you can get a very deep satisfaction out of your own game, the teamwork, the struggle. It's full of incident, good play, mistakes, success, failure. It's physically very draining. Playing football forces you to do a lot of mixed running, short and sharp, a rest, long and hard, short again, explosive effort, steady, positional running, twisting and turning. It all drains your body in a nice sort of way, leaving you wasted but relaxed. And the comradeship within the team, that's good. But at the end of games players from opposing sides who've just been war-gaming against each other usually shake hands, thanks for the game, well played, mate, good game, mate, thanks Ref. We're all members of the same society, not blood enemies. Although there can be big bust-ups on the pitch, they're usually resolved, because there's a common need for peaceful relations just to be able to run a League. Teams need each other if they're going to actually have a game.

It's only *the fans* of professional 'clubs' who hold a continuing real, genuine, vicious hatred for each other. Like ambushing others with catapults and Stanley knives, like (some) Everton fans on United's fans while this was being written. Working class Everton fans, which will be most of them, should be organised and working together with United fans on real issues. But these are workers attacking other workers, when they should be uniting against the rich, the business class bosses of the docks and the car plants and the call centres. Instead, they're at each other throats. Literally.

It's Not All Bad

Of course, many of we workers ***are*** *organised*. In the UK there's something like 8 million of us organised as members in unions, that cuts right across the Where You're From and football divisions. There's maybe a million of us *active*, at a guess? *But there's many more millions fervently antagonistic to each other over football*.

Many are basically alright about it, they get on with other fans away from the game. There's a type of football supporter now who from university or work, where there's now a lot more mixing of people from different places, has mates who support other teams, and they get on Ok. But there's still a big, big problem with the whole partisan thing affecting people's mind-sets, how they see themselves, how they see other workers, and how it divides us, at the level of feelings, that plays a part in us not being organised together.

It's a whopping big weakness of the working class that *We*, all the many millions of us, are more fervent about 'our team' than we are about our real interests and our class. *We're not organised enough or active enough,* ***as a class.*** That's why the business class 'boss' us.

What's Good About Football and Sport

What's good about football and other sports and one of the reasons it entrances us is that with many other things in life, and certainly working class organisation and activity, the trade union and industrial struggle, you rarely get a clear cut result.

Working in an *organised* workplace is noticeably much better, more secure and dignified, than working in a non-organised, non-union one. So you can tell it's worth doing that way. But you don't often get a clear result to any particular negotiations or strikes. You just grind on, Organising, Resisting, Defending, Improving. But as Damon Albarn, of the group Blur, said (of supporting Chelsea) the great thing about football is *you get a result once a week* - win, lose, or draw. Hopefully lose, in Chelsea's case. Oops, don't want to upset and fall out with my fellow-workers who support them..... and Damon's alright, a very decent person, politically.

And with football you don't have to make any *real* effort or investment. You are only *watching*. You just have to crank up your fake hopes and fears. With football you don't *really* win or lose. It's not like it's something important, like the miner's strike for example. That's one the reasons we do it - *because* it doesn't actually matter. You can experience the primitive - even spiritual - feelings of Success, Defeat, Danger, Glory, Triumph, all vicariously, with no actual, real struggle. That's all fine if that's where it stays and doesn't lead to you hating and attacking other workers, just because they are trying to get the same escapist feelings as you from supporting another bunch of footballers. And Ok if you also do something in the real struggle, as a worker working with other workers for some real thing, like Safety at work, Jobs, Pensions.

Football is alright as long as it's just done to get a break, an excursion. Even in a socialist society with all basic needs guaranteed we'd need games like football to mimic the aggressive nature that is part of our biological make-up. It's not good if, as too many do, it means avoiding real issues and doing something about them with fellow-workers; when you hate and fight them instead.

Nothing said here is going to stop you so by all means carry on identifying with a football team. Carry on getting some glory or tragedy in your life, expressed through the Beautiful Game. It's difficult to get rid of. Can't even stop myself . We often say it's something that gets into you and you can't get rid of it. And it's probably not necessary to do so. Done in a civilised and intelligent way, it's Ok. Get's you out of your head, away from the sometimes difficult job of finding real significance and satisfaction in your life. But don't *just* get off on footballer's achievements; *do stuff yourself*.

Like - Talk To Each Other About the Real Stuff!

We talk a lot about shallow football enthusiasms. People talk so, so passionately, and at such length, about what is only a bloody game, treating it as if it's serious issue, as if all the meaning in our life is based on the team we support, or following the professional game. *Yet to talk about the real serious issues, seriously, is often condemned for being too serious*! It used to be said, don't talk about Politics or Religion in the pub, it leads to too many arguments. How sad - that's us failing to talk decently to each other about the real issues. We should talk to each other more about them.

If, instead, you'd rather talk about football, Ok, but treat it just as a game, as the players do.

People sometimes talk in awe of how dedicated somebody is to 'their team', how they've got their room as a proper little shrine. Such enthusiasm is Ok, probably shows an energetic aspiration to enjoying life. But really, we should live for our *own* achievements, what we do in our own lives, not those of some footballers. The rich treat it as just a beautiful hobby, because they are successful in their own lives.

Let's keep a lid on the football fervour. You might be thinking, you're making too much of the rivalry, for most of us except a few who let the side down, it's just a bit of fun. But No, just look at the *faces* of fans during games - the hope, despair, the tears; the standing up and threatening the other fans, *the expressions of vile hatred of other workers* – 'You're gonna get your fucken heads kicked in' and 'You're goin' 'ome in a fuckin ambulance'. All that over-the–top fervour that Murdoch buys and sells back to us – is that all just good fun? Or doesn't it form our minds and displace real struggle? Compare the awareness of footballing and place identities – like many Liverpudlians and Mancs hating each other – with the absence of such fervour and involvement of many of us in real issues. It seems to be the least organised and successful, the poorest of us working class people, who most wear the England shirt and put the flag in their bedroom windows.

It's fine if you can treat it all as just fun, a break from reality. And a fantastic art form, a great, great game, testing skill, strength, character, teamwork. Many fans do treat it as just a great game, with no antagonism to other fans, just a good craic. At the major international tournaments, the European Championship and the World Cup, there's a huge number who mix with opposition fans, swap songs, scarves. Which is nice.

Football Doesn't Express Working Class Collectivism, More Vicious Division

Returning to something said earlier – that sociologist's shallow view of football being an expression of working class community. Yes, perhaps it was. But it's not *much* of an expression of community, of our class. Football fans aren't *organised* together. They just individually, but alongside each other, cheer on some gladiators in a fantasy of triumph, to get above the meaninglessness of being an ordinary worker. Supporting your team is just symbolic, escapist, avoiding the need to organise for real and fight the real fights.

But beyond that weak but 'positive' expression of Working Class collectivism, where's the working class collectivism in hating those of your fellow-workers who support other teams?

What about the bellowing of vile hatred at each other, and battering each

other? That's no expression of working class ***community****. It's an expression of extreme, horrendous, vicious working class* ***division*****.**

For that reason I'm not too bothered about the Glazers, capitalist businessmen who know nothing of football, having taken over 'my team', Manchester United. Football has always been an unorganised, vicarious, escapist type of collectivism. An escape from the Boss, the Factory, the Office, from Capitalism. But capital, or rather, real live capital***ists*** like the Glazers, are always looking for new activities to exploit. They often turn what started out as our cultural activities into businesses. It's been happening for a long time with music. Music is really self-expression, a cultural activity; but the 'music business' always takes over and makes it about business, industrialising it. And holidays are now industrialised.

And now they've taken over, turned into a business, industrialised, our *escape* from industry. We escaped from their control at work into Football outside it. But they've caught up with us. So fight against the likes of them, in football; but it's more important to fight on the real issues, non-football – Jobs, enjoyable jobs even (nice idea, anyway), Pay, keeping your Job, manageable workloads, pensions, holidays, health, an unfucked-up environment... and so on.

Football can be a socially positive thing. See *Anti-Social Behaviour, or Some Organise, Some Go Under, Some Turn Nasty* at ***page 347,*** which discusses how with football you can give people, young men particularly, the chance to express their ambitions in a socially-controlled setting with rules and a sporting code, and that can reduce their need to assert themselves anti-socially on the streets. There's a club local to me playing good amateur football, with five teams and a veterans and an under-21 team, with a club house where they entertain the other teams afterwards. That's good.

But all the vicarious, shallow-but-fervent identifying, the rabid hatred of fellow-workers, all the vicious bloody attacks - that is very bad for us.

There's other ways than footie of getting a glorious high without having to hate anyone or fear defeat. You can get higher for longer at a good gig, being moved by the music, than you can with supporting a footie team. And in getting uplifted by the music you can all get up and off your heads together, without any belligerence towards each other.

Other Identities - The Family

Families might be one group that's more real than the national or local or football identities. Families are supposed to be the most basic way of grouping yourself with other humans for practical and emotional support. They can be, if they work properly.

But many families aren't supportive at all, they are destructive. There's no need to go into it all here but when people talk simply of *having a baby*, that under-states what they're taking on. 'Committing a huge amount of your life and effort and skills and emotions to the development of a child into a decent, happy, socially responsible adult over a difficult 18 year period' - or longer – is more like it. And it's quite a job.

But even those in functioning families want something bigger to belong to, something with more social significance than the family anyway. Many members of strong, supportive families subscribe jointly as a family to many of the place identities like town, football club, region or nation.

Conservatives always bang on about importance of *'the Family',* though they often behave terribly towards their own families. Since they're so much for *Individualism,* sod everybody else, why? The reason, why they push the family despite it contradicting individualism, is because it is a *Social Security system*. The more you can get it to function as one, the more it's members bear the cost of each other's unemployment, education and

health care, the more the costs are contained within classes. There's less need then for transfers of wealth from the rich to us masses by taxation. That's why Tories are all for individualism but also for the family. Or claim to be.

It's the same reason why, in the 1980's, while claiming to be for individual freedom, they were virulently anti-Gay. It's because gay people's lifestyles and relationships have much broader social networks than the family, and that challenges the myth of 'the family' being the core of society. It's nice to note that now, in 2008, the Tories are so unpopular and gays have been so successful at getting themselves accepted by most people, that the Tories desperation for support has made them quite tolerant to gays. There's progress.

Their anti-gay stance – outrageously against people's freedom to do what they want with their own bodies – raises again the need to note something very important about what *freedom* means to Conservatives. *For them, freedom and individual rights are only about the freedom to be able to make money and keep it. They only mean freedom for business and for individual wealth*. Given those freedoms they won't be bothered about, will even be hostile to, freedoms like *free speech, democracy, freedom to organise in unions, personal freedoms like substance use and abortion, and contraceptive rights and freedoms. More often than not they suppress such non-business elements of freedom*.

Women and Men - Gender Identities?

A TV presenter called Michael Buerk claimed 'Women are taking over the world'. Always assuming they can find it on a map, eh, Michael?

Yeah, all them cleaners, dinner ladies, check-out girls and women, all them Filipino maids – organised in women's groups, taking over businesses, radio and TV stations, police, armies – where will it end?

I've had as friends, worked with, loved some great women in my life. My best mate is a woman (aka my wife). A lot of blokes are Ok as well, but many aren't. Some of them have been absolute bastards as politicians, business owners, managers. Some hate me for supporting a different football team.

So it make no sense to side with 'blokes against women'. When some blokes, and sometimes women, say sexist crap like Buerk the berk, I never take part in it, and challenge it if I can find a suitably pithy response.

Men and women, girls and boys, guys and dolls, chicks, fella's, ladies - *We're all **humans.** That's the main thing. We're far more the same than we're different*. Genetically, we've got 45 chromosomes all the same. Just *one* other chromosome makes men and women a bit different.

The difference is significant, sure. I'm a big fan of it. But even that difference *unites* men and women. It causes a strong attraction to each other, for a majority of people. So why the sexist hostility? The gender wars?

It's because the need to relate *is* so strong, but we find it difficult to manage. We want a lot from people of the other gender but it's not easy to make and maintain the relationships. Growing up, we get bugger all proper education or guidance about it.

So in response to the problems you get the saying 'Women - can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em'. Some women seem to take the opposite view. But instead of each gender blaming the other, let's all just recognise the need we have for each other and the difficulties by saying "*relationships* with - insert your preferred

gender - (oops ....) can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em".

Men v. Women is just another example of people being ever-so-ready to place themselves or somebody else in some facile identity group, easily joined, no requirement for membership except easy prejudice, which if examined, is nonsense. Don't line up with some dodgy people, or against some decent people, just because of that one chromosome difference, or because of the difficulties we have with sex relationships and socially-learned roles.

Religious Identities

The word 'religion' comes from the Latin *re ligio* - the thing that ties together. Many millions of people all around the world bind themselves together and identify other people as groups by religion. There's Christians, Muslims, Hindus and more. And other people use religion to group people for hostile reasons - the business class Press and racist groups use it to set some 'whites' against Muslims.

Religious beliefs have more real meaning than shallow local, place-based identities because they 'bind people together' by definite value systems and attitudes to others. Insofar as many Christians, Muslims, and other believers in 'Gods' care about other people, about social support and world poverty, then ***Secular*** decent people (like me) can work with them politically. Religious blind faith is an obstacle to our social development; but since many 'believers' and much of their beliefs have some commitment to a better world, their approach is better than the brutality of most of the business class and their system, capitalism. And is better than the crass consumerism and selfishness that many live by.

Having said that, some criticism of religion follows here. If any religious readers are offended, well, that can't be helped. Because there's a lot of group identities based on belief in 'Gods' and 'Holy' Books that influence a lot of people's public behaviour, that affects me and others. So it has to be covered in this work. This writer was brought up Catholic.

There's quite a few *Christians* who really do see Christianity as being about what Jesus was apparently for - supporting others. So that's a real identity grouping.

But for many who claim to be Christians it's not *really* about following Jesus's teachings. For the American Religious Right, it's nothing to do with caring for and supporting other people. With them, it's compensating for the uncaring, divisive philosophy of *making it on your own* which is strong in the USA. That has a liberated element to it. But it's essentially an anti-social approach to life. It endorses uncaring selfishness in business and working life. That leaves even those who do '*make it'* in money terms, isolated, alone, and insecure. But people, even so-called individualists, need people.

So basically selfish Christian evangelists express belief in a God publicly, in those *social organisations*, Churches and get *'saved'* in public view. This way, they get *social endorsement* for their actually *anti*-social selves. On top of this social endorsement and approval from other people, they see it as getting endorsement from 'God' too. That's certainly authoritative social backing of their actually anti-social selves!

That their beliefs are not to do with decent social values but are cover for not applying any in their individualistic, selfish, lives in business, in politics, in backing the Republicans, is confirmed by the fact that they don't use the *Christian* tradition - which contains a healthy amount of caring for others - but the *pre-Christian* Old Testament. Their beliefs are really just about themselves and their need for support and justification. Jesus's sayings don't endorse that. So they focus most of what they say and believe on the Old Testament God rather than Jesus.

Moving on - in the UK many people say they believe in '*God*'.

But most are in fact, believers in the god of *Consumerism.*

That includes many Muslims.

Actual Muslim beliefs are about more than just explaining and justifying their *own* existence. Muslims seem to care about other Muslims – they call them *the Ummah*. And most Muslims seem to be pretty civilised people generally, with great awareness of the obligations of social co-existence, and not just with fellow-Muslims.

Terrorists use the Muslim identity as a unifying, motivational idea for resisting western businesses' long-running imperialism in the Middle East. Fundamentalist Muslims turned to religion to justify the struggle against western imperialists because more rational beliefs were tried but were defeated by western governments working on behalf of the business class, particularly the oil companies. In the fifties and sixties, in most Arab countries, people resisting imperialism tried *secular* anti-colonial Arab Nationalism, and Stalinist-influenced 'Socialism from above'. This was with leaders like Nasser in Egypt. But these movements were defeated by 'the West' supporting local business class politicians and governments friendly to western business like Mubarak in Egypt; and by the West's support for Israel.

So now, with those social movements having been defeated, a fundamentalist version of Islamic beliefs has been developed as a motivator for fighting back. It's poorly thought-out though. The terrorist element claim to be fighting for fellow-Muslims but how do they justify *killing* many of them? It's only temporary, hopefully – there are plenty of humane Muslims, and also Secularists, in the Middle East.

More on Binding Together by Religion

The big world religions usually consist of - a fixed set of socially useful moral values; some rules controlling the individual's personal life; belief in a mythical authority for these two things, usually called *God*; and a succouring belief that this authority figure has a blissfully safe haven for you to go to when you die if you follow his or her rules.

Some people defend religions because of the social, moral values they promote. Many of those values *are* useful, necessary if we are to be decent and live peacefully together. God and one 'Holy Book' of beliefs have served this socially useful purpose in the past - helped impose a set of *Social Values and Morals* that enabled a degree of peaceful living. If in centuries past you were met and threatened by, say, robbers at night in the countryside or the town or the desert, or by pirates on the high seas, you had some leverage when you could appeal to shared Christian or Muslim beliefs and morals and the threat of God's punishment if they mistreated you. To a rational and democratic person these days, the use of imaginary all-powerful authorities doesn't seem like an acceptable way to do it. But that's the way it *was* done, and religion served that useful social purpose.

But it was also an instrument of repression used by big *landowners* to rule *peasants*. The values embedded in the religions can be as much full of nasty stuff as they are of good stuff. One prime example is the Catholic belief that babies are born with 'original sin', of which they need purging. What a vile proposition! Poor babies! Innocent little things, new to the world. And much of religious belief represses people unnecessarily, for things about *personal* behaviour that are nobody else's business. And there are plain daft beliefs like 'life after death'. That's a contradiction in terms!

But the biggest problem with each religion is that believers have to accept the

entire package of beliefs pretty much unchangeable. That's the way religion works - it says here you are, a complete explanation for life, a way of living, and a promise of a way out of the problems of life. A tempting offer. So Christians think it's all in the Bible and what Jesus said; Muslims think it's all in the Qur'an and what Mohammed said.

Now that is not right. No one person in history, whether Jesus or Mohammed or anybody else, and no one human or book or collection of rules can contain, forever, the *complete* wisdom about human life and the Universe. Belief only in what one '*Holy Man*' or '*Holy Book*' from ancient history said, as your entire wisdom, limits your development and our development as a species. We are constantly developing our knowledge of ourselves and the universe and our social values, and there's far more wisdom about, and to be developed, than can be found in any one of the so-called holy books. We've all got something useful to say - Socrates, Spinoza, Hume, Hegel, Shankly, Nietsche, Kierkegaard, Dylan, Douglas Adams, me, you. This writer is a Marxist but that doesn't mean taking what Marx said as an ever-lasting gospel. He was just a very smart bloke who worked out a very useful analysis of how human society develops. But it can be questioned and improved.

The notion of a *'God'* that is basic to much religious belief is a primitive theory of how the universe came about and what purpose there is to our lives. It's early science, developed at a time when we also believed the sun went round the Earth. We can see it now as a very unlikely and far-fetched theory. No one can present any evidence to demonstrate the existence of a 'God'. There's only the most remote, extremely unlikely possibility of there being one. It would be unscientific to say it's totally impossible but it's a bit unlikely. Just have faith, they say. No - believe only in what you can see and what can be shown to you.

We are a long way yet from knowing how the universe came into being. But we don't need to know! Our purpose is first of all to survive and, if possible, enjoy it. We ***Secular, Rational Humanists*** - there's many millions of us - don't need to say that we *don't know* or are doubtful about *'God'.* We don't need to say we are *agnostic.* That's to abstain from thinking properly about a big issue. There's no need to be shy of saying God is an extremely unlikely theory put forward by our forebears in an attempt to explain their existence and the way the world worked for and against them. Just as we now know a lot of what they believed in science was incorrect, we can say the same about '*God*'. *On the evidence* there is no God.

With it being an unlikely idea, with there being no evidence, with no-one able to demonstrate anything real about it, it's not worth treating very seriously as a theory of what the universe and ourselves are about.

But the fact that so many do believe it *is* a serious issue.

Being Human

The best thing to be said for religion is what the comedian Bill Bailey said – 'God is an expression of man's desire for a common consciousness'. But people are giving up on themselves by believing in the religious value systems. That's handing their thought processes over to some old learnings and wisdom that are true in some respects but not in others. There was a letter in the paper once that purported to defend Christianity because without 'God' to give us moral values we'd not have any. What nonsense! The moral values we have, that are claimed to come from this imaginary entity, *are* Humanly devised!

Ever since the Enlightenment, and David Hume exhorting us to believe only what we can demonstrate to be true, we've been evolving as a species, into developing the capability of understanding the universe and our selves, for ourselves, using *rational* enquiry and

discussion. Many, many millions of us are *Secular Rationalists*. But we need to promote it more clearly. In all the debate about beliefs, we don't get treated with respect, we're not considered one of the world's great belief systems. That's because we don't, by definition, commit ourselves to any one identifiable set of beliefs.

But we do commit ourselves to *Scientific Method* and there's not a problem in applying that to social values and morals. We can and do work out for ourselves what is good for just and peaceful living. It's what the secular democratic process that we have won in many countries is about - using democratic discussion and negotiation to decide our social values, not some fixed old book. With secular government, that's what politics is *for*.

Religious beliefs are wrong because of their fixedness, their rejection of open-ended rational discussion and evidence, their complete commitment to what a mythical being, one holy book and a priesthood tells you to think. And their claimed absolute authority is used by fundamentalist believers like Bush, Blair and Al Quaeda to motivate and justify their murderous activities.

So What Do I Believe In? (If you're interested …)

I believe this - we've found out a huge amount about Life, the Universe and Everything. And we keep learning more and more, about the origins of the Solar System, the Universe, the Big Bang, Dark Stars, and all those billions of other stars and planets; we know lots from geology, archaeology, biology, evolution, all that beautiful and amazing *Life on Earth* stuff that David Attenborough knows. There's Physics, Maths, Psychology, Sociology.

Most of what we've got to know and understood is bloody wonderful, marvellous stuff. Everyone should read Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything* and appreciate the splendours and weirdness of the universe. Including *Us*. Me, for sure. And you, probably. But for all the wondrous stuff we know, there's a lot we don't. But as we learn more we get further away all the time from the idea of a god and being able to rely upon just one or two 'holy' books. Nevertheless, this writer has a very brief philosophy of life, a good core approach –

This is It - Enjoy (or try to) - Pay Your Dues - Be Kind

Anything left out there ? Covers it all in just twelve words ?
A great Humanist song saying 'this is it, make the most of it' is John Lennon's 'Imagine' -
Imagine all the people living for today…..
No hell below us, above us only sky….
No need for hunger, a brotherhood of Man (and Women ……)
And if we need the idea of Heaven, of a blissful place -
Ringo's *Octupus's Garden* does it well! Give it another listen.

We don't need religion any more. As a species, we are moving on and evolving, particularly in our understanding of the universe and ourselves. We are capable of providing security for each other in material things. And we know enough about ourselves to work out how to live interesting, useful, supportive, satisfying lives alongside each other, and just enjoy. The basis would be a socialist way of relating to each other on meeting our basic needs, like Making a Living, Education, Health and Political power. Then enjoy, in your own way.

So What Identities Should We Have ?

National, place-based *Where You're From*, football, gender, family and religious identities have been looked at closely and at length.

Place can be an easy, non-contentious, non-political, non-probing way of getting talking to people. But it stops us from *properly* relating to each other, across the UK, and, with the world becoming more integrated, across Europe, the USA, and Globally too. All that self-identification as Northern, Southern, Yorkshire, White, British - it's all empty, without substance. If you self-identify as *British* you put yourself in a fellowship with Thatcher, Tebbitt, Michael Howard, any other Tory you care to name, the Daily Mail and with nationalist, sexist nasties like Jim Davidson. Identifying your self as *American* puts you with Bush and Cheney and Rumsfeld and their backers. As *Italian*, with Berlusconi. As *French*, with Sarkozy and Le Pen. Now does that make any sense to anyone with any decent humanity in them? No, surely?

People do it because all the meaningless identities - town, city, county, region, nation, football club, gender – are easier to pick up on than the real ones. Let's be honest, to be in many of them all you've got to do is be born! Or buy a scarf or shirt. No real effort, action, skill or real commitment is required. From just that you're allowed to get all proud about the achievements of anybody else 'from' there even though you've no real connection with them. Anything will do - the Welsh are even proud of 'their' mountains! But they're just *there* - the Welsh didn't *make* them!

All the 'where you're from' and football identities group us together and encourage people to 'take sides' with little real meaning, and harmfully. We should be more thoughtful, and identify with other people for better reasons than just happening to live in the same town; or 'being born or living on the same patch of the globe where human rules are made by a 'state' - the 'country'.

We could do with dropping all that and recognising only group identities that actually mean something, that are defined by real, active relationships.

Family and religion do have some real meaning. Although family is not a wide enough group for all-of society social organisation and, as said, is over-promoted by the business Class to deflect us from making demands on them for social support. Also as said, religion has its shortcomings.

But do you agree there's nothing in 'where you're from'? Is there something in it? According to stereotype, Scousers are argumentative, and witty. Do you find this one is, in this book? The first of the two, surely?

But I'm not really a Scouser, I'm from Berken'ead.

Seriously - if you're grouping people, do it for the right reasons.

*So what groups **should** we put ourselves and others in?*

False and Real Group Identities

There *are real* group identities for us to adopt. Identities like being *truly* Working Class, working with other working class people for real things like jobs, pensions.

But to cut through the fog of false identities heavily boosted by the business class through their 'news' papers and TV trash, to see yourself in the real groups, *you've got to be doing something*, to be involved in real community or union activity. It's easier to attach your identity to football where all your passion can be vented on something that makes no real demands on you. If beaten, you can turn away after the match, feel gutted for a bit, but then have a drink, forget it. It's essentially meaningless. There's no real links with the 'club'

– often now, a business - or with other fans.

Football fans do organise together a bit. The committed hooligans organise themselves and pre-arrange scraps with rival hooligans. I'd leave them to it – it's originally a war-game so if they want a real one let them go ahead. But more positively, despite the filth and hatred expressed through football rivalries, other fans sympathised with Liverpool fans after the Hillsborough disaster in 1989. And in seeing off Sky's attempt to take over the club, United fans were helped by Manchester City and Liverpool fans. A City fan chaired one of the first meetings of the campaign.

Some of the Manchester United fans organised to oppose the take-over of United by the business man Glazer. And some have successfully set up their own team, FC United of Manchester. There is some interest in the fans being more involved in the clubs, looking at clubs like Barcelona that are owned by the fans, who get to vote for the President.

But for most people supporting the football team or 'bigging themselves up' for *being from* some town or city just means vaguely – although passionately - associating themselves with something big. It doesn't mean they see any meaningful relationship with all those other people they share that identity with. Like in Manchester, if they're robbing you, they don't say - *Oh, I'll not rob you because we're both United fans or Mancs.* Although sometimes if you can identify some shared social contacts like 'knowing' someone the person robbing you knows, it can help.

Groups With Real Meaning

It's easy to stay with the shallow identities because the real identities make real demands on you. But they are more rewarding.

Without even getting political there's many ways to group yourself with other people with more meaning to them than place and football. Such as shared tastes in *Music*. It's means more to identify yourself as a fan of particular bands and kinds of music, because they or the music express things more relevant to you and your personal life than the raw triumphalism of football. And you can expect to be friendly with other fans, to share feelings for that music based on something substantial, shared values, regardless of where they're *from*. What music, which bands, do you like? Rock, Hip-hop, Rap, Jazz, Grunge, Indie, Dylan, Sinatra, whatever? Aren't there people *all round the world* who share that with you?

It works across national identity. The other people who like the same music, people you can relate to on that, can include a lot of Americans. This writer is a Dead Head, my favourite band being the Grateful Dead, who are, amongst other things, 'Americans', being from San Francisco and other parts of the cosmos. But we don't expect to be friendly with *all* Americans. Certainly not Bush's crew. But those who we have something real in common with, yes. Decent Americans, decent people, yes.

I'm a motorcyclist and identify with bikers all over the world. Because unlike with place identity there's a *genuine* common interest and common experiences to talk about, and things to do together. And there's road transport issues to campaign together about - like European Union rules trying to stop us modifying our bikes. If in France or Germany, say, I expect to be able to be friendly with, have common interests with, bikers from there. To talk about the TT, the Nurburgring, Le Mans.

There's InterNet sites where people with particular bikes chat daily, exchanging technical information, advice. But they are from all around this globe, the UK, Australia, France, USA, Spain. Place identity doesn't figure in it. And that's fine.

The common interest is real, based on helping each other with technical problems, arranging get-togethers. It's got nothing to do with boasting or being antagonistic about where somebody is *from.*

Although some bikers get partisan about owning one make of bike rather than another. Sometimes it's any identity but those that matter.

But here's a nice, mildly stunning example of people from all over sharing ***real interests***. Eating in the station café of the Ffestiniog mountain railway in Porthmadog, Wales, I could overhear some blokes at the next table who'd met by arrangement, to go on the little old mountain railway together. It sounded like they were swapping details of different types of smokeboxes or something. I don't *fully* get why you'd want to do that ..... One had come from Merseyside. Another had come from... bloody hell! *Reno,* Nevada! All the way from Reno to Porthmadog to meet like-minded smokebox enthusiasts!

But good luck to them. They have a real relationship based on a real shared interest, not a spurious one like *Where You're From*.

What about your other interests? Are you into hot-air ballooning? Micro-light aircraft? Scuba diving? Computers? Computer games? You have a real relationship with other people about that, which you don't have with some of the prats who live nearby in this town or in this country (whichever country you are reading this in.) Take most interests or hobbies - gardening even (not me, maybe you!) - and you'll find *Where You're From* has nothing to do with the ability to share your interests with people from all over the world.

Can you think of a few ***common interest groups*** that you are in, not to do with town or country, but to do with real, shared interests or needs?

It Ain't Where You're From that Matters

But more generally in society, how should we group people?

Should we be grouping people at all?

Some people try to just ***Take People As They Find Them***, judging each person they meet on their own merits. That's fine.

Certainly, place grouping is well overplayed - a weak association based only on geographical proximity between you and a large number of people you don't actually know and have little of real meaning in common with. Shared local knowledge, an accent - that's about it. Pretty meaningless, really, when you think about it. But *so* important to so many. The (fabulous) Stone Roses were caught up in it all by being a 'Manchester' band at the time music from there was big as "Madchester'. Their singer Ian Brown used to play it down, using that wonderful saying –

It Ain't Where You're *From* **…. It's Where You're *At***
Mohammad Ali said it originally. Great man.
It's Not Where You're From – It's Where You're At
It's Not Where Anyone is From (that matters)
It's Where They're At; or Who They Are

Think about it. It's so true. It demolishes all those place identities and hatreds and replaces them with more useful questions like -

'What kind of person is he or she or them *as actual people?*'

'What have you or they got going for them?'

'How do they behave?' *Do* they behave (themselves)?

You can apply it to race –

It Ain't What the Colour of Someone's Skin Is - It's Where They Are At.

A common saying is 'There's good and bad in all', in different races.

Decent Folk

Just for convenience in communicating, we do need to group people together. But it's best to really describe people properly as far as possible, we need to avoid turning the convenience of short-hand into pigeon-holing and stereotyping, and they need to be valid groupings.

This first way of doing it sounds a bit naff. But you can, as in kid's games, group people as *Goodies* - decent people, decent folk, decent types - and as *Baddies,* bastards. These simple ways are sound enough for grouping people. With degrees in-between, and shades of grey, sure.

For the most basic grouping of people ***decent folk* or *decent people*** will do. It means those who appreciate and enjoy the fact that they live alongside others and take account of that in how they live and what they do. Wherever they are, whatever town, city, district, region or country they are in. It excludes those, like real Tories and working class little Tories, who think life is all about looking after 'number 1'.

When we get past the crudity of place identity don't you find that you, and other people, do group or classify particular people as *decent*, or not? It's common, isn't it, to ask of someone 'What's she like, she alright?' Or to say 'He's alright'. Or, if he's not, 'He's a bit of a dick'. Or a swine. Or a bastard. And that's fine, to describe or group people like that, because you are judging them by how they behave not by the unalterable, irrelevant, place-based 'where they're from' or by their 'race' or gender.

So for a basic way of grouping people whatever their colour or wherever they are *from*, why not drop all the 'where you're from' stuff? Or just keep it at the level of 'talking about interesting places' and maybe about 'the different local customs they have there' and instead, see ***Decent Folk*** (or not) as your main way of grouping people?

It's important to our political thinking. It's the first step to building the sort of group identity amongst people-as-workers that we need if we are to better ourselves, together.

So whenever you find people grouping and judging themselves or others by place, nationality or race – which you do find, every day – challenge it. Argue for people to put aside whether someone is *'an Aussie', 'a Geordie', a 'Pakistani', a 'German', a 'Nigerian', an 'Argentinian', 'a Pole', Welsh, a 'Japanese', a 'Cockney', a 'Whatever*'. And insist instead on judging them on who they really are, on '*Where They're At*'. Try it, as a conscious decision, as you take part in ordinary discussions or remarks with family, friends, neighbours, workmates. It works, believe me!

The Right To Unionise 5 –

Working Class Identity - The Real 'We'

Here, some real *Social Groups*, groups of people who give and get real support and mutual protection –

- *Family and friends and people who share your interests or music.*
- *Decent people* living decently alongside each other, good Neighbours, Community activists.
- *Some Religious groups* offer each other support. It's based on myth and wildly unproveable belief systems, unfortunately. But they do help each other get through life.

- *People-as-Workers organised as Trade Unionists* to help each other.
- *Political parties* that try to ensure all people have the necessaries of life like work, income, food, water, housing, education, health care, and are safe on the streets.
- There could be *Socialist Government* with mass democratic control of the economy and everything else.

These are or could be the ***real*** tribes, the social support groups in ***modern*** life. The valid, functional groups who help each other survive and get by.

Supporting these doesn't sound as exciting as, say, the football, rugby or cricket, does it? It can be, though. Because when you really defend yourselves and challenge the business class it can be as exciting as you might want, as those people fight hard. Like how they used the Police against the miners during the 1984/85 Miner's Strike. Sport *seems* more exciting; but it's only safe excitement. Except, I suppose, for how working class fans hate and fight each other. That's exciting. But pointless.

Political Identity Groups

Politics, of course, is the most important thing in life where we should to work with other people on shared interests and needs. But for all the identifying with Britain, Britishness and British sportspeople, fellow-Countrymen and women don't really ***do*** much jointly, together. Voting in elections is the most important shared act yet ***there's very little debate between ordinary citizens***. Most debate comes from the business class, in their press, on their agenda and their terms, bending our minds, undermining our class thinking. Many ordinary citizens won't even tell another how they vote, treating it as a deeply private matter.

But what about all the talk of We, Us and Ours? Voting isn't simply a *private* act. It's a *collective* act. The *debate* with each other about how each of us votes is as necessary to democracy as the vote itself. What each of us does affects each other so we should be up-front with each other about it. Secret voting was only needed initially because in the 1830's and onwards landlords and business owners would kick you out of your house or sack you for not voting for their candidate. Now, between equal citizens who respect each other, it shouldn't be needed. It only encourages us to be isolated from each other in making a very important collective decision.

I suppose we probably *do* need it, secret balloting; but we should also *Talk to Each Other* more about how we vote and act politically, instead of about the soddin' football and the pretentious doings of 'celebrities'.

Look at all the issues - Work, Wages, Holidays, not being Sacked, Redundancy, Housing, Transport, Health Services, Schools, Colleges, Universities, Grants, Climate Change and Pollution. You, and I too more than I do, should be involved with other people who have the same interests as you on these things.

It sounds boring compared to the football and probably is. But there's nothing boring about having a decent, secure, interesting job with good (i.e. short!) hours, good holidays. Nothing boring about going to A&E when somebody's injured and getting prompt treatment. Sitting around there for four hours because there's not enough taxation of the rich for an adequate health service, that's the boring bit. Pensions must be the most boring subject around. But what's boring about *being able to retire* from having to go to work while you've still got some living to do and being able to afford to go places and do things?

Politics sounds boring but if you want life to be sweet, easy, so you can live it the way you want to, you have to do it. It shouldn't take over your life. It does for some, those lovely people, the hardy union and political activists who put everything into it on our behalf, while

we watch the TV and the footie. It shouldn't be that way, that some sacrifice their lives to it like that. If we all did *a bit* that would add up to enough.

We Don't Take Care of Our Business

Most of us, yours truly included these days, don't *act* much on the real issues, and that's how the rich and powerful, the business class, get away with running the country and the world despite being only a small minority. Why *don't* we like getting involved in *Politics*? We find plenty to find fault with in what's done in society. Yet a lot of us prefer to get by as confidently and comfortably as we can and ignore politics, at least as far as doing anything about what's wrong.

One reason is that it's seen as uncool. Isn't it? Being 'political' has to mean getting wound up about things, to some degree. But 'cool' means not being fazed by life, being able to handle what goes on and be above it all. You know – 'whatever'.

Yet the rich don't feel that way. They 'take care of business' - *the business of looking after their interests.* They work on relating to their customers, do the corporate freebies, the golf course socialising. And more. *That's why they're in charge - they take the trouble to be*. True, many of us just don't want to live that way, don't want to be always fighting for self-interest, for more wealth, just want to live peacefully. To stay cool and mellow. And that makes it difficult for us to challenge them. *But there's so many of us and so few of them that each of us wouldn't have to do very much to put them on good behaviour, as long as all or most of us did it.*

For your own identity group, just being one of the *Decent* people might be enough for you. But it's weak compared with those more commonly-held identities. All around you there's people identifying strongly, collectively, by nation, by place, and around football. You can feel quite a loner if you reject being in those identities, especially while the footie World Cup and European Championships are on and everybody else (it seems) is in groups in pubs and houses, boozed up, intoxicated with the big national togetherness myth, and the quest for shared footballing glory. You're a miserable grumpy outsider.

I've thought, hell, this doesn't feel nice. ***Isn't there something I can be?*** *Some group I can be in? And I thought, well, you're one of the organised and active Working class. And that felt better.*

Working Class Identity - Our main identity

If you work for 'someone else', usually in fact not an individual *person* but an *Organisation*, a business or a public service - ***You are a Worker. You are Working class***.

And so too are most of the people you'll meet socially. Including teachers and lecturers. And even managers. To argue again what was said when defining class – by far your most *important* group identity should come from *How You Make Your Living*.

For all that you give so much importance to 'where you're from' we all know that ***What You Do*** is the more important information about you. That's what people ask of you at parties - "What do you do for a living?" It's what the Windsors always ask you (apparently.)

Identifying as Working Class

Being Working class should be a strong enough identity, a credible alternative to the others. But how much does it really mean to workers?

Most people will readily recognise that they *themselves, individually,* are working class, if it's mentioned. And some will say - have said to me - "and proud of it". That's fine. It means you recognise that you're not one of *Them*. You recognise that you have serious differences with them*;* that (even though some of them are alright) to some degree you see them as your opponents. As ***Bosses.*** Or, better, as ***the Business Class***.

But we need to firm this up. I'm arguing here that we should define working class and ourselves and other people by *What We Do* and that *Going to Work* makes you *Working Class.* It's an objective definition - meaning people don't just choose that identity, it comes from what they do. They can't opt out of it. It's not a self-defined image, doesn't depend on what people themselves think they are or whether they want to be.

But that's just me, and maybe you, saying that. It doesn't mean anyone else automatically feel themselves to be working class by that definition nor does it mean they are going to identify with all the other workers, not like people do over nation, place and football team. It doesn't necessarily mean they are Working class by self-image, nor that they identify with other Workers as a group, doesn't necessarily affect how they think and act.

So we need to firm up *Working class* identity, for each of us to identify ourselves as a member, more consciously, with more definition and conviction, and more publicly. *The first thing we need is widespread agreement and use of the sort of definition of being working class argued here - **that if a person 'Goes To Work' for 'someone' else they are Working Class** regardless of their upbringing, accent, whether they wear a suit to work or not, and other superficial things*. I hope you yourself agree with that. If so, it needs *you* to spread that definition amongst other working class people who you know and I don't.

We also need more self-respect. We do let ourselves down at times. It was disgusting, once, to see how self-demeaning a lot of we workers can be in relation to the business class. Working, as said earlier, in what was once the biggest factory in the world (now closed), GEC Trafford Park, formerly AEI, Metro-Vicks, Westinghouse, 'Lord Nelson of Stafford' was visiting. He was an owner of GEC along with the better known Arnold Weinstock. There was an atmosphere like a royal visit. My attitude was to go about my normal movements around the factory and remain proudly aloof from this low-life. But most of my fellow-workers were agog - people would come into the office and either announce that they'd seen him and where he was; or be asked if they'd seen him.

"He's down K aisle near the machine shop". "He's in Sales now". And they'd pop out from their workbenches to look down the aisle for a glimpse of this shiny, pretentious little twerp. (I happened to see him.) If you like, don't despise people like him as much as I do; but please, working people shouldn't be in *awe* of his type, or of 'celebrities'. They still have to wipe their bums, same as the rest of us, you know.

According to ***employment law*** in the UK, you are an equal to your 'boss'. We're not, but only because of *They've Got All The Rest*. We are not really inferior to him and his type. There's a little something for us in the law about the attitude we should take to them – as equals in our heads, if not in the actual business class / boss / worker power relationship.

Bonding by Class

As said above, a lot of people see themselves *individually* as working class. But usually they've based it on vague criteria like what their parents did. But being working class has to mean more than just self-identifying in this individualised way. It means, first of all, recognising the definition, that other people are working class if they too *Go to Work* for 'someone' else.

Then it also means ***Identifying with all those many hundreds of millions of other members of the Working Class,*** daily, in all the variety of social and political circumstances and issues that surround us.

Really being working class means you identify with all other working class people because the business class treats them harshly too; and because they play us off against each other.

Turning on Your Own

Large sections of the working class do the opposite. They want to make something of themselves but to do it they don't take on the business class, don't get organised with other workers. *Instead, feeling oppressed and disadvantaged, they make something of themselves by oppressing other workers*. You'll know of these people, people so unaware of where it's at that they are bastards to fellow-workers. By being aggressive to their neighbours (despite shared place identity); burgling their houses; or by robbing them on the street. They're most common in the poorest working class districts and the estates, places like Glasgow's Gorbals, Newcastle, the East End, other districts in London. Liverpool, Manchester. Salford, Wythenshawe. I'm from a part of Merseyside like that, where you can get a real beating up just for being out on the street late at night. Groups of thugs will cross the road, "'What you looking at?" and really injure you. It was done to my brother.

People talk of such districts with respect as 'tough areas'. People are given status for being from there. *But if it's a 'tough' district it means only that workers are being right bastards to each other.* There's nothing to respect about that. How do people get so vicious? Blame the business class and the Tories. In *Anti-Social Behaviour or Some Organise. Some Go Under. Some Turn Nasty*, at ***page 347,*** it's argued that it's caused by the atomisation and brutalisation of poorer workers, caused by the business class's callous way of running society.

We Need More Solidarity

Why don't you, wherever you get the chance - talking to neighbours, relatives, in the pub, at work, talking to the Decent and half-decent ones - put the argument that goes like this - *being working class means feeling Solidarity with other workers, not being bastards to them.* Not robbing and beating up local lads, nor seeing others as 'Southerners' or 'Scousers' or as hated football rivals. It means seeing how they all have the same problems as you and we'd all be better off sticking together.

Organising by Class

It's far less common to bond with each other about class, by *What we Do,* than people do so easily on place. ***But it's not really that hard to see your fellow Workers as a group.***

At work, people do it quite readily for social purposes like organising works 'do's' at Xmas and birthdays. The trouble is that many are less enthusiastic about *proper* social organising, uniting, operating *Collectively* for something serious and meaningful like saving somebody from being sacked. This writer saw many people made redundant in his last job and tried with others to resist the redundancies through union action, strikes and so on. And noticed how many more people turned up for the sad 'leaving do', the drinks and crisps and farewells, than had turned out for the union action that might have saved that person's job.

That's *inside* your workplace, where people don't see, as much as is needed,

the need to really support each other. People find it harder still to see the links with workers who work *on other Sites*, for your employer; in *other businesses*, *in other locations*. We absolutely need to. Whether the other workplace is in Walsall or Warsaw, Wichita or Wuhan; Bedford or Buenos Aires; Mumbai or Johannesburg.

Wherever possible, without being too pushy about it, I relate to other people *as workers*. On the phone to the call centres, in the supermarket. At parties, after *What Somebody Does* comes up I usually ask about the issues in their trade or industry – harsh workloads, redundancies, pay, level of organisation. If you care about the person you're talking to, and presumably you do as you're both at a party - an event for social bonding – why not relate to them on the core issues of their life? Some will say "Oh, don't talk about work, let's enjoy ourselves." Well, yeah, to a degree. But I've always found people – fellow-workers – who you meet at parties and suchlike occasions actually welcome you being interested and informed about the problems they have at work, that are important to them but are not normally the stuff of everyday chat and socialising outside work. But they should be.

Just remember this - business class people network like mad. When they socialise, far from escaping from their economic role, they carry *on 'Taking Care of Business'*. They don't alienate themselves from their own most basic needs and don't ignore the common class position they share with their fellow-business people. They make links with them, make contacts and sound out deals. It's what an awful lot of their social life is *for.*

And it's because they take the trouble to do that, that they're our bosses.

There's lots of ways of being consciously and actively Working class, just as ordinary working class people, without doing anything particularly hard. The first one is, to repeat, to just ***sympathise with other Workers***. When you support a football team all you have to do is decide to support them, declare it to other people in everyday talk and maybe buy a scarf or replica shirt. It's equally easy to *take an interest in people as workers*. Speak to those you know about what goes on at work and in their job and trade or industry. Speak about the issues around union organisation. Speak up for workers in discussion with other people. Like when they strike, speak up for them with others (even though they're inconveniencing their fellow workers as customers.)

Organisation, Organisation, Organisation.
Being Organised with your Workmates

Tony Blair, the skunk, once said it's all about 'Education, Education, Education'. Well, education is fine. It's polluted, though, by being run not for the young worker but for the benefit of employers and 'the economy'. Alternatively, ever heard of the school in Suffolk *run for and by the kids,* Summerhill? Their site is **www.summerhillschool.co.uk** But come back here!

But much more important than education to our working class well-being, a much better way to improve our condition, is being ***Organised.*** It's well-known that the rich get where they are as much by class organisation - including *who* they know - than by *what* they know. ***We have to be as organised, in our own, more humanistic way.***

Being Active

As well as being organised, be a*ctive*. Do things with other workers *as* fellow-workers, even in just small ways. There's lots of things people can do without being greatly active. ***Just by being one of the people who know they are members of the Working Class, who say so, and who do what they can.*** It could just be *signing petitions* on the shopping

precinct to oppose privatisation of the Health Service and other public services. There's many working class people doing something in the community with a class objective to it – being school governors; campaigning on pensions; defending the Health Service. It could mean *giving to collections* for workers on strike or *going to meetings* to hear from workers on strike asking for support. Anybody doing anything active with and for your class is in an identity group far better than being a supporter of some football team - being 'an a*ctive* member of the Working class'.

A huge number of us are organised in our unions. At least seven million ***Members*** according to government figures. I thought it was more like ten million but the exact figure isn't important here. We are the biggest political organisations there are. Many more of us should at least be ordinary union members. All of us, actually. Even if we can't get union *Recognition* where we work, you can still get help, advice, backing for a compensation or tribunal claim and *Individual Representation* at work. We should all be in unions and think and readily say that we are. But saying 'I'm in a union' is too passive. *'I'm a Trade Unionist'* is better, it speaks of it being an active thing.

There's a few million, just in the UK, who *are* ***active*** members, who take an interest, go to meetings. There's up to a million who are ***Officers***, Branch Secretaries and the like, who run the union organisation *outside* the workplace, go to regional meetings, annual conferences.

Then *inside* work there's the ***Union Reps***, the ordinary workers who take on the crucial, central job of ***Representing their Workmates***. They take responsibility for *organising* us as a class; get better conditions for us, challenge sexism, racism and other unfair treatment. The last time I saw some figures, there were around 400,000 workplace Union Reps. That's quite a lot of seriously active people.

There's not normally a lot good said about ***Unions*** and ***Union activity***. But I'm always struck by the response, when talking to someone new, and they ask the question 'What did you do?' (for a living). I tell them I taught (or 'tutored') on union Shop Stewards courses. People have a standardised 'take' on it. A slightly surprised, head-cocked, raised eyebrows, respectful expression, and saying 'Oh really? Wow. Hmmm. Interesting. Good'. That feels good for me, of course. But what's of more interest is that despite 'unions' being almost invisible in everyday talk, and the strong anti-the-unions attitudes taken in the business class 'news' papers and amongst politicians, *people know about* ***Workplace Union Organisation,*** *about* ***Workplace Union Reps****, and have an instant respect for them and what they do*. Interesting and encouraging, that.

I should say that this book and the arguments fiercely made in it are not at all representative of what happens on the courses I taught. For one reason, they are not run with tutor-centred lecturing. They are run with student-centred educational activities based on students own experience, finding solutions to their own and their members immediate workplace problems. This writer played a role in establishing these teaching methods against resistance from some lecturers who believed instead in themselves having a powerful role as 'industrial relations experts'. No, it's more that the background to my teaching was the unbelievable marginalisation of trade union organisation, the absence of a coherent statement of the case for it, even amongst many workers, and the staggering cheek of the anti-union laws. That fuelled my long-held determination, now retired, to examine and explain the basics, as this

book does.

Working class organisation starts at work, in the workplace, with union membership and Recognition. It doesn't stop there because us organising is a challenge to the most basic structure of society, the dominance of it by the business class. It is therefore highly political. But it does start there. And it's nowhere near as strong as it needs to be. Workers are always at least annoyed, or worse, desperately distraught, about what's done to them at work. This writer is retired from working in education and having been a union Rep in that sector. Everyone still in it has terrible tales of despair about increased teaching loads, at the same time as draconian and pointless inspections, audits, assessments and a huge range of similar imposed new systems, not one of which helps them to do the actual job. It's a health-wrecking nightmare, mental and physical. The response needs to be a high level of sectional – department by department - *Organisation* amongst themselves.

There and in all workplaces every group of workers in a particular Job or Department should be organised by and represented by one or more Union Reps / Shop Stewards, and should be prepared to back them, and workers in other departments, and ensure that the amount and type of work we do for the 'Boss', and the Wages and Conditions we do it for, are as nearly as possible negotiated with us having equal power to them.

Show Your Class

There, above, are some things to 'big yourself up on' if feeling outside the place, national and football identities that have been analysed and criticised her. That's what I do. That's a good identity group to belong to **- *Working Class and active***. There's plenty of us. It's a better identity group to feel a part of than shallow place and football identities and chauvinism. In this work, I criticise a lot of things about my fellow-workers, particularly those who act like little Tories. But when they act *as workers*, organised workers preferably, they're great. Maybe they're active in a union at work. Maybe in a tenants group. Or in anti-war groups. Or in a Socialist party. This writer is a member of 'Unite', the Union; of Amnesty International; and of Liberty, the Civil Rights organisation.

When people-as-workers do get themselves organised and act together the divisive *Where You're From* and football identities fall away pretty quickly. All unions have regional and national meetings several times a year, and annual conferences in Blackpool and Bournemouth and wherever, where working class activists work together with people from other places on all the real issues. You still get a little daft banter there about place and football identities but it's not a real problem.

They're Better At Solidarity Than We Are

We think **Solidarity i**s about *workers* supporting each other, don't we? Isn't 'Workers of the World, Unite!' the best-known slogan in world history? But instead, many of us insult and hate each other as Krauts, Jocks, Eyeties, Frogs, Yanks, Japs, etc. etc. and fight each other over bloody football when we should work together.

Over the centuries and now, the rich classes, the Land-owning and then the Business classes, are far better at solidarity than we are.

Although their competitive economic system makes them *business* rivals, they're very good at domestic *political* solidarity; and also at *international* solidarity. Despite their wars, most of which are about them competing brutally for resources and markets, they can also work very closely together with great solidarity to preserve their system.

As far back as the 12th century they married themselves or their kids off to the rulers

of far-off countries to solidify international alliances. Like Henry the Eighth did, repetitively. Just think about how poor travel and international communications were back then compared to today - but they still *Communicated* and *Co-operated*. Then think about how parochial many of the working class still are about 'foreigners'.

At ***page 358*** there is material about how the fiercely anti-democratic British land-owning and business oligarchy of 1793 made war on the democracy of the French Revolution; *and* in 1918, the Russian revolution, in solidarity with their own kind in those countries. And today, they organise themselves through several international alliances and treaties - the European Union, which is a business class club; through NATO; the United Nations; the World Trade Organisation, and the G8.

Give the rich some credit, they do *Take Care of Business*. So should we, by dropping narrow *Where You're From* identities and linking with fellow-workers wherever they are. It's not easy; but with globalisation, it's desperately necessary.

How to do it summed up ...

The real We, the real Us

We, we people-as-workers, we-who-are-many, should emulate the Business class's national and international solidarity. We can, we do. The global Resistance to Capitalism movement and the movement against the war on Iraq are the biggest ever co-ordinated global actions by workers and progressives yet seen in human history.

Do what you can to help. Look for just little things you can do each day to connect with fellow-workers as fellow-workers. At work and at the supermarket check-out, on the bus, at the airport; on the phone to the call centres, in the shops.

Let them know you are relating to them as fellow-Workers.
Whatever city they are from. Whatever team they support.
Whatever country they're 'from'. Whatever colour they are.
Whatever country you are in.

It might not change people a lot because we change attitudes more readily not through talk but through action. When workers have to defend themselves as workers, that's when we most readily drop the false identities and the prejudices against people from other towns and cities or of other skin pigment or nationality.

But change by just talking to each other as workers – we can do that too. And by reading – if you agree with most of what's said here, recommend it and pass on to another worker the links -

www.uspol.org

And to a Business class person, if you think they're civilised enough to appreciate it; or if you think it might it might help civilise them.

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The Right To Unionise 5 continued

How We Relate in Politics: 'Democracy' Under The Business System. Our Right to Associate, The Case For Our Union Freedoms and Against Anti-Union Laws

It is commonly said, and widely accepted, that we live in a Democracy. But do we really? What does it mean? For example, when those millions of us who opposed the Iraq War told Tony Blair he was wrong, he said "Well, that's your right to say that - that's democracy". Er, excuse me, you arrogant, democratically illiterate war-criminal twerp – *that's* free speech. It's an important pre-condition for democracy. But it's not democracy itself. Democracy means that your views actually *count*, that the majority decide, not just one (mad) man like him.

He decided to take the most serious action possible – ***War -*** with all that involves in death, maiming, grief, public spending - and had the cheek, the idiotic brass neck, to claim he had the right to start a war, that involves all of *us*, just on his *own* decision! And he fully intended to. He only allowed even the members of Parliament a vote on it because of huge protests by millions of citizens of this country. And that was the first time ever the MP's had a say. Gordon Brown when Prime Minister promised a law that MP's would definitely have a vote in future decisions on war. But in the vote that Blair conceded them on Iraq, many of them voted for war against the views of their constituents.

But in many years of activity as a trade unionist, when involved in organising ***Strikes***, for it to be legal I and others had to ballot every member, by post, under rigorous laws *made by MP's in Parliament.* Made by an organisation so un-democratic it allowed Prime Ministers to commit us all to war without even *themselves* having a vote!

Once, this writer could have been sued for many thousands of pounds by his employer because an incompetent judge had made a wrong ruling against his union. This is the sort of nonsense you get caught up in - before a strike, the law requires you to tell your employer who you are balloting - your *Members.* Later, if members vote for a strike, the law requires you to tell your employer which *Employees* you are going to encourage to strike. That can legally be *all* the workforce, not just union members.

This judge mistakenly read these two separate requirements as the same thing, and, following his faulty legal instruction, our union told the employer only our *members* were striking. Many *non-members* wanted to strike too and asked me, a branch officer, if they could. I got caught up in the complication of telling them it *should* be legal for me to encourage them to strike: but because of this judge's mistaken ruling, and my union officials therefore not telling the employer we would be doing that, I couldn't be very positive in encouraging them to join in without risking being sued.

But why are we forced to do all this? And by who? We trade unionists have always had far more ***democracy*** when we go on strike than those pompous, presumptuous Parliamentarians have when they go to war. We, workers organised together, have the most democratic systems you could find. Before they forced postal balloting on us we had a variety of democratic ways of deciding to strike, each far more democratic than theirs for deciding to go to war. Postal balloting is inferior democratic practice to some other ways.

Of which more, later.

But... how about *you* lot, you MP's, you who committed us to a brutal, murderous and illegal *war*, including making us targets for enraged people fighting back against you, how about giving me, and you, reader, a vote - ***any*** kind of vote - on that?

It gets worse. As said, striking is our - far less momentous - equivalent of their going to war. ***In our case, Parliament has even given the other side, the people we're up against, the power to make our action illegal!*** But what business is it of the employer, how we, ***independently organised workers***, make our decisions? When they decide to close plants and make people redundant, we've not got any right to have their boardroom decisions made illegal, unless their shareholders are balloted. But they can do it to us.

It's as if, when Blair declared war on Iraq without giving us a vote,

Saddam Hussein could have got Blair's action made illegal.

In 2010, the UK election resulted in no party having an overall majority. The Liberal Democrats went into a coalition with the Tories that allowed the Tories to implement a savage attack on the majority of the population. Nobody voting Lib Dem expected this. It was profoundly undemocratic, a constitutional outrage. They argued it was the only thing to do. Not at all – all they had to do was for the pair of them negotiate the terms of their coalition and go straight back to the electorate with that coalition as their declared intention. Yet it happened, and as a way of forming government and crucial policy, was allowed to go ahead, without serious objection. Democracy?

What Do You Think? Who Takes Any Notice?

Do you think about how much, and how little, democracy we get in national and local politics, and in our own organisations, thinking about and comparing the actual nature of 'democracy'? It seems most people don't, don't critically examine and discuss democracy itself, our rights, and the structures and procedures. Boring …. But think about the opinions we all have on all the many separate political ***Issues*** - how much we talk to each other about them - how annoying it is that we're ignored - and surely it's worth being interested in?

We are actually opinion junkies, constantly discussing things on the Internet, texting our views into discussion programmes, going on radio phone-ins. Most people, most citizens, have plenty of strong opinions on all the political issues. We talk to each other about them, at home, at work, in the pub or club. About climate change, the war, education, health services, rights at work, terrorist attacks, anti-terror laws, and so on. For me - I can fairly claim to be quite politically aware and well-informed, even on some of the heavier issues - for instance, Employment law, the Benefits system, Pensions. I even know how the EU works! I read the Guardian, watch 'the news' on the Telly, watch BBC TV's 'Question Time' (the closest we get to open, participatory political debate.)

But we have no idea what to *do* with our opinions. We don't know how to get them noticed, taken into account, for them to count for anything. Yes, a number of us do campaign strenuously. People write to their MP's. But there's a common feeling of powerlessness that is maddening. There's a lot of people around who, although they have strong opinions, don't bother with the political system at all because they feel they are ignored.

It shows in how we talk about political issues not as what ***We*** are doing: but of what ***They*** are doing. We say things like *They* are going to make it illegal, *They* won't do anything about it, *They* are building a by-pass. That's partly because ***They*** is easier to say than clumsier terms like *Parliament* or *the Council*. But it also shows that *we know we don't have much democracy*.

Our opinions are every bit as good as those of the politicians, the media 'commentators', the 'experts' interviewed and on the panels. That's what is the real core of democracy is - everybody's opinion is equal, to start with. We decide which is really best by ***Debate*** and majority ***Voting.***

Gordon Brown when Prime Minister realised how alienated we are, with low turn-outs in general and local elections. He asked for a debate on participation in democracy. He spoke of opening up the discussion about the rights of ordinary citizens to have a say not just on who will be in government, but a say, maybe a vote, on particular single ***Issues***. Instead of our views on each issue being lost in that single vague, amorphous General Election decision of who's to be the Government. But he didn't do anything much and none of them will without a great deal of pressure from us.

Is This Democracy ?

So what if I read the Guardian, take an interest and feel strongly about many big issues – what does it matter if I do? Or if you do? Who, in a position of power, knows or cares what we think? The lesson of the Iraq war was clear – Parliament isn't interested. So what is the point of me thinking about all these things, and discussing them with family, workmates and neighbours? That's led me to think that the priority issue is ***democracy itself.*** What we think about each of the ***Issues*** doesn't much matter, until we win the right to be taken notice of at all. Until we look at the political system.

It's a shallow, barely-democratic system we have. We have no mechanism to make MP's accountable to us for what they do, supposedly on our behalf, on each and all of the issues. You can write to your MP. Some MP's take *some* notice of constituents. But s/he doesn't *have* to take any notice. And you've no idea how many similar or alternative views they receive, and which they intend to take notice of. You can ask them what they are thinking and how they intend to vote on any issue. But I know of no duty on them to tell you and you've no power to influence it. It's a patronising system and it's insulting and offensive to us all. *It treats you and me like kids.*

There are people who actually think MP's *shouldn't* take much notice of us! In a letter to the Guardian in 2005 some idiot wrote supporting the notion that an MP betrays you if they take notice of your views and not solely of their own! This insult to us ***citizens*** was originally said by Edmund Burke, an 18th century MP, in opposing the democracy of the great French Revolution. And at that time *we* didn't even get a say in who was to *be* MP - the constituents MPs might have taken notice of were only the landowners, squires and assorted 'Gentry'.

Now, we do get a say in who is to be MP. But this political system still treats us, grown *adults*, with contempt. It only allows us a choice of who is to speak for us, regardless of what *we* actually want, as if we're under-age or mentally handicapped. So we should take a good look at this barely democratic system we live under.

To understand it, and to understand our worker's relationship with business class people, we need to be clear about how 'democracy' has been developed over the centuries. What there was before it - what changed - what didn't - and why.

Do We Live in a Democracy?

Before examining the history, let's look at a couple of views used to authorise everything that Government and the 'authorities' do, used to convince us to respect and abide by all the laws made and all the Government decisions taken.

One, that simple statement '*We live in a democracy*'. ***As if this is it – 'Democracy' is*** the once-every-five-years elections, the Constituency system, the MP's, the Party system, and all the other bits and pieces of it. As if at some point it was all thought out, alternatives were considered, it was planned, signed-off by us all, and then, on an appointed day, brought into use.

That is air-head stuff. It is non-historical, it ignores what actually happened. 'Democracy' was never discussed, planned and then 'put in,' with our consent and approval. There has never been a democratic Constitutional Conference with all of us involved in deciding what procedures to put in place. Not for the ongoing system of Parliamentary elections; *and not for our democratic re-consideration of all the many laws, still in force, made in the deeply non-democratic past*.

Especially the Employment and Union laws that define the basic, important, economic relationships between workers and the business class, from which they get their power and wealth , and from which we get insecure work in which they bully us.

The second view of democracy, in the UK, doesn't present it as here, complete, and 'just so'. This second view acknowledges that it did ***develop.*** Over the period 1640 to 1926, roughly. But it skilfully comes to a similar conclusion - that the Parliamentary system *is* democracy, precisely ***because*** it evolved over the centuries. The 'historical grandeur' of its development is part of its claimed legitimacy.

This is, to be fair, a more rational view than the first one. It at least admits that the system has been developed over historical periods. It allows for there having been a real, actually happened, concrete development. But it smoothly omits to make clear something important - that it didn't develop grandly *all by itself. And it didn't do it from nothing*. It started from somewhere: and it's development was actually particular people and particular *classes*, with different interests, battling to retain or gain the political power to look after their differing, conflicting interests. It's doesn't say these very basic things -

That this country is a society –

- that was originally a ***Dictatorship –*** *or an* ***Oligarchy -*** of a small class of brutal, un-democratic ***Property owners*** - the monarchy and the aristocracy, the lords and barons and earls. They owned everything and had all the political power. They even *owned* ***us***. Now, in these supposedly democratic times, and you go round their old castles and stately homes, isn't it outrageous that the displays and leaflets don't condemn the anti-democratic dictators who ran this system? Instead, there's disgusting awe of their armour and their baronial halls. All paid for by the majority - brutally-treated serfs and tenants - our people, our ancestors.
- that from 1640, this Propertied class were forced to concede power to a semi-democratic Parliament of large farmers and merchants and manufacturers, business people. And that they re-set the laws of *'the country'*, re-set *'the country'* itself, to enforce business people's rights.
- that not very long ago we Workers forced these Propertied, Business classes to concede us ***just one little, occasional, vote.***

The true democratic story is this - We have won some feeble democratic,

political rights from a *Propertied* and *Business* class who own most of '*the Country'*. They always fight bitterly against giving up any political power and have held onto a lot of it. They have held onto their most treasured, basic business rights - those of *Ownership and Property* but more importantly, the unequal rights they have over workers in the *Labour Trade* part of the Free-market Business System. They've strongly resisted mass democracy, equality and fairness. They've been quite successful and that's why we haven't yet got those things.

What little democracy we have had to be fought for by workers and other ordinary people. ***It is not democracy, the final version***. It's nowhere near that. We still have a *society* unfairly dominated by the business class and their business system.

From Open Class Rule To Business Class-run 'Democracy'

For centuries, the Business class were open about being a class permanently in power over the rest of us. They even codified it by birth – they called themselves *the Gentry*, being *of Gentle Birth*, and us, *Commoners.* And by all sorts of ridiculous pomposity and ritual. ***But now, they try to conceal that they are a separate class.***

They do it with the claim that ***anyone can make it.*** In fact, research shows that a lot of the business class are from the same families as they always were. *But it doesn't matter whether that's so or not. Because the Business Class - or **a** business Class - exists, year on year.* If it has different members, as they drop out through business failure, or become new members by 'making it', it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter who they are – a 'toff' from a family wealthy from generations back: or your old schoolmate 'made good'. Even if it were easier for some of us to join it, there still always is a business class.

***What matters is that there is such a class, dominating the majority*.**

Some of them are able and enterprising and manage well. But they're also mostly amazingly greedy. Through the unjustified '*free' labour market* mechanism of *They've Got All The Rest,* explained in the first section of this work, they get and use the power to bully us and to make 'their' fortunes out of us. When we organise to get nearer to equality of power with them, they tie our hands behind our backs with laws against us acting as trade unionists. And all so they can live pathetically empty, expensive, ridiculous lifestyles.

To repeat, we don't have 'a democracy' that was drawn up and agreed, in which we consciously endorsed the business class's power over us at work, or their economic and *financial* power. We never had a big discussion on ***Property rights*** and ***Work Relationships***. Nor on what d*emocratic* rights and institutions we should have. And then all agreed to put it into practice. *What's happened is that we've chipped away for centuries to get some political rights, partly to challenge the Propertied class's rights, from their absolute ownership of land and even **Us** - that is known as Feudalism: to today's business-dominated society with only some faint democracy*.

It's claimed that it is 'the best democracy in the world', 'the cradle of democracy.' The purpose of that argument, and it succeeds, is to get us to accept what little we've got and be grateful. But look at other countries and you'll find they've got useful things that we haven't. Notably, the citizens of the American republic get a vote on who's to be the head of Government. We don't in the UK. The Prime Minister you vote for at an election can be replaced with you having no say at all. This is in the choice of who is to do the most important job of all! When Gordon Brown took over from Blair without any democratic process this was commented on. But it still happened, even though outrageous.

Even if this *was* 'the best democracy in the world', we, the People, are treated with such contempt it only means it's the best of a bad lot. What it really is, is the present stage

of a real, concrete evolution – though it can involve revolution too, as in the Civil War of the 1640's. Let's look another, closer look at how it developed.

How We Got this Weak Democracy, Controlled by the Business Class

Before 1640 the monarchy – who were, let's be clear, ***Dictators*** - ran the country (the UK) along with a class of strongmen - the aristocrats, the lords, barons, earls, dukes, marquesses - whatever they are - and other mediaeval ***Landowners***. They were the kind of brutes now called 'warlords' in Bosnia or Somaliland. Under the feudal system they owned most of the land, most of *the country*. Before around 1380 they even *owned* the likes of you and me! They made all law. The process used for extracting their wealth from the masses was taking ***Rent*** from tenants, who earned it by farming land that the Landlords owned just for being the strongest brutes around.

Then, a class of large farmers, merchants and tradesmen developed ***Commercial*** wealth. They too wanted political power. It took the awful, bloody Civil War for these people to persuade the unelected aristocratic class, the oligarchy, to concede some power and for 'the country' to be run more democratically by locally elected MP's assembled together in *Parliament.*

But the outcome was also clearly ***not****-democratic.* Only the wealthiest, those people with substantial land or wealth, got the Vote. Ordinary folk had fought in the Civil War, been allies of, died with, the new commercial class against the aristocrats, thinking the war was for universal democracy. But it wasn't. It was democracy only for, within and amongst the class who owned large Property. Cromwell's winning faction actually spelt it out openly to the Levellers, in a famous debate at Putney, saying - *How can you people have a say in running the country if you don't* ***own*** *any of it* ?

What an argument that is! Worthy of Monty Python! It takes *the country* to literally mean *the Land*. Surely it was obvious that 'the country' should mean ***the People*****?** That's what the French Revolutionaries meant by *le Patrie*. In the UK the country *still* feels like some God-like entity above and apart from us, the humans who live here.

So, in summary, there's the first stage of the development of what is called *democracy* - between 1640 and 1688 the ***new commercial, merchant class*** won political power, as Parliament, from the monarchy and the land-owning aristocrats, the Feudal class; and betrayed the ordinary person by making a new constitutional settlement with the monarchy and the land-owning aristocrats to secure against *too much* democracy. They restored the king or queen, with reduced powers, as a symbol of national identity and the authority of the new type of sate. This was limited democracy, clearly, openly, just for the rich. They were not the slightest bit embarrassed about it. They claimed it was the natural order, that they were superior by birth.

Following that, in the 1700's and 1800's, more and more merchants got wealthy through ***Trade***, including trading in *people*, in the slave trade. Some became ***Industrialists***, ***Manufacturers***, making the Industrial Revolution. Together they became the modern ***Business Class***. It absorbed the old landed, aristocratic class, many of them becoming commercial farmers and industrialists too.

And with the Industrial Revolution we developed too - the modern ***Working***

Class. Through the 1700's and the 1800's, despite repression such as brave activists being deported to Australia, they organised and agitated and forced the landed and commercial/business class to reluctantly concede free speech.

And later, the vote. First to less wealthy business people. Then to better-off workers. Then to all men. And lastly, to women. We didn't all get the vote until as recently as 1926.

And All We Get is just one little x

*And after all that, what do you and me actually **get**? Just one little pencil cross on a scrap of paper every four or so years*. A pathetic little thing it is. It is used against us – because this one little chance to influence what goes on is presented ***as*** democracy, and we are expected to accept and abide by all the laws made because if we wanted things different on any issue, we could, supposedly, change it with the vote.

But this is nonsense. First - ***many of the laws in force today were made when it was not at all democratic***. If you want to change any or all of the many laws and thousands of government decisions that were made, undemocratically, *before* we got the vote, this one occasional little-cross-on-a-piece-of-paper - a maximum of about 15 over your lifetime - doesn't give us the power to change all of ***that***.

Second - if you want to influence what is done ***now***, it only allows each of us a crude, remote say in the choice of one group of lawmakers - one Party, one Government - rather than another. ***Then they do many different things, make new laws, make thousands of decisions. That one Vote gives us little influence over what they do.***

It's little wonder that *We* talk of what *They* do.

And that we feel powerless. It's because we are.

Having said that - if you take the long view, all of history, the whole development of the human race - the democracy and freedoms we've established are our greatest achievements. We should value the *Social Organisation, Co-operation, Civilisation, and Democracy* that we've developed. Compare the world now with all previous ages - say just three hundred years ago - and we've more freedom around the world than ever before. But ….. there's a way to go yet.

What Conservatives Want to Conserve

After winning the Civil War and, in 1688, forcing the monarchy and the aristocratic landowners to concede power to them in Parliament, the Propertied and Business class spent the years from 1700 viciously using their new political power to destroy ***Feudal*** economic relationships and re-structure society to suit their new ***business class*** interests. In the 18th century, the ordinary people knew they were making class law and they had to have flunkies riding on the outside of their carriages to defend them from people's anger. You know them, the 18th century Rich – be-whigged, perfumed and brocaded, arrogant peacocks with extravagant clothes and manners. Gentle manners with brutal politics. They were disgusting people. You can now go round all those big, sumptuous country houses and mansions and estates they had built for them. They revelled in their status, and, as said, clearly, openly, unashamedly divided people from birth until death into themselves, G*entlemen and ladies* - ***the Gentry***; and us, people of *'Common Birth'* - ***Commoners***. They were contemptuous of we, 'the common people'.

Through Parliaments made up only of big landowners, and through judges exclusively from their own class, they established in law the key relationships, how they can behave towards us and how we can behave towards them, that are still the fundamental relationships in society. The relationships that suit them and that they fight to ***conserve***.

Relationships, ways of relating, that don't suit our interests, those of the Working class majority. That is to say – *When this wasn't a democracy they established in law their ownership of productive Property and the basic relationships of 'Free' markets.* You'll know how often they are mentioned in politics and how important they are. We should take a close look at them and how they affect us.

Power and Wealth Through Owning Land

Nowadays owning ***Land*** - big farms, estates – and producing agricultural products isn't the main economic activity. It is still a big one, industrialised. But more mainstream Industrial production, including 'Service' industries, now dominates. ***So the big issue now is how we relate to each other in the Industrial production of wealth***. It's the key theme of this whole book. We'll deal with it again shortly.

But what they did with property relationships, particularly land, after getting power in Parliament, transformed our relationship with them. And it set things up for the industrial economy with a 'free market' in labour. So let's look at what they did with *Property*.

We all want our own *personal* property. But what's really important is ***property that is used to produce things***, that we use to *'Make Our Living'*. Feudal society had been authoritarian and un-democratic: but there was common access to a lot of the land, and it had supportive features. There was the notion of Christian duty to all members of society. The land-owning and new merchant business class demolished this form of somewhat-caring society and replaced it with uncaring, self-aggrandising, private ownership of productive property. In the period 1700 to 1800 the landowners authorised themselves, in their Parliament, to steal most of the Common land from 'the Common People' by enclosures and clearances, to enlarge their estates. That enabled them to get rich as landlords, extracting Rent from Tenant small farmers, and also farming it 'themselves'.

They relieved themselves of responsibility for their fellow-British. Masses of ordinary country people were driven off the land into dreadful poverty or driven to property crime – poaching, street robbery. The land-owning and merchant class brutally enforced their new powers, hanging starving kids who stole bread, deporting people to Virginia and Australia for minor property crimes that had not previously been crimes - like catching game on common land now privatised. Vicious at home, even more vicious overseas - through being slave traders - they made big money – *capital* – and re-invested it back in the UK in the new factories - where they treated us, again, brutally. All this time, our sort of people fought to retain a more collective, supportive society. But we had no political rights, it wasn't a democracy, except for the propertied class. So the Propertied class won.

Much of the still-existing law of property is from these profoundly un-democratic times. It does not have the moral or political legitimacy of having been decided democratically. We have never agreed to it.

With Industrialisation productive property came to include, as well as land, factories, machines, offices, ships, lorries, airliners and lorries. Now, they get wealthy more from industry and services than from land. *So the argument about laws favouring them is now less about **land and property ownership** and more about their **'free market'** system.*

Power and Wealth through Free Markets in Products

In the feudal system, the Middle Ages, *Free markets* were not common. Most *Goods* were produced on the land and the aristocratic landowning class owned most of that. Far from there being free markets, 'monarchs' handed out monopolies in key trades to their political supporters.

One of the key reasons for the medium-size farming *Squirearchy*, the *Merchants* and the emerging *Manufacturing* business class transferring power from the monarchy's dictatorship to Parliament was to complete the already-developing change to a system where business people were free to trade, free from control by the monarch and aristocrats *or even by each other*. This is a powerful argument of theirs, one they make loud and often - that anyone should be free to ***Sell*** Goods and Services and whoever does it better, gets the business. And anyone should be free to ***Buy*** from anybody else without interference from Government or from anyone else (their argument goes.) Let's concede that these ***Free markets*** of theirs were and are progressive compared to the monarch granting monopolies.

We need to move on again, to progress to *planned economies*, to avoid the madness of how markets operate. That would involve comparing free markets in goods and services with ***Public, Democratic Planning*** and delivery. This book doesn't cover that debate. But one thing - a planned economy would have to leave room, at the small-activity end of the economy, for some amount of free enterprise for all those business class movers and shakers to have outlets for their exceptional enterprise, energy and talents.

And next, the really important one. Yet it's overlooked even by socialists and all who oppose the market in public services – free markets in *people* .....

The Business Class's Power and Wealth Is From Free Markets in People – in You

Free markets in ***Goods and Services*** have advantages and disadvantages, and they are fiercely debated in politics. At times we've challenged free markets in goods and services by nationalising some major industries. We've done it, largely successfully, in health and education. Although we are being pushed back.

*Free markets in **Labour** are not debated and argued about like free markets in goods and services are. They are simply accepted by most people.*

Yet they disastrous to us, the majority, who sell ourselves as Workers.
We have to challenge the free market in Labour, in particular.
Because it's not just about how goods or services can be bought and sold –
It's about how YOU can be bought and sold.

To repeat – the Business class established free markets before we got the vote - before we got *any* democracy. We did resist them establishing their Free market system in the selling and buying of ***labour***, where we swim or sink, unsupported, as weak workers subordinate to employers. That's freer than being a feudal serf. But at least with feudalism there was a stronger notion of it being one society, with obligations all round.

But they criminalised our resistance to being atomised into 'free' but weak workers, our attempts to organise together to make each other stronger. Workers in the late 18th century had to organise unions secretly, meeting in back rooms and upstairs rooms of pubs, sometimes holding the meeting in the dark so government spies couldn't see who said what. Even now, they shackle us with laws that give employers the right to obstruct us from ***organising*** and stop us from ***acting*** together.

They didn't have to do this to us then and they don't have to now. They could just

have recognised then, and could now, that it's no way to run a ***Society*** for the great mass of the population to be in the terribly weak position that was demonstrated in the first section of this work as *They've Got All The Rest.* They could have allowed us to organise. They'd not have got so stupendously rich: we'd not have been as disgustingly poor as we were from Dickensian Britain through to the 1930's. The 'economy' would have been less dynamic. But our parents and grandparents and other forbears would have lived much happier lives, free of much of the misery we all know of from the history books and Dickens.

We're Stuck With What They Did Then

A summary - having won political power from the previously all-powerful aristocracy, the *Propertied and Business* class, the only people with political power, operated openly as a class and structured law and relationships to suit themselves. The class of person who runs a business benefits from the laws, ***Employment Contract*** law, mainly, that define free or 'de-regulated' labour markets: and from laws against union activity that shield 'free' labour markets from our challenges to them. It is built into the workings of 'the country'. The actual people change over time but they persist as a class. And we workers haven't won enough democracy or freedom to organise to challenge this class law. So let's look at the democracy we've got, that we are supposed to be able to use to change all that.

Just one little x - To Make All the Changes We Want !

We get just the one little x that we pencil onto a scrap of paper in the local school every four years. It's not of much use in getting what we want done over the *huge* range of political ***issues.*** All that one all-encompassing little 'x' allows is for us to choose between several alternative 'packages of policies and promises' – the ***Manifesto's*** - made by the political parties. But it's pathetic. Because most of us agree with one party on some things – some *Issues* - but disagree with them, maybe deeply disagree, on others. This gives us ridiculous choices to make.

For example, in the UK election of 2005 New Labour's leader was a war criminal, Tony Blair. Despite that, lots of us still voted New Labour because they were still the best of the choices available. Even as the New Tory party it really was, it was still, across *all* the issues, preferable to the true business class party, the real Tories. And preferable to the party of middle-management and Small business, the Liberal Democrats.

But the war in Iraq was by far the biggest issue and people wanted to vote against it. But you couldn't vote for Labour, and vote separately against their war. So, many people prioritised the War as the defining issue and voted for parties who were against it: but who are, like the Lib Dems, also anti-worker. Some didn't vote at all – they abstained in protest. Some - including me - voted New Labour reluctantly.

So even when the party you prefer overall gets in to government there's a big problem – voting a war criminal back into the job of Prime Minister. And 'voting for' New Labour's privatising of the NHS. And because we don't get a separate vote on, for example, war, but people wanted to vote against the party that started it, the civilised majority, of New Labour and Liberal Democrat voters, was split. That can let the Tories in with a minority vote, but the biggest one.

Here's an example of the 'Issue' problem from a different arena, motorcycling. Bikers write to Motor Cycle News in a fury about speed cameras, saying 'They take

us bikers for granted. But we've got votes, let's use them against this lot next time'. But it'd be daft to vote against, or for, any party on just one motorcycling issue; and to ignore what they do on the NHS, Education, Transport; on War, Pensions, Taxation, Benefits, Union Rights, Individual Rights at Work, Climate Change, and on and on ….

You've no chance to have your say on any particular one issue. All you are allowed is to try to decide which party's mixed package of policies you think is best, or least bad, from each of the parties mixed packages.

Electing Dictatorships

There's another problem. The candidate who gets the highest number of votes in a Constituency wins the seat in Parliament. The rest of the votes cast count for nothing. This is called the *First Past the Post* system. But the combined losing votes often add up to more than the winning vote - maybe 30 and 20 per cent for each losing main party – making 50 per cent - and only 35 per cent for the winning party. The party that wins the most seats, often like this, gets all the power in Government. Nationally, the losing vote often adds up to more people *against* the party that gets in than those *for* it. So parties get into government, with complete power, with the support of only around 35 per cent of the *voters*. It's argued that this system makes it easier to get governments that make decisions. But then the decisions are not those the majority voted for.

And twenty to thirty per cent don't bother to vote. That's their stupidity, not even bothering to put a cross on a piece of paper to chose the least bad party. But it means governments are often doing what *only twenty per cent of the population want doing*. We get 'elected' minority dictatorships. No wonder a lot of us are disgruntled.

We Need More of a Say

We need to think about the problem of only getting one little cross - x – there you are, that's it - to choose one multi-mix package of policies rather than another: and of your choice of package being completely rejected in favour of one supported by only a minority.

The most common improvement argued for is to reduce the dictatorial power that one minority party gets with 'first past the post', by the parties who come second or third in a constituency also getting seats in Parliament. That's *Proportional Representation*. It's then less common for the party with most seats - but no majority of votes - to have an overall majority of seats, and more usual for them to have to make *Coalitions* with the other parties to get a majority and form a Government.

It's argued against PR that you get less decisive government than 'first past the post'. But wouldn't we be better off with less decisive government if whatever is done is what a majority of the population actually wants done, not things they deeply disagree with? Thought that was what democracy was about.

But we need to go much further than proportional representation. Regardless of the party or coalition that gets into Government, we should demand more of a say on the separate ***Issues.*** Instead of governments having dictatorial powers, we should *all* have a say on *all* the issues, one by one. That's *Have a* ***Say*** rather than a *Have a* ***Vote*** because we couldn't possibly vote on *everything*. Full democracy can be a bit time-consuming. But in principle we should, and could do so a lot more than we do now. Which is virtually never.

As it is, you do what you're allowed. You go to the school hall and make your pathetic little cross. And then these remote people, the MP's go off to London and ignore us for four years.

There's More To Democracy Than This

What kind of democracy ***is*** this? It's laughably crude and sketchy when you've been active in Trade Unions and got used to far more democracy than that. So now here is a detailed and unfavourable comparison between what we're told is democracy, and the much greater democratic rights we organised workers have in our unions. It starts by comparing what democracy we get in the making of the biggest decision – Governments going to War. And the Union equivalent, going on strike.

Our Union Democracy Exceeds Parliament's – Going to War and The Miner's Strike

Let's look for the comparison at the great Miner's Strike of 1984/85 against wholesale pit closures. You'll know something about it, even if you were a kid at the time. And you'll know how Arthur Scargill, president of the miner's union, un-democratically refused to have a ballot for the strike. Or so the anti-union myth goes.

It will be shown how there was far more democracy about the miner's strike, even without a ballot, than we ever get from Government when they act, including their equivalent to striking, committing us to War. For a start –

The Conservative government didn't hold a ballot about pit closures. Did they?

We, the Voters, didn't get a ballot on closing the pits. Do you, does anyone know, how Thatcher and her crew got any *democratic authority t*o close down a huge industry that now, it is clear, was financially viable: and destroy stable communities, where now it is frequently reported that loads of the kids, unemployed, are on heroin?

They got the actual *power* to do so by getting elected in 1983 on their election manifesto and by 'winning' that election with the votes of only 30 per cent of the electorate. Was closing the pits in that 1983 manifesto? Maybe it was. But I don't think so. Do you know? Has anyone asked the question before? Maybe one of us should find out. Even if it was, it was buried in one of those complex electoral packages, the manifesto's, on which we get just the one all-encompassing vote. ***Why should we accept less democracy from Parliament than they impose on us in our Unions?***

Just to open things up before developing this argument - did you know that Arthur Scargill was actually against the strike? A fellow-activist ex-miner was told by an old NUM - National Union of Mineworkers - contact that Scargill thought it was the wrong time. The Conservative government had stock-piled coal, and Scargill thought - and he was probably right – that they were provoking the strike to take the miners on while the coal stocks were up. Arthur didn't start the strike. It started when the Coal Board's senior managers announced they were closing those two pits in South Yorkshire - Armthorpe and Silverdale? - in illegal breach of the review procedure for closures that miners were entitled to demand they use.

The Yorkshire Area miners asked other areas of the NUM for support, and got it. There was a national Strike in support of them - and in support of themselves, because they knew this was only the start of a plan to run down the whole industry. The media, the establishment and, disgracefully, the Labour Party, then hammered the miners for 15 months for not having a national ballot for the strike. But am I, being such a one for democracy, condoning them not having one? Well, not necessarily.

It's an argument worth having within the NUM and the Trade Union movement. *But we can ignore and ridicule pressure for a ballot from the far less democratic Government, that doesn't give us any ballots for anything **it** does; and not for its equivalent to a strike - War*.

The same applies to pressure from those not-very-democratic people, those nasty pieces of work who own and run business class newspapers – most of the media - the Murdoch's, the owner's of the Mail and the Telegraph, those types.

You might be thinking ***'But that's ridiculous, you can't expect the Government to have a ballot for War***'. You might think 'It's different'. Yes, it is different. *It's far **more** serious than striking, and so **more** in need of a democratic mandate before they commit us to it.* Sending Working class lads to kill and die, and the illegal slaughter of hundreds of thousands, as in Iraq, is a much bigger issue than calling on people to strike. There is a much *stronger* case for a ballot of all of us.

Since Prime Ministers can do something as serious as start wars simply on their own say-so without even a vote of MP's - as, the year before the miner's strike, Thatcher had done over the Falklands - and since the media and the business class supports the Tories being able to act so un-democratically - then those of us who are organised workers can ignore lectures on democracy from the likes of them. More than that, we – meaning I, you and others - should belligerently challenge them over their double standards.

But we are so naïve about democracy that nobody made the comparison between what little democracy we get from Parliament when they act, and what they impose on us when we try to act. The onslaught about the national ballot was used by the business class's party - the Tories - and the business class-owned newspapers, and trailed by the BBC and ITV, to undermine the strike. In fact, there was *plenty* of democracy about the miner's strike.

For one - *the miner's **Annual National Conference** had already voted for strike action* if the Coal Board announced pit closures.

And two - the miner's union was a ***federal*** body. Members in each regional **Area** had the right to do a lot of things on their own say-so if they chose - like each State in the federal USA - without having to be led by or needing to get approval from the National Executive, the National President or the National Secretary. Or a national Ballot. Each area had a constitutional right to call a strike independently. Each was led by a committee of ***Delegates*** from each pit. When the South Yorkshire miners asked for support, each area made their own decision to support them (except for Nottingham.) ***The strike was called area by area*** as members discussed what to do about the closure of the two Yorkshire mines. The areas decided to strike in support separately, but together, in accordance with their constitutional powers, by meetings of delegates from ***Branches***. The National Executive and a special National Conference then *endorsed* the strikes called by each area.

A national ballot was only needed when the National Executive *called* the strike. It didn't. I was told Scargill was against it but when he saw the membership moving, he went with them. As he should have. He led his members in fierce defence of their livelihoods and communities. Everybody talks as if he foolishly led them to defeat. But the Tories were determined to close down the industry anyway and eventually did. Resisting didn't cause it - it was just something the miners and Arthur had to do. Many millions of workers in Engineering and other industries also lost their jobs under the Tories, also had their communities ruined, were also defeated. But their union leaders didn't put up the same sort of fight Scargill did. They are more to be criticised than Arthur. He did his job.

Third - *Picketing* is a respected way of asking fellow-workers to support you. With all areas except Nottingham out, there was clearly a majority taking part in the strike. They

picketed the Nottingham pits to try to persuade Nottingham to join in.

With *all that* democracy there was no need, and it would have been stupid, to go back to work while organising a ballot and allowing Thatcher's government and the business class-owned media to attack and organise against the strike.

There's yet another way of looking at it. It's probably essential to ballot over striking for, say, a pay rise. Everybody is involved in the same way and some may want to vote that it's not worth the bother, only about a few per cent more on your pay packet.

The Yorkshire miners were faced with something quite different, something fundamental – they were faced with *all* of them being sacked, their pits closed, their communities destroyed. The Conservatives, laughably coming from them, argued that the miners who worked on through the strike had *the Right to go to Work*. But how can some members have that right when others are having it taken away?

An old and respected slogan is *All for One and One for All*. The miners whose pits were being closed were entitled to *demand* support, without the need for a vote, to defend people from being kicked out of their industry. You are expected to join in war, without a ballot, when 'the country' is attacked. In the World War Two, when the Nazi's bombed London, Coventry and other cities, could people in rural Herefordshire have refused to take part because *they'd* not been bombed?

War and Parliament's Democracy

We're comparing here the miner's democracy over their strike, with what we get as citizens of the UK, from Parliament, when they start a war.

As said, in the miners union, ***delegates*** from each pit called the strike. They would have held branch meetings at their pits and got support from all ordinary members to vote for the strike at the area delegate committee. Each ***MP*** supposedly represents a *constituency*, just like a miner's union ***delegate*** represents their *branch* to an *area committee*. The *Prime Minister* is like the *Area President*. But as said, whenever the UK has gone to war over all the centuries, Prime Ministers never allowed even our MP's a vote. ***Prime Ministers declared war on only their own decision.***

We did actually force Blair to allow MP's a vote over him starting the illegal war on Iraq, the first time they ever had one. *But MP's didn't take a vote of people in the Constituency*, as the area delegates of the miners would have done in their *branches*, their pits. Most MP's voted for war against overwhelming demands from constituents not to.

Blair defended the declaring of war being solely the Prime Minister's decision and rejected proposals that would make a vote amongst the MP's a permanent, binding feature of the UK's so-called democracy. As said, Gordon Brown, when he was Prime Minister, promised to make it law that Prime Ministers no longer have this power to commit us all to mass slaughter just on their own say so, but would have to at least give MP's a vote. But they would still ignore ***us,*** wouldn't they?

War and Our Union Democracy

So the miners, in their strike, had these four elements of democratic decision making – National conference decisions - Area decisions forming a National majority - almost everybody actually participating in the Strike - and the right of those being sacked to *demand* support from those who were not being sacked just yet. Yet if the

NUM had operated as 'the country' did in every war before Iraq, operated as Thatcher did over the Falkland War, Arthur Scargill, the National President of the Mineworkers, would have just been able to declare the strike on his own authority alone.

MP's - Labour as well as Tory - and the business class newspapers, and the BBC, savaged the miners because they didn't have a national ballot. Yet they accept that procedure where *just one man* – one as deranged as Blair - can start wars that make *all of us* at war. ***If they think that's alright for running the country and going to war, involving us citizens in such bloody matters with no vote, they're not qualified to make law that dictates differently to we organised workers*.**

There's no requirement for us to ballot for calling off strikes. No imposition of democracy for that. We often do ballot on it anyway. But the law is happy to just let our officials call it off, even though there is still a democratic decision to strike in force..

Although we resent the deliberately obstructive laws requiring ballots that the party of the business class impose on us, we in our unions have always had democratic ways of deciding to strike. Almost always, all of us ordinary union members, have had a vote of one kind or another. Why have we never had one as *citizens* for going to *war*?

'We' were the aggressor in the Iraq War, where it is being argued here that we should have had a vote. There'd be an argument that you couldn't ballot when it's 'us' being attacked – that we'd need decisive leaders able to act on our behalf. We'd have to allow the Prime Minister authority to take us into war instantly, in self-defence. Even though they can, like Brown, become PM without even being elected. Maybe so. So then - why couldn't Arthur Scargill do that ?

How did they get away with savaging the miners without being loudly laughed at by all of us? On these biggest of issues, *declaring war* and our equivalent, *Going on Strike*, we in our unions don't allow the centralised power that they do. We have far more democracy. It's outrageous that they get away with damning us and dividing us over this when they operate to far lower democratic standards themselves. The barbaric mass bloody horrors of the two World Wars were each started without any national ballot. They should have acknowledged that Scargill and the miner's were operating to a far higher Democratic standard than theirs and just shut up.

There is an answer to this question of how MP's, Parliament, feel themselves fit to make laws that obstruct us when we try to organise action, requiring us to be a lot more rigorously democratic than they are: even giving *the other side* the power to get our actions made illegal. ***It is that the business class dominate ideas and politicians, even Labour ones.***

They put far more work into establishing their anti-union, anti-worker views and laws, far more effectively, than we do ours. They have their own party, the Conservatives. They have independent members of the class whose politically activity is running newspapers. Most of 'the Press' is owned by business class people who operate independently to the Tory party but as allies of it. They set the agenda and terms of debate of politics. And, crucially - they own most of the country's most important activity - the production of goods and services, which is where *money* is made, and in which the majority of us get jobs and earn our living.

The Labour Party's big problem is always –

How much of what you are elected to do for the worker majority can you do, when the people who own and run the economy won't wear it?

Because business people run the economy they get most of what they want. Particularly anti-union laws, that are simply class law made by and for the business class to

deny Working class people the right to organise independently of them.

What Their Wars Are For

Wars are the biggest issue so it's worth looking at what they are ***about.*** They always present their wars as being for *Freedom*. *Our* freedom, even! But if you just look at the history, it's crystal clear that the freedom and the democracy we have were won by fighting *them, inside* the UK. The only time a British army has protected or promoted *our* freedom was in the Civil War, *inside the UK*. That liberated us from absolute monarchy. Since then, it's difficult to identify any wars or anything else the army has been used for, that were for our freedom. If they were really defending us, you'd see them helping out on the picket lines.

But they've allowed themselves to be used *against* our freedom several times, at Peterloo, at Newport in 1831, and in 1919. And what were they doing in Ireland from 1969 to 2007? Not even the Second World War, the one most often claimed to have been about freedom, was really about that for the Business class. There's more about that and their wars generally in ***Digressions 1 and 2 on pages 351 & 353.***

You Get No Vote On Their Wars – Yet Have To Fight In Them

As said (repeatedly, yes), they *start* these wars, in our name, involving us in terrible acts, putting us at risk of people retaliating, using our money, with us having no vote on it.

But they will also make you take part in war - to fight, kill and die. *They will conscript you into their military*. That has a huge, irreversible effect on millions of people's lives. You have to leave your own life behind, friends, family, prospects. You have to fight, kill, or die, maybe mangled and slowly drowning, in a shell-crater; or hanging on barbed wire. You might get shell-shocked, like Spike Milligan did; or maimed, lose your legs or arms or eyes, suffering the agony of the bloody mess at the time, and be a cripple for life. When growing up in the 1950's I saw loads of guys with arms missing, legs missing, and otherwise maimed in the two world wars. Not only do you suffer, but your relatives do too. My great-grandad got gassed in the First World War: my uncle got through the Second fighting in North Africa but got blown up clearing mines just after it: never knew my grandad because he got shell-shock from bombings and was put in mental hospital. And now, that's happening to people over Iraq and Afghanistan.

And in being sent away to war, soldiers and sailors and airmen - and women - are separated from boyfriends and girlfriends, some they're engaged to be married to. But often they lose those relationship, one will pick up with another partner, nice relationships wrecked, forever, by War. And I had some relatives, women, who were amongst the millions of women who lived all their lives unmarried because so many men were killed in the wars, there weren't enough to go round.

All that is far more than the miners were asking of each other.

And all done without any bloody national ballot.

Or even a vote amongst MP's.

Some readers might *still* think, well, that's *the Government,* it's *different.* But free your democratic mind on this. Look at all ***organisations*** - unions, 'the country', the golf club or football league, the tenants or resident's association, school governors and others, as the same kind of thing. It's just about how you work collectively, with other people. There's nothing different about the state, the *nation,*

to any other social grouping, any *organisation* that you are in, that takes collective decisions. It's just you, me, and others working together. The only basis on which I will willingly work with people in any such organisation is democratically, where my voice on what we are to do is good as anyone's and I get a direct say. Wouldn't you say the same for yourself?

Our Union Democracy – Better. But Weaker

Our union democracy is much better than Parliament's. I'm going to show how, in a few other aspects besides wars and strikes. But there's a big weakness. For all our democracy when making decisions, we don't actually exercise much visible power at the end of it. We won't or can't act often enough, with enough a*uthority*. So we don't give ourselves, nor do we get, the respect we should have. Even when organised, we're inhibited about striking. We allow business people to put us on the defensive about it. We are reluctant to exercise real social power. Unlike, say, French workers. Not enough of us have the sense and, including me to a degree, the bottle, to stand up to our employers. Too many acquiesce to being treated with contempt and are half-hearted or even obstructive of doing anything together.

Another reason is that the business classes of the world make it difficult. Over the centuries, from intimidation in the workplace to anti-union laws to death-squads in Central and South America, they obstruct us. They even repress us with *language*! The media, *their* media, talk of *the unions* as if they are not actually workers but are some self-serving, intrusive agency, as if imposed on workers. *But 'the unions' are simply those of the vast majority of the population who are workers, who are, very sensibly, organised*. Like business people and state agencies are.

Our Democracy Exceeds Parliament's –

Our Right To Associate - The Case For Our Union Freedoms - The Case Against Anti -Union Law

Our union democracy is fantastic compared to what little of it governments use to authorise all that they do. That's been shown on the biggest issue - war and its union equivalent, strikes. Now let us compare them on another basic issue :

- the ***right*** to be a citizen and the ***compulsion*** to be one
- the ***right*** to be a member of a union and the ***compulsion*** to be one

Both involve people ***associating*** with other people. It's a fundamental feature of human society, of political rights, of human rights. We need to look at how we are *compelled* to associate with some people while *denied* the right to associate with others.

Compelled To Associate With The Business Class

We have to accept being in the *association* that is ***'the country'***. We are expected to abide by its laws and the decisions of its governments. That is so even when the government is unelected, as the Tory and Liberal-Democrat coalition of 2010 is. Being a 'member' of this association means being bound by the decisions of Parliament and Judges. It means being subject to their monopoly on the use of force in society, exercised through the police and the military. We have to accept the authority of this association even though our democratic rights are ludicrously weak, as with the coalition getting power and as when one mad ego-maniac, Tony Blair, involved us all in illegal mass slaughter, with us having no vote on it.

The institutions of this association have such authority that at times - long gone and never to return, you'd hope - they even tortured people for not supporting it. At any time, we may be expected to kill and die for it. Conscripted soldiers who mutinied against the awful, undemocratically-decided slaughter of the First World War were executed by it. Killed.

Most importantly - the basic meaning of this association is unity of the worker majority with the business class and their conservative parties. It means unity with them in a system where they get unfair power over us, that they use to treat us with contempt. We should challenge the expectation from these people that this association with them deserves our loyalty.

This no doubt sounds a radical view. But the Tories acknowledge it. Their talk of 'one-nation Toryism' is an attempt to patch up the obvious divisions that show the nation to be a system for their class misusing the rest. With speeches about 'one-nation Toryism' they say they are for everybody, not just their class. Meanwhile they do the opposite with their actual policies, like favouring themselves in the tax system and in cutting welfare and public services. They try to concede to the concerns of just enough people, to attack us just as much as they can before they show up the falsity of 'the country' too obviously.

We should accept what rights we have won within the association that is 'the country', that people should be entitled to anyway. But we should reject the expectation that we have complete loyalty to it. We never freely decided to join together in it as members, as fellow-citizens, on agreed terms. There was never any choice offered about being in it and being bound by its institutions and the laws made in them. If we had proper democracy and the right to organise as workers to get equal to business people; if we were given the respectful, democratic, adult, status of *citizens*, not *subjects* of a family of pompous buffoons, it might make sense to have some loyalty to this association. But as things are, it doesn't.

Looking at 'the country's' historical development, as is done in Section 4 of the full book, it's clear that 'the country' means the rich people's system. *They themselves* are in no doubt about that. See *They Really Attacked Democracy* on page 195. Briefly here - originally, aristocrats owned all the land that made up 'the country' and even owned us too; then, it was business people with a narrow democracy, for them only; now, it's business people dominating a wider but weak democracy. The system defines the country, and most countries. As someone once said "The business of America is business."

The casual daily assumption of the national identity, and the authority of the politics, laws and government of 'the country', means that we workers are members of it along with business people under their system. It means -

We are in a compulsory association with the Business class, on their terms.

We should examine all forms of associating on the same terms. There's nothing special about *the country*, *the nation,* compared to other ways of associating. It's just one of many ways. We should recognise that associating as workmates is much more important to us and legitimate than the association with business people that national identity embodies. The next few pages expand on this.

The Business Class Can Associate, Protected by the State

That compulsory association, the country, codifies in law that *business people can associate together*. That's what ***companies*** are - legally recognised associations of people. And the country even endorses them trading not actually as themselves but *as pretend 'legal individuals' - Limited Companies*. If their business fails, that allows them to walk away from their debts, from the people they owe money to! And it allows them to evade their safety responsibilities to injured workers. That's quite a level of protected associating – being allowed a pretend identity to carry the responsibility for what you do. They argue that it's necessary, to insulate them from business failure, in order to encourage business enterprise. Maybe so. But we could do with protection too.

'Free' Labour Markets – 'Free' Markets in <u>You</u>

'Free' markets mean 'individuals' - which includes *companies*! – can trade with each other without anyone else interfering. They are a key feature of the business system. (For business politicians like George Bush and his regime, freedom to trade is all they really mean by freedom.) Individuals are free to make contracts with each other each making their own free decision about whether to do so. Such 'freely-made' deals are endorsed in law as contract law. So business peoples and conservative politicians key argument against workers associating together, to bargain together, is that in doing that they restrain each other from 'freely' making individual contracts with business owners and managers; that they deny each other's *individual freedom*. That they are ***in restraint of trade.***

They present free trade as if it's a human right. It might be, where we trade as equals. *But it's plain nonsense in the labour market in industrial society.* First, workers don't often trade with another *individual*. They trade with *organisations – businesses, companies, corporations, government departments (as employers) and councils*. Our employers are usually a *team,* with partners, Boards, shareholders, MP's or Councillors, with many managers, thoroughly organised.

*More importantly, the contract they make with any **one** worker, they also make with a lot of other workers. Each is of only marginal additional usefulness to them. In the jargon of 'economics', each is of only marginal utility.* The full analysis of this important process is the first section of this work.

In 'free labour market' jobs business owners and managers can pressure you to do what they want because if you don't some other worker will. Each worker has to do the same to hold onto their job. Fear of the sack has us driving each other's conditions downwards, competing for security. Likewise, we only get more pay by competing to see who can most please our employer.

Where you make an individual, 'free labour market' contract with an employer, you do make it freely on each particular occasion. You are under no compulsion to take any *particular* job. But Capitalism develops Industrialism and 'the economy' is dominated by mass production. We can't ever have that mythical alternative 'If we shared out all the wealth equally tomorrow'. That idea belongs to a world where nobody invests in the efficiencies of mass production. We have, *inevitably*, a small number of business organisations and a majority, us, who effectively have to work for *one* of them. *Whichever* of them you get a job with, you are in a desperately weak bargaining position, because each of them has *plenty of you*.

Free markets in some goods and services have some plus points. But in the labour market where we sell <u>ourselves</u>, the notion of workers being free in 'free markets' is

nonsense. It is disastrous to the majority. We know this from our everyday experience of working life. It leaves you, me and every other worker terribly weak in the most important relationship of all - the relationship in which you get the means to live. It is unacceptable.

The notion that you are a *free individual* dealing with your boss who is just another, equal one, is laughable. We know this, in a felt way. But obviously not in a thought-out way, or the case for organising, the Right To Unionise, would be more widely and clearly declared.

The Business Class Are So Cheeky

The business class are *amazingly* cheeky. They argue in their newspapers and through their Tory party *as if siding with people* that they must have this freedom. They refer to it as a *right,* to make a contract with an employer individually, 'free' from restraint by other workers exerting pressure for them to be on union conditions. In the 1980's the Tories passed a series of laws against workers organisation, arguing that it was against this freedom to negotiate individually.

What cheeky, shameless, lying, self-serving brutes they are! It simply means that, frightened of not getting or losing a job, and under pressure to undercut each other, each of us has to bargain with *them* on our own. It means they gave us the 'freedom' to negotiate weakly with *them!* It means they gave us the freedom to allow them as business owners and managers to bully and intimidate us!

You'd think it'd be obvious that's why they did it, so they can drive us hard at work, to better exploit us. But their media, their politicians and their 'intellectuals' put forward this argument about a workers individual freedom to bargain weakly, that, incredibly, carries weight with people and wins the anti-union political argument.

In the intense political debate about 'unions' in the 60's and 70's, in justifying all the laws against union activity the Tories made in the 1980's, in the public debate about the miner's strike, they put up that ludicrous argument and won! Nowhere, even in the civilised press like the Guardian, was it challenged. They got away with it, easily, unopposed. It is still commonly accepted. The argument still holds together the anti-union consensus. The Labour Party conceded to it with barely a murmur. It's amazing. It just shows how the basics need examining and exposing.

'Free' Labour Markets - Workers Denied the Right to Associate

To balance the excessive power business people have over each individual worker, to respond to They've Got All The Rest, we workers need, like them, ***the right to associate*** *- the right to organise together in unions, to bargain* ***collectively*** *and be able to act together, to strike. But we are denied or obstructed by employers and by employer-made law in these rights.*

The political parties who support the business class – all the big parties - claim we actually have the right to join a union. What liars they are! What they mean is that *you* can join, be part of the union outside the workplace. It's worth it for *advice* and *representation* in using the limited *individual* employment rights you have. You'd be unwise to tell your boss you are member, though, unless essential. And we can all join like that, individually but in the same workplace. But such membership isn't what we really mean by unionising.

It's got to really be about bargaining collectively instead of individually. But employers don't have to ***recognise*** you and the union members as a ***group,*** for

collective bargaining. They don't have to meet people who represent you all, to ***negotiate*** with them. That denies the main reason why we associate. With no support for the right to associate as workmates and bargain as equals with your boss, you've no real right to union membership. There is a *limited* legal procedure, that we'll come to.

Some big employers accept us associating, because they can relate to 'the workforce' in a more orderly way if we're organised. But generally as a class, business people hate us associating and acting together they've given themselves the legal powers to make it difficult for us.

But ... if we cut the whingeing ... if we are convinced enough, if there's enough of us, we can actually force it on them. What we need is for the Right, the ***Entitlement*** To Organise to be clearly put and widely adopted amongst workers.

Challenging 'Free' Labour Markets Strikes 'In Restraint of Trade'

Were we organise we get the negotiating strength to get everybody better pay and conditions. But employers often resist reasonable claims and we have to use power, as they themselves do all the time, by taking action together - by ***Striking.***

When we strike for union pay and conditions, we are rejecting their 'free' and highly unequal labour market by :

- refusing to trade with them as weak individuals.
- refusing to compete with each other.

In their 'free market' view, by striking we are :
encouraging each other – giving each other the courage –
to break our individual employment contracts with them.

The business class used the argument that this is interfering with free markets to outlaw us organising and acting together all the way from the 18th century until the early 1900's. It's still their chief argument for obstructing us with anti-union, anti-strike laws.

They talk of 'free markets' as if they're laws of nature. But ***we humans*** decide how we relate to each other. We managed society without free markets in early primitive communities and in the feudal system in the Middle Ages. Limiting and regulating free markets is just taking democratic collective decisions instead of fragmented, mutually damaging individual ones.

Associating - Getting Union Recognition

As said earlier, politicians say we have the right to join a union. You can, and pay subscriptions, and if you dare to let your employer know you are a member, get union representation from the outside when you have a grievance or are being threatened. But it has little meaning as 'the right to join a union' if we have no support in getting an employer to recognise a number of us as the union for *collective* bargaining. Collective bargaining? – boring jargon maybe but it improves your working life no end. There is a law, made as a concession to us by business-class-friendly 'New Labour', that supposedly enables us to require the employer to recognise a group of workers as a union. But it's very weak and open to employer manipulation. It requires that a certain minimum percent of the workforce vote at all. It requires certain size majorities. It even allows workers who *don't* want a union to vote on whether one will be recognised. They can stop those who *do* want to organise from getting the right to be recognised by the employer! Even though if the vote is won they won't have to join it! It's like our Closed Shop (see next page) in reverse.

Yet MPs in Parliament, and town Councils, even when they 'get in' with very low turn-outs and small majorities, are not limited like this. MPs who require minimum turn-outs

and majorities of *us*, don't *themselves* need a certain size of turnout of the Electorate, or a certain majority of those who vote, for the authority to start wars and make all law and government decisions. Including this law about our rights to get union recognition, and anti-strike law. UK Governments and Councils govern with complete executive power with very low voter support. The Tories led by Thatcher and Major never got the support of more than about 30 per cent of the population. Yet they acted decisively, viciously, against our right to organise and act as a workforce independent of business owners and managers, their class. They, like the Labour Government of the late 70's, will operate with very small majorities, of just one or two MPs. As a matter of practical politics, maybe that's Ok. But then they have no authority to make we organised workers operate to far more rigorous standards than they do themselves.

What happens is, business class MPs and their 'news' papers assault us with ultra-democratic criticism. But they are simply finding arguments to obstruct us from being independent from them, as a class. And we haven't the nouse to see what they are doing. The way MPs obstruct us from organising to protect ourselves against the power of the business class is absurd. We need to point it out, show how they don't apply the same arguments and procedures to their own practices, or to the business class, and have confidence in what we do.

It should be as straightforward as this –

Those workers who want to associate at work and be recognised by 'the boss' as a group for bargaining should simply have the right to. Like business people can as Companies and Government, central and local, can.

Even without legal support and even with legal obstructions, it ***is*** possible to be organised and force them to recognise us. But there's nowhere near enough of us who are. A lot of the problem is simply down to us. We need the arguments for organising to be widely spread :

Yes, when we Organise, we are in restraint of trade. We are in restraint of us weakening each other by allowing employers to have many alternative sources of labour: In restraint of leaving each of us to bargain alone with them whilst of only marginal use to them.

The Closed Shop -

'The country' compels workers to associate with the business class yet obstructs them from compelling association amongst themselves

It has been shown that 'the country' means the business and political system that suits business people. And how being a member of it with them, with all the pressure to identify with *the nation*, is you *having* to associate with them, as if on the same side, when there is more that divides us from them than unites us. Although workers are far more clearly on the same side, we are prevented from doing the same.

When some of us associate as workmates, in a union, the next step is to insist on all fellow-workers *having* to be union members. They get the better conditions our organisation achieves and if they don't join, they tend to undercut and undermine them. It's called ***the Closed Shop*** - a workshop closed to workers open to employer intimidation. Until the Tories led by Thatcher made a law against it, it was fairly common for us to do that, to make new workers join the rest of us in the union.

Thatcher and her class and their press argued, without opposition, that the

Closed Shop was against the individual worker's freedom, and so gave employers a legal weapon against us doing that. But their argument is laughable nonsense. It is everyone's experience, a plain, well-known fact, *that* ***in taking a job you give up your freedom to the employer***. (A non-union job).

All that law really means is that a worker who doesn't get a job because they won't join can win a Tribunal claim against the employer. It isn't *that* expensive, so if strong enough, we could force employers to just pay out in the rare cases where a worker is so idiotic, and bear the cost. But we've not been strong enough in our self-belief or organisation to do that so it's worked to outlaw the closed shop. Ours, anyway. Not theirs.

Employers' non-union Closed Shop

Where an employer says *'we don't have unions here*' – and that's a lot of them, isn't it? - *that is an employer's closed shop*. It is closed to workers who want union working conditions. And where we *do* have union conditions, employers will try to make it non-union. They start to employ new starters on worse pay and conditions. The new starter is no position to refuse and it takes a highly-organised and combative existing workforce to stop it. Over time, some of those on union conditions will leave and more will be started on non-union conditions. The business owners and managers eventually get enough of the workforce onto them that they don't lose much production by sacking those remaining on union conditions, unless they transfer to non-union. Amongst many others, it's been done to eighty thousand college lecturers, including this writer. And his wife. And to many workmates and friends.

Nothing wrong with our Closed Shop

Our closed shop is about preventing that. It's about preventing an ***Employer's*** *Closed Shop, one closed to people on decent, union-negotiated conditions*. Organised workers should unashamedly claim the right not only to voluntarily associate, get recognition and negotiate union pay and conditions, but also to refuse to work with workers who would undercut us. We are entitled to insist on them joining us in the union and on *Union Conditions*. The union closed shop isn't about stopping a *worker's* freedom. It's about stopping an *employers* freedom to bully workers individually and so to drive down everyone's conditions.

After all, it's normal for people to expect you to acknowledge membership of a group. The national identity is the strongest, most binding example, easily shown to be an absurd one. So in taking a job - everyone knows that you don't just join the employer, *you join your fellow-Workers too.* You get new *Workmates.* And so do they – they get you. Joining your workmates in a union, and being expected to, is only like some other socially-expected 'getting together' practices. There used to be unpleasant apprenticeship 'initiation' rituals to mark it. Workmates often put well-meaning social pressure on others to go to works 'Do's' or to give to collections for people's birthdays or for people leaving.

It's more worthy of social pressure, far more worthy, to expect each other to commit to supporting each other as workmates in the face of the boss's power, to join the Union, than to go to the works Xmas party or to somebody's 'leaving do'. To join your workmates *properly, formally, officially,* recognising your shared, equal position, supporting them by joining together with them. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with saying that when you get a job, just as you accept you've joined the boss, ***You also have to accept that you join your workmates? Properly?***

Management themselves recognise that we share a common role, different to them,

the *boss,* the *employer.* They call us *the Staff, the Workforce. They talk of somebody being 'one of the workers', or 'one of our employees'.* In Northern factories, managers talk of *the lads and lasses on the shop floor*.

But some workers say 'I took this job agreeing to work for this company. I don't see why it means I have to join a union'. The answer is, you also joined your workmates. Or they say 'Nobody tells me what to do'. That means being expected to take part in strikes, or the sanctions like banning overtime that anti-union laws call 'actions short of strike action'. But … *nobody tells them what to do?* - what nonsense that is! The boss *constantly* tells them, tells all of us, what to do! *Not having somebody tell you what to do is exactly the point, the first and best reason, for joining a union*.

Sure, your workmates, organised as *the Union*, as an authority like others in society, will sometimes 'tell you what to do.' But it will be with far more democracy than you'll get anywhere else, far more than you get from the Government and the Council. They make big decisions binding on us every day, with us having only the most remote democratic control over them. If there's a union instruction to do something, you've got rights to influence the terms of that instruction, and the decision to issue it. It won't be a ***them*** 'telling you what to do'. It will be all of ***us,*** *including you,* acting together as equals and taking a democratic, collective, majority decision. Sometimes it might go against what you want. But equally it gives you the right to get support from others when you need it, and to get action for whatever you do want.

I've also had workers say (as an argument against taking part in union action) 'the union doesn't pay my wages, the boss does'. That's another argument that appears sensible but is actually silly. If you're not Organised, *They've Got All The Rest* means you are so weak that your boss gets away with paying you far less than the value of the work you do. They sell what you produce for a price and pay you far less than that. So the saying should be 'I earn my wages and the boss robs a lot of it. The Union gets me (closer to) what I'm rightfully due'.

Yet all the political parties, the entire political establishment, the business class-owned 'newspapers' and even the liberal papers, talk of the union closed shop as if it's an outrageous infringement of freedom. That *they* can make this argument without us laughing at them shows how backward we, the Working class are, at arguing our case.

Union Democracy Exceeds Parliament's - What We Expect of Each Other

We as workers can't make each other to be members of the union. Yet we demand far less of each other than 'the country' does. We don't send each other to war, to kill, be killed or be maimed. We don't intrude on each other's liberty like Parliament does, making laws such as the one-time laws against Homosexuality; or the drug laws, where they make criminals of people for what they (might) do only *to themselves*.

We simply seek to say – you can only work here for our better conditions. That includes protecting you from being unfairly sacked. We have to say you can only work here for the better conditions because without that, business owners and managers can sack us and replace us with people like you. Occasionally you might have to make some sacrifices for the better conditions by doing things with us, like striking, that you'll have a say in deciding. Obstructing us from enforcing union membership and

action on each other is, again, class law. It's minority business class law against the working class majority.

It is the business class, working through their Conservative Party or through overawed-by-the-business-class Labour, denying us as workers the right to organise and act as a class, independent from them.

Re-stating *They've Got All The Rest* - you are weak on your own in your dealings with your boss because while they've got plenty of you, and me, they can push each and all of us hard, if all any one of us can do is leave the job, leaving them with the others still working. To correct that, what's wrong with at least *expecting* of each other; and maybe *demanding*, that we all join the union? Why don't we treat it as a matter of course that we join the Union? Why don't we naturally accept the Closed Shop, that simply means allowing your Workmates some power over you, just as your boss does? When you take a job you're not only making a deal with your 'boss'. You also enter into an important relationship with your workmates. You should recognise it, and formally join together with them in a union. Why don't we automatically ask each other, socially, when one of us gets a new job 'Have you joined the union then?' And if they haven't or there isn't one, why don't we say "What? Why ever not?"

The Labour Market is crucially important to how we live in society because *it's in it that people get their entire income,* usually. And employers get great, unfair power over the majority in this crucial activity, *without us ever having made any conscious social, political decision for it to be so*. It's just an unintended historical development, an outcome of the development of industrialism. We should see it as such, evaluate it *and change it*. It's simply a fair, human, humane, civilised necessity not to have an individualised market in labour, not to allow employers the excess of power of *They've Got All The Rest*. That has us competing with each other, forcing the *worsening* of our conditions. And when we want to *improve* our pay and working conditions, it's madness to leave ourselves and each other in that weak position.

We all know this very well, of course, in our gut feelings. But it's funny how it never gets spelt out. The purpose here has been to spell it out, to spell out how their power works. I hope that's been done, and that you'll pass the analysis on to other workers. I hope I've given you powerful arguments, that you will use, that we should believe much more in our entitlement to organise and be far more ready to do it, as fellow-workers, independent from employers.

These arguments for our right to associate in unions and to act together have never yet been fully argued and won. ***Let's argue them***. Most importantly, let's argue them *to each other.* Use this book. That is what it is for.

Our Union Democracy Exceeds Parliament's – What Leaders Do

Later, this work will examine having a say on ***Issues***. It will compare how in national government we don't get a democratic say on things issue by issue, with how we ***do*** in our unions. Getting a real say, ***a vote***, on any issue, great or small. With *electoral democracy,* which is non-participatory, we don't get any such right. *We get just the one tiny little x, to choose one Party. Everything is then up to them* - ***and particularly their Party Leader, who gets to be Prime Minister.*** So how that person gets to that position, and how they behave when they are there, and how we can influence them, is a big issue. The biggest. Bigger than any of the actual issues around the War, NHS, the Economy, Work, etc.

There's a self-demeaning habit amongst MPs, as with a lot of us, of deferring to leaders. It's partly a cop-out. We're glad to let somebody else take the responsibility. And

it's partly the traditional deference to 'authority' in this once-dictatorial, still barely-democratic system. MP's treat Prime Ministers like elected Kings. They allow them to ignore their party's *Conference decisions* and to make up and implement Policy by themselves.

The likes of Blair argue that Prime Ministers and MPs can ignore the party because they've been elected by the whole Electorate and are therefore responsible to them, not to the Party. If they only implemented the Manifesto we elected them on and nothing else, that might make sense. But they often don't implement it, it's often vague, things come up that weren't covered in the manifesto - like making war on Iraq - and they simply decide for themselves what to do. When first writing this in 2005, most Government policy didn't involve the Party or the MP's we elected. It was being dreamed up by unelected air-head 'policy wonks' that Blair had around him. They ignored the party at Conference and made their own plans, to privatise our schools and hospitals. Then Blair pushed it through by bullying MP's or promising them positions in government.

It's an absurd argument to say they can ignore the party in favour of the Electorate. We, the electorate, elected them ***as*** a Party, because of their party programme. They should implement their manifesto; and when it comes to interpreting it, adding to it or deviating from it, they should follow their Party Conference, the party we voted for.

People like Blair and some media 'commentators' and columnists, even make a *virtue* out of the kind of leadership where the leader does as they please! They talk favourably - it's good leadership, apparently - of Prime Ministers 'taking tough decisions even though they are unpopular'. Like making War in Iraq, and Privatisation, two issues where Blair was so clearly out on his own but so determined to push his decision through, that it's a monstrous insult to all of us and makes absurd the notion that we live in a democracy.

There's a difference between leadership and dictatorship. Maybe, in exceptional circumstances, a leader has to argue and push for their own line on an issue. But they have to convince us, to take us with them, not simply defy our clearly-known wishes and even make a virtue out of it. If they fail to persuade us, it shouldn't happen. In general, *We* should decide, issue by issue; and the leader's job is to do as we say, just to carry out the policy we tell them to carry out.

That's what we expect in our unions. We don't just elect Executives and General Secretaries and Presidents and then leave them to do what they want. We have Annual Conferences where everyone, through getting support at their Branch and Region, can, and do, get proposals put to annual conference and be made policy. That means the leadership has to implement them whether they agree with them or not. When they don't agree, they do have an impressive ability to drag their feet and avoiding doing them, it's like getting a teenager to tidy their room, and that's a problem. But there's ways of tackling that, which I'll come to. Anyway, if you get something through annual conference, a strong Rank and File organisation (unofficial networks of ordinary activists) can get it done themselves regardless of the inactivity or obstruction of senior bureaucrats in the union.

Although, just as people and MP's defer to the Prime Minister instead of controlling him or her, we union members too tend to defer to the person in the senior position. In both cases, it's because we're glad that someone is prepared to

take responsibility. But we have to grow up and take part and be prepared to participate in big decisions, not leave them to Mummy or Daddy.

We get a lot of hypocritical pontificating from the political parties and the media and the business class about democracy in unions. But when it suits them they demand the opposite – that our union leaders should 'control their members.' That's when they want us to stop strike action. In a strike, when some members defy the democratic decision and go into work, you don't hear these people demanding that our General Secretaries get down there and instruct them to get out on strike. Prime Ministers and General Secretaries should be our *servants,* not our *masters.*

Our Union Democracy Exceeds Parliament's - In Choosing Leaders

So with us deferring to them and their position, allowing them such abuse of power, ***how our leader is selected***, either the Prime Minister of the country or the General Secretary of a union, is a big issue of democracy. Let's compare how the Prime Minister is *Selected* with how we *Elect* our union leaders.

Just as we saw when comparing how they and we decide on war or striking, they make it illegal for us to do things in certain ways, that we do or did for good reasons. *Yet they use worse ways themselves*. They force us to do things one way because they claim it's more democratic but they don't do it themselves!

Here's the different ways or processes, and strengths and weaknesses, of ***the various ways of choosing leaders***. In any organisation, it's open to debate about which democratic procedures to use. The main problem is that a less democratic body – *Parliament* – selectively enforces certain methods on the most democratic bodies – *Unions* – on behalf of the over-powerful, anti-democratic business class.

You might think it's a boring subject. Maybe it is. It's just that when we all fume at what 'They' are doing or not doing, it's worth us asking "*How* did they get the *authority* to do *that*?" Such as, for example, involving us in war and terrorism.

Choosing Leaders – What We Used to Do - What They Forced Us to Do

Since 1984 laws made by MP's in Parliament, with a Thatcherite Conservative majority, force we union members to choose our General Secretaries by ***postal ballot*** of all members. Note that says choose, not elect. Because there are other ways than direct election.

What's wrong with postal balloting, with ***direct election***, then? Many unions used to choose their General Secretary that way anyway. But before being forced to use ballot of all members, many unions used an ***indirect*** way. *And that is how Parliament itself operates*.

There's some variation but most unions are organised something like this - local *Branches* send elected *Delegates* to meetings for each *Region or Trade Group.* In many unions, those delegates then elect further delegates to go and represent the region or trade group on a *National Executive*. In many unions, though not all, that *indirectly elected* National Executive used to a***ppoint*** the national, or General, Secretary. That most senior person was a paid Official, an employee. Possibly equivalent to the Prime Minister. But maybe more like the senior Civil Servant.

She or he was the most senior of the union's paid Officials. The ignorant business class-dominated media, unable or unwilling to comprehend our mass democratic organisation as workers, usually talk of these officials as 'the Union'. That's annoying to the activist ordinary members. ***The members are the union***. The appointed or elected General Secretary was the boss of all the other officials but was supervised, as an employee, by the

indirectly-elected executive of ordinary members.

Members in the unions that used this method had developed it in their own way over a century or two, as free, self-organising groups. It has advantages. The people best qualified to apply for the paid job of General Secretary were the leading elected activists, in the regions, or on the National Executive. These delegates on the executive, when appointing the day-to-day leader - the General Secretary – knew the candidates well, and their track records, having worked with them as fellow-activists on that executive committee, and others, over the years. They were in a good position to decide who was most suitable for the job.

Going back down the union, the Executive members had themselves got onto *that* body by being elected as delegates from their Region or Trade group where their *own* record over the years, the positions they took on issues, their voting history, was known to the people there. Those people in turn had got onto the region or trade group by being elected as delegates to it by the ordinary Members in the Branches. They in turn knew *them*, and could judge them on *their* record. So although the method was *indirect* - meaning ordinary members didn't get a direct vote for the General Secretary - it had advantages and was thoroughly democratic.

But Thatcher and her business-class party and the business class-owned media argued that delegates from regions choosing the executive and them choosing the National Secretary meant that ordinary members of unions (for whom the Tories felt the deepest sympathy, of course) were misled by unrepresentative conspiratorial Leftie militant activists. So they made it illegal, forcing all unions to use instead a direct National Postal Ballot of all members for the General Secretary (and for the Executive Committee.)

Now it is true that lefties, like me, were involved at all levels. But so were decent activists of no particular political persuasion, and right-wingers (meaning moderate, right-wing Labour activists, not fascists. Though there were and are Tory union activists, some of them Ok. How they square it up inside their heads I don't know.) All of them only got there by being accepted by members at their Branches, and were accountable by the obligation to report-back to branches. Far from being an unrepresentative cabal, most of the activist delegates worked hard to encourage members to be more involved in the union.

The Tory government claimed that members were manipulated by the activists, and followed them like sheep. Well to some degree that happens. Rather than think too deeply for themselves, many members respect what the more involved members - the activists, the delegates, and the leadership - recommend and go along with it, through trust and loyalty and deference to their judgement and to 'the Union'. I'd rather they didn't, rather they made up their own minds.

But where members in unions defer to the judgement of their delegates and to who their delegates would choose as General Secretary, *they are only doing what they're used to* ***having*** *to do with MP's*. Because ordinary citizens having no power over MPs and Ministers and who gets to be PM is *exactly* how Parliament works, with deference to the decisions of Parliament and Prime Ministers and no say of your own. And deference in the case of trusting delegates from your branch, people you know and work with, is far more informed, intelligent and accountable than it is with us leaving it to MP's.

Choosing the National Secretary by postal ballot to all members is Ok in some

ways. It's weakness is that many ordinary members don't bother going to branch meetings and so don't hear reports from the delegates who go to Region. They don't learn from their own delegates about what's going on, and who is who in the union. The Conservatives were consciously separating members from activists, so their vote could be influenced instead only by their *own* activists - the editors and political columnists of the business class-owned Press – Murdoch's Sun, People and News of the World; the Mail, the Express, the Mirror.

With the postal ballot you just get a single written *Election Statement from the Candidates* sent to you at home, making all sorts of promises. You've little idea who the candidates are, how they've been voting over many issues in whatever roles they've had, as Regional Delegates or Executive members.

If they get in to office for four or five years, you'll have little idea what they do as National Executive members or General Secretary, unless you go to local meetings and get some feed-back from the activists. Although some unions have rules that officials, including the General Secretary, have to write regular reports on the main activities they've been up to, such as negotiating with employers, meetings they've been to, conferences they've attended, and present them to the executive for questions and publish them in the union magazine.

As it happened, even using the postal ballot of all members that Thatcher's crew forced on us, designed to by-pass the evil militant leftie activists and 'give the union back to ordinary members', there's been a very noticeable swing to the left in elections for General Secretaries in the 1990's and onwards, as members facing attacks from employers wanted a stronger union leadership.

And What Do They Do Themselves, In Parliament ...

But if our old ***indirect*** way of choosing our union leaders through delegates was so faulty that parliament felt fit to make it illegal - WHY DO THEY DO THAT THEMSELVES?

We elect an MP once every four or five years. They, together with their party, choose one of themselves to be ***the Prime Minister.*** In between elections, the MP's – equivalent to our indirect delegates, except they won't accept instruction from us as delegates should - can change who is PM without consulting you. You, as a Voter, think you've voted for one Prime Minister at the General Election. Then they change them without our involvement at all. Party members also get a say these days but still the MP's are central. But why don't ***we*** all get a direct vote for this, the senior post in Government? They do in France, the USA, and other countries. Since Blair claimed that the PM is responsible to the whole electorate, shouldn't he have called a General Election when he resigned instead of letting the Labour Party replace him with Brown?

Then there's the senior committees. Ours, called ***National Executives.*** And Parliament's, called ***the Cabinet***.

Parliament forces us in unions to use a direct postal ballot of all members to elect our *National Executive.* But their own *indirectly elected* Prime Minister simply *chooses* the Parliamentary Executive – *the Cabinet*.

It's not that long ago, only a few decades, when the Conservatives used to change their leader, and thereby when they were in government, the PRIME MINISTER, without even their MP's having a vote! A few unnamed 'men in grey suits', meaning the richest and most powerful of them, unelected even by the Conservatives, gathered in 'gentlemen's clubs' in London and in their big country houses, and chose who it was to be! Yet they passed judgement and passed laws on the much more democratic way we Trade Unionists chose our leaders! And they got away with it.

Now the Conservatives did eventually get round to *electing* in an open process, their leader, who could be Prime Minister. And they initially gave a direct Vote to all ordinary members of the party. Like they make us do.

But now look what they've done. In December 2005, before choosing Cameron, the fourth Conservative leader in eight years, their MP's complained that the ordinary Tory party members, with their direct vote, had been lumbering the MP's with a succession of unelectable wallies. This was true, of course - they'd given them William Hague, Ian-Duncan-Smith, and the repulsive Michael Howard. So the Tory MP's argued that they knew the candidates better than the ordinary members did, and had to work with whoever was elected, so they should decide.

*Which is exactly the traditional Trade Union argument for electing National Executives through Regional Delegates, and **them** appointing General Secretaries*.

Tory members didn't know that Hague, Duncan-Smith and Howard were wallies? Hard to believe, but that was the argument. So the Conservatives changed their election procedure. Now the MP's vote in a first round to get the 'best' two candidates for leader / PM; and then the ordinary members vote in one of those two. They'll still get wallies – they're only choosing from Tories, after all.

There was no comment at all in the media (***their*** media) that the Tories had insisted on the direct, all-member vote for working class people organised in our unions, as if it is the *only* democratic way to do it; and were now abandoning it for the same sort of indirect method some unions had used, for the same sort of reasons as them.

That nobody in UK politics ever raises for discussion or even notices these rank double standards, by which Parliament makes laws against union freedom requiring that union National Secretaries and Executives be chosen by a vote of all members, when the members of those unions might, and once did, prefer to do it by the method Parliament *itself* uses; when they don't themselves use the supposedly more democratic method, and fix up who is Prime Minister in a far less democratic fashion even than any of the other methods we used, shows up how shallow British democracy really is.

There's a huge amount of democratic illiteracy and hypocrisy about it all. And the things they require of us in our Unions is class law, put there on behalf of the business class, to limit workers freedom to organise themselves and enable business people to bully us. (Have I said that before?)

Our Union Democracy Exceeds Parliament's – Controlling Leaders

As said, Prime Ministers like Blair, and sometimes our union General Secretaries, behave like dictators when, if truly democratic, they should be our *Servants*. What can you do then?

How about this for ultimate democratic control of the leadership? My own current union contains the old Engineering union, the AEU. Before right-wingers got control of it a few decades back (with a great deal of propagandist interference from the business class Press) and re-wrote the rule book to give the officials a far more central controlling role, it had the most amazing democratic Rule Book.

Take that important situation where you don't agree with what the leader does between Conferences and Elections. How can you challenge any defiance by them of Conference policy or Manifesto commitments, any betrayals, sell-outs, shenanigans, or dictatorship such as Blair practised?

In all unions, you can, from your little branch, ask members to support a resolution challenging the General Secretary, the national leader; get it taken to a Region or District meeting of delegates from other Branches; and your delegates argue that those other delegates at Region should back it and take it forward to the National Executive.

So far, so good, and something you can't instruct your MP to do with rogue Prime Ministers. But perhaps your delegates who raise it at Region, or the ones who take it on from region to the Executive, wouldn't be able to persuade the other delegates, because those others have to be responsible to their own branches and Regions, who might not know of the behaviour you are complaining about, or might not have heard the arguments?

Well that wonderful old AEU rule book gave you *the right to go to any Branch of the union and speak there.* (But you could only *vote* at your own branch.) So members who wanted to rally support for challenging a rogue General Secretary could do a tour of branches, asking for support in calling them to order. *When you got a certain number of branches supporting, you could demand* ***a special National Conference or even – an Extra-ordinary re-Election for General Secretary***.

That's democracy! Imagine if we'd had that power over Blair when he started the criminal war in Iraq in our name, and got us on the target list of terrorists. We really could have stopped him and maybe stopped all that slaughter in Iraq. We could at least have left Bush and his crew isolated.

It's another case where our union democracy is better than Parliament's.

Meeting Each Other

Meetings. Boring eh? Too many of us don't do anything as organised workers, are not union members at all or are inactive members, and hate going to *meetings*, and there's more about that problem later.

So I'd better say this, because I fear you'll nod off, if you haven't already, when reading about meetings ……. just remember, the rich and powerful and wealthy, the business class and the Politicians don't mind meetings at all. They do hardly anything else *but* meetings. Because that's where decisions are made, that's where power is exercised. They *Take Care of Business and they don't think it's uncool and boring to take part in politics.* Far from it. And that's one of the main reasons they are rich and powerful and we aren't.

That's not to argue there's something badly wrong with you if you don't like meetings. It's just saying, face up to it, that's the heart of decision making and the heart of democracy, the heart of how you get your say. If you or anyone else can't be arsed, the next time you moan about things not being the way you'd like them to be, ask yourself - how much trouble have you taken to have your say? If the answer is 'Not a lot', then you might as well accept the business class, who *have* taken the trouble, running the country, and stop moaning.

But you really shouldn't do that. Carry on moaning - it's the first stage of rebellion. *But think about moving on from that and also do something active to challenge them*.

Maybe I'm a headcase, but I've found many meetings riveting. Like those Negotiating meetings with management when we had a chance of winning, and did. And worker's meetings can be really inspiring, *if only for the pleasure of seeing us behaving, for a change, like mature adults instead of helpless kiddies.* Like when I had to walk up to the front through a room full of 500 Liverpool Dockers, in the middle of their long strike to defend their conditions in the mid-90's. The hall was packed, every seat was full, with people also sat on the window ledges. They were listening to delegates sent in support by Australian and San

Francisco Dockers. Call me a romantic, because I am, but I get goose pimples when I see our lot meeting like that and taking on the rich and powerful.

(What was I doing in there? I had to walk through this serious worker's meeting to quietly ask the platform 'Can you ask whose is the car blocking ours in, outside?' And got the answer 'Hell, mate, I can't interrupt the meeting for that'. I said, 'Well, unless we get it out, our kids will come out of primary school 40 miles away soon and find nobody there to collect them, or let them in to the house'. The guy next to him whispered 'That's Frank's car, there he is over there'. Frank came out and moved his car.)

They lost, I'm afraid. But, sometimes you have to fight. What started the strike was them defending the right to be able to finish work at the expected finishing time and not be instructed to work late, regardless of what they had going on in their life outside work. That issue again!

Here's another insight into that strike, from the other side. Someone I know runs a black cab on Merseyside. Around that time he told me, not in connection with a discussion of the strike, how he'd been contracted to take the wife of one of the dock owners down to Wolverhampton to go shopping and wait half the day with the cab's clock running before bringing her back.

But they take the trouble to be that wealthy. When I go on about discussion, debate and meetings here and below, it's about getting our say. That matters, doesn't it? And with the possibilities of the internet, we could do a lot of communicating and decision-making without having to see each other.

Our Union Democracy Exceeds Parliament's - All The Issues - What Do You Think About Them ?

MP's *select our leader* without us having any say. They also *make new law* that we are supposed to abide by, and will get punished for not abiding by, on all the many different ***Issues*.**

All of it is made indirectly by the MP's, not by us, and without us having any right to a vote on any of the issues. The nearest we get to it is the very rare referendum on Europe. After making our humble little x on the voting paper, *we* get no further say. You can write to your MP about issues. But *other constituents* could be writing to her/him with opposing views, and s/he has to take notice of neither. On the other hand, in our unions, it's comprehensively built into the rules that you, me, and any ordinary member, can have their say on *any and all* of the issues. It's mass democracy.

If we all had more say issue by issue the fact that Parliament is a dictatorship of a minority of the electorate would be less of a problem. We'd delegate or at least strongly influence our MP's *issue by issue*, and the one-party domination of all decision making would be weakened. In our unions, we've not divided up into parties because we can all vote on all the issues. People's views vary issue by issue and it's neither likely nor necessary to form permanent alliances, the parties, one of which takes all the decisions, and have to whip each other to maintain discipline. That's just perverted, isn't it?

Bottom-up, issue-by-issue democracy (if you'll excuse the expression) in our unions is so thorough, compared to Parliament. You've got the right to a say on everything. Including the Rules and the Constitution.

We build policy and action from the bottom up. It's not visible until you get

involved. Our mass democracy isn't trumpeted on the front pages of the business class's 'news' papers. But all across the UK there's many hundreds of thousands of *activists* meeting together every day or evening or weekend, to organise putting up a fight against what employers throw at us. With about ten million union members, with all the Workplace Reps and other elected Officers and Committees and Branch and Regional meetings, *Unions are easily the biggest and most democratic organisations in the country.* And in the world.

Inside the workplace, the last time I saw some figures there were ***400,000 Workplace Representatives***, all ordinary workers elected by their organised workmates in the workplaces. Members are usually grouped together by Department or Job or Grade, and each group has a ***Rep*** (once, and in many workplaces still, called Shop Stewards, from the factory workshops where they were first used.) They are elected by members in each Department or Job group to represent them in talks with management.

Look at the democracy. A member can get hold of the Rep every day. Or the rep can go and see members. And can hold meetings of members. Members can easily replace the rep if they don't do the job right. Often no-one else wants the responsibility anyway; but they can be replaced by someone keener. Members from across the whole workplace can go to regular Branch meetings, typically monthly. All members can speak there and can put up proposals for action, or alterations to what somebody else is proposing. Members can call special branch meetings where they think the branch Officers should do or not do something. The branch can decide on things to be done locally, across the workplace, like tackling management over work problems and conditions.

Above and beyond your own workplace, typically every three months, branch delegates go to Regional meetings. That's a chance for you to influence ongoing *national action*, by deciding on proposals yours and other branches make to influence the National Executive and General Secretary.

Branches also send proposals to the annual *National Conference*. That's where solid, binding national Policy is decided. In my old college union our Conference Delegates where elected from Region. Before annual conferences, branches submitting proposals to national conference (for the whole Union to adopt), have to submit them by a specified date so they can be sent to all other branches, so they can discuss them and decide to support them, amend them, or oppose them, and instruct their conference delegates on them.

And What Do Delegates Do?

As said, democratic practice in unions can be very thorough. Here's an example. Sorry if you find this is going into too much detail, but it's about having your views taken notice of.

Union's Officers and Reps generally behave as *Delegates*. That means you can instruct and mandate the person, not just leave everything up to them to decide for you.

And if you've booked a room for a branch meeting, sent notices out, members came along for the meeting, a group view decided; and then you've travelled on a Saturday morning to Bolton to represent these members at a Regional meeting in debate with other branches; and to decide regional positions on all the issues, to be taken forward to National Conference, and you come across this behaviour.....

Yours truly was at our region's pre-conference meeting there once. We elected the region's Delegates to national conference. Later, we passed a resolution for our region to put forward at conference for there to be a ballot for national strike action in defence of our

working conditions, that the colleges were attacking. But a succession of the delegates to conference, the right-wing 'moderates', then stood up each saying 'Reserve position'. They meant they were refusing to commit themselves to voting at conference for the regional position. But they'd just lost the vote! I was outraged – what had been the point of my members having turned up at our branch, and then me giving up my Saturday morning, travelling to Bolton, taking their views to the regional meeting, if it could be ignored by our delegates?

Well, if you're interested in your rights and democratic processes, there is another, interesting way of looking at this. It goes - What is the point of having debates at all at the conference, if everybody comes delegated, stuck fast to their regional position? Delegates have to listen to the debate, hear arguments on the issue from delegates from *other* regions. It could be that *our* regional position is flawed.

Hmmm… this raises a very important feature of democracy - ***Discussion, Debate***. We love discussion, and rightly so. You must discuss political issues with people; maybe listen to a political discussion like on BBC's Question Time. Just look how we debate stuff on the internet and take part in phone-ins. We're debate junkies. Or even outside politics, you might read the footie sections of 'the papers', and football fanzines, and argue the important issues of the abilities (or lack of them) of various players and managers. And in politics or footie, you'll have found people making points and thought 'Aah, that's right. I'd not thought of that'.

Voting is not simply an individual act. It is a ***collective*** act. *It's 'Us' deciding something together, something we will all abide by*. Things affect people differently, and there are any number of angles to think about, any number of alternative views. The way I vote could affect you. You should be able to tell me how, and why maybe I shouldn't support whatever it is we're voting on. *Democracy is not solely about individuals voting, separately. It has to include people* ***discussing the issues*** *before voting.* In meetings we debate, we inform and educate each other. Then we make decisions that affect each other, aware of how they do.

So what to do with my out-of-control regional delegates to conference who were 'Reserving their position?' Allow for the argument that there'd be no point having the national conference if every delegate just stuck to their region's position? I did some work drafting Rule changes that would have - compelled them to normally support our Region's voted-on position; if the debate at Conference made any of them want to vote differently, they'd have to meet with the rest of the region's delegation, outside the conference, and argue for, try to justify, why they planned to break with the regional position; and listen to counter-arguments. They might convince *more* of the delegates to vote differently to the regional position. They could then go ahead and vote against the position. But if they did, they'd have to write a report justifying it and speak in support of it at the next regional meeting.

That way, they wouldn't get away with quietly, privately, sneakily flouting the position me and my members and other people at the regional meeting had spent time and effort and democratic rights putting together. They'd at least have to explain themselves afterwards. And maybe we would approve and endorse what they did.

Compare all that Delegate democracy in unions ***with the little we get from MP's***

MP's behaviour is far worse than my union delegates 'reserving their position'.

We've no control over MP's at all after electing them except to vote them out next time. Unlike with our union branches, *we Citizen Voters have no right to meet together as the MP's Constituents, in between elections, to debate and decide a Constituency position on any issue. Far less do we get the right to instruct the MP to take it to Parliament for us*.

No mandating, and also no reporting back duty, for *them*, on how they vote in Parliament. We could have such rights. We could easily devise procedures where a reasonable number of citizens could demand meetings and votes on particular issues and then *mandate* (instruct) our MP, as a delegate.

And another thing – Why Vote in Constituencies Defined By Place? Why not in real Interest Groups ?

What group of people is an MP supposed to *Represent,* as vaguely as they do? This work has argued strongly against the importance people give to place identity – saying *It Ain't Where You're **From** That Matters – It's Where You're **At***. In the constituencies that we vote in, there's hardly any real, functional, politically significant links between each of us, and plenty of differences. So in the limited democracy we have ***Why elect our MP's from Geographical Constituencies*****?**

What is there about lumping together 60,000 or so people in mine or your locality that makes us a community that can be properly represented? Where are the functional relationships with each other, just from living in the same area? My constituency and yours include lots of very different people, Working class and Business class people with quite different interests. Constituencies based on locality group us together regardless of our roles in the *Economy*, in our *Trade,* or of any other roles we have in society. They rule out any real, functional organisation for political power. There's such a variety of interests, and bugger all commonality, bugger all real collectivism, in a geographical constituency.

It matters because democracy is more than just *a Private Vote*, once every four years. It can't just be a collection of infinitely varied individual views. We'd all be pointing in any number of different directions and there'd be no commonality with which to form political policies and Governments. Democracy is actually about people with *common interests* getting together in groups and putting forward their views, exercising some power over things that affect them. But in geography-based constituencies, we don't relate to each other very much, there not common interest groups. Constituencies should mean something more than geographical proximity.

Maybe geographical constituencies made sense a few hundred years back when we lived in the countryside, in villages. When roads were poor, no rail, radio, telephone, internet. When society was more locally stable and coherent. Gathering the views of people locally and taking them to London probably fitted the poor communications. But then, it was only Landowners had the Vote. And they *did* bond together locally, and nationally, as a common interest group, *a class* - the Gentry. They even shared very tightly specified dress codes, manners, married only within their class, all that sort of thing. So voting was by class back then, because only the Propertied class had the vote.

And when we won the vote from them in the 19th and 20th centuries, and after their economic system cleared us off the land and into towns and cities, with Industrialisation, we workers lived close together, near where we worked. Many of our neighbours worked in the same workplace or trade and went in the same pubs and clubs. So then, to a limited degree, geographical constituencies *did*, in an unplanned way, mostly reflect the real, functional relationship of being fellow-workers. People recognised these functional relationships and organised, building the Labour Party and getting Labour MP's elected. But

even so, just living in the same area wasn't a real, meaningful political relationship and it was *actually, really,* our *Union* organisation, based on the fellow-worker relationship ***at work,*** that we used to build a worker's political party. (As the Labour Party was.) We did, though, have to put up our Candidates, and vote, geographically, in the constituencies.

These days the rough correspondence of constituency with class is gone. Our community links are much weaker than they were. We work in far more diverse jobs, not most of us the smoky factory or rail yard or pit in our neighbourhood, and we travel long distances to work. We don't mix with neighbours as much as we did. There's some collective functions that are based locally, with parent's supporting schools, sports clubs and so on. But we mostly, we're all either watching TV or travelling far to work and then travelling outside our neighbourhood to meet friends made at work.

So place-defined constituencies aren't sensible groupings to base our vote on. If they were, you'd expect to see more small, locally-based parties, representing real communities. There are some of those. But not many.

But this argument is endorsed by the fact that, although voting *is* by place *we do vote as non-geographical Common Interest groups; by* ***Class***. Even though, because of a weakening of class consciousness and class politics amongst workers, and because New Labour, because of *that*, decided to become another business party, voting patterns are blurring. But before this blurring, and still underlying it, *Labour* is still, if you exclude the Blair/Brown careerists, a party supposed to represent the working class. *The Conservatives* are trying to look nice, but are clearly, irredeemably, still the party of the Business class and the rich. *The Lib Dems* are Small business, Professionals and middle management, muddying the waters by flapping about trying to decide which direction to go in to get votes from each of the two main classes.

For all of the 20th century and still, how we vote in the constituencies *does* generally reflects the different interests we have in our roles in the Economy and Politics. People don't, on the whole, vote for the *Candidate*; they vote for the *Party*. Most people have, actually, voted according to real, class-based Interest groups, the big votes being for class-based Labour and class-based Conservatives. But it all gets blurred and confused by *place*-based constituency voting, which doesn't correspond to class interests.

So why not organise our voting not by place, but to correspond with our *common interest groups*? Obviously we can be in many of these. But - What's the most important thing you do in life? The answer has to be - *Making Your Living, Getting the means to Survive*. Without that, nothing else is possible. Who shares with you that most important role, who have you the strongest common interest with? – your workmates. Your ***Class***.

It works out in the real world. Who do you talk to most about politics - about 'what's in the news' - people in your constituency, *as* fellow-constituents; or people at work and in your industry? Which is more useful, for grouping yourself with other people for political decision-making - being lumped together with people simply on the basis of geographical proximity, who you have little or no functional relationship with; or organising with other people by your economic role, by how you *Make Your Living*? The answer is obvious.

If we organised for the vote by our job and our trade, we'd be pretty much organising on class lines. The constituency group you'd be in for voting for *Delegates* to go to government – MP's – would be your workmates, local or distant, according to your trade. Not the 60,000 people you mainly don't know and have different interests to, who just happen to live locally, in your geographical constituency.

It would work like this - say you work in Education. Teachers would vote as a group, Admin workers in education maybe a separate group. Or if you work in Retail, you could be in Tesco Stores group or a Tesco Warehouse group. Or if you work in smaller shops, in a Hairdressers group. If in Transport, you'd be in a Bus Drivers group or a Bus Mechanics group; or an Airline Cabin Staff group or a Baggage Handler's group or a Pilots group or a Ground Crew group. And so on. How would we be grouped in your trade or industry? We're far from being in the same interest group as our bosses, so we would put the business owners and the company directors in their own job and trade-defined constituencies. Then we'd see how few they are and how easily we outnumber them. We'd see our class politics far more clearly and argue and organise for them more clearly.

People find this a bit radical as an idea. But you know *this is actually how it really works anyway*! Political decisions are far more commonly made according to how they affect *functional interest groups* than to suit the people loosely lumped together, with no real, functional links, in constituencies.

Before Government makes new laws - Acts and regulations - they consult the *Organisations* they affect - business and other organisations - Councils, charities maybe. Although they take more notice of the Business class's views, the relevant unions also get copies of proposed laws - called 'Green Papers' because they're printed on green paper - and are invited to comment.

This writer recalls from when he was more active, we were among those consulted about such things as Statutory Sick Pay; the disastrous 1986 reform of Pensions by the Tory Norman Fowler, that caused many people to leave employer pensions for dodgy ones based on the Stock Exchange; things like the privatisation of Cleaning Services in the hospitals and the councils, and of parks maintenance, of canteens; of Competitive Tendering in Council Building Services Departments (Direct Works); in re-organisations of the NHS. And, of course, on each of the successive laws against union freedom made in the 1980's.

We were able to look at these proposals the Government sends out as the first stage of making law. *At the back of these documents, there'd be a list of Interested groups, fifty or a hundred* ***Organisations*** *listed at the back of the Green Paper, that the Government sent the proposals to, inviting them to comment or lobby on the proposals and how they affected them*. The list would include organisations like the associations of Catering firms, associations of Cleaning firms representing the likes of the multi-national Compass Group, local Councils, Doctor's associations, the Association of Pension Fund providers (or somesuch), and so on. If it affected them, the Road Haulage Federation, the Chemical Industries Association, the Food Manufacturers, the Construction Industry organisation representing firms like Bose, Wimpey, Balfour Beattie, Laing's, Costain. Pensions legislation affects the Pension Industry, and works Pension Schemes. Training for job skills affects all industries and services.

Most serious issues that central Government deals with are like this - ***functional****. To do with particular Industries, Trades and Organisations, functioning across the whole country*. They are not normally dealt with as local, constituency issues, and affect we, the

voters, in very different ways, even while we are mixed up non-functionally in geographical constituencies.

D'you find it hard to believe that the responses to government proposals that business makes, seeing how they are *the Economy*, are far more influential than the responses we atomised citizens might make through our MP's? And in the US, lobbying by corporate interest groups (Business) is well known to be central to the President's and Congress's decisions.

On our side, we workers do the same - *we organise politically not by where we live but by our Trade, in our Union*. As said, that's how we founded and still try to influence the Labour Party. Union's sponsor MP's, an effort to influence politics ***by class, not place***. And although not all unions affiliate to the Labour party, all do campaign, independently of Labour, on political issues affecting their membership.

For non-Trade, really local, place-based issues, there's the Council.

Arguing for our constituencies, and our political selves, to be mainly organised by our ***Trade***, by ***How We Make Our Living***, is just matching up to the real world. *Geographical constituencies de-class us.* Let's see it done by trade and we'd see the big issues more clearly and be better able to organise in our interests. It just comes out of the reality that your most important way of relating to other people politically is more job-based than place-based.

A barely-developed Democracy

Until we fight for and get some changes like those I've argued for, we should treat with contempt the claim that we 'have democracy'. We have something that's a start, that's all. We should value it highly over what it replaces - the feudal oligarchy of the monarchy and their class, the aristocracy, the lords, ladies, barons, earls and whatevers; and the democracy for the rich, of votes-for-property-owners-only, that we had until only a short time ago. But *we only have a barely-developed democracy*. The stupid thing is, everybody *feels* that; but not many are saying much about it.

In all this, I've not even mentioned the house of lords, have I? There's no real need to debate them and their role - they're so obviously, outrageously, un-democratic. They insult us, that's all.

Our Union Democracy Exceeds Parliament's -
Talking To Each Other - Acting Together - Secret Ballots or Meetings?

It's been said here that there's more to democracy than each of us voting just on our own. *Meetings* are the usual way of talking and acting together –though, again, the internet is helping us develop new ways.

In our unions we often used to call strikes by having ***Mass Meetings*** at, or just outside, the workplace. The Tories/ Business class and their Press attacked mass meetings with a hostile imagery of 'wild-cat' strikes, and then, through Thatcher's government, gave themselves legal powers to stop us making our decision this way.

But we'd developed the use of mass meetings <u>*because*</u> *we have more democracy between ourselves as Trade Union members than we get as Voters, as Constituents, with our MP's*.

The reason for mass meetings was that *workplace shop-floor organisation* had developed outside each union's official processes. It's because initially, for many years – maybe 1840 to 1940 - it wasn't safe to organise inside the workplaces (and, as you know, you have to be careful even now), so a lot of wage bargaining was done

by the national unions negotiating with Employer's Federations to lay down basic ***union conditions across the whole trade***. There wasn't much local bargaining inside each workplace.

Direct negotiations inside each company between shop-floor-elected reps and local managers grew from things like the Production Committees that were set up with Government prompting to get our help in the war effort during the 2nd World War. In many unions, strike action in just one company wasn't covered by union rules and this Shop-floor Organisation often involved reps or Shop Stewards from several unions acting together. So the Shop Stewards Committees, as they evolved, developed a rough and ready, but very democratic, practice of calling mass meetings to report on negotiations they were having with management on whatever the issue was, and taking a vote on a show of hands.

The Tories had no democratic credentials for criticising that. They could start even a nuclear war that would melt us all down without *any* kind of vote.

But with outrageous cheek they and their press did attack our mass meetings by building a myth of workers being intimidated at them into voting for strikes. It's unlikely any such intimidation happened anywhere – no evidence was presented. But look at *reality – workers are far more threatened and intimidated by the boss than they are by their fellow-workers*. Far from generating intimidation, mass meetings give us a sense of how strong we are, and quite right too. It *overcomes* intimidation, and gives us confidence in our strength, when all gathered together outside an empty workplace we can see how management, looking forlornly out of their office windows, are few and helpless if we all stick together. *That's* what the business class and their political representatives don't like about mass meetings.

So, as the Tory party, business people gave themselves powers to get court injunctions that are intended to stop us striking, and giving employers a right to sue unions for damages, unless we balloted, secretly, by post, individually, at our home address, with all sorts of requirements for minute accuracy, that often make it impossible. (But if we've got the nerve, we often do it anyway and sod them, faced with enough of us out and determined, they back off from using their law against us.)

There's no real *need* for secret balloting, in our unions anyway. Secret balloting was introduced for electing MP's in 1832 because the candidates were usually landlords and business owners, or were their men (and they *were* men), and those few workers and tenants who had a vote faced being sacked or evicted if they didn't vote for the Boss's or landlord's candidate.

But between people such as us, fellow-workers, equals, who have no such power over each other, we should, in our unions, be making what is *a joint decision*, a joint commitment to each other, *openly.* There's no evidence that we need feel intimidated by each other.

In the Parliamentary elections, it's talked of as *your* vote, *you* voting for what *you* want. And yes, of course, it is that. But as said, we affect each other in how we vote. We should discuss how each of us intends to vote, to be able to inform and educate each other about the issue, and the consequences for others of how you vote. It's a joint decision, we should be able to call each other to account, in a civil manner. That's what we do in meetings - debate and make a joint decision, voting openly. You don't get married by making an x on a piece of paper in separate cubicles, do you?

The important thing about meeting is that people can hear the arguments, indeed *can make the arguments themselves*, for or against the action or for some other kind of

action. I've never heard of any intimidation. Although back in the day, many unions had a rule, when meetings are held in pubs, of 'No ale in the room.' To keep the debate civilised. Only in the heat of the miner's strike was there any violence between union members. But it was nothing like the scale of the intimidation and violence the miner's received from the police.

Meetings, for debate, are so important that secret ballots would be Ok if we only got our voting paper by attending a meeting to discuss ***the issue or action****. (With procedures in place for those who can't make it to the meeting.)*

Promoting Unionisation

From 'The Right To Unionise - the Three-page Read'

Organising as workers means more than bargaining on conditions at work. *It means becoming fully mature citizens, becoming 'players' in the economy and politics, along with business people and the state. To understand how society works, you need to see that there are many forms of social organisation. We are encouraged to see the electoral vote as the summit of organisation. But, while being able to vote is better than not being, it's no way to get governments that will run society for the majority. It's no way to challenge the main organisations, those of the people who run the economy.*

That is business people, organised in running their businesses, corporations and banks. They are effective players every day. Based on their everyday organisation and confidence in their views, they dominate politics. To stand up for themselves against business people's power, the majority, workers, need a better form of organisation than just as atomised voters in the occasional elections. It's a flimsy form of organising for collective strength. Organisation at work is the obvious basis, extending to greater political influence, as business people do.

Early in this work it said 'There's little point complaining or campaigning about each separate political issue because the political system grants us little power to affect them. And there's little point grumbling about each problem at work. The real problem there is our relationship with business and public sector employers and managers. Argue and campaign instead to change political and work relationships so that our views on political issues carry weight and we have the power to bargain effectively at work. That's what's needed to make lasting progress on any of the issues.' So, here's how we could do that.

There are millions of people, union reps and activists, with a strong commitment to improving society. They expend a lot of energy on campaigns and demonstrations on each of the current political issues. They include millions of retired members and activists.

These campaigns usually aim to influence government. That's a waste of time when many other people have passed up the chance, by simply voting, to prevent us getting governments like we do get. The activists should re- direct their campaigning to organise the huge numbers of unorganised fellow-workers, who need the benefits of being organised; and through being organised influence each other to help change the power relationships that cause them to suffer on each of the normal issues, like the NHS, education, social insurance and so on.

Historical note – it's been done before. This writer observed, while growing up, those workers in Britain who had suffered the First world war, the depression years

of the Thirties, and the Second world war, and, while collectively subjected to mass slaughter and unemployment, found out how essential it is to organise.

Develop large-scale organising activity and networks. They would be led by the unions. In the UK they have a central body, the TUC (Trade Union Congress). The TUC has an Education Department that provides training for union reps and activists. There are also local mini-TUC's, the Trades Councils. In the US, the central body is the AFL-CIO. There are equivalent bodies in most countries.

The TUC has an organising academy and organising officers. So do the unions. Their function needs expanding dramatically. They could train and co-ordinate those activists mentioned above. Retired activists and members in retired members branches would be a great resource and would have something hugely useful to do with their experience. The union organising bodies could link with Citizens Advice Bureau's, so they could provide information to those many millions who aren't organised, on how to go about it.

Through these networks, the huge numbers of unorganised and very badly treated workers would be provided with the powerful arguments for the right to organise and act – maybe strike - summed up in the Twenty Minute Read of this book, and laid out thoroughly in the book itself and in *The Right To Unionise*. ***The key argument is that the 'A Lot Of' mechanism makes workers organisation completely right, normal, unexceptional and respectable. It's just the arithmetic!***

It would include advice on how to take care when organising, like maybe recruiting quietly and, when there are enough members, getting the outside union official – who managers can't threaten - to approach management for you, for recognition of you as an organised body. It would include information on which unions would be appropriate to join, for the jobs and trade you are in. It would include information on what you get with unionising, such as agreements made with employers for better pay and conditions. It would include information on how you organise inside the workplaces – union reps for each department or job group who organise and defend members, negotiate with departmental managers, meet in worksite committees, and how they can get trained with the union or the TUC.

Guides to the right to unionise would be produced. They could be handed out outside workplaces, football matches, and music gigs. School students are introduced to the world of work by having people in from business bodies and unions. Local union reps, trained by the TUC, provide sessions on the rights they should have in work, including the right to organise and be represented.

This and the other activities are a far better use of time and effort for those who currently do things like going on demonstrations, which, when you look at the permanent, everyday power structures that business people use to control society, is a futile form of action.

The campaigners for organisation would use social media to make and discuss the case for organising. Facebook pages, e-mailing of links and guides to the right to organise, along the lines of this writer's works, including the *Three-page Right To Unionise* – page 52 - and the extract *'The Right To Unionise' at* www.therighttounionise.org

Lastly, the Organisation Campaign would spread the following view - that organised workers are fully entitled to act together as political organisations. It is through their own organisation that business people dominate not only working relationships but also politics, political relationships. That's mainly because, by being business organisations, they are the economy. Their power through dominating it far outweighs voting. The business and work

relationships that enable this comes before the vote. Historically, they literally came before they conceded the vote. (In the UK and most countries). So the counter-move to it is to also organise politically, to be able to use the vote effectively.

They present voting as the key political activity because in it, ordinary people can only mildly challenge them. It's useful to them for electing people to organise their internal affairs but as a collective act for everybody else to control them – which is the major issue – it is woefully weak. In voting we act atomised, un-coordinated, naively believing their presentation of it as an effective, democratic decision-making process.

They present voting not as a collective act but as an individual one, as if that is freedom. In fact, it is our weakness. They do not act individually in politics. They use their wealth, derived from their organisations (businesses) to promote their political parties. In the UK, that's the Conservative party. Alongside their parties, their independent activists own most of the media and use it to dominate political debate and promote conservative parties or, occasionally, Labour parties that they think they can tame. They establish the false idea that free markets are the only way to run society. And alongside that, they divert attention from its failures – their failures - onto innocent outsider groups.

To challenge them politically, workers have to act together politically. Much of that would come simply from being organised and in touch with each other as workers, educating each other about the free-market business system, class, and the need to vote for parties that will challenge the business class. At present, no party will do that because too many voters are misled, by them. But with, say, 60% of the population strongly organised and strongly conscious of all this, we could continually elect parties that will regulate them.

Recognition'

These works identify how the unfair job deal justifies workers organising as union members. Identifying that is a major step forward towards a fair society. But to actually organise, as a group of real people, is a process that needs examining. And we need to examine the final, crucial stage of getting an employer to recognise the union. Before that stage, you and workmates can be union members, but that's only between you and the union. Recognition means the employer agrees to bargain with you as a group, to accept you as a negotiating body with whom they have to agree most working conditions; and they agree to recognise your representatives for that purpose and for them to represent individual members who need help.

It's shocking that these issues are so little discussed.

Business people are allowed to organise and even allowed, by limited company status, to walk away from their responsibilities. Business organisation dominates our world. When people talk of capitalism, free markets, free trade and neo-liberalism, business people's organised activity is the centre of it all.

As of December 2019, this writer intends to produce a work that can help the process of workers getting recognition for their organisation. There's a Bill before the US Congress Right now, 'Protecting The Right To Organise', that I think addresses a crucial issue - for union organisers to have the right to go into workplaces and address the staff and invite them to join the union. Without this, there's a tricky situation where those who want to organise, particularly the leaders, can be victimised and

sacked by anti-union bosses. There's excellent accounts of some experiences of organising in the US in this book https://www.amazon.co.uk/No-Shortcuts-Organizing-Power-Gilded/dp/019062471X (Yes, OK, Amazon, anti-union. But the staff are unionising.)

In the meantime, there are already two places in *Us, Politics, The System And Class* and *The Right To Unionise* that refer to *Recognition*. They include the writers own experience of trying to organise a workplace. An interesting experience! Everyone should try it! The first piece is *'The Bottle Problem'* at page 100; then the final piece on *Recognition* (at present) is *'Workers Denied The Right To Associate'* and *'Associating - Getting Union Recognition'* pages 253 - 260.

End of the Right To Unionise sections.

You're Wasting Your Time Saying All This

You may think 'All this talk of *Union Organisation and Mass Political Democracy* may be all very well. But what about ***People?***' They're not interested in all this. Well, that's true of many people, and some turn right off from politics. But aren't there also a huge number annoyed with how they're treated at work by arrogant business owners and managers? And frustrated with how little say they get in politics? And with how, for one big example, Blair got away with the awful crime of starting an illegal war but was able to carry on as Prime Minister long after it was clear that he'd started it on a lie and everybody hated and despised him? And if we don't get more aware and organised we'll carry on getting as badly treated as you know we are.

The Parties - They're All The Same. And They're Not

But yes, a lot of people can't be bothered. Some say 'I don't bother with any of them '*They're all the same'*. But that's a cop-out from doing any thinking. I've taken part in loads of union elections at all levels and only rarely is it really hard to decide between two candidates. It's easy to find enough of a difference to be able to decide on one rather than the other. It's easier still with the political parties. There's so many Issues they all have policies on, they don't really match up very closely over the whole range, if you just actually think about the issues and the policies for a minute.

When people say 'They're all the same' what they really mean is 'They're all a big disappointment'. But to think that, you must believe what each party claims, that they are trying to do right by *everybody*. That's not true.

The Conservatives can't ever be *a disappointment* to any worker. Why ever expect anything of them but business-class bias against we people-as-workers? I've mentioned often enough their hostility and hatred of us being able to organise, in unions. More commonly known is their hostility to public services. The Conservatives and Business class people are wealthy enough, and cocky enough in their ability to survive in their dog-eat-dog world, not to need public services. (Except for the police and the military, to defend their property and system, and to control other countries for business purposes.) Apart from those, they've a visceral hatred of other public services, of doing anything with or for us, and don't want to be taxed to pay for publicly-provided things they, being rich, don't need.

They've only taken an interest in public services (from 2005 onwards) because we've forced them to notice that most of us *do* want them and they've realised they won't get into government without concealing their true attitudes.

The Labour Party was set up to be the party of the majority, us-as-workers. But the political careerists (Blair and his like) noticed this important fact - that during 18 years of

Conservative government, 1979 to 1997, many of us workers allowed or even assisted the Conservatives to win elections on pro-business, anti-working class, anti-union and anti-public services programmes. We weren't as class–conscious as we should be. A lot of us were taken in by business class propaganda.

So in order to win elections, the Blairites decided to become, as New Labour, another pro-business party. And hoped to still be able to do a bit to improve things. *As a party*, bad as New Labour is, they are simply not as bad as the Conservatives. Unlike them, they're not enthusiastically, viciously against public services and against ordinary working people. But from a lack of conviction ***that is only a reflection of the politics of the whole class***, they allowed Blair and Brown to cower to the business class, partly to win the votes of the better-off, Tory-minded workers; and because they have been allowed to by the Labour Party.

The **Lib Dems** are a party of small business people, managers and professionals. They also are pro-business and have no intention of doing anything for us as workers. They just claim the whole show can be run more efficiently. That's because of their class – being Middle-Management and Small Business.

The reason all the main parties seem the same is that they all defer to the Business Class. The business class own most of the economy. You could say, and they do, that through their enterprising business activity, they *are* 'the economy.' They are very determined people, full of confidence and with a strong sense of their own self-importance. They want a lot of things their way. They can and do make sure that governments, of whatever party supposedly 'in power', give them most of what they demand. Our job is to put up our own case so strongly that governments have to take notice of us, too.

Conceding everything they want to the business class isn't a problem for the Conservatives, as they *are* the Business and Propertied class, organised into a political party to represent them ***as*** a class.

For *Labour* it is a problem. They have to either challenge them or work with them. How Labour governments handle the business class, to try to get them to behave more sociably, is the biggest issue they face.

So the parties are not, as some people unthinkingly say, 'all the same' - the Conservatives are the Business Class: Labour tries to do better for the masses but is afraid of the business class's power, and unwilling to challenge the business-class 'news' paper's influence on how people think and vote. The Lib Dems are Management class.

Whenever I talk to people about politics, the government and the political parties, I declare early on that I am working class. So why, despite New Labour being a big *let-down* as a party for workers and progressives, would I or them vote instead for *anti*-working class parties? The problem of New Labour's betrayals, and allowing a mad war criminal to be Prime Minister, isn't solved by turning to worse parties, who are *enthusiastically* anti-worker. The thing to do with Labour, after voting them in as the least bad option, the nearest to being a party for workers, is to have more control over them. And defending ourselves and improving our conditions with independent strike action, like French workers do. In the 1970's we had some General Strikes against Government anti-worker laws. And won.

It's Our Own Fault

When Blair was Prime Minister we said a lot about him being a traitor, really a

conservative, privatising public services more than even Thatcher did. *But it's no good just blaming him*. There's a sense in which he was entitled to get as much influence as he did, and to do what he did. Because he didn't inherit political influence. He got it by putting some effort into politics, by arguing for what he believed in. (Nonsense though it was.)

Any of us can do that, get some influence, if we can be bothered. Blair and careerist business-influenced politicians like him wouldn't be a problem if so many of us didn't sit back, if we all put *just a bit* into politics. Just voting them in is not enough. We need to match the business class in putting pressure on the likes of Blair and Brown. The fact is, we don't, not enough. We should be far more confident about organising ourselves *as w*orkers and fighting to defend and promote our interests, organised in our unions, and ensuring we have a real workers party.

And there's not much point in ***blaming the media*** for bending our minds. *What else are they going to do* but that, to look after their own business-class interests? They take the trouble to bend the minds of so many of us, to suit their class purpose. It's up to us, as a class, to look after ours by talking to each other more about ***our class interests*** and exposing *theirs*. For starters, we need to develop ways of discussing their choice of 'newspaper' with the millions of workers who read their mind-bending shite.

They are vile, disgusting people. The Mail, the Sun, particularly. They scapegoat people and create bogeymen like immigrants, foreigners, 'the undeserving poor', and so on, to scare some of us with. They do it to distract us from looking at their class and their disgusting wealth and anti-social behaviour.

You might still say - 'All of that is all very well but **People ... Can't .... Be ... Bothered**'.

This writer is very well aware of *that*, that's why he's taken the trouble to write all this, to try to change it! One argument to put to people is to say 'If you *don't* bother, you definitely get no say. If you *do* bother, you get no guarantee of getting what you want; but you must get *some* progress.

And you'll feel better about yourself. Having a go feels better, more adult, than all that powerless, inactive whingeing we do about what's wrong with the way we are treated.

Who's Against More Democracy?

It's been argued, and shown, that we don't have very much democracy and should have a lot more. So why don't we? *Do you know anyone who's **against m**ore democracy?* I don't know many people who wouldn't like more of a say, like I've been arguing for. You do get the odd self-demeaning cretin who is happy to say 'Leave it to them'. But apart from them, wouldn't you agree that it's a no-brainer – of course we'd all like more of a say? So why haven't we got it, why haven't we got a democracy that allows us to exercise real power over things? Why do most of us feel very frustrated and angry about politics, or like some, give up? Who is against it us having more democracy?

But there has to be a very important rider, a reservation, to the argument for democracy. Majorities decide on all usual issues. *But there's a limit*. There are some things that people are entitled to fight, even against a majority decision. If there were majorities for sexist or racist action, or for oppressing people for their religious beliefs, and making laws about such things, then that's beyond the limit and can and will be resisted without it being a defiance of democracy. And this applies most of all to ***our rights as workers to organise and defend ourselves.*** Workers rights to organise and act are untouchable. Even if we moved on to a socialist society.

Somebody is against us having more democracy. It's not clear who. Few people talk against it. Although there is that idiot who wrote to the Guardian endorsing Burke's

outrageously anti-democratic statement from his tirade against the French Revolution, that an MP who represents his constituents view rather than his own, betrays them!

Although you don't see the argument expressed anywhere else, it must be the rich, the Business class, who are against more democracy? They have the economic system and laws that suit *them* and not the majority, and more democracy would surely lead to us dismantling them. The MPs appear to be the people in a position to widen democracy, but in doing so would put themselves under much more influence from us; which, most of them being egotistical careerists, of course they'd rather not have. Even some who start out Ok, once they've joined the political elite, forget their origins and get sucked into the pomposity and presumptuous rituals of Parliament. There's maybe up to fifty of them out of 630 (is it?) who remain Ok.

That leaves us, The People, to fight for more democracy and we're not loudly demanding it, in our many millions, are we? We're deferential to the system as it is. That includes those who are angry but turn away and off rather than fight it. I get that, too. It sure is a struggle.

Their Capitalist So-called System

This book has analysed the rights and wrongs of the basic *Social and Political relationships* of this system, this way of running *Society*. There's been enough to say about that, hasn't there? But the other main question, not attempted in this book but currently being studied with great urgency is how their economic and financial system operates as a whole. It can ruin our lives and the planet. We need to get some sanity into how we organise the production of what we need, and how each of us gets the means to obtain a fair share of it - how to Earn a Living or have an Income.

We need to either regulate and control their way of doing it; as, early in 2009, is being frantically attempted by the politicians; or replace it with collectively-controlled and stabilised methods of running society. I'll say no more here on the economic madness other than state the basics of the problem - **production of goods, services and wealth is highly *Collective*; but *Privately owned and run*** to serve the private needs of the rich, not the many. We need to change that. This book has been aimed at helping develop the Class awareness and strength necessary to do that.

In Conclusion

You won't immediately agree with all that's said in this work. So I'll leave you with what I've learned from debating politics, philosophy and religion over a drink. In the heat of a drink-fuelled debate we don't often change our mind there and then. We don't say 'Oh, yeah, You're right. I'm wrong'. That's too much to expect of drink-enhanced ego's. But later, you find you can agree with points you'd disputed. (Or you think of devastating points you could have made in response). Just store them for the next time you debate that subject. So – just think about the arguments made here. Next time you're discussing, observing or doing something political, maybe some of them will make sense.

The Two Charts

The charts on the next two pages aim to summarise the main points of this work in graph form.

The Basics of Politics Chart –

shows how the majority need to base their politics on their economic role as a worker, just like business people base their politics, and their dominating political strength, on theirs as business people.

The Right To Unionise Chart –

the key issue is that business people are organised and the majority, workers, are mostly not; or need to be more confident about their right to be organised and to take action, like business people are.

Politics - The Basics – In Chart Form

Workers – the majority of people - are mostly atomised, not organised.
Business people, their conservative media and parties - are organised.

Workers at work - under-organised

Workers as voters – under-organised

At work, business people and public employers – *organised as businesses and public bodies* - ***control unorganised workers.***

In Politics – *little inter-action between workers in their shared public role as voters. Low level of collective, progressive, political views and voting. Civilised politics and parties not strong enough. Overwhelmed, even in government.*

The Media – mostly Business-owned
Confuse people
Divert people
Divide people

Business people *are (most of)* ***the economy,*** *so they automatically dominate* ***governments.***
They have a clear view of ***business people's class rights.***
They dominate political debate.
Conservative parties *represent them.*

How To Fix Things

Workers Unionised At Work

Confidently Organised, Dealing with Employers as one

Equal at work to business owners & public service managers And also now equal 'players' with them in the economy

Voting As Workers in Politics

The worker majority, organised together as workers, in unions, developing their own independent, collective, civilised politics.

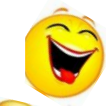
Resistant to the business class media

Civilised, easily electable progressive parties, able to govern confidently with mass voter support, and regulate the business class.

Business people – the business ***class*** *–*
their ***conservative parties***
and their conservative ***media***

The Right To Unionise

Business people and public employers are <u>organised</u> - <u>as</u> businesses and public bodies



Most people aren't organised as workers

One Starting

Un-unionised, each worker is weak <u>because the employer has many others</u> doing the work and doesn't much need any <u>one</u> more..... or <u>one</u> less

One Sacked

The Right – the <u>Entitlement</u> - To Unionise

*Most work is industrialised. Most employers have many staff. They can get by without any **<u>one</u>** leaving, any **<u>one</u>** new, or any **<u>one</u>** they sack, with **<u>the rest</u>** working. Each is weak in the job deal with their employer **<u>not because the employer can replace them from the unemployed but because even without them they still have all the others</u>**. And, with most workforces ununionized, there's the same unfair relationship in other jobs they might go to instead.*

People shouldn't have to make their living on such unfair terms. It operates against everybody - whatever gender, colour, or nationality. They have the right to bargain with business people and public sector managers as equals, by unionising.

***Get Strength, Equality and Dignity
At Work By Being Organised,
Negotiate As One, As Equals,
With Business Owners
And Public Service Managers***

Employers Are Organised - <u>Workers</u> Should Be

Such power for employers from 'having many others' is not on. It just grows out of industrialising, it was never decided. People are entitled to respond by unionising. It's about more than pay and conditions. By getting equal to managers you become adults at work, with dignity, not minions. Being in a trade union should be normal, accepted, expected and respectable in everyday life and politics.

*Business people dominate the majority in politics as well as work. Their **work-based, trade-based** organisation makes them 'the economy'. Because of that they dictate to progressive governments. And by owning most of the media they dominate political debate. And they often get to **be** the government, through their conservative parties. Yet they say we should not be involved in politics through our unions, just work and working conditions! No – we, the great majority, workers, are entitled to use **our** trade organisation too, to become 'players' in the economy, alongside business people and the state, and to build **our** political parties and power.*

People need to convince each other of their right to unionise – and do it.

How To Talk Politics With Each Other

This is written about politics in the UK but it applies to most countries because the basics of economics and politics, and people, are the same worldwide. It is about ordinary citizens talking to each other about politics, and about progressive parties such as the Labour party in the UK, and elsewhere, talking with voters.

People think politics is about politicians and what they do, but it's far more than that, it's about us running society together. And we need to talk to each other more about how we do it, as fellow-citizens. That we don't do it enough was shown by, in Britain, the referendum on Europe and the Brexit saga that followed; and by voters (as a whole) electing into government conservative parties that are hostile to most people's interests. Likewise in America with the support for Trump.

In Britain, the Labour Party (I am a member) only really talk to voters just before elections, going round the streets knocking on doors asking people who they intend to vote for. That's like approaching strangers and asking about their sex lives! And when the media, mostly owned by conservative business people, have been on at people every day, year in, year out, distracting and mis-directing them, talking to them at election time is too little, too late.

By-Pass Their Media

To overcome the conservative media's demonisation of progressive policies, parties and leaders, we need to by-pass them, by building our own independent communications. Running newspapers and mass broadcast media like they can afford to run – and take the trouble to run - seem to be beyond our current confidence and level of organisation. But no matter. ***Talking about politics is best, most naturally done, by people talking to fellow-citizens they have relationships with, in normal everyday conversation. Talking to each other 'organically'***. That can be our mass media. So let's look at how to do it.

(Social media is not addressed here, yet. But talking with people you have real, definite, maybe organisational relationships with, is far more useful than social media. There we just fling snappy opinions at each other, usually as strangers, and only in our role as voters who only act together, if you can call it that, at occasional elections. The thrust of all these writings is that we need to associate in definite social organisations in which we can act with real social and political power.)

How To Talk To Each Other About Politics

You can talk politics with people all the time. You don't have to push it. You probably shouldn't. No need for 'Let's talk politics.' Though maybe sometimes. 'Let's have a heated debate!' But things come up naturally in conversation, at work with fellow-workers; with friends, relatives, neighbours; in pubs and bars. Most people are actually keen to voice their political opinions.

You just have to develop the skill of noticing how people say things that have political meaning while often appearing to think they haven't, that open the possibility for political debate, and be prepared to broaden it into a proper political discussion. Like, 'Aren't these pavements bad' can lead into how Conservative governments slashed council funding; how they always want to do that anyway; but how from 2010 they used as cover for doing it what Labour had to spend to solve the financial crash of 2008; how that was caused by Labour having conceded too much to conservative free market ideas and allowed conservative bankers to cause the crisis; and how Labour took the blame - for being conservative!

You'll need to deal with '*Don't talk politics in the pub or club, or at family events'.* Get over that with 'Look, we're fellow-citizens. Look at the divisions in Britain over the EU referendum. Look at the election of Trump in the USA. Voting isn't just an individual act - politics and how we vote, or don't vote, affects us all together. How I vote affects you; how you vote affects me'. It's a collective decision. And as well as being fellow-citizens we are fellow-workers (mostly), maybe actual workmates, relatives, friends, neighbours. To be adult citizens, we *have* to be able to talk to each other about how the society we all live in works and what we do about it.'

It's essential to lead discussions away from politics as being just about what each person *thinks*. What they think is, in the end, important, as it guides their actions. But what we think has to be based on the world outside our heads. Always base political discussion on the reality of *the system*, the economy, production, sales, work, jobs and wealth, and their place in it. It makes discussions much easier and more productive.

And the single most important, normally overlooked feature of politics and the system is that business people dominate it. We need to point out to each other how they are 'the economy', since they control production, sales, work and jobs; that they dominate politics for that reason; and they control of much of the media too. And to say that we need to see them as a class - the business class. And to see that Conservative parties represent them. In discussions you can move outwards from these central facts but keep referring back to them. Not all of the business class are hateful capitalists, some are alright (discuss) but, as a minimum to all agree on, we have to

recognise the central role they play in society, talk about it, and include it any political discussions we have.

When talking about politics it would be best to agree some basics about how to conduct ourselves

- When getting onto political territory during an ordinary conversation, instead of spontaneously firing out a few random and contrary political opinions at each other then rapidly reverting to safer ground such as sport and consumer issues, agree to discuss politics properly for a few minutes.
- Agree that 'OK, it often does get heated. But let's agree to try to make an effort to keep calm!'
- Maybe agree early on, as a basic framework, that we all want society to be fair and we are discussing how to make it work fairly. That whatever different political opinions we have, we are talking as decent people, in favour of people treating each other decently. And possibly as humanitarians or liberals (people in favour of treating others properly).
- That, as well as being fellow-citizens, we are (mostly) each of us a worker, with common interests based on that.

Try for evenly balanced debate, allow each other to speak. (A tricky skill, this, judging when to interrupt in order to have your say, and when not to!) Don't let disagreements dominate - look for things you can agree on.

Finish with 'Well, have we agreed on anything?' And, since there will be some things you don't agree on - there always are - 'Can we go away agreeing to think about what we've each said?' People - me and you included - do change their mind later that way.

If you are regularly too keen to open up political discussion, you might need to deal with 'There s/he goes again, on about politics'. Deal with that, again, with the *need* for us to do it, and how, if we don't, we are not fully mature, adult citizens.

For any who say *'I'm not interested in politics'* say 'Well politics is interested in you. It affects your life hugely. Here's how…..'

There's an attitude that denies political debate and agreement where people say *'Well you think that, I think this. Everybody has their own opinion.*' This is true, we do all have our own opinions. But we also all live and operate in the same system, the same society. Leaving it at everybody having their own opinion might be Ok for survivalists living in the woods. But probably not, even for them.

The whole point of democracy is to come to agreed decisions on how to run the society we share. We can't do this with every last detail - we have to leave a lot to legislators, governments, public service managers, judges and more. But in principle that's what we aim to do.

And democratic politics requires us to combine our varying opinions into coherent public policy, on a wide range of issues. Human society is mostly run not by individuals but by those who organise together and organisations can't function with everybody pleasing themselves. You won't do very well as a football team unless you agree on what is happening – agree the facts – and what to do together. At work, bosses don't say 'Yeah, just please yourselves what you do, whatever.' They more or less dictate facts and actions, from everything to do with the actual task to even how you dress. Do the military just let all their troops have their own view? Then there's the law - the whole point of the law is to determine who is 'right' in how we behave towards each other.

Denying political discussion with 'everybody has their own opinion' doesn't *elevate* individual opinions, it downgrades them. Because if they are all left at being different, the opinion-holders actually lose their right to have a say. Because for opinions and votes to have effect, some significant number of people have to discuss, agree, and pool their views into coherent ideas. It's what the conservative media does, raising some issues and downplaying others, setting the political agenda. It's what the political parties do. And single-issue campaign groups. They devise proposals and policies, that the remaining people can vote on. So the effect of 'everybody has their opinion', if universal, would make it impossible even to draw up anything for us to vote on. Those saying 'Everybody has their own opinion' and 'If I ruled the world' makes them ineffectual followers of those who organise collective platforms, who realise that to have any real say you have to do the hard work of agreeing things with each other.

There *are* things that are pretty much people's own business. But not work, politics and law. They are collaborative and collective. Most things in public life are done by some form of common purpose, by agreement on facts and actions, collectively. It may sometimes be imposed by autocrats, but preferably by various degrees of democracy.

It has been said here 'Don't let discussion be limited to what the person you are talking to thinks, or whatever political label they have attached to them'. Instead, raise the external actuality of their lives, their place in the system. Anchor the discussion on their actual role in it. Ask how they make their living. Most will be workers. This writer declines to be labelled as 'left', which bases things on my opinions. I identify by my economic role in the system, as a worker, on my being

working class, a fact that comes before my attitudes and political opinions and actions.

Conservatives stress 'the individual'. A lot of people go along with that and say '*I just look after No. 1'.* Some indeed can seem to get by OK like that. But they are inevitably affected by the overall state of the society they live in. And they usually have relatives, friends, neighbours and workmates. What about them?

And the majority can't get by simply by 'Looking after No. 1'. The main response to both points is 'We live very inter-dependently. Much of society is collective. Especially work, which, with high-volume production of goods and service (industrialism) in big organisations, is *intensely* collective'. So ask also about theirs and their relatives, friends, neighbours and workmate's place in the system. Ask how a particular political policy affects not just them but these other people close to them. And about how *they* vote or don't vote affects *you*. Acknowledge that of course they are entitled to their opinions but couch discussion of voting intentions to also include 'Well look, if you vote for or allow the conservatives in, you are doing harm to me, your relatives, friends, neighbours, workmates, and your fellow-citizens in general'.

Feelings Not Facts?

Another attitude to challenge is *people going by feelings* instead of facts, policies and debate. Going by feelings is actually declining to exercise your right to have your say. You can't have a credible opinion on most political issues without some consideration of facts and options. Going by feelings means handing that right over to some politician, many of whom deliberately only appeal to your feelings, with extravagant rhetoric assuring you they'll look after you but with little real content, just invoking fear, hate, belonging, security, hope or change.

What should we say to fellow-voters who say they just go by feelings? Maybe this - 'Well we do function with feelings, it can't be all about facts and reasoning. But don't you think the two should go together? Don't use feelings as an excuse for not weighing things up properly. It just doesn't make sense, if you really want to get what you want. But what are your feelings? Let's talk about them then.'

Values

Another approach might be to ask about their social values. *How caring should we be to others*? Do they agree we should aim for *fairness* in society? (That's not the same thing as *equality)*. What do they think we should expect from each other as

citizens? How much should we be able to depend upon each other? What do they think of the term 'solidarity'? What do they think of *'It's everybody for themselves'?*

And of 'People should be able to keep what they've earned'. The key response to this big conservative argument is to say 'Well let's look at how they get it.' Most of the rich's wealth is made from other people's work. From ours, in fact.

Who We Vote For

And we need to be open with each other about who we vote for. In the UK, voting originally needed to be by secret ballot because landlords would evict you or employers sack you if you didn't vote for their candidate. And it still does need to be by secret ballot, as far as employers and the state not knowing how you vote. But between ourselves, equal citizens who aren't going to intimidate each other, we should be more open with each other in conversation about how we vote, and why.

In summary - we need to talk to each other, and organise together, as citizens and as workers, and work towards mass, mature, involved citizenship.

It's Not About Leaders - It's About Parties

The media, and many ordinary people, treat politics as if it's all about the party leaders. Almost all media coverage of politics is about how leaders do or don't hold sway over their party; their prospects for winning elections; their qualities and shortcomings as possible or actual Prime Ministers. This is ridiculous. For party members and voters who place all their hopes in whoever is leader, it's 'Messiah' politics. It's immature. Messiah politics demeans those many who are active in their parties.

Leaders are important but their key qualities shouldn't be as one-person policy-makers and decision-makers. In a proper democracy, we all matter. On policy-making, parties have many members and activists, and policies are decided by thorough democratic processes. Major decisions that come up unexpectedly should be made by collective party leadership, not one person. The leader's key qualities are being able to bring together and hold together coalitions of views, in cabinets, in Parliaments and in the party membership as a whole.

Expecting so much from leaders is doomed to failure anyway. It's foolish to expect them to be all-wise. They can't be. So in talking to people about politics, argue against people just going on about the qualities and failings of potential prime ministers or presidents. Or just saying they 'like' one more than another. There's more to any party than the attributes of just one person. *Argue instead for supporting parties and policies rather than leaders.*

And the media and many people place on the leader all the responsibility for getting voters to vote for the party. But that's not

only the leader's job - it's every member's job. And they can do it better than the leader. Whoever is leader doesn't know the relatives, friends, neighbours, workmates of several hundred thousand members. They do, and they are the best people to talk politics with them.

Taking Responsibility

One reason people pay so much attention to the leader is that they give up trying to make sense of politics themselves and take the easy option of 'Leave it to somebody else', i.e. one leader or another.

This is because we don't have a clear, commonly-held understanding of *the system*. Most importantly, of the fact that business people, the business class, dominate it, and how their overblown belief in their own qualities and rights is the root cause of most of our problems. It's not really difficult to understand and talk about politics when you locate discussion in terms of this central political issue – that business people, the business class, have the most power in society; that most people are workers, the worker class; that business people get power through being organised; that in response the rest need to organise too, mainly as workers (and are entitled to).

Us, Politics, The System And Class, a free download from the website ***www.uspol.org*** is a resource for this.

As said, we do need leaders. But the over-emphasis on them is a condemnation of our democracy. We should work towards a thorough, involved democracy, with widespread involvement of mature, rational citizens, acting together all through society. I've seen it done in the trade union movement. Political meetings needn't be boring if discussions are organised with small groups that allow everyone to speak. See the small group activity *Talking With Voters* that goes with this paper.

Persuading Fellow-citizens To Vote Effectively

People give reasons for how they vote or why they don't, that don't make sense. Here are the main ones, and some responses:

- *'I'm not voting for them because of (a single issue)'.*

Where people feel so strongly about one party on one issue that they don't want to vote for them, *prompt them to weigh up what the other parties are saying on that issue too.* Prime example – after Tony Blair's war on Iraq, many normally Labour voters stopped voting Labour. But that only, eventually, helped to allow the Conservatives into government. Yet they, and Parliament as a whole, had backed Blair on this war. And Blair

and New Labour were, of course, infinitely better than the Conservatives on domestic issues.

You don't usually get a vote on one issue and you shouldn't vote according to only one issue. There are many issues and each party has differing policies on each of them. You normally have to vote for *packages* of policies*. You need to decide on the best or least bad package.*

Whatever you think of the parties, whatever their leaders or candidates have done or not done, *once you get to the vote, to the actual list of candidates, to the ballot paper, one must be the least bad* and you are surely better off with them in government than a worse one. So, in Britain, it means, even when Labour governments don't do as much as you'd like them too, Labour is always the best option for most people. Most citizens should never let the Conservatives in. The same applies in the US - the Democrats may not do enough but are the obvious better option for the majority than the Republicans.

- *Some will say they are voting for a minor party as a 'protest vote' against what progressive or social democratic parties have done or not done. Usually, it's because they've not been progressive enough.*

In the UK, protest voters see it as teaching Labour a lesson but they damage themselves as much as Labour. The minor party usually has no chance of winning so the protest vote just splits the progressive vote and allows the Conservatives – usually the worst option - to win the seat and get into government with, usually, less than 40% of the vote while the combined progressive vote is regularly in the 50% to 60% range.

Where people are committed to the small party and want to build it long term, it might make sense. But at any particular election, if their party has no chance of winning, all they often achieve is to allow the worst in. What the minority party should do is make tactical decisions about how supporters should vote in each election, to get the best or least-bad party or candidate in. But they are generally in too simplistically positive a mindset about their chances to do that. So then it's up to *voters themselves* to take a cool look at what is possible in any current election and vote for the party that is (a) actually able to win the seat and (b) is nearest to meeting their needs. If protest voters want to build the minor party in the long-term, throwing away their vote and letting the Conservatives in is not the way. They need to build that party in between elections, protest voting is an unlikely way to do it.

- *Many people say their vote makes no difference.* Well, yes, for everyone, it's rare for votes to be so tight that their vote appears to be a deciding vote. But they do add up, don't they?

- *Some don't vote at all, saying 'They're all the same' or 'They're all as bad as each other'.* In the UK, about 30% of those entitled to vote usually don't. And for all the fuss about elections for President in the USA, only about 50% vote. It's a serious problem for progressive parties. It's one of the reasons we usually have parties governing us who have the support of less than (a different) 30% of citizens.

Tell people who say this that the political parties are never all the same. They all disappoint in *some* way, that will be true, but they are never all the same. Saying that is just lazy.

It's a cop-out from doing any thinking. I've taken part in many union elections at all levels and it's easy to find enough difference between candidates to be able to decide on one rather than the other. It's easier still with the political parties. There's too many issues and too many policies for the parties to be the same on all of them. Too much in each parties' package for them to really match up closely over the whole range, if you just actually think about it for a few minutes. More on the nature of the main parties shortly, but argue to people who say this that they should at least *vote*, and to at least make sure the least bad and not the worst gets in.

The Parties Aren't All The Same

'They're all the same' leads to people just talking of 'them' and 'them in Parliament', and Trump calling them 'the swamp'. The media reinforce this, presenting elected representatives as a single, homogonous group - 'politicians'. It happened with Brexit in the UK, where people railed against 'Them in Parliament' or 'Politicians' for not *'sorting it out'*. This is lazy thinking. It's pretty obvious that elected politicians have varying objectives, so you can't talk of them as a homogenous body that you can expect to 'just get on with it'. In his work *'Us, Politics, The System And Class*' this writer shows how you can get a clear view of the differences in politics by basing it on our relationships in the system, at work, in business, in the economy. But even leaving that aside, just watching the nail-biting Brexit debates in Parliament, it was plain that the Conservatives are mostly an arrogant, entitled, unpleasant bunch, wealthy business people representing wealthy business people. There's a few with some human decency but not many. And it was plain that Labour MP's are mostly caring, well-intentioned people, even with internal disagreements about how to tackle the conservatives and the business class and the many voters under their influence.

Governing Is Not Just Managerial

In Britain the Labour Party loses votes and elections because the conservative 'newspapers' convince people that they are *not competent to manage the economy*. It's a myth – see *Labour Is Fit To Govern* at page 320 of *Us, Politics, The System And Class*. *But we need to point out to people that there's more to governing than competence anyway (important though it is).*

One result of seeing choice of parties as being just about competence is people voting for a party simply because they are unhappy with the incumbent government. They do this because the present situation is unsatisfactory (it always will be, to some extent.) So they'll say '*Let's give the other lot a try*'. They'll vote just for *'change'*.

But few people *really* evaluate a government's competence, and certainly not those who just vote for change. They take the simplistic option to just try something different because they don't have a clear, holistic view of the system and the parties.

But There's Intentions Too

More importantly - the competence charge against Labour rests on the assumption that all the parties aim to govern for everyone. That there is a key task, managing the economy and that it is a neutral skill. So the choice is presented as just being about managerial ability. But although competence is obviously important, first ask people to look at *what are a party's intentions anyway?* What do they try to do, what are they for, who are they for?

When people say 'they're all the same' what they really mean is 'they're all a disappointment'. But to think 'they are all the same' you must believe they all intend to do right by everybody. As said, that's not true, and we need to make it clear in discussions with fellow-voters.

Conservatives claim they intend to do what's best for everybody. That they get away with that claim is quite an achievement. They don't. They aim to manage the country for the people they represent – business people - the business *class* **-** and rich people. And to do just enough for some of the rest – managers, some high-earning workers – to get enough votes to win elections.

But it's our fault they get away with this ridiculous pose, for not talking enough ourselves to all those people who get political news and opinions from conservative media, that present conservative parties as well-intentioned, effective managers and also set the agenda for broadcast comment and the media generally. They talk to voters day in and day out and influence them deeply, such as diverting enough of them into blaming outsiders for problems to take election-swinging votes away from progressive parties (who don't blame

outsiders.) And they undermine Labour's and progressive party's overall credibility with voters.

The Conservatives shouldn't ever be a *disappointment.* Why expect anything of them but policies largely hostile to the worker majority? They box clever with some policies that appeal to or benefit some workers. But their main aims are clear on the big issues – their fierce support for 'free markets' which essentially means 'freedom for the business class to get rich from everybody else's work', and their opposition to us matching up to their organised strength by ourselves organising together, in unions. And they oppose public services and support. Workers need public services because of how the business class mistreat and exploit them at work. But conservatives and their class – the business class - can afford to buy what they need themselves so don't want to pay taxes for public provision (except for the police and the military to defend their property and system, domestically and around the world.) They make a show of supporting public services because most of us *do* need and want them and they know they won't get into government without concealing their true attitudes. But look at what they do on public services, not at what they say.

You can observe how they go about looking after their interests and admire the effort they put into achieving dominance in society, and realise it's our own fault, the rest, most voters, for not matching up to them, for not talking to each other properly about politics, for not educating and organising each other enough to show them up.

Updating this piece in May 2025, ***Reform*** are the alternative conservative party, with the same basic objective, to represent business class interests, just even nastier.

The Labour party genuinely aims to do the best they can for the majority. More on that below. But to get that through to people we first need to get them to see the key features of society – that business people dominate it; that it's because, as businesses, they are most of the economy; that this gives them power in politics even before they are active in political parties; to get them seen as *a class.* Having done that we can show people that most of 'the press', who position themselves as unaffiliated commentators, are actually independent conservatives, business people, working to influence politics and voters in the interests of business people. Only by spreading that basic understanding can we can pull people out of the influence of the conservative media and show how, in various ways, they consciously divert people from blaming the business class and their free-market business system for our problems. Then we can put *our* case clearly.

The Labour Party *can disappoint* because of a persistent problem it has never, so far, resolved - how much to regulate and tax the wealthy and business people for the benefit of the worker majority. The left in the party wants to offer policies that require that, and to do it. But the centrists notice that not enough workers will vote for these policies. (That includes those who don't even vote.) So instead, they cobble together less ambitious policies that they hope enough centrist workers will vote for that Labour actually wins elections and gets into government. But then those policies eventually mean disappointing many workers, who don't vote Labour next time, maybe 'trying one of the others'.

The last time before this that we got a Labour government, it was after centrists led by Tony Blair took note of how, during 18 years of Conservative government, 1979 to 1997, many workers allowed or even assisted the Conservatives to win elections on pro-business, anti-worker, anti-union, anti-public services programmes. So to win votes from such workers and win elections the Blairites decided to become, as New Labour, another pro-business party. (That's what endorsing free markets really means). They hoped to still be able to improve public services and welfare, and did. The party as a whole went along with this, conceding to the business class and their media-propagated political arguments, in order to win the votes of better-off, conservative-minded workers and others who accepted their anti-union, and anti-public spending arguments.

It worked, to a degree, allowing New Labour to get elected and improve public services. But it failed in the end because the 'free market' policy left the economy to be steered by the most greedy, reckless, socially irresponsible members of the business class, the bankers, and they caused the crash of 2008. Labour let itself get blamed for that and lost the next election on grounds of incompetence and excessive public spending. As said earlier, all Labour had done was concede to a core conservative economic policy, that seemed to be necessary to get the votes of better-off workers, and the excess public spending was just what they had to spend to rescue the economy from the mis-behaviour of the financial leaders of the business class. It was absurd, and a good example of how awful we are at communicating with voters, and the consequences. A similar accommodation to conservative-influenced voters is happening now, in 2025, with damaging consequences.

But the concession to conservative policies is not only the party's fault. We voters obstruct Labour in what it can do for workers. Not enough of us vote for them on manifestos that would regulate business people and conservatives and govern for the majority. The party is limited in how radical a programme it can offer to workers when many are not as radical as even the centrists in the party.

Labour centrists feel, correctly, that they don't have the support to put forward policies that most members, left, centre and others, know are right, so they cast about for modest policies that might win elections. But when they do, these policies inevitably don't deliver enough for the mass of people.

But however disappointing some might find Labour governments, as a party they simply are better than the Conservatives. Unlike them, they aren't *intentionally* against 'ordinary working people' - workers – and public services. So the parties are *not* all the same.

To state this crucial point again – although there is a lack of conviction in the Labour party that causes bitter, ugly division between the left and the centrists and leads to policies and actions when in government that disappoint workers and voters generally, it is only a reflection of the politics of the whole electorate, including those who are workers. This, the politics of the electorate, needs tackling so that they can be offered, and will vote for, policies and government that won't disappoint them.

The left need to recognise that you can't just put up radical policies at election time: that you have to have thorough, constant dialogue with many millions of voters, through our own connections, to convince them of these policies.

The centrists need to recognise that devising a mish-mash of moderate policies hoping to get votes from voters who are doubtful about stronger policies means people saying they don't know what Labour stands for, not offering what you know is needed, and not doing enough in government to sustain support.

***The whole party has to campaign continually with voters and change those voters' minds**. Then, left and centre can share a measured assessment of how radical the party's programme can be, to win an election, based on how much constant campaigning has brought how many voters to more progressive views and voting intentions.*

***And this is not solely Labour's job**. It's up to us, the many millions of voters, to talk to each other more and persuade each other to vote Labour and commit to still doing so when they promise more determined policies and action – centrist voters. And even when they don't – left-wingers.*

And, again, we - ordinary people, voters, activists, and progressive parties – urgently need to by-pass the conservative mass media. It doesn't look likely we'll set up our own, progressive, mass media any time soon. *But we can talk to each other directly, consistently, thoroughly, every day, as fellow-citizens and (mostly) fellow-workers. The Labour Party*

particularly needs to talk to voters independently of the anti-Labour media. That's what the activity Talking With Voters is for, to provide encouragement and support for members doing that.

The Lib Dems are a party of small business people, managers and professionals, with a rural base. They too are pro-business-class and don't intend to do anything for us as workers. They just claim to be able to run the country more effectively and campaign opportunistically on personal rights and single issues.

The Power Of The Business Class

All the main parties can seem the same because they all defer to the business class. As said, they own most of the economy. You could say, and they do, that through their enterprise they are 'the economy'. They are people with a strong sense of their own self-importance, confident and determined. They can and do make sure that governments, of whatever party supposedly 'in power', give them most of what they demand. Progressive parties conceding to them is seen as deferring to the business *system* (free markets) but it's the business *class's* system. It's them who benefit from it far more than the majority. Its them who argue and fight for it, fiercely, determinedly. It is actually conceding to *them*.

One of their main promotional points is that 'free markets' allow individual freedom. That's a myth. The economy is actually, observably, hugely collective, particularly the businesses that they own and organise and we work for.

Conceding to the business class isn't a problem for the *Conservatives.* They *are* (the most politically-active members of) the business class, organised into a political party to represent them *as* a class. For *Labour* it is a problem. They have to either challenge the business class or work with them. How Labour governments handle them, try to get them to behave themselves, act more sociably, is the biggest policy issue they face.

So the parties are not, as some say, 'all the same' - the Conservatives are from the business class and represent their interests. Reform are an alternative, even nastier, business class party. Labour tries to do better for the masses but defers to the business class's power and are unwilling to challenge the business-class 'newspapers' influence on how people think and vote. The Lib Dems are small business and management class.

Again, we need to frame our evaluation of the parties, our attitudes to them, and our political discussions, in terms of the system. Whenever I talk to people about politics and the political parties and government, I declare early on that I am working class. (I'm moving to saying 'a worker' because people limit 'working class' to meaning just less qualified workers on lower incomes.) So why, despite Labour not achieving as much as workers might want, why

would I or them vote instead for *anti*-worker parties? Any problems workers have with Labour letting them down or not doing enough aren't solved by turning to parties who are *enthusiastically* anti-worker. The thing to do with Labour is to vote them in as the best option - the least bad if you want - the nearest to being a party for workers, and then to support and influence them to do more.

Again, the bigger need is for all of us, *as ordinary citizens, workers and voters, to talk to each other more about politics and persuade each other to vote for parties genuinely on our side (Labour in the UK, the Democrats in the USA, and similar elsewhere.) And to talk to each other and develop ourselves as an electorate that will not, as at present, hold back those parties from presenting more progressive policies, but support them in doing that and vote them in as more progressive governments.*

And to defend ourselves and improve our conditions with more than just progressive governments but with thorough union organisation at work and in politics.

There's another mis-conception about parties that we need to clear up with voters. After Labour lost the December 2019 election to the Conservatives the media, commentators and even Labour leaders themselves accused Labour of letting voters down and even demanded Labour apologise to voters. This is treating the parties as if they are public services or businesses that other people can make demands on. But, unless actually in government, they are not public services. And they are not businesses that people, as consumers, have given money to and can make demands on about quality of goods and services.

We are voters too. We are a voluntary association of those several hundred thousand voters who care enough about the conditions in their own lives and those of other voters to organise and put forward policies and candidates to improve them. They are Labour members like me, and active trade unionists, and others affiliated to the party. We join the party, pay money in, go to meetings, committees and conferences, discuss and vote on the policies we think best for ourselves and the many, and who from amongst us we should put forward as leaders, and as candidates for elections.

Most of our fellow-voters don't take the trouble to do all this. They leave us to do the graft of knocking our heads together to work out policy, with a lot of dissatisfaction buried in compromise on the way, then expect us to meet their every little individual whim and concern. Now although we do need, for our own good and, we think, theirs, to convince them that the policies, candidates and leaders we choose are the best on offer, it is not a *duty* we owe them. It's more that *they,* as fellow-

citizens, owe us a duty to get involved, maybe join the party and do what we do - compromise with each other on many issues to put together the best political offer we can, and the best available, and offer it to the electorate.

But sometimes members are so fervent about their own views that they ignore what other voters will make of it. In the 2019 election campaign, you (and I) might have thought a re-run of the Brexit Referendum was appropriate. But there were maybe four million other probable-Labour voters who'd voted for Brexit and for whom it was the biggest issue and a real vote-swinger. So unless you could go out and convince them you were just inviting defeat.

But these things are for members to discuss with each other. We owe no duty to non-members. Although we do need to communicate with them, and them with us, day in, day out. Not as a service supplier though, but as fellow-citizens and fellow-voters.

We let the media embarrass us when we lose elections by asking if we think voters are wrong and would we prefer to choose another electorate? First though, reject the media's simplistic question - there is no homogonous 'the electorate.' An awful lot of people vote Labour. The problem is with a minority, who are mostly workers, who are disillusioned and don't vote; another minority who would be better off with us but are taken in by conservative arguments, especially like the one that the EU was the main problem, when in fact it is the conservatives themselves who are. Add to those minorities the business class minority who really do benefit from conservative government and you get a conservative win.

So do we think those voters are wrong who vote for the conservatives or allow them to win? Of course we do. Because, do we think we are better for them than the conservatives? Of course we do. We need to convince the non-business class majority of this and that means communicating with them much much better to, indeed, change them. Although it would be a dialogue, a mutual process. This writer is urging the party to format branch meetings around exchanging experience and developing best practise on members getting across to voters they know, and has provided an activity for branches to use to do this.

Citizens' Assemblies?

This paper has been about the usual main political act, the vote. And occasionally there's referendums too. But they too suffer from the same problems as how we vote for representatives in Parliament, Congress and other democratic assemblies - there's not enough properly organised discussion between citizens, and no opportunity to have a say on individual policies. People's or Citizen's Assemblies may be a way forward. They are temporary gatherings of citizens selected randomly, maybe with proportions by age, gender, ethnicity and so on, who meet over a cycle of weekend conferences and

suchlike, with presentations by political parties, councillors, council officials, MP's, lobbying groups, people with expert knowledge etc, and come up with recommendations for the rest of us on a particular policy issue. This writer's best knowledge of it is a book that calls it *'Sortition'*, the book being *Against Elections: The Case for Democracy by David Van Reybrouck.*

A final note to clarify what people should expect from politics - people talk about politics and the political system as if everything about society *starts* from there. As if we, whether politicians or all of us, started from a blank sheet and made society what it is. And as if politics decides everything that goes on.

That's not how it is. Lots of things go on in society, far more than government can reach. And most are governed by customs and rules developed over centuries, often without political action, just 'what is done' or has come to be done. Some of it will have been set down in law and in political statute but much won't have been.

The crucial example, the central subject of this whole set of writings, is how high-volume, large-workforce production gives an organised minority – the business class - unfair power over the majority when they are just individual, atomised, unorganised workers, which we never decided in politics as the way to allocate what people need to make their living, and wealth.

It's best to see politics is as a way of potentially altering what already *happens* in society. To see *the system* and the basic activities and duties and rights and penalties as pre-existing, and politics as the main, officially-offered way of changing the broadest-ranging of them.

This may be a useful book on talking to each other
https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/feb/16/how-to-have-better-arguments-social-media-politics-conflict

More papers like this, covering all the basic organisational political issues, are at **www.uspol.org**

This version is in landscape view and columns, laid out as if for printing as A5 booklets. Although it wouldn't print both sides back-to-back correctly like this.

Talking With Voters
for progressive parties

The following small-group activity aims to help progressive parties to support members in promoting the party's politics, independently of conservative mass media, through the natural relationships they have with voters,

Members' everyday relationships with family, friends, neighbours, workmates, acquaintances are the best route for communicating with voters. Several hundred thousand members talking politics with people they have 'organic' relationships with, in everyday conversation, is more natural and substantive than the usual forms of communication and campaigning.

It will overcome the alienation of the campaigning relationship of 'we Labour, you voter' and replace it with many scenarios where members and the many voters they know discuss politics *as* fellow-voters, equals, all members of that majority who need progressive governments. It will help develop us as a society to where it becomes the norm for citizens to discuss politics together.

The present situations in the UK, the USA and many other countries show that we *must* talk politics to each other as fellow-citizens and voters. The accompanying paper 'How To Talk Politics With Each Other' explains how to do it.

The small-group activity is drawn from the writer's experience as a trade union tutor (now retired), where group methods were the norm, were effective, and greatly enjoyed by union reps and members.

Activity: Talking With Voters

v. 2025.1

(Initially written offered to the Labour Party in the UK)

Aims: To exchange experience of talking about politics
To develop skills and confidence in talking with voters
To develop best practice

Setting Up Your Group:

A facilitator will organise you into small groups.
(See *Notes for Facilitators,* following)

In your group get someone to start and informally chair your discussion – like, keep it to one speaker at a time; indicate who that person is; allow everybody the chance to speak once before anybody speaks twice.

Choose someone else to take notes of key points, maybe on this sheet, on card provided by the facilitator, or on a smart device.

Group Task:

1. **Ask members in turn about discussions they've had, or have observed, about politics, voting and the party**.
(see *Notes for Facilitators1* * *overleaf*)

Ask:

Who was the discussion with? (no need for names)

Where? (tea break, party, across the garden wall etc?).

What was the political issue?

How did the discussion start?

What did they say? What did you say?

How did it develop?

Did it seem the other person's views
were influenced by the mass media?

What do they do for a living? (if you know)

How did it end?

2. **Finish the group work** by noting down **ideas on best practice** in talking with voters, or on the issues discussed, or just in general.

3. **Full-branch Report Back from each group**, and general discussion. Aim to take reports on one topic from each group in turn.

   We may not get to every group but all will have had the benefit of their own group's work and will get the benefit of the whole report back.

A Resource document or takeaway for this activity titled ***How To Talk Politics With Each Other'*** is provided here immediately after this activity (when printed for use in meetings) and is permanently available at *www.uspol.org*

See Notes for Facilitators2* overleaf *

Notes for Facilitators1*

... with neighbours, relatives, friends; workmates, fellow-union members; people met while campaigning or door-knocking; discussions seen or taken part in on social media, things read in 'the papers' or seen on TV, etc.

Some members might not be willing to talk with voters on their own, or not be in a position to. The activity is to support those who can, and all can contribute to that. Members (and senior officers of the party!) should be reassured that this is just about talking with voters as fellow-voters, not as official spokespersons of the party. And they need not feel they have to strenuously defend every party policy. The aim is simply to talk with people as fellow-voters but also as a Labour member; and for the party in this way to have grass-roots dialogue with voters, independently of the conservative-dominated media.

Notes for Facilitators2 **

Setting Up The Groups
The following points aim to help set up the small groups. They might seem complicated but are worth doing to avoid time-wasting confusion and to achieve good discussions.

1. **Have pieces of card** ready cut for numbering groups and for group note takers.

2. Ideally, set up groups mixed by experience of activism, age, life roles, gender, ethnicity etc. But for first, or early sessions with a particular gathering, or for just one session at a Branch meeting, just **mixing people up randomly**, as suggested below, is probably all that is achievable.

3. **The preferred scenario is to have tables laid out**, enough for groups of four (divide expected numbers attending by four).

   Place a number on each table. Groups as big as five or six might have to do, though people then tend to sub-divide into twos or threes.

4. **The 'at-the-door' method** - As members come in, explain that we are having discussion groups and are mixing people up so they can meet and discuss with those they don't know. At the door, allocate them to tables like this: first person to table 1, next to table 2, and so on.

5. **The 'moving people around' method** –
If there are tables, but not numbered and people are sat at them already, go round and number the tables. Then explain, apologise and seek agreement for moving them and their coats and bags. (Good luck!) Then go to each table and allocate the members there to table 1, then 2, then 3 etc.

   This method is a bind, avoided by pre-numbering and allocation at the door as in method **4.** But still worth it.

6. **The 'chairs' method** –
If there are no tables, with members just on chairs, this might seem a bind too but again, is worth it: have numbered cards for the number of groups (of four) you will get from the numbers you are expecting.
So if you expect twenty, you'll need cards numbered 1 to 5. If there's more, scraps of paper, numbered, will do.

   Go along the chairs giving number 1 to the first person, 2 to the second, and so on up to 5. Then carry on along telling the next five people they are in group 1, 2,3, 4 or 5, then 1,2,3,4 or 5 again and so on round the room. Then get people to assemble in their groups around the person with their numbered card. The card holder for Group 1 might stay where they are, the one for Group 2 will need to move along, the other card holders will find a suitable spot, maybe Group 5 will be near the end of the seating. The person with the number is just an assembly point, not necessarily group chair.

Add-Ons

Nationalism & Classism *2024.4 Sept.*

How conservatives and the business class show that national identity and nationalism are shallow

A lot of people are turning to nationalism. It's not the answer to their problems but is a big problem for everyone else. Many people fiercely oppose it. This work aims to help, by showing how nationalism is an expression of the commonly-held belief in nation, nationality and country, and to argue for toning that down.

'The Country' Is Just The Government

It starts with the fact that countries and nations are really just pieces of territory where human relations are regulated by certain institutions - the systems of government, the state. They are probably necessary. That just seems to be so - for society to function, in any territory, some people will set up a system of political control and a system of laws. But everyone gives them more meaning than that and that meaning is never examined and evaluated. This work does, and will show that we should discuss national identity and patriotism and, while recognising the practical meaning and authority of government, law and the state, take a good look at how we actually relate in them and challenge the fervent belief in them.

People identify as a meaningful group by just having been born in a certain territory, whose institutions and laws most have a poor knowledge of. Nationalists just take that commonly-held belief to the extreme and, to get their needs met, ignore real relationships and turn on people who are a bit different.

But who is crazy about the political system or the government they live under? Most people resent them. They talk of the government and authorities that define the country as *them*. That makes sense - how much *do* states care about people? State support is a battleground in politics because in most countries there are well-organised groups of people - conservatives - who are determinedly against it. In most countries people do have rights that are worth defending but that's a practical thing. And people are entitled to more protections and rights than they get. Some countries are better in some ways, worse in others. All should be much better. None is worth the intense mass identification you get. It obscures big, practical issues about how people in them view each other and treat each other. People don't do enough together and for each other to justify the ever-present identification with nation and country.

Define Patriotism As 'The People' – ALL The People

The awful behaviour of conservatives to fellow-nationals, over centuries, and them having got ingrained into our minds that the nation means the institutions and laws that enable the awful treatment, has long made the case for challenging the notions of loyalty and patriotism. This work goes on to make that case, and for not supporting their wars with the abdication of adult responsibility of 'my country, right or wrong'. But the ideas of country, nation and nationality are so strongly established and difficult to challenge, it is maybe better to start re-

defining patriotism rather than trying to squash it, and to argue the view that a proper base for a nation than the governing institutions is *'the people'*. So a patriot defends and promotes the well-being not just of themselves but of their fellow-citizens, in the important, practical things. Supporting them with their health by voting for good, free health services; voting for them to have good social insurance, good education services, job security, the right to unionise, and more. A patriot will be a progressive, a social democrat or a socialist. And this view enables civilised people to challenge conservatives by saying 'Look, to say you are a patriot, you need to show more concern for your fellow-citizens'.

Common Culture?

There's little common feeling and supportive action between citizens simply as fellow-nationals. You never hear people say, about a contractual dispute, maybe a work-based one, or others, 'Oh, s/he's a fellow-countryman/woman, so I'll be considerate and fair about it'. When you say to them that nationality is just having been born in a particular political system, they say it's about something else, usually feelings of attachment to the surroundings and culture they grew up in and are familiar with, and about just identifying as part of 'the country'. These feelings have some validity but not enough to justify the intensity of nationalism. They are discussed at length in *Us, Politics, The System And Class pp. 176-229* but there are real antagonisms, soon to be discussed here.

How Countries Are Formed

But when people say 'the country' is based on a shared culture, ask 'Was that how the country was formed? Did the people, all those ordinary folk, feeling that culture, come together to form the political system that makes up a country? Or did it come from small numbers of powerful people, usually the landowner class and the business class, taking control, often by force?'

Take the country you identify with, and one other. Think about how they grew, as political power structures. In the main book *Us, Politics, The System And Class*, this is discussed in relation to Wales, Italy, Spain, the USA, India and Pakistan (*It's The Same All Over, page 177*).

And countries have usually been set up by some people long before the current population were born. And it rarely involved everybody. Take the American War of Independence, fought for freedom from the British landowner class who ruled both Britain and America up to 1783. Many of the colonists were acquiescent or even loyal to British rule and didn't support the war. Many people in Britain *did* support it, because they wanted freedom from the landowner class in Britain too! And today, few in any country play any part in the governing institutions they so identify with. The mass of citizens don't bother to get involved, not in proper, organised relationships, like in political parties, where membership is often quite a small number of citizens.

Where Is The 'We' Of National Identity?

What do the 'we' actually do with and for each other? How much do fellow-nationals *care* about each other? In most countries, real supportive relationships between people *simply as fellow-nationals* are shallow. Most countries are very unequal, very unfair and it is obvious and well-recognised.

Everyone in the USA knows about the excess power and wealth of the corporate business class, although they make the universal mistake of not actually calling business

people a class. But the Democratic National Convention in August '24, where Kamala Harris was endorsed as their candidate for President, was a stunning and encouraging statement of mutual support, of 'the country' being about fairness, neighbourliness, and decent behaviour to each other. We'll see if that philosophy prevails – seventy million Americans will vote for the fascism that Trump fronts for. And Harris's optimism and belief in all Americans having 'the opportunity to succeed' in small businesses is limited by the blunt reality that industrialism is more efficient than homesteading and small trading and will always dominate. So what most people are going to get is work in the industrial production of goods and services, dominated by business employers, corporate and smaller. Then, the right to unionise to make industrialised work bearable and even fulfilling has to be the main thing a government can do to help the majority to succeed in the life they actually live. Thankfully, the Democrats do get that, more than any other progressive parties.

But most countries are not genuinely supportive of the mass of the population, except for what trade unionists and progressives achieve. Casual assertions such as 'this is the best country in the world' (UK) and 'a great country' (the USA) leave this unexamined.

People's only joint activity as fellow-nationals is voting, every few years. (If they have the vote). It's not a shared, collective, open activity. There's not much real, structured political discussion, debate and decision-making between citizens. You just go to the school room and, privately, make a mark on a scrap of paper.

Conservatives, The National 'We' And 'The Individual'

Conservatives are big on the hugely collective 'we' of 'the country. They do it to bind people to the system that enables them to dominate everybody else. More on that below. But they contradict themselves nonsensically by also saying the country is all about the individual. About looking out just for yourself. They glorify it as freedom, the freedom to be aspirational, to succeed through your own efforts, be able to keep the benefits, to 'make it'. It's to justify their wealth and, when their fellow-nationals, mostly workers, suffer from the faults and failings of their system, to legitimise neglecting them in their most basic needs like health, homes and basic income. And to obstruct their fellow-nationals from taxing their wealth to support them. And to obstruct them from regulating the business people conservatives are and who they represent.

Conservatives And Reality - Collectivism -

But saying the basis of the country is the individual obscures the fact that almost everybody - business people themselves, and the great mass of people who are workers – *don't* simply make their living as individuals. A small proportion do - small traders and the genuine self-employed - but the great majority - including themselves - do it collectively. That is because we have industrial economies that run on mass industrial production of goods and services. It is a system of relationships fundamental to most countries. The most important relationship is in business and work, in the process where we produce goods and services, where wealth is made and wages earned. It is basic to everyone's lives. It is defined in laws which help define 'the country'. ***And in them, we relate intensely collectively***. Not democratically. But collectively all the same.

Conservatives and business people operate *collectively* as *companies and corporations.* Their 'self-made' success usually comes not just from their individual skill and effort but from them organising as collectives, as businesses; and organising the rest in collective, industrialised work. Yet they deny fellow-citizens the right to do the same and operate collectively as trade unionists, leaving them with just employment contract law that treats *them* as individuals.

Conservatives, The Business System & The Business Class

These basic relationships of business and work, established and maintained by conservatives, enable business people to exploit or discard the majority, their fellow-nationals: to employ them on unfair, unequal terms, to make money from them unfairly. They produce unfair, unequal results. Most countries have these relationships, implemented, sometimes viciously, by conservatives. They embody serious, differing, organised interests, with antagonisms between them.

So in most nations there is this class of person who disagrees with the nation being about all the people. They say it is about the strongest, most able, most enterprising being able to get as much as they can and bugger the rest. ***The class is business people and conservative parties aim to represent their interests.***

Well-established political arguments, and laws, deter and prevent people from challenging the inequality and unfairness of the business system. People allow themselves to be persuaded that it is just there, as if part of nature, and everyone just jostles in it for success or survival equally. But it is a set of relationships that favour business people, the business class, against everybody else. They create a class system, based on the reality of everyday trading relationships, so divisive that it seriously undermines the 'we' of national identity.

Conservatives *talk* with concern for all citizens, because their conservative parties need votes. But that's all it is – just talk, to mask a real lack of concern.

The USA has been the free-est experiment in all this. The common view in America is fiercely in favour of individual economic freedom, of opportunity, of 'making it big on your own', of 'the American Dream'. But industrialism and the reality of everybody's inter-dependence in the collectivism of the economy gets through. The support for Trump is a demand for collective help. They won't get it from him, he is a front man for the business class, who express themselves most nastily as the Republican party, diverting people's anger onto other people than their class.

The False Unity Of Nationalism

The business class, through their conservative parties, really run countries but people don't see it because they don't see them as a class. So the nationalist mindset unconsciously unites working class people with them and conservatives**.** ***The single most effective way of countering nationalism is Classism – theirs, first of all - to just show people the existence of the business class and to name them.***

Identities & Nationalism

That all describes reality doesn't it? So why *do* most working class people take on national identity, the cover for business-class domination and anti-working class conservativism? It's because, despite the talk of individualism, most people need to feel they belong to things bigger than themselves, to recognised or successful associations or organisations. They need group status and authority. You can see this with how people identify by town or region, by 'where you're from'. These identities don't involve

real relationships, they are mainly just tenuous associations with well-known places and a barely-associated aggregation of people. But people adopt them, because of that need to belong to something recognised.

Take people's fervent identification with football teams. Watch the international football championships, with almost everybody, in most countries, even those who don't really follow football, in a state of berserker assertion and aggression, or despair, over the performances of their national football team. (Though the writer is a football man.) Look at the extreme expressions of national identity by the fans, all the wearing the team kit, the face-painting, and the rest of it, broadcast approvingly and enthusiastically from the stadiums to living rooms all over the world. Ask if they express any real, practical collectivism in things that really matter.

Fan's identify with national football teams just because they live in or were born in the same political system. But beneath that, few have any real relationship with the teams. They've no cause to be proud of whatever the players achieve and no right to feel let down by them nor abuse them when they fail. In England, the national team that fans fervently support and expect success from is organised by the FA, The Football Association. Yet England fans despise the FA. And within the football fandom, there's no real unity. In Euro24 there was admiration for Scottish fans displays of fervent support, marching to the stadiums in kilts and playing bagpipes and all that. But the one thing most people know about football in Scotland is that supporters of the two big clubs, Celtic and Rangers, hate each other viciously. Same in England, between supporters of Manchester United, Manchester city, Liverpool, and Leeds. Same in Italy, Spain and Argentina.

And there's no real involvement in the actual game. Few of the fans who go wild about the national team's performance in the championships give any time and effort at the grassroots, developing facilities and players, the base for the national team. They don't get youngsters together on weekday evenings to coach them, get them together for matches, organise transport, get the nets and corner flags up, do any referee-ing. (This writer has done all that, organising and managing adult and youth teams. And he has been a regular in the most fervent section of fans at one of the biggest clubs in the world. So this is no anti-football outsider view.)

Supporting the national teams, and club teams, is baseless. It's associating with and identifying with *other people's* success and achievements, people you have no real links to – the people who actually play the game and the business people who run the teams. Aside from a game of football or whatever sport, it's pretty meaningless.

And take relationships between citizens more generally, of any country where many of them fervidly support the national team together. For example, the relationships between the landowning and business class, and the workers and peasants, of Brazil, and their political parties. Or Columbia. Or many other countries. People say it brings a much-needed degree of unity. It really covers up and enables the reality of deep disunity.

Many, maybe most, of the identities people adopt or are pressed on them are almost completely insubstantial, identities based on real relationships very

under-developed. People use the false ones because it's easy. You can loosely associate with people you have little real connection with. Buy a football shirt and wear it. Job done! You can associate and ride on the back of the group's recognition, status and success. It helps you overcome feelings of being isolated, insecure, insignificant.

Sports identities can be just good fun. But national identities mean more, because the nation has real, established political power, the power to make laws and wars. Belief in your country, in nationality and the political system, is the most serious political belief.

The Main Problem With National identity

It unites working people, unconsciously, with the business class and their conservative parties. National mindsets mask how badly they treat fellow-nationals and don't threaten their influence and power. *And that's the main objection to them*. And they are so strong, people acquiesce to whatever governments do, like make war, with the awful belief 'my country right or wrong.'

But being a fervid follower of a football team or a regional identity is just assumed to be what people do and is overwhelmingly endorsed. It comes from people's own need to identify but the media promote it energetically too. That's partly for newspaper sales and viewing figures but the media is mainly owned by business people and they magnify the fervour so as to push working class people into group mindsets that divert them and divide them from each other and unite them with the business class.

There *are* real relationships between people, of which more later, and there are real groups. But not in mass sporting identities. Enjoy the game. But realise that by taking these affiliations and rivalries as seriously as they do, to the extent of real, deep, lasting hatred between fans of different club teams, working class people divide themselves when they need to unite. Football is just the best example, people identify with many insubstantial social groupings, *Now if membership of a group involves real relationships, real mutual support, that makes sense. More on that shortly.*

The 'Insider' Identity

Still, again, why do people feel so strongly about 'the country' and nation and nationality, when they themselves will tell you plenty about what's wrong with it? Again, it's because each one person feels safer, stronger, more validated, as part of social groups or organisations that are widely recognised.

None are bigger than 'the nation', 'the country'. It has real authority and power. And even in the least democratic countries, it claims to be the guardian of the people's needs and promises to satisfy them. So when people feel they are owed better treatment they look to the nation for help and support. They feel a sense of entitlement, as they should.

But Conservatives have got people to see their system as just how the world is. So within the national identity, most people don't see the business system and how it unfairly favours business people and enables them to abuse and neglect themselves. And don't see them **as *a class***. So they haven't got a sense of entitlement to challenge and claim decent treatment from those of their fellow-nationals who actually run the country, conservatives and the business ***class***. And don't see how central to what they need is the right to unionise, to be able to stand up to the business class, at work and in politics. So they don't take on the business class as the main cause of their problems.

The 'Outsider' Identity

But from national identities they do get an 'insider' sense of entitlement over those seen as outsiders, those who 'aren't from here'. And when they think or are told that outsiders cause their problems, that turns some to turn on outsiders to attempt to protect their interests, to nationalism. They see the answer to their own mis-treatment by their fellow-national business class in worse treatment for outsiders. They don't 'punch up' against those who run the country and mistreat them, the business class, but 'punch down' against people they see as less entitled and turn on minority groups, immigrants and immigration, foreigners.

Its Migration, Not Immigration

Immigration is the main issue for nationalists. Colour of skin is the visual thing that gets them going, but, for people like white Eastern European workers, they do raise the same allegations of immigrants taking jobs, using services, eroding native culture and the rest. We need to discuss it more, but only while saying it's a minor issue compared to the power and the deeds of the business class, and their obstruction and destruction of public services. And asylum seekers are even less of an issue, except for them. And pointing out the benefits they bring, like staffing the services they are alleged to be overloading. Here's another - *Don't immigrants actually bring jobs?* Because, once here, they buy the usual goods and services. If you sold them that where they came from, as exports, that would be seen as good. Sell it to them in the host country, with them resident and shipping costs saved, being less costly, you can sell more. (That idea came to me when the Polish building workers over the road asked me where they could get their dinnertime sandwiches).

And treat immigration as part of an entirely normal thing that happens within countries, without such attention – migration. When this writer worked in industry in Manchester from the 1960's onwards, he always had Scottish workmates. And Welsh. After the Conservatives demolished a lot of industry in Britain in the 1980's, a huge proportion of Liverpool people moved out, mostly to London. Such movement is the same in its effects on jobs, services and housing to migration from outside but people don't generate the same hatred about it and don't make it the central cause of diversionary political movements.

Opposing Racism

Independent conservative political activists, the conservative media, build the base for racism by promoting this image of an insider group and a varying cast of outsiders - Jewish peoples, West Indians, Asians, Mexicans, immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, East European workers, Muslims. Anti-racists usually limit themselves to defending the outsiders.

But Look In The Other Direction – Look At The Insider Group

Looking at the scape-goated outsider groups is looking in the wrong direction. The real issue is the insider identity of white-ism, nativism and nationalism and what little sense it makes. The big problem with it is the business class and how they believe in looking after only themselves, viciously. Getting that widely recognised is the key to opposing nationalism and racism.

More generally, there's nothing about anyone's skin colour that guarantees their behaviour towards others of the same colour. That applies to people of all colours, black, Asian, whatever. The 'outsider' groups are usually talked of as 'them' but are rarely acting *as* a group. They are just individual humans doing their best for themselves, like we all do. So just like there's no real insider group, there is no real outsider group, in economic or political sense, just on less important cultural habits. So talk of an outsider 'them' is as wrong as the insider 'we'.

There is nothing about any racial group that means they are all on the same side on the real issues of how people relate to get what they need. Take white people as the example. People who see skin colour as important should be asked 'what do you think about how little support, and a lot of hostility, the white business class members of the national insider group give to native working class people? As they do to the working class altogether, of all origins?' And what is there about you and other ordinary people being white that means you are all on the same side? Are you prepared to do something for each other, like on the practical issues of health, jobs, public support, and the rest? If so, good, but that's a class attitude, not a nationalist one.

Ask What If They Got What They Want?

And what benefits do white workers expect from supporting nationalist parties and politicians that promise action against outsiders? They are business-class activists more than nationalists, simply diverting people from attacking *them*. They might do things against minorities to get support from nativist workers but they have no serious plans to do anything for their fellow-nationals, nothing really positive for working class people, white or any other colour.

Nationalists have little to say about what, if they got their way with anti-outsider action, they would do about all the other issues. Like jobs being crap, or poor job protection, under the business class and their system. Like support for you when ill or out of work. Like health services. Like education and housing. And transport. And most of all, about the working class's right to unionise, to be able to stand up to the business class. So we shouldn't only oppose nationalism because it's anti-outsider - we should ridicule it because that's all it does.

Some British workers voting to leave the EU, blaming migrant workers, American workers supporting businessman Trump because he attacks 'outsiders', and others supporting populists like him in some European countries, are examples of the mistaken actions that come from nativist, national and white-ist anti-outsider views. It is because they don't see how the problem is the people in the insider group - business people, the business class – who run the country. It is workers taking the limited opportunities available to them to strike out against being mistreated. Blaming 'outsiders' is going for the wrong targets and is futile but it's made easy by the whole widespread mindset of identifying by nationality or colour. You just have to feel you are an insider entitled to decent treatment from the political system (which you are), see 'outsiders' as a threat, and support populist, nationalist business-class politicians.

But it's not just some misguided workers who don't see the centrality of the business class and the business system. Even our activists and politicians, and liberal politicians and the liberal press, don't get that. They, and we, need to, urgently, and get it across to everybody, especially those who have turned to nationalism. Look at the full book, Us, Politics, The System And Class at **www.uspol.org**

Nationalism Is Easier Than Real Identities

Nationalism is easier than challenging the powerful insiders - business people, conservatives. To do that, you have to identify by real, relationship-based roles, mainly being a worker, and you have to do more. You have to join together with others on the basis of real commitments *to each other*. With national identity and white-ism you don't have to do any of that. No real input, no real commitment needed. Radical-sounding, populist business politicians will do the organising. Just back them. (Populism is when people, atomised, not seeing and not organised by their real relationships, take the easy route of voting for confident-sounding leaders who don't have much in the way of real policies, just rousing oppressed 'insiders' against innocent 'outsiders'.)

People Like Yourself in Other Nations

There are real relationships *between people in different countries* as well as within countries. And the same identity – decent people who will really do things for you and together with you - felt internationally, makes more sense than 'the nation'. Nationalism divides you from them, people like yourself, just because they live under different political systems, in other countries.

Nationalism & War

And nationalism is the bedrock belief that enables the biggest of horrors, fighting each other in wars that are usually for business class interests in access to and control of markets and materials.

In economic crashes, when 'normal' parties can't manage the economy, the damaging effects of national identity are extreme. Take what happened in Germany under the Nazis. Not only what was done to Jewish people, but to all Germans. Nationalist sometimes say the Nazis were right but the German people were led to disaster, to mass death and destruction. In invading and being beaten by Russia, in being heavily bombed and invaded by Britain and the US. So many lives ruined and lost. It was from the strength of the national idea that enough people voted for the Nazis to let them into government. Note though that in the last free election, in 1933, only 26% of German people did that. But that was enough to let them form a government, with a party of big business people.

The Effects Of Nationalism On Progressive Politics

In most countries, conservative parties encourage everybody to feel they are part of 'the country'. But so do the 'newspaper' and other media owners, who are conservatives, business people, operating outside the party system. They reassure them with the inclusivity of belonging to the country and frighten them by dramatising threats from the various 'outsider' groups. The inclusivity diverts workers from 'punching up' against the big business class; the supposed threats from 'outsiders' divert them into 'punching down' against them. Most people are not taken in by nationalist parties who promise the futile policy of attacking outsiders while leaving big business people alone but Conservatives don't need to divert everybody like this, just enough to split and reduce the opposition to them. it doesn't take many workers to be pulled that way to stop progressive parties from getting into government.

Another Look At Nationalism, Colour & Racism

Let's look a bit more at what people base national identities on. As said, on being born under a particular governing system. Then, a shared culture or 'way of life'. But even amongst nativists, there are too many varieties of culture for there to be a single one worth defining as a national identity. And of course having many cultures is a benefit, it enriches life. Anyone for a curry?

But colour of skin is a big identifier, visually. But what real meaning is there in skin colour? Certainly not enough to base political, group identities on. It's nowhere near as important for grouping people as what they *do,* especially their roles in business and work, on how they relate to other people, including nationalists. We notice it because there's an evolutionary benefit in spotting difference - we notice it more than sameness. – and we need to rise above that involuntary reaction.

'Outsider' groups themselves adopt, in a positive way, the identity seemingly given them by colour. But to identify positively by colour, and sometimes by gender, is as low in meaning as the hostile discrimination. Yes, there is the shared issue of the oppression placed upon you by 'insiders' and it has to be fought. But to base politics on shallow 'happenstance' identities instead of on real business and work relationships is accepting the discrimination!

In earlier history and still ,in some geographical locations, there have been societies where everybody is of the same colour and culture. But there's nothing fixed about it. People don't really function together by race, certainly not in today's industrial and urban societies. There's more to you than your colour or gender. For example, working class women are more oppressed by their class than by their gender. Working class people of colour, the same. So refuse to be discriminated against because of these identifiers *and* don't self-define by it.

Meaningful identities need to come from real relationships. Outsiders as well as insiders need to see the centrality of people's actual behaviour and politics, of business and job relationships, see the business class identity and the working class identity, and see, in the light of that, the superficiality of the commonly accepted identity groups.

Real Groups and Classism To Tackle The 'Insider' Mindset

In all countries, there *are* real relationships, that really mean something, and real groups to feel you belong to, to identify with. There's real (grassroots) football clubs and other sports clubs, parent's associations, neighbourhood associations, motoring clubs, charities, run by many thousands of volunteers; religions. And lots more. Maybe family too. ***But class is the main one. Again, start with identifying, naming and exposing the business class.***

Then, where workers, the working class, organise in unions, there's mutual protection and promotion of each other's interests in their jobs, against business people and state employers, in the essential activity of making a living. Being able to rely on each other by class, at work, against bosses' bossiness, by being unionised. And not just locally but across your employers operation, that can be worldwide. And talking politics to each other as organised workmates. *And taking part in progressive political parties.*

What *real* groups do *you* belong in? Who can you *really* identify with - people you can define as a group because they share your problems and offer support, who will actually do things for you and with you and for others like you?

Equality For All Workers - How To Disperse The 'Wokism' Attack

All workers are treated unfairly because all politicians (and everybody else, really) support or accept the business system and so don't challenge the business class's unfair power over all workers. But some are badly treated more so because of colour, gender or personal preferences. Liberals and progressives are more civilised than conservatives. Mis-treatment based on people's personal biological or private attributes is so obviously wrong, they tackle it. Oppressed white workers see this, and are encouraged to see it by conservatives, as favouritism while they see neglect and oppression of 'the white working class.' They *are* neglected and oppressed and need to tackle that, but turning on workers who are even worse treated because of minor differences but have got some protection from that by fighting for it and by decent politicians granting it, is out of order. Absurdly, conservatives, who clearly are of and represent the real elite, the business class, point worse-off workers at the liberals, who, being professionals, business people, or better-off workers, are portrayed a 'liberal metropolitan elite'.

*To counter this diversion, liberals, progressives and organised workers need to challenge not only discrimination on personal attributes but the bigger discrimination against **all** workers in the unfair relationships of the business system and politics.* The key to challenging it and them isn't in legislation from above, though that should be done. It's in supporting the empowerment of workers with the right to unionise, laid out in my book '*The Right To Unionise'* which is mainly the relevant extracts from the work *'Us, Politics, The System And Class'.*

Just Political Systems

The actual existence of a country, with a political system and laws and all that, is significant enough, sure. But we need a pragmatic attitude to it. Live in it and with it as far as daily life requires, but don't feel serious, emotional collective identity with people just because they were born and live under the same political system as you, because it has little to do with whether or not they'll treat you right. Far from it - some of them are your worst enemies. Recognise how shallow national identity is and reject the flag-waving. It's just people grasping personal significance by identifying with something big and successful that, in most cases, they aren't *really* part of. 'My country right or wrong' is an abandonment of mature, adult citizenship in favour of allowing people at the top of the institutions do some awful things. Iraq. Stay emotionally independent of them and those of your fellow-nationals who don't care about you. Particularly conservatives and their class, the business class.

Declare your emotional and group identity independence from what are just institutions of government and law. Don't follow the government blindly on international issues, don't let national identities excuse illegal, mass-murdering wars, made in your name. And in some countries they have excused the most awful genocide. We do need to feel part of big, successful organisations but they should be those we really do get support from and, as much as you can, contribute to. That's argued thoroughly in *Us, Politics, The System And Class* at www.uspol.org

Classism And Nationalism

People do need something to believe in but we have to work to show them something meaningful and decent. The big division in a country is between the business class and the rest, who are mostly the working class, but the term is a mess of meaning. The real meaning is examined in *Us, Politics and The System.* ***But for here, let's just say we need to counter nationalism with Classism. But not, initially, working class classism. The starting point is to get people to see the existence of the business class and their dominance.*** They're not all bastards, but many are. And their system pressures them all to be, unless regulated by strong unionism and progressive government.

Working class classism, class awareness, is much easier to promote once you establish the business class. It flows naturally from it. It's not very strong at present but that's got a lot to do with people not taking a cool look at the system, at how industrial production organised by the business class makes most people workers. *Us, Politics, The System And Class at* www.uspol.org, is a comprehensive explanation of the essentials of the system.

Working class classism (which has nothing to do with minor things like culture, accent and origin) has been strong. This writer was involved with union activity in the 1970's, in engineering and had a career as a trade union educator. He also had some dealings with miners during the strike in the 1980's, and most of them were *solid*.

And when you stand back from sharing national identity with the business class, you realise you have to be internationalist too. That you should identify with 'the people' and workers in other countries too. Because you have real links with them that mean as much as those you have with your fellow-worker fellow-nationals. Conservatives themselves, while they urge you to be nationalist, actually operate their trade, their financial dealings and businesses in many countries. That links you too with their staff there. While smaller businesses may not operate in other countries, their supplies and sales are almost certainly international to a degree. It's an inter-linked world.

So if you want support and help from others, you can't just look inside the country you live in. The business class don't. While pressing nationalism on workers, and using it to promote their business interests, they also act internationally. One of the first things the Conservative party did in the UK after getting into government in 1979 was to remove restrictions on them sending capital to wherever benefited them the most, rather than keeping it in 'the country' where it could benefit their fellow-countryfolk.

Countries are just the political and legal systems. Be against all national identities and nationalisms. (Except when its resistance to real aggression from other countries.)

How To Persuade People To Tackle Nationalism

People expect the leading political activists (politicians) to do all the work. (Meaning progressive parties, don't expect anything of conservatives.) But they are seeking people's votes so challenging their views can lose them votes. Conservatives do that all the time, by their media posing as being not the conservative *parties.* But we haven't got an activist progressive media.

Progressive parties can still do it, if they took it up thoughtfully as an ongoing process not limited to election periods. But ordinary citizens and workers are the best people to do it. We aren't asking for our fellow-citizens and fellow-workers votes, we can just talk with them as equals. We talk to each other all the time, all we need to do is thoughtfully question the assumptions people make about national identity. Supporting the national football team and other sports activities is one. Just ask 'What, actually, do

you or I have to do with these people? Good luck to them, but we just live under the same government, we have nothing else to do with them and their sporting activity.' But raise also the positives – that an awful lot of fellow-citizens do an awful lot of good things together, in various groupings.

People say social media makes a big difference to how we discuss things and how views get spread these days. Maybe. But we do talk to each other face to face, as people who know each other, still. In *Us, Politics, The System And Class* and at www.uspol.org is a short paper *How To Talk Politics With Each Other.*

Challenge Nationalism with Classism

Promote the idea that patriotism is about the people, not the institutions of government, and to be a proper patriot, you need to care about your fellow-country-folk, and probably be a socialist, or at least a social democrat or liberal.

But, as said, the most effective thing is to just raise the existence of the business class. Just expose and name them, as a class. And then their role and dominance, and how most of them believe in a self-centred, selfish approach to life and wealth and oppose public services that help the rest to get by despite them cornering vast wealth. Say they are not all bastards but the relationships we have with them are not co-operative enough to justify the level of shared national identity that is usual. When they talk of a national 'we', challenge them and their conservative representatives to behave in a more civilised way towards their fellow-citizens, at work and in provision of public services. And when you name the business class and their place in society, it follows easily that most of the rest are working class and need to adopt the national 'we' with the business class and conservatives less fervently. And to organise as themselves, to create a proper working class identity independent of the business class, and unionise widely.

Why Labour In The UK Is Fit To Govern & Manage The Economy

This paper references the UK Labour party and Conservative party but conservatives and their media have some success globally in charging progressive parties with not being competent and taxing and spending too much. It's a myth.

Conservative Parties Should Never Get Into Government

In the UK, conservative parties should never get into government because *amongst citizens* there's probably a 60% majority of progressive, civilised, non-conservatives; and amongst those citizens who *vote,* a majority of anti-conservatives. Conservatives never get support from more than about 30% of the electorate.

Much talk about them, amongst Labour activists and amongst ordinary people, is about how nasty they are. Most people know it. They even know it themselves! *But conservatives aren't the real problem.* The problem is us, this non-Conservative and anti-Conservative majority. Why we don't persuade each other to vote so that we always have Labour or some other form of progressive government that serves most people (which the Conservatives don't, and don't intend to)?

One reason is those who waste their vote on parties with no chance of

winning a seat. This splits the non-Conservative vote and is what allows them to win. Then there's those who won't vote Labour for just one or two policies or actions they don't like, when other parties do the same or worse. There's those who place too much importance on the party leaders and won't vote progressive because they 'don't like' the leader. There's those who say 'they're all the same' and don't vote at all. Election returns show that turnout is usually around 70%. So, 30% of the electorate don't vote. But it's reported in the UK that another 8 million who could vote don't even register to.

These actions are self-harming because they just let something worse, i.e. the Conservatives, win seats with minority support and get into government. These actions by our fellow-voters, and how we can tackle them, are covered in another brief paper, titled ***How To Talk To Each Other About Politics***, another free download from www.uspol.org

But another reason conservatives get into government is that we let them and their business-owned press mislead many voters with the claim that Labour is not competent to run the economy, and taxes and spends too much. Their big example has been saying the 2008 crash shows Labour is not competent. This paper refutes that and long-standing, similar allegations. The main arguments are:

- *Managing 'The Economy' Really Means Managing Business People*
- *Labour's Record On Public Spending, Deficit and Debt Is Fine*
- *A Party's Aims Matter As Well As Competence*

SUMMARY

'Managing the economy' really means managing business people. They are hostile to being managed. The Conservatives key aim is to allow them that – it's called 'laissez-faire (let them be) and 'free markets.' The 'New Labour' governments conceded to it. (They called it 'free markets'). The 2008 crash showed it doesn't work because business people are too selfish and reckless to be allowed such freedom.

On public spending, until the crash and having to bail out the business class, Labour's public spending deficits were less than the previous Conservative government's.

And voters shouldn't judge governments only on 'competence' but also on what they aim to be competent at. The Conservatives represent business people and try to be competent at representing them and neglecting and abusing the rest. Labour aims to back everybody.

FULL TEXT -

Competent To Govern – The Labour Party in Britain Managing The Economy

Conservative politicians and all the conservative, business-owned newspapers convince many people that governing is just a managerial task, only a matter of competence. Especially managing 'the economy'. Then they convince many that Labour are not competent at it. It is a key obstacle to Labour winning elections. It's not true. Labour must rebut the charge. But it's not only Labour's job. It's up to voters themselves. More on that at the end of this paper. But to rebut the conservative claim, Labour needs to first be clear with voters what the basic issue is:

- we rely on business people to organise most of the goods, services and jobs we need.
- 'the economy' is mostly what business people do in their daily business activities.
- relying on what they do for their own private benefit to result in public good and the good of the majority, is a problematic policy. For Labour.

- It's not a problem for conservatives. Their key *aim* is to free business people from this responsibility.
- A Labour Government's role in 'managing the economy' is mainly about what freedoms, incentives and rewards you have to allow and give business people to persuade them to manage the economy so it works for the public good, as near as we can get them to.
- With this made clear to voters, Labour can make sure the blame goes where it belongs when there are problems or crises.

The 2008 crash. Labour needs to tell voters that the last 'New Labour' government didn't fail to manage the economy that what they actually did was concede to the Conservative, business class's arguments for government not to manage the economy; to allow business people to manage it. Business people caused the crash, led by their financial element, the bankers.

New Labour only caused it by having conceded to this conservative, business class policy. They conceded to 'free markets' and conservative policies of de-regulation of financial trading. The crash wasn't them being incompetent, but it was them being craven before the decades-long conservative onslaught against state influence in the economy. The arguments for democratic political oversight of the economy, for some control, for some state regulation, for a strong role for the state in the economy, was marginalised in favour of 'free markets'.

The Labour leadership of the time conceded to this too readily, naively. And they - Blair and Brown and others - actually believed in letting 'markets' - business people and bankers – run the economy rather than themselves. What plonkers they were. And the rest of us for letting them be our leaders.

To be fair to Labour, they, and the Democrats in the US, and similar parties worldwide, concede to the business class argument to leave the economy to them because not enough voters - enough of *us* - back them strongly enough, to challenge them. We are not politically organised enough to challenge the business class position on free markets.

After the 2008 crash, Labour bailed out the banks. *That was actually a feat of economic competence*. So while apologising for allowing the business class to bring us to such a crisis, they should boast about their competence in stabilising it. (Though there are arguments that they should have let the idiots collapse. But they do have such a huge role how the economy operates that maybe that would have been too radical?)

Conservatives claim free markets are the best way to run the economy for everybody. But it's really because free markets mean low regulation of business people - the people they represent, the people they themselves are. Free markets are proven not to be in everybody's best interests by the huge inequality in wealth, people being treated terribly at work, and by business people's greed and recklessness causing crises. So, again, it was ridiculous that when they and those of them who are bankers took it into a crisis, *Labour got the blame*.

If Labour are going to carry out these conservative, business class policies like this, they need to be clear about it and why they feel they have to do it. *Labour **has** to allow business people to run the economy,* to a degree, because not enough voters show willing to back Labour to regulate business people and 'free markets'. So Labour need to be open and *clear with voters about this biggest of all political issues* - that they have to strike a balance between regulating and taxing them for

the public good; and their readiness to behave decently or to be selfish and ruthlessly greedy. Where they won't, the least we should do is call them out on patriotism and their lying claims to believe in 'the country' and 'the nation' which really, is 'the people'. And, when business people mess up, make sure the blame goes where it belongs. After 2008, 'New Labour' was only incompetent, like we were we as voters, in allowing the Conservatives, whose policies Labour had followed, to get into government by painting Labour as incompetent.

Environmental Crisis, Growth, The Business System and Labour

Growth is taken to be an absolute essential. It's not. And it's causing climate disaster. All politicians see it as essential because - one, business people insist on the right to 'put their money to work' and 'get a return on capital'. To constantly re-invest. That causes ever-greater productivity. That means less need for staff, redundancies and closures. Two, the business class insist on the right to compete with each other so they can all have a go at getting rich. Competition has its points but it *forces* business people to constantly re-invest, to keep up with each other on efficiency, prices and quality. That too causes jobs to decline. *So governments have to support growth to provide jobs for the people made redundant.*

Also, we could tackle poverty and low wages and get improved living standards and public services by taking from the rich. The inequality of wealth is disgusting. But, taken in by conservative arguments about taxes (see later) not enough voters back Labour to do it. So Labour has to use growth to get improved incomes and living standards for all without taking from the rich. That means encouraging business people to be active. Then growth enables Labour in government to siphon off an amount that enables improved living standards and services for the working/worker class without having to take from the rich.

And while the Tories want growth anyway for their own greed, they too want it so they can allow the rest, whose votes they need, some improvements in living standards without taking less themselves.

Conservative, business class governments are so convinced about their entitlement to make money they care little about the consequences of growth. They find it difficult to do much about climate change, for example. They have to make a show of caring about it but can't bring themselves to regulate themselves.

Progressive governments *do* care about the consequences. But, being too politically scared to balance society by taking from the rich, they too need growth. Since we are a long way from having the confidence to actually run society, more rationally, ourselves, they need business growth to provide jobs and improved living standards.

Both Labour and the Conservatives need growth to provide jobs for the workers (voters) discarded because of the efficiencies gained by investment, as well as for improved living standards. It's all madness, because we produce too much. Constant investment in greater efficiency, alongside reducing the need for jobs, produces ever–increasing amounts of goods and services and it's causing climate disaster. the business class foist these on people with aggressive marketing, with the known power of advertising.

Labour need to tell voters that because business people are the economy, Labour has to strike a deal with them, and business people don't take to it very co-operatively. Insofar as they don't, we should call out business people and conservatives out on their

claims to being patriotic. Before arguing patriotism they have to operate in the interests of fellow-citizens, not just their own.

The Myth Of High Labour Spending

Another part of the conservative charge is that the last Labour government, and Labour governments generally, spent too much and caused a large deficit in public finances. This wasn't true. Labour need to tell voters that.

After Labour pulled them out of it in 2008, conservatives (ludicrously) blamed the crisis on Labour's alleged excessive public spending. People don't like the technical stuff, apparently, but this writer hasn't got the emotion-manipulating skills that apparently work better, so here goes with the technical stuff.

Here are the facts - (see Ref 1, at end) - How it works -

- The *budget deficit* is how much public spending in one particular year isn't covered by taxation. To cover it, they borrow, to a large degree from rich, business, conservative people. Also from pension funds.
- Labour's record on the deficit up to the end of their last government, up to 2010, is actually good. In government, from 1997 to 2007, the average deficit was 1.4%, *half the average under the 18 years of the previous Conservative governments*. In 2007, it was the same as the Conservative average - 2.6%.
- the *national debt* is the running total of deficits not yet paid off. The government pays interest on it, to the well-off, until paid off. Before the banker's crash, it was 36% of the value of the economy (GDP). Interest paid on it was 2% of GDP. That was less than the Conservatives ever managed between 1979 and 1997. It shot up to about 70% in 2010 of course, as Labour saved the economy from the error of the conservative policy of leaving the economy to business people. After nine years of Conservative government and austerity, they hadn't reduced it. The public still owe the rich all that money.
- Because of the 2008 bankers crash, Labour rescued the bankers from their 2008 financial meltdown with public money that then did increase the national debt a lot. The Conservatives lied in presenting this as a result of Labour public spending, got away with it, and people let them into government, and they've used the whole amount as cover for attacking public spending and state support for the mass of the voters. It's absurd but it happened.

Government borrowing is Ok, especially when used for investing in things that help the economy. No reason why the government shouldn't do it. If they didn't borrow the money from whoever has it, business people would, and would invest it in other things, probably of less public usefulness. The banks are allowed to loan and owe many many times more 'money' than they actually have, which is far more dodgy, as we know from 2008. Yet since this is them as private business organisations doing it, Conservatives think that's fine. (For more on money as a lubricant for the economy, not a fixed thing in itself, read 'Money' by Mary Mellor.

The Myth Of High Labour Taxation

Conservatives deter voters from voting for progressive parties like Labour by portraying them as parties of high taxes. They say "We believe in letting people keep as much as possible of what they earn".

But they are only talking about Income Tax. In the Uk there are at least three other major taxes to take into account in calculating overall tax rates. They are National Insurance, Corporation Tax and VAT (sales tax).

Income Tax is usually about 20% of most of most people's earnings. 40% of someone's earnings over £50,000.

But National Insurance is a basic tax too. Most people pay 12% but people on more than about £50,000 a year only pay 2% on their income above that. So this basic tax is not 12% of earnings for them. The more income they are on, it's an ever-declining percentage. So they pay far less than the 12% most people pay.

Corporation tax is on people's earnings as business owners. See it as income tax on what they earn before they draw a regular wage from the business. It's only about the same as everybody pays on their wages. And there's Capital Gains Tax at a similar rate.

Then there's sales tax, VAT, a large share of the tax take. Everybody pays it at the same rate, currently 20%.

Take these taxes together and, with the National Insurance cut-off, corporation tax as low as standard income tax, and VAT paid the same by everybody, and, as research has shown, the richer you are, the less tax you pay as a percentage of income (which is how most people would judge taxation).

Of course, this is before you look into tax evasion.

So let's not allow conservatives to get away with talking of tax only as Income Tax, and claiming they are parties of low taxation. Let's always insist on including National Insurance, Corporation tax and VAT in the calculation and show how conservatives tax richer people less than the rest.

Governing - Not Just Managerialism – Aims Matter As Well As Competence

As said, conservatives and business newspapers get many voters to see governing as mainly just managerial. To see it as just a politically-neutral skill, and that Labour hasn't got it. When people raise the issue of competence, Ok, we have to answer it, as has been done above.

But we also need to ask them to think about what any party's aims are anyway. What do they try to do? When fellow-voters raise the issue of competence, we need to tell them governing is not just managerial, not just a matter of a party's competence. Ask them to also look at what any party's intentions are anyway. What do they aim to do? What - and who - are they for?

The Conservative party present what they do as being best for everybody, for all voters, all citizens. But they simply don't aim to govern and manage the economy for the benefit of all. They intend to manage it for the benefit of the people they represent – business people, rich people, the business *class.* Then they aim to do enough for enough of the rest – managers, better-off skilled workers – to get enough votes to win elections.

Look at what they actually do and it's obvious. They promote 'free markets' as being best for everybody. But really it's because they give business people the freedom to look after themselves at everyone else's expense. They are forced to make a show of their policies being best for all because they are a minority, and the majority have the

votes.

Again, we need to call them out on patriotism. They have to operate not just in their own interests but in the interests of fellow-citizens. Anything less than treating fellow-citizens with respect and mutual concern is not patriotism.

Conservative competence may be worse for the majority than incompetence! We don' t want them competent at exploiting and neglecting people.

With many voters, and the media, they get away with their pretence of governing for all. It's quite an achievement. But it's also our fault for not being organised and educated enough to expose them. One way is by us leaving many people who are victims of the Conservatives to get their political news and opinions from them, from their business-owned media, instead of from fellow-workers and progressive sources.

Labour and other Social democratic parties genuinely do aim to do the best for the majority. Some voters think Labour fails them in that. But the fact that business people dominate the economy and, to a degree, voter's political thinking, obstructs them. Labour doesn't yet have the ideas to challenge them. Neither do most voters, so they don't push Labour into challenging them. For Labour to challenge them effectively they need more backing from voters. Voters need to be told this and to tell each other. Not as scolding from on high, but as a discussion amongst the majority.

To repeat - in response to the charge that Labour is not competent to govern, *aims* have to be raised with voters as well as competence.

Not Only Labour's Job To Challenge The Myth Of Them Not Being Fit To Govern.

Most voters view political parties like official providers of government that have a public duty to offer voters alternative governing packages. As if the parties themselves are a public service. They see themselves as passive consumers, judging and choosing between the alternative official providers of government.

But voters need to be told that parties are not that. That parties are just those people from amongst voters themselves who take the trouble to be organised and active and try to do what they think best for the people they are of and aim to represent.

Voters who aren't active in politics themselves should not over-readily fault those who are. Whatever shortcomings Labour has, the members are not, as many voters are, unorganised and passive. Instead of expecting 'politicians' to do it all for us, voters themselves need to take an active, self-respecting role in politics, in organised contact with each other politically. It's every voter's responsibility, to themselves and to each other.

And to not get their political news and opinions from the business-owned media, who are against their interests. Then they, and not just Labour itself, can rebut Conservative arguments like the charge of Labour not being fit to govern.

(1) figures from The Guardian, 10 August 2015, Larry Elliot, 'Labour must stop apologising for what it got right'. His source – a House of Commons briefing paper by Matthew Keep.

The Rich - Are They Worth the Expense?

They 'take care of business'. More than some of *us* do. But how much wealth should they get? (Written before 2008, when the bankers showed how socially irresponsible the business class are).

When you hear ordinary people and the media talking about the state of things, about political problems, about 'the economy', anybody or any thing seems to be up for the blame - except the rich, the business class. The behaviour of the people who sit on boards of directors and the big shareholders is pretty much under-examined. From around the time I started this piece, here's some everyday examples of people blaming or attacking somebody for our problems, but not the people who actually own and run the show.

Somebody I work with grumbled about all the manufacturing jobs going overseas. She says it's the union's fault, for wanting too much pay (and probably good hours, holidays, and safety.) So for her it's the workers fault the jobs are going. And not, it seems, the fault of the Company Directors who actually made the decision, for the benefit of themselves and their shareholders - *even though both of them have much higher incomes than the workers who are being blamed for being too expensive*.

Another example - we got talking to a fellow-walker coming down off Snowdon. He's an immigrant from Latvia, nice enough bloke, glad to be able to work here. But goes on about 'those who don't want to work.' They're the problem, it seems.

And another - at the Labour Party conference of 2003, Tony Blair, faced by strong opposition to his activities as a war criminal and a privatiser, makes a big thing about how 'resolute' he is under pressure. About how tough he is at standing up to those of us who disagree with him. So it's Ok for him to be tough, then. But not Ok for workers who are resolute in defending their conditions, who resist privatisation, by striking for example. That's bad toughness, it seems. But for all Blair's boastful tough guy talk, look how timid he is with the business class! No toughness there. He gives them all they want. Won't tax them even as much as Thatcher did. And look how timid he is with Bush ....

But where are the rich and powerful, the business class, in these sorts of everyday political discussions? They're hardly mentioned. Economic problems like jobs, growth, and competitiveness are blamed on unions, greedy or lazy workers, or on 'scroungers'; or on teachers and the education system; or on public spending and the taxes raised to pay for it. Politicians are blamed - some say they're all useless or bent. Asylum seekers, lone parents, black people, immigrants, Asians. All are blamed regularly for whatever is wrong. But how often are the people who own and control businesses, small and large, blamed? The merchant bankers, the directors and shareholders of, for example, Centrica, British Aerospace, Arriva, Stagecoach, etc etc. Make your own list here - how many big companies can you name? How often are their actions and worth and decisions held up to public scrutiny? And examined for social accountability? Very rarely.

When they close a factory, it does become an issue in the news. But really, their decisions are accepted. Unions and government plead, but there's little basic challenge to them, little real criticism of them – nothing like trade unions get. And in the general political debate, week by week, and at election times - the behaviour of the rich section of the business class is not really a central issue.

Wouldn't you think their wealth, decisions, investment, research and development spending, training, and export of investment, would be much higher up

the discussion agenda than they are? After all, these are the wealth creators, according to themselves and Blair. They actually own and control the economy, jobs, and wages. They way they talk, they *create* the economy by being so enterprising; they *are* The Economy.

And they could be right, to a degree. One of the most original things I want to say, for a work like this, that I think isn't often acknowledged when socialists criticise the business class, is that they do seem to 'take care of business' in many ways. Probably more so than the rest of us. And that does create 'the economy'. Many of them are Ok, just sharp, confident, capable people. *Their system* is anti-human, and so are many or most of them personally and politically. But people running small and big businesses take on a lot of responsibility for making things happen. Let's acknowledge that. For that they probably deserve rewarding. The question though, is How Much?

But having said they are 'the economy', would the rest of us really just lie down and die without them? I don't think so. We've never done so in all other forms of economic organisation, primitive farming, feudal farming, early home-industrial manufacturing. We've got on with organising our survival. It's just now, the way capitalism 'works', that they are in that position and we are in ours. Of course, they do it for private greed and we laugh at their claim that they 'create jobs'. They only do that as a by-product of making money for themselves, and they make as few jobs as possible, don't they? So challenge them when they make out that they do it for the greater good of us all.

Given their position, wouldn't you think social and political scrutiny of their actions would be nearer the top of the agenda than, say, asylum seekers. All right, you do get some references to Fat Cats, but really, given their importance - they hardly get a mention. At election time - where's the discussion about what this so-important crew do, and what to do with them? A bit about taxing them more, maybe. But not much else. Why is this?

They get an easy ride. Blair claims to be tough with everybody, but he sure as hell isn't with the rich, the business class. Where we workers want employment rights, he says no, a flexible labour market is what we need. But 'flexible labour market' simply means weak rights for workers. And for him, employers can have that, have us at a big disadvantage, to misuse and exploit us. Since when we get organised in our unions, we overcome the flexible labour market, Blair and now Brown says to them Yeah, you can have laws restricting our freedom to act as unions. Yet 'flexible Labour markets' are presented not as being for the employer's benefit exactly – they're presented as a good thing for 'the economy'. And privatisation, to allow public services to be run for profit-making? Again, it's presented as being a good thing in itself, for all of us. So they can have it.

The rich and powerful business class hardly get a mention in political discussion of who should do what, and who should get what. They just quietly get given most of what they want.

What Are They Worth?

What do these people contribute, who are they, and how much should they get? How much should we restrict what they get? If we didn't give them so much, would they stop doing what they're doing, running the economy? Would they take their capital and business nouse out of the country, as they often

threaten to do? Would we be worse off without them? These are some very big political questions, and they are normally left unasked. You have to assume that Blair - and millions of us - are simply accepting that these people are essential, they have to be allowed to do what they want and they have to be given whatever they want. Blair does fairly openly assume that – 'the wealth creators' are vital to the economy and its growth, so he lets them get on with it. We all need their enterprise, their entrepreneurial skills, the hard work of the business person small as well as large. When he talks of 'the market economy', to a large degree that's just code for letting the enterprising types get on with it. All the rest will get, is what can be spared from what these super-people want.

They seem to want an awful lot. There are estate agents in the UK who specialise just in selling second-homes. There's about a million of these in the UK. And then there's those in France, Spain, Barbados, Mustique, Italy, wherever. I'm writing with a lot of UK experience here. But it's all easily translatable to the US; and to South America where the super-rich live behind high-walled fences with private security. Look at Brazil, with the biggest gaps in wealth distribution in the world - shanty-town favelas alongside walled super-wealth. These people have yachts costing hundreds of thousands of pounds, BMW cars, Ferraris, planes, SUV's. In MCN, my weekly bike paper, you get articles about people with motorbike collections worth half-a-million. Why blame workers for not accepting worse conditions, when jobs are exported because labour costs are lower in Taiwan, Singapore, and Indonesia, when there's all this wealth about? In North Wales, I see the yachts, the expensive cars, the second homes. Do they deserve them?

I've written elsewhere in *Us, Politics, The System And Class* about what it is that determines how much the rich get and how much people-as-workers don't. It's the mechanism, the single most important mechanism in our lives - that any business person buying labour from many different suppliers, can pay each one far less than the value of what they earn for the business because any one can be disposed of if they don't like it, as long as the rest of the supply is maintained. ***They've Got Many Others.*** Allowing that the rich may deserve more for being so socially useful with their aggressive selfish enterprise (isn't that clever of them, how aggressive selfishness produces social good?), the central reason they are able to get so much, is that single mechanism - ***They've Got All The Rest...*** *There is nothing fair about it. What they get has nothing to do with what they deserve.*

In considering this big question of how much the rich and powerful should get, I'm conceding, from my experience of working life, that some people <u>do</u> work harder than others and deserve more. And some don't. There's no doubt about it. I worked in a wide range of jobs, some where everybody was supposedly committed to the work and not just doing it for the wages. And some of us *<u>don't</u>* 'take care of business'. There were a number of people, in different jobs I did and at different times, who didn't pull their weight. *Many – but by no means all – of the people who set up and run businesses, do 'take care of business'.*

Maybe these able, enterprising, initiative taking, wealth creating people do a job for the rest of society, and we have to put up with it? That, surely, is the reason they're behaviour is so little criticised by all the main political parties, and why they look elsewhere, at our unions and at education, when they're looking for things to blame for what's wrong?

But if you first look at how business classes develop, at *history,* they've not got

quite such a worthy record. Take the development of industrial production (which is why we have so much material wealth.) *We were, most of us,* originally, working in self-reliant small businesses, taking care of business. We were mostly small farmers and independent craftsmen. The classic example in the UK was the weavers, who ran their own business from the family home, and sold their cloth independently. They were put out of business, and turned into wage workers, by those who got enough money – capital – to invest in expensive new machinery and factory production. This money in most cases came not from the rare talents or hard work of the factory owners, but from money made in the shocking, murderous brutality of the slave trade.

Here's an example, from looking round Penrhyn Castle near Bangor in North Wales. The Pennant family who 'built' it were slave-traders in the West Indies. They invested the profits in the Welsh slate quarries, and got very wealthy. The quarrymen didn't. They went up cliff faces in all weathers at all times of the year, some fell off, or got shards of slate in their eyes. I've visited the hospital and seen the records of their injuries, and of the dreadfully meagre diet they existed on. Mainly lots of tea for the caffeine drug boost, and bread.

The castle is something else. There's a banqueting hall with minstrel gallery, a smoking lounge with billiards table as big as your whole house. It's a really obscene thing. One of the staff asked me what I thought of it and I said, disgusting, because of the exploitation. But, she said, don't you think the workers who built it would be pleased with it as a monument to their skills? No, I said, I'm pretty sure they'd have rather their kids hadn't had malnutrition diseases and had decent schools and hospitals instead.

But still, let's grant that in many cases, the business person's wealth came and still comes from being more willing than some of us to take care of business and work hard at getting things done, meeting customers' needs, and so on. Like any of us could, they say. (Even while saying that, a lot of research shows the same families continuing in power, over generations, and that despite the examples of the Alan Sugars, the self-made men and women of this world, there's not as much social mobility as the business class claim with their 'anyone-can-make-it-if-they-work-hard-enough' propaganda.)

Some can be decent - say Cadbury's, Lever Bros, the philanthropic capitalists. I know personally some decent people who run their own business. But in general, they're a pretty unpleasant bunch. They may apply greater effort and skills, but the other thing they do is behave ruthlessly. Not at all socially worthy. Very, very selfishly, greedily. They are very good with language - they call anti-social selfishness and greed 'individualism', and make it into a virtue! Most business people are pretty hard-nosed, selfish bastards, and proud of it. The standard conservative philosophy is that this is human nature, that we are all selfish and any attempt to look after each other is contrary to our nature. Thatcher famously said it on their behalf - "There is no such thing as society." No, not with you bastards around.

Of course, when they come waving the Union Jack, expecting us to fight their imperialist wars for them, they expect us to forget all that.

Before Iraq I wouldn't have felt able to say 'imperialist'. But Iraq demonstrates how obviously they are imperialist, trying to control the oil.

So although they may 'take more care of business', and in the process take care of economic activity, the reasons they get so much wealth are as much immoral and impossible to justify by social values, as they are virtuous. And although in political debate they present what they do as being for the benefit of 'the economy' and for the benefit of all of us, that's not at all, not remotely, why the average business person does it. They do it for their own benefit. Giving us work, providing jobs, paying us wages – to them these are all unwanted side-effects, to be minimised as far as possible.

How Much Should They Get?

But admitting yet again, as I argue we have to, that some people do work harder than others - how much should they get, these oh-so-enterprising self-starters who own and run the economy, upon which the rest of us do actually depend for a living?

Right now, in the UK, *they get a stupendous amount more than us, the Working class majority.* There's various ways of putting it - one recent bit of research showed the average Chief Executive in the UK getting *113 times* the income of the average worker. The wealth gap is wider than it's been for a hundred years, bloody wide. Now a lot of us workers are not slackers. Plenty of us work bloody hard. Also from my experience of work, I can recall admin workers who would do anything, last-minute, work after finishing time, if asked. Many of us are bloody conscientious, far more than the employers deserve. People brought up Catholic or Protestant often have a strong work ethic, a sense of duty, that means they work just as hard as the worthily entrepreneurial business types.

Another thing, many workers are highly inventive and skilled. Most improvements in manufacturing or efficiency aren't the work of the individualistic business owner. It is done by the research and technical staff, paid by the owners according to the formula "with the others I've got, do I need you?" The owner makes a lot of their money from *other people's* effort and skills - your effort and skills - not their own.

Most of what the rich get is not from their superior efforts or skills. It's from *Exploitation*. That means they make their profits from our work. When we say ***profit***, it isn't about balancing the books. That's Ok, I suppose. It's about business owners *using their power to pay you, a worker, less than the value of the work you do, less than they sell it on for. Your Boss keeps the difference for themselves. That's what exploitation means and that's where profits come from*.

This is how it works, simply put. I was arguing this line to my window cleaner, when Thatcher was in full barbarian mode. My window-cleaner couldn't or wouldn't get it, taking a typical self-employed or small business point of view. He ran his business, he was entitled to the profits and couldn't see it as exploitation.

So I said –

"OK, how much do you charge for cleaning the windows on a house?"

His answer – three quid (GB Pounds)

"If you took somebody else on, how much would you pay them?"

Answer – well, I'm not sure.

"Wouldn't it be as little as you could get away with, as little as they'd accept?"

Yes.

" Maybe only two quid per house?"

Yeeah, possibly.

" How much would you charge for the houses they did?"

Answer, the usual price, three quid.

"Why not two quid, or pay him or her the full three quid? What you're doing is charging full price for his/her work but keeping a pound unfairly, for yourself. *That's* ***exploitation***. Allow you to keep some of the pound for buying the ladders, advertising, doing the books, running the business and so on. You would be stealing the rest from the other worker."

In practice he wouldn't pay the worker two pound for each *house*, he'd pay them by the *hour.* That separates two transactions, one the *Buying* of the guy's labour and the other, the *Selling* of it. It hides the exploitation.

Having enough work for themselves, and then some for you, business people exploit their position as middle man. It's unfair and it's a scam and it's the key reason why they are rich and the masses are poor, all over the world.

The amount the rich get now – not through any socially-justified mechanism - is just plain wrong. It's a joke. It denies people at the bottom their basic needs, better education, better health, better jobs, it creates poverty. It creates crime, because some people at the bottom are just as ruthlessly selfish as the rich, and refuse to accept the little they can get legally. So they get it illegally. And that ruins everybody else's lives, with the fear and actuality of being robbed, burgled, having your car broken into, and many more kinds of misery.

All unnecessary, if we weren't allowing the rich their floodlit lawns, their second homes, yachts, Rolls Royces, Ferraris - finish the list yourself .....Armani...Rolex...Gucci. Have you ever watched one of those TV programmes where they are allowed to film the inside of the houses, the consumption, of the very rich? It's disgusting, depraved excess. Also it's boring and meaningless. You look at it and think – what on earth are they doing? What a crass way to live.

They argue that it's fair because any of us can get rich, by running our own business. That's not the point, for us to have Equal Opportunities to unfairly exploit each other. It's impossible anyway - modern society is now based on the mass production methods of industrialism, even in service industries, with their call-centres. If we all ran small businesses, it wouldn't work. And why should running your own business be the only way to get a fair crack? Aren't business people able to treat their labour suppliers fairly? Their fellow-human, fellow-countrymen and women?

So, do they really deserve what they get? Are they that good, is their enterprise that necessary? Revolutionary socialists argue that we don't need them at all, that we, the masses, could run the economy without them. That's a position worth arguing. But here we're just looking at things as they are. The way their constantly growing economies are ruining our climate, it's time to say we've got *too much* enterprise. No more growth needed. Let's stand easy on what we've got, enjoy life a bit and heal the planet.

How Should We Regulate Their Wealth?

Taxing the Rich is the easiest way of correcting the unjustifiable inequality, and is the most obvious and usual method. But we need to be much clearer in saying why it is fair and justified to tax them. Because conservatives business class people around the world have a powerful argument against taxation that they successfully use to get even many workers on their side. *They argue that people*

should be able to keep the money they earn, to spend as they choose. I've found a fair few workers who really buy that line.

It seems a reasonable argument, one of those that are sometimes difficult to respond to. But there *is* a response and it is this - with the unequal power they have over us through ***They've Got All The Rest***, most of the rich don't get 'their' money fairly. They get it through exploitation enabled by the unequal and unfair bargain you make with them as a worker. Look around the supermarket next time you go. Look at all the young girls and women at the checkout, the lads doing shelf-filling. Tesco's £2 billion profit is actually theirs, not the Tesco shareholders. At Amazon, Jeff Bezos doesn't shift many parcels.

If we tax the rich, it's not their money we're taking off them. That money is rightfully yours, mine and millions of other workers'. So we'll have it back through taxation and spend it on hospitals and schools instead of yachts and Rolexes.

Some people do earn their money just from their own work - the self-employed, musicians and footballers who are exceptionally talented and popular. But most of the rich get it from *our* work.

Another way of tackling their excess wealth would be to say, Ok, how much is their management work actually worth? Having done a job of some responsibility, and seen others not take responsibilities seriously, I concede some work harder than others and deserve something for it. For some unknown reason many people think socialism means everybody would get the same. I think that's never going to work. It's unfair, as much as the system where the rich get so much. There'll always be a case for differentials. In union bargaining, you'll not get support from members for a deal struck with management, unless it includes fair rewards for more work or more responsibility. As a very simple example, overtime pay for those who work it, and not for those who don't.

What Socialism actually means is that we'd all get an *equal say* - in running the economy. But, in all having our say, we'd probably decide, collectively, by majority decisions, to pay brain surgeons (cliché alert!) more than the poor old dustmen. And so forth across all jobs – we'd have to allow for differing effort. We'd provide so many more basic needs for free, regardless of what income you got, that in effect, for key needs, we *would* all get the same. Just as we're all supposedly getting the same health treatment and education right now. But for pay, we'd have wage scales rewarding recognised effort and skills.

Working out fair pay scales is routine in industry and public services. On Union Reps courses an important part of the learning is for the Reps to get to know and be able to use the handbooks of national and local ***Agreements*** negotiated by the unions with employers organisations and individual employers. There's loads of them. They're much broken up by the attacks on unionisation of conservatives in the last forty years but are still widely applied. The National Engineering Agreement made with the Engineering Employer's Federation; the Local Government National Joint Council for manual staffs, the 'Green Book'. The one for Admin and Technical, the 'Purple Book'. Both now merged into one for all grades, there's a range of salary points, twenty or thirty perhaps. A job's place on the scales is determined by Job Evaluation, where a job's skills and responsibility are assessed nationally and locally and placed on the scale.

I've a friend who sits on a local NHS panel right now, going through jobs in a local hospital. It's a way of assessing what someone should get based not on the crude and

unfair power relationships of the labour market, the sole-customer-who's got-plenty-of-you law, but on socially and collectively acceptable criteria. A simple example from the Local Government National Joint Council book - someone working for the Council's parks and gardens gets more for being a plant propagator, who can raise plants in the greenhouse then plant them in the park or on the roundabout where you'll enjoy them, than the person who does grass-cutting, a less skilled job. (If they get privatised, that sort of fair, well-negotiated pay structure is the first thing to be attacked, cutting costs and wages. Many a reptilian middle-manager has got a BMW or yacht from pushing it through.)

So fair rewards can be worked out, and it is widely done. Why not apply it to the senior managers in industry? It's only a broad political point I'm making here, not looking into how to implement it, which is another thing again. But we could do it. It's done for the senior Civil Servants who run the country, just below Minister level. The argument is the 'captains of industry' deserve so much because of the responsibility. Yes, there is a bit of a case for a differential to allow for that. But how much do you think they should get? *The top 1 per cent get 70 times the amount the bottom 10 per cent get. The average chief executive gets 113 times the £22,000 annual pay of the average worker.* That much? What do you think? Why isn't it headline news, repeatedly, as a scandal, like the relentless attacks on people on benefits and asylum seekers? Because these people own the papers, that's why!

You can get competent people to do responsible jobs without paying them that much. I worked with a Principal of a Further Education College who got £70,000 compared to the £30,000 I got as a Senior Lecturer. She got over twice as much as me. But that's not huge looking at the figures I've just given in the economy generally. She was competent and hard-working, although misguided by the managerialism that manages what they know but not the actual job of educating students, which they don't. Being in charge of a College with 10,000 students, where you're not just producing things but altering 10,000 people's heads and measuring the change (that's what education is about) – that's quite a responsible job. Yet you can get capable people to do that, for only two or three times what a lecturer gets. Mind you - I was at the top of a pay scale she managed to destroy, and one of her 'achievements' was to put new people on far less than me, so she was probably on four times what a lecturer got.

But who is worth ***113 times more?*** When GEC loaded more work on me I disputed it. The management response was "there's only so many hours in the day, so how could I say I had to work harder?" Ok – there's only the same number of hours in a Director's day so nor can *they* work that much harder than anybody else. And so can't possibly deserve all that extra cash.

People might say, but look at the stress they get, with all that responsibility. But you can get stress in any job. Most readily when you don't control what you have to do, as an ordinary worker, and these well-paid business owners and managers force you to do it in ways that make you ill. Thanks to pressure from people paid much more than me, I got really, really badly stressed in my job, and had to retire early. These mega-rich directors, they can control what they do better than any of us, so they shouldn't get stressed.

Business people, small and large, claim their high rewards are justified,

socially and politically acceptable, for things like the financial risks they take in running businesses. Well, they are not quite such great risk-takers as they make out. You'd have to be pretty dumb to make as much as a lot of them do and not put some of it safely by, in a paid-for house, in savings, in other property. And one of their key 'business freedoms', the limited company, is a scam, a device openly designed to enable business owners to walk away from their debts if their business fails. A couple of years ago I sat through a presentation by some civil servants on how the Government was making it easier for people to go bankrupt, to avoid debts, and still be able to return to business, after only one year instead of three. This was done 'to encourage enterprise', for the good of 'the economy' or of us all. But that means that although business people may lose their own money, so can a lot of other people, their creditors. Business people aren't risking personal debt as much as their propaganda makes out. They can dump that, their responsibility for other people's money.

I'm not particularly criticising this device here. Maybe it's a good idea, to encourage business. But it shows how the image of the risk-taking entrepreneur is a bit of a myth.

Most of them only take real risks with their spare riches. Is that what they call 'venture capital'? And they expose all of us to risk too, with their free-market business system. It is theirs, not ours. Loss of our jobs and health. And increasingly ominously, loss of the whole sodding planet.

Sure, a small number of people in small businesses do put all their savings into it, re-mortgage their house, and lose everything. But that only means they go bankrupt, and their creditors suffer more than they do. The failed business owners then just re-join the rest of us - workers selling their labour to the remaining business people. You might have known people who've done this. Historically, this is how the Working class was created - lots of small, independent farmers, weavers, businesses being forced out of the trade by bigger, industrialised firms making things in greater numbers and cheaper, and having to then work for them as wage-workers. It continues to work like that - it's a repetitive cycle in capitalism. As a new industry develops, it eventually ends up with just one or a few big companies, with all the small business people who were once active in the industry doing something else, many of them now as workers.

What about ***Shareholders?*** What about fairness in how much they get, for what they do? There's a lot of wealth goes to the rich that way. Almost always, the directors get plenty not just from their mega-salaries, but also from giving themselves shares, from which they get dividends and can also sell them. People criticise footballer's earnings, but at least that's them getting their full value as rare talents from the work they themselves do. But when Martin Edwards owned Manchester United, as well as paying himself something like £1 million a year for being Chief Executive, and paying himself dividends, also sold out the club to the Stock Exchange and made £80 million. (And that left the club open to being taken over by a rapacious billionaire with no interest in football or United, only in milking the club for income.) Ok, Edwards ran the club fairly well, but that £80 million is a hugely more than Ferguson got for managing the actual football team, and hugely more than the players get for actually playing.

So how much do shareholders deserve? The traditional argument is - they put their money at risk, and that justifies them getting large dividends when the business is successful. I lost a few thousand myself by not being mistrustful enough of the glib financial saleswoman who advised me what to do with my savings so I can't argue that

there's no risk of losing it all. But shareholders get too much. ***They are the main beneficiaries of the exploitation of They've Got Many Of You.***

Maybe through strong trade unionism, we could reduce the exploitation and leave less for the shareholders. We'd have to be strong across the global economy, otherwise they just move their money to wherever they can best exploit workers and get big dividends there. 'Every fund an Ethical Fund' – how's that for a slogan?

Maybe restrict them to only being able to invest in mixed, pooled funds where they don't face as much risk, so don't have to be given so much wealth to compensate for their risk-taking. Happens already of course, they do it themselves for the same reason. We'd just have to tinker with it. Underwrite their original capital, place limits on dividends to limit their greed and power, balanced by state under-pinning so they don't lose their investment. The banks are big investors of course. We'd need controls on them. And there's National Savings as a risk-free way of investing, where you lend money, securely, to the Government. There was a well-advanced plan for a National Investment Bank, to direct investment into useful stuff like technology instead of property speculation, when Tony Benn was in charge of what is now the Department of Trade and Industry. He was moved out, our Labour government caving in to the rich, as they often do.

With 70 times the income of the poorest, where is the sense of social responsibility that these people direct at workers who want more, who they accuse of wrecking 'the economy'? Never was this more daftly argued (and still is) than when in 1979 the local government workers, amongst the poorest in the economy, were accused of bringing down the Labour government by their greedy demands! How's about a bit of social responsibility from the rich?

Will They Accept It?

Their threat is that *if we don't allow them so much money, they'll stop being so enterprising and we'll all suffer*. Or else they'll leave the country, taking their capital and their enterprising personalities somewhere else. 'Holding the country to ransom', as they accuse trade unionists of doing. Is that what would happen if we instructed a government to rein them in, either using the simple taxation method, or more complex things I've touched on, so the wealth they end up with is socially acceptable and we use the rest for everybody's benefit? *That's a very big question*. It underlies a lot of what is done and not done, politically, in the UK and in most other countries too. Centrist politicians and conservatives say, yes, they'll become lazy or move abroad, we'll all suffer. They say we can't allow that; we must allow the movers and shakers the stupendous rewards they get.

It seems we must throw money at the problem. They don't actually put it like that, do they? No, that expression is reserved for arguing against better spending on schools, hospitals, and the housing. Funny thing, that - throwing money at us and our problems is said not to work, but it's exactly the right thing to do for the problem of the Rich.

Is there an answer to this question, will they start slacking without the huge wealth they get? Well, they themselves do say 'Yes, we will slack unless we get what we want.' So, centrist political leaders and conservatives 'give them incentives' and 'reward enterprise,' with low taxes and lax regulation of their activities. But they are familiar, in business, with hard negotiations and are capable

of accepting a thoroughly-negotiated deal, with suppliers and customers, even if it's not as good as they started out expecting. Is there any reason why they can't do that with their fellow-countrymen and women, as citizens and workers? I think it's the biggest political question we should be asking. You, me, everybody.

I'm actually arguing a bit naively here. The evidence from history – Italy 1922, Britain 1926, Germany 1933, Spain 1936 – is that, faced with a working class that sticks up for itself, business classes are not prepared to negotiate and compromise. As an economic and political class they work themselves into quite a frenzy, sometimes to the extent of opting for Fascist dictatorships, to protect their ability to unfairly exploit us. But individually, in business, they are prepared to settle deals according to the balance of forces. It's up to us, locally and world-wide, to put them in a position where they have to make a civilised deal with us all. Or if they won't wear it, to move on to socialism, if we become capable of doing that.

The least we should be doing, and I urge you to do it, is to raise the discussion up the political agenda, and subject these almost invisible people - I sometimes start to make a list of them, like Martin Edwards as was at Manchester United. It's not that difficult to do if you trawl the financial pages. Does 'Who's Who' cover it? People like the Tower group at MG-Rover, as I write in April 2005. They are a definite class of person, maybe several million of them in the UK.

Let's identify them in daily political discourse, and give them the sort of scrutiny of what they do and what they get, and what they should do and get, that they dish out to workers, asylum seekers, unions, people on benefit, through the media that they own - The Daily Mail, the Times, the Sun, the Daily Telegraph. Murdoch, Fox News etc. ***Using the term 'Business Class' makes a big improvement in our ability to talk about them and what they do .***

And if it's true they need the huge wealth they get, to get them to do what is apparently important to all of us; and we have to allow them it; then let's be fully aware and much more open about it. Make it an open bargaining process, central in political debate; have a clear settlement with them over how much they are to get. Then, assuming they insist on continuing to be brutal, disgusting, greedily selfish, treat them socially with the contempt they deserve.

Tell jokes about them – did you hear about the rich bastard, the CEO, the MD, who ..... That really needs doing, there's so many jokes about people for being black, gay, women or whatever. Hardly any about the boss, business class.

Oh, and all this isn't *the politics of* ***envy***. It's our money anyway - ***see page 15***. It's *the politics of* ***fairness***. We don't *want* to be like them. *It's not envy. It's disgust.* Disgust and contempt for such greedy, smug, arrogant anti-social twerps.

It'd be better if we could do without them. But that'd mean we'd have to take over and run the show ourselves, collectively, democratically – Socialism. But frankly I, and most of you, don't appear to be ready to do that right now.

How To Save The Environment Or Don't Put Your Money to Work

Expecting your savings - and their capital – to 'Earn Interest' is what drives the madness of planet-destroying 'Growth'.

We're wrecking the climate, wrecking our home - Planet Earth. We might well wipe ourselves out. It's not certain, but with such a whopping great danger you don't have to be certain for it to make sense to not take the risk. All the time we Humans have been around, we've had to work hard just to survive. Now, we're so good at producing things, and daft enough to consume way beyond what we need, we *threaten* our survival.

Now it's possible that, even with the existing system of production – Capitalism - we could Regulate what people do so they don't wreck our shared environment. That's the solution our business-friendly governments place their hopes in. Though they're feeble indeed at doing it. For regulation, we need global agreement and enforcement, or those businesses or national economies that make goods and services cheaply by being careless of the environment will put those who take care out of business. In the European Union, we have Health and Safety regulations in every country, so business's compete by being better, not by being more careless of people's health and lives. Such World-wide regulation of industry and transport, enforcing cleaner methods, might rescue our environment. But there's still the problem of ***growth*** – of us simply doing more and more, environmentally-regulated though it may be.

Growth Is Not Good

Growth is not essential. Not if we, as a species, were to make an intelligent, collective choice about how much stuff we need. But the business class and their politicians see *growth* as some sort of absolutely necessary, essential good.

It is forced by the ***competition*** that is a key feature of their system, of their 'free markets'. If you are making goods or providing services, competing with others, whether as a single company or as a 'national economy', competition forces you to constantly invest in making and selling ever-greater quantities. The economies of scale make your product cheaper to make and sell. If you don't do that, somebody else will, and you will lose business to them and stand a good chance of going out of business altogether. So even if business people's production *methods* were better regulated to reduce environmental damage, there's still competitive pressure for ever-greater ***quantities*** of their goods and services to be produced and sold. More production, more transport, more pollution.

Putting Your Money To Work

But there's another powerful mechanism. All of us want our money, our savings, our ***capital,*** to earn *more* money. Whichever Building Society, Bank or Life Insurance or Pension sum that we have, we all like it to generate Interest or increased value. When I retired, I got £30,000, money I'd earned as wages; and some life insurance policies 'matured' - became cashable. I had the financial advisers round offering me ways of 'putting my money to work'. Like anybody else, if one investment promised me 8%, that seemed better than 3%. Who wouldn't want another 5%?

But – I earned the original money from *my* work. That's fine. And I didn't want to lose it – shares can be also be a way of losing money. I did lose some, in fact. And I got thinking about this business (sic) of wanting a return on my capital. *Do I really want, need or deserve the money that I'd earned from my work, to*

make more money? Most of us say, Yes, of course you do. Well, perhaps. *But it's what drives the growth that's wrecking the Planet.* That extra per cent is made is by investing it in new or more intensive economic activity. More factories, more transport, more consumer goods that we don't need. More cheap airline flights. Cultural activities like football clubs turned into businesses, making and selling shirts on top of actually playing the game.

In the West and Japan, we consume so much more stuff than we did 30 or 40 years ago. But in discussing this as a problem, most commentators assume the problem is our greed. But it's not. We don't really go around feeling our lives are lacking unless we have an iPod or a wide-screen Telly or a mobile phone with photo capability, until some bright sparks use investment capital to invent one, and then they bombard us with advertising. Of course, when things are invented, produced and marketed, thrown at us, then we want them. We do have a problem within ourselves, an insatiable greed for new experiences, new things, more things. *But it's not us driving this frantic consumerism that is polluting our planet*. That comes from the commercial activity of the people who own or look after capital – including your savings - looking constantly for new activities, new products, new services, to invest in, to advertise to us, to sell to us, ***all done in order to make that percentage return on investment. And that's what forces environment-wrecking growth.***

In the capitalist economies we live in, politicians and business people speak fervently of the importance of growth. But is it so important to us all? Why, exactly? Many people in the poor parts of the world, yes, they need drinking water and other basics. But we in 'the West' and many other parts of the globe are in a mad lifestyle where *to live, you expect to consume*. It's how a lot of us judge our happiness. Buying things *is* nice – shopping therapy, yes? But if it costs us the planet……? We can choose not to be a consumerist, surely? We can choose to live by *Being*, not by *Having*. But advertising mesmerises us to go along with it. *And the main reason for it all is so those with spare money – including even us with our savings - can get a return, interest, a percentage*.

Don't Demand That Your Money Should Make Money

For myself, when the financial advisers attempted to seduce me with their percentages, I decided I didn't need to make the sort of % return that means I take part in the relentless growth that is ruining the planet. I earned the original money from my work, as wages, so that's Ok. I can pass on the % growth in it. Though I wouldn't mind it keeping its value against inflation. I could just lend it to the government, through National Savings, for them to spend on schools, hospitals. More staff in schools, hospitals and care homes doesn't have to mean growth. It's used for current spending, not for investment in new, ever-more-productive methods, production that mean environment-damaging growth. And I can have it back when I want to spend it. They replace it from taxation.

Ethical funds should be less environmentally damaging. But that's just the Regulation method of limiting the damage. Ethical funds also force growth.

Now I've said it's *your* Savings that causes the problem of growth. But the amount of Investment capital that belongs to the ordinary person, how much is that, as a proportion? Most of us get most of our Income through wages from work, not from ***investment income***. Pensions, where some of us do have significant amounts invested, shouldn't be based on the unreliability of the Stock Exchange anyway but should be

managed by paying it to the State, with the security of it being still there when needed. And better, it should be paid for from taxation of the current working population, re-paying to the earlier working population, now retired, the value of what they left for them, the schools, hospitals, motorways.

How much more, is the capital belonging ***the Rich?*** And the Banks? There's some figures back on page 127. The rich *'earn'* most of their money from *Investments*, not *wages*. Presented with the idea that they shouldn't look for ***a return on capital***, the rich and the Banks would squeal a lot harder than the rest of us. They'd do more than squeal, they'd probably think of organising a coup against any government that proposed to limit their 'right' to Invest.

Can we persuade them they can't live off Income from Investments? They'd say it's the End of the World as they know it. But that's exactly what their ferocious desire to re-invest and force growth is doing, literally – wrecking the planet through ever-increasing economic activity, pollution and use of resources.

Of course, you have to wonder if capitalism could operate at all without return on investment. It's a crucial part of it. They always say their free-market, capitalist economics is the only way to run the world, like it's a law of physics. We have to say, 'That is nonsense' We can make collective, socially responsible, political decisions, that they can no longer have it that way. Nor can any of us - Putting your Money to Work is ruining the Planet. You've got to stop. Live on your wages, earned by your own work, not unearned income. With less frantic increases in the production of unnecessary goods and services, there'll be less work to go round, which is fine, we can share it out and achieve what we once expected to – work less and enjoy a life free of having to work. And by restraining growth, we'd save the Planet too.

Racism
Or Some Your Own Colour Are The Problem

How the Rich, White, British Business Class Damage Our Culture and Our Lives.

As argued earlier in *Us, Politics, The System And Class*, when you identify with 'your country' and 'the nation'; when you say 'Us' and 'We' meaning 'the British'; or when 'French' people or Americans and many others do likewise, you-as-a-worker demean yourself by identifying with the rich and powerful. You identify with, feel a bond with, people who are at best careless of your well-being; who are at worst, the people most dangerous to you on the planet. Your biggest enemies. Tebbitt, Thatcher, Bush; the thug attacking you on the street.

You are proud of *simply happening to have been born in the same territory, on a piece of land with a common law-making system (government), as them*. You are buying into an unthought sharing of common identity with others, rich, poor, middle, many of whom will do you in, on the street, at work, and have no concern at all with your health and the kind of treatment you'll get if ill. You identify with them simply because, with there being so many of them, you feel like you're part of something bigger than yourself. Since some of them are good at whatever they do, you're encouraged to get some self-esteem from that – how they make cars or bikes, or run faster over a hundred metres than somebody else.

But you've rarely any idea if any of these people are decent people or not. I

recall watching Terry Butcher captain the England football team, and later read that he is a Tory. Well, that means he hates me, despises me, and couldn't give a toss about my welfare. Or yours. Tories don't - that's their core belief. Look after themselves, sod you and everybody else. So it's all nonsense, the 'I'm English and proud of it ' stuff.

And then what follows from belief in 'our country' and 'us' is contempt for, or fear and hatred of, foreigners. Outsiders. Immigrants. Black people. Asian people. Asylum seekers. The French, the Germans the Spanish; Italians, East Europeans. They're all up for being demonised by the business class, the Daily Mail, the Tories - they come here, and take our jobs and our benefits (at the same time!) **And 'they undermine our way of life'. Or - do they? Do they really? Aren't there some of 'our own' who do more of that?**

Try this new way of looking at racism and the issues around 'foreigners' and immigrants - anti-racist writing and resource material states, quite correctly, lots of good myth-busting stuff about immigrants. Like usually, there's as many or more British people go off to be immigrants themselves in Spain, France, the US, Australia and Canada, as come in. So the overcrowding argument is nonsense.

There's much more of this stuff. But it still means the discussion of racism centres around the *'outsiders'* themselves, and their supposed failings, or, alternatively, what an asset they are, like staffing the NHS for instance.

Being White Doesn't Make Anyone Your Mate

There's another side to this. It's that fact that the ***'we'*** that the foreigners and immigrants are supposedly threatening, *contains many bastards who are a bigger problem to me and to you than any coloured or uncoloured immigrant.* Your fellow-Brits do many bad things to you but most people don't draw the obvious conclusion – there's bugger all loyalty and duty to each other in being fellow-countrymen.

Here's an opinion-forming example from my life. I once spent two years thoroughly re-building my beloved BSA 650 motor-bike but after only a few months use some bastard stole it from outside the bike show at Belle Vue, Manchester. That really gutted me, and still does. I still get that sick feeling about it, like when John Lennon was shot, things that sicken life for you. Who stole it? Some fellow Brits, surely, bike thieves. That same evening, somebody wrecked my wife's car – bricked the windows, the roof and bonnet – made it a write-off, while parked up a few miles away. That same evening.

Who did these things to us? Probably somebody British, probably white. Who sacked me on the spot from a job on a building site, for nothing? A white, Anglo-Saxon Brit. Not, of course, totally - check anyone's ancestry and they – you – will have a bit of 'foreign' in you. Gobshites drive around, and park up near my house, with monstrous, monotonous bass booming from their car audio. It goes right into my brain, it dominates my consciousness so much I can't function.

Many white British people do an amazingly disgusting, anti-social thing - they shit in public. On the pavements, on the grass where I play football with my kids. I mean dog owners. Alright, since a lot of complaints by me and others to Councillors, most of them now clean up their droppings. But for years, and still a bit, I'd have their – maybe your – (dog's) shit on my shoes. Then it gets onto my floor. I have to clear the sink and wash my shoes, my floor, the tyres on my kids bikes. From the park, I'd get it on my car carpet, stinking the thing out; on footballs after the kids soccer school I used to help run. And racists have so often said immigrants were dirty! What about your fellow-white dog-owners? How come racists never noticed what a hefty number of their fellow-whites

were doing?

My kids and their mates have been robbed on the street so many times, of their bikes, mobiles, trainers, coats, money; and once, hit over the head with a metal bar. And who are these people? White, 'English thugs, in many cases. Some black and Asian too. There's bad as well as good in every race.

I got a back injury that meant playing my Sunday league football career – thirteen years of it - limping about with sciatic pain in my leg. Who did that to me? The white employers I worked for, who instructed me to do a lifting job that they shouldn't have. Meanwhile, they're swanning about posh Bowdon in their BMW's and Land Rovers', cocky about how they got their wealth by their superior ability and hard work. Bollocks.

More recently, I had to retire from work early from ill-health, after six years of genuine hell, due to people - the Tories and careerist managers - enforcing brutal increase in workloads. And so on..... I bet you can think of a few abuses of yourself and others, done by fellow-white Brits?

Not all white British people, of course. Obviously. It's definitely a minority. But there's enough of them, bad people, to make a nonsense of the idea of a 'we' made up of people who happen to be born in and occupy a piece of territory, whether that is England, Britain, the UK, the US, Germany, Italy - wherever. That's all 'a country' is - a piece of land where there's been political struggles over the centuries and some class or groups of people have established control; or there is an established power system for making the rules – a kind of government. Now that is a significant thing, and certainly it means a lot of things apply to all of us together. There might even be some issues on which decent workers, and the business class, and the street-attack thugs, have a common interest, one separate from those people who don't live 'here'. Although I can't think of any right now.

But the big issue is this - that ***the business class promote the myth of 'your country' yet, at the same time, insist on the anti-social philosophy that "You're on your own, it's a dog-eat-dog world, that's human nature."***

Their position is summed up as 'I'm not paying taxes for public services because I'm rich enough not to need them. I don't care about your health, education, job security. I should be able to sack you whenever I please. If you're struggling to survive, don't look to me. Your needs are nothing to do with me.'

This 'couldn't care less about you' stuff shows loyalty to country, belief in 'the country', to be a shallow myth. They actually promote this as a positive thing – *'individual freedom'*. (But they only do that as far as wealth is concerned). There should be individual freedom but in the case of wealth, most of what they claim the right to keep is not 'their' money; they made it from Us. (see *They've Got All The Rest*, the first section of *Us, Politics, The System And Class*.)

National identity assumes that rich fellow-Brits are all Ok guys. They support the same cricket team as us after all. But them ***immigrants – they are accused of undermining 'our way of life', 'our culture.' But how?*** Do we have 'a way of life' common to 'us' all, for them to undermine?

We Have No Shared 'Way of Life'

We don't. ***There's little really of a common 'way of life' shared by UK born people.*** Let's look at some possible features of 'our way of life'.

Take ***Football***. Yes, very popular and a key feature of some people's culture.

Mine, certainly. But loads of people aren't interested, if you care to notice. My wife, for one. I recall a bloke I worked with, a welder, who used to say 'I wouldn't watch it if they (Man United) played in my back garden.'

Take ***Religion*** – 'they' (outsiders) have different religious beliefs to 'us'. What? Few of 'us' 'British' are Christian these days. I'm certainly not. And there are many like me, UK-born, secular, non-religious people. I strongly resent the influence Christians have in this society. The Tories when in Government in the 1980's outrageously enforced acts of Christian worship in schools, when all my kids were going through. That infuriated me. The cheeky, dictatorial bastards. They enforced on me a bit of 'a way of life' that they arrogantly and presumptuously decided I had to share with them. I exercised the right to keep my kids out of the school assemblies with these ridiculous, compulsory, Christian 'acts of worship'. Acts of worship? I worship no one, and certainly not a fictional being. But it left my kids out on a limb, so I let it go in the end.

A funny thought..... there might have been more Christians amongst West Indian immigrants than amongst UK-born people?

Most importantly in this argument about 'our way of life' is the question 'How much do you mix with the rich, the 10% who share 50% of the Wealth amongst themselves, leaving 90% of us to share the other 50%?' ***How much do you share a culture and way of life with the Rich? Don't they have a different culture****,* that doesn't match your way of life? I've always felt a great gulf between them and me. Starting even with local small business people and active Tories - you won't find me at the golf club, the rugby club, the cricket club. There are some ordinary working class people at some of these social gatherings, there may be some more social mobility than there was. But for sure, I do not share my way of life with the really rich. I'm not at gymkhanas, Ascot, Henley. In expensive hotels. In London's 'gentlemen's' clubs?

The so-called 'we' are greatly separated by wealth. The wealth gap in the UK is bigger than it's been in a hundred years. The rich, and the better-off, spend more on a meal in a restaurant than someone on benefit, or even someone on Minimum Wage, gets in a week. Or a month. The cars, the designer clothes, the Rolexes, the second homes. They are way beyond our reach. It's a different culture. I've spent a lot of time in North Wales. The yachts, left idle a lot of the time - they cost a lot. I call them hospital wards. Or classrooms. That's what they could be if we taxed their owners and spent it on these useful things, useful to all.

The rich and the smugly 'successful' are such disgusting self-centred people, most of them, that I wouldn't want to share their culture, their way of life, and their company. We are separated by too many serious antagonisms and attitudes and assumptions. You do get decent ones, of course, and I've known some. You can't *pre-judge* individuals by their class. Well-known, you get decent folk like David Gower. And, like Hitler, apparently, many of them can be perfectly charming and nice to individual workers, socially, whilst being, in business activity, selfish brutes.

But by the extremely – extremist? - self-centred world view they have, by the luxurious lifestyles they have, you can say that many of us cannot share a 'way of life' with them. Look at the things their political party does to me and you. Look at and listen to the 'people' at a Tory Conference. I've encountered the rich in person now and again. I feel like a racist must feel when surrounded by black and Asian people. (The difference is that I'm judging the rich by what they do, not by the colour of their skin.)

Of course, through history and around the world now, it's the same in other

countries. We should include the disgusting rich of India and Brazil in the type of people who do not share a ' way of life' with our kind.

One common remark from the rich in response to these sort of views is to say we are just jealous of their success and wealth. They say it is *'**the politics of envy**'*. No, it's not *envy*. Not at all. No decent person wants to *be* like them. ***It's not envy. It's contempt for such anti-social attitudes and behaviour.***

Who <u>really</u> undermines – even attacks – 'our' 'way of life' ?

Not only do the rich not *share* a culture, a way of life, with the mass of ordinary people; but ***they actually attack it,*** damaging it far more than immigrants may have. They've attacked *Beer.* And *Pubs.* And *Football*. They are some pretty basic parts of what 'our' culture is claimed to consist of.

It gets worse - *they've even attacked the Bacon Butty*.

Beer – the current state of 'Britain's beer' is a bit confused, as there's been a turn over to lager, and a lot of continental beers. That, too, instigated by the breweries. But certainly back in the 70's they attacked our Beer by producing dreadful keg brews - Watney's Red Barrel was famously dire - that were easier to keep, with less waste; but horrible to drink. It took a big campaign, by the Campaign for Real Ale or CAMRA, to set them back. Have the breweries won, with lager promotion? Not sure. What is sure, though, is that the breweries were amongst Thatcher's Tories biggest backers, and are or were owned by Union Jack waving, British, Business-class people. *And they adulterated the beer.* Attacking 'our culture'? Guilty as hell. But do racists have a go at them for threatening 'our way of life'? No.

Then they attacked ***the Pubs***. How many traditional English pubs have been ripped out and re-opened as soul-less cash-cow chrome and glass horrors?

Take another traditional feature of 'our way of life' - ***the Corner Shop.*** You'd know the staff, meet your neighbours. Centre of the community. Destroyed by the big-business supermarkets. A repeat of what happened in factory production in earlier history - the Rich, by investing capital in economies of scale, drove the small producers out of business. That in itself isn't so bad in some ways - economies of scale can be useful, everything available in one place, and the workers in the trade pooled together by capital, not atomised in small businesses, which helps us to get organised in unions. But look who it was who destroyed that pretty significant piece of 'our culture', the corner shop - it was British rich people, not immigrants.

And who brought the corner shop back? You know who – those immigrants, those Asian and West Indian and other shop keepers!

So the Business class, mostly White and 'British', have had a go at 'our' beer, the pubs and the corner shop. But worse still – they've ruined our ***bacon butty!*** Bacon is now so pumped full of water that when you try to grill it, to get it nice and crisp, you're actually boiling it. The bacon butty, for chrissakes! Is nothing sacred?

Football, meaning the game, played by millions, not just the professional sport, is a key feature of British – or rather, Working class - culture. Sunday leagues were the backbone of the game as that was the one day off from work that most people had. It's now quite difficult to get enough people together regularly and reliably, to run the full 11-a-side game. On my local fields, where there's a dozen or two pitches that used to be mostly in use, Sunday morning and afternoon,

there's just the odd one or two games going on now, and sometimes none. I don't know the figures, ask the local FA, but it seems to have been decimated. And what caused it? 24/7 working. Started with the dropping of the legal restrictions on Sunday shop-opening, steam-rollered in by Thatcher's Tories. All in the business interests of the ever-so-British rich.

So there's a much stronger case against the Rich for attacking 'our culture' than the case so often and casually made against ethnic minorities. And you can put on the plus side, for the ethnic minorities, all that good scoff you can get in their restaurants.

Then there are the ***attacks on our Communities***. Thatcher's economic policies quite consciously caused the collapse and closure of huge industries. Liverpool lost Tate and Lyle, Dunlop, the docks, and more. The steel industry went. Manufacturing industry in the West and East Midlands, Scotland, Wales, the North East.

Now this massive cycle of closures and run-down of Industry just *might* have been justified, in terms of economics. Probably not, but it might have been. Here, we're dealing with what it did to 'our culture'. Liverpool became a wasteland, and lost about a third of its population. That is a hundred thousand people who had to leave, leave friends, family, football clubs, pubs, all the social connections that make up a community. That means many young couples have brought their kids up hundreds of miles away from the rest of the family, grandparents and so on; which loses them the support and experience of the family. Many make a poor job of it on their own, so then we get anti-social behaviour from kids raised outside of the security and discipline of communities. And people find themselves isolated in no job or an insecure one; and, without being good at organising a political opposition to this, develop a 'me or me and my family against the world mentality', which means being aggressive, possibly offensive, or robbing your neighbours and anyone you encounter on the street. Street crime – *that* is a major and massive attack on 'Our Culture' and our 'Way of Life'. Caused by the Business class, not by immigrants or 'outsiders' or various ethnic minorities.

The ***pit closures*** of the mid-80's and the early 90's were carried out by rich and powerful white people, that is, the Tories. On behalf of white, British, rich and less-rich business members and voters. They destroyed whole communities, ruined lives, promoted heroin addiction, crime and anti-social behaviour. It's all documented, journalists go to these places and estates and articles appear in the press and on TV.

Back to ***Football***. In May 2005, a billionaire with no link to football has bought Manchester United – 'my' team. That doesn't bother me too much, as I realised 30 years ago that the Edwards family, who then owned it, had nothing in common with me, they had all the decision making power, and I had none. It became obvious then that it wasn't a club at all, but a business. And then the Heysel Stadium disaster in 1985, when fighting caused the deaths of 35 fans, focussed my thinking on how fans hate, maim and kill each other over football rivalries. Since then, I've seen it as an empty, somewhat pathetic way of getting off second-hand on somebody else's' achievements on a football pitch. It's just a game anyway.

It has often been seen as an expression of working-class community and aspirations; a defiance of the alienation and powerlessness of being a worker. Well if so, it was always based on avoidance of real struggle, and therefore nothing much to be proud of. And now it's developed into mass hatred of other fans - look at the expressions on the faces of those fans who sing and shout abuse at the opposition fans. It's vile, disgusting. And not workers expressing themselves in a positive way at all, but *turning*

their aspirations against fellow-workers from the same city or the city down the road or from another region. It's the same in Spain, Italy, wherever, as in the UK, of course.

But now, even that escape from real struggle about real issues, into football passions, is played out. Because *the business class capitalists you are running from at work have caught up with you* and are taking that club, that you thought meant something more than just commercial relationships, into just that. There's what Abramovitch has done at Chelsea, where you've got workers getting off on the achievements of money ripped off from Russian oil workers.

Add it to the list of things the rich do, that destroy 'our culture'. Not Asians, not black people, not East European immigrants, not asylum seekers. The Rich. The game on the pitch is still great. But the fan's affiliations and passion are based on nothing.

How the Rich Get Away with Ruining Our Culture

People with racist views have been blinded by the vision of Britishness they are given to believe in, and attack 'outsiders'. Because of 'Britishness', they don't see the Rich and all that they do, and refuse to do. By definition, nationalism groups rich people, the Business class, Workers and Unemployed Workers, all together. The basic view, 'us', we 'British', has us and the business class on the same side, against various kinds of 'outsiders'. Often not consciously so - a lot of racist arguments are really made by working class people arguing for working class demands. Like jobs.

But racists don't make those demands on the Business class, they make them by picking on the outsider. So for example on that big issue of ***Jobs***, racist workers take a nationalist view against 'them' coming here and taking 'our' jobs. But it's stupid to talk nationalistically of 'our jobs.' When a racist says this, he's claiming a right for native-born people to have jobs.

But the (white) Business class fiercely oppose the idea of their Working class fellow-Brits being entitled to jobs. We've not established such a right.

The business class believes working class Brits should only get jobs when they can make enough money out of us, often only if we'll work in crap conditions for crap wages. *Workers who are racist and talk of 'our jobs' should be told that the only way you'll get the Business class to agree to anyone having the 'Right to Work' is by a united Working class forcing it on them.*

It has no sense as a ***nationalist*** *demand. It's a* ***class*** *demand.*

Encouraged by the business-class 'newspapers', racist workers notice foreign workers who 'come here and take our jobs.' But they don't notice, or make anything like as much protest and express as much anger and hatred, at ***their fellow-white Business class Brits, exporting their jobs.*** The very same people who preach Britishness at them in the Red Top papers. Any of us could name a few factories recently closed, and call-centres now, where British business people have moved their operation to a poor Asian or South American country. They make more money there. Do they then bring it back and spend it to the benefit of their loyal racist poor working class Brits? Can't say I've noticed.

This is all very unpatriotic of the Business class and very disloyal to their 'fellow-Brits.' The very first thing Thatcher did when getting into government in 1979 was to remove the restriction on export of capital. That was so *her and her*

class could invest their money where they could make the most profit; not where it would most benefit their fellow-countrymen and women. They get away with this without receiving any of the attention and hatred that powerless immigrant workers receive.

When you hear workers blaming the outsider, ask them if they're not being very lazy to base their political thinking on identity and colour. It's plain stupid to see outsiders and immigrants as a major problem and to put the issue at the forefront of politics. If there are problems about these issues, they're small problems compared to the big political issues - jobs, the economy, how to run the health service, how to tax people and raise public money for services, how to get decent pensions, what to do about transport, education, climate change, energy, the wealth gap. It takes some real thought and some decision making to deal with each of these issue – ever tried really looking into Pensions? Racists have little or nothing to say on these real issues, as it's much easier to just blame an outsider for everything. But that's lazy and stupid when there's so much to be done about these big issues. Beside them, making a big issue of people's colour and basing your politics on it is just ridiculous.

And it's cowardly, because to tackle those other issues and leave race out of it, they'd have to have some guts and take on the rich business class. They're a mean and ruthless bunch, Thatcher and her class, people like Bush. So you can understand people being scared of taking them on. Everyone recalls the defeat suffered by the miners, and many draw the lesson that you can't beat the business class.

But if people are going to be defeatist, scared of the rich, they should just leave it there and not turn on those poor ordinary folk who are a different colour or whose family haven't been here for quite the same number of generations as theirs.

And when getting agitated about 'them' coming 'here' they should think also of 'us' going 'there' - millions of British-born people move to Spain, the Algarve, France, and before that Australia and Canada. Everyone knows someone who's done that – don't you?

Racists should drop the hatred they have for coloured and black people and make their demands on the Business class. We might have to put up with these people, make deals with them, make political and economic settlements with them. But let's be clear what a disgusting, greedy, harmful bunch they are, as a class (though not all individually), and tell them that whenever we get the opportunity. Many of us trade union activists have told many a business owner or manager that they are ruthless brutes. That by itself doesn't stop them, they're a thick-skinned self-obsessed lot. But at least it directs the bile where it belongs. We should do that far more widely.

To conclude - it's not about British versus Outsiders – whether they be German, French, or Pakistani. It's about Goodies v. Baddies. Decent people versus Bastards.

Alright, allowing for some shades in between.

Say it again , Muhammad Ali - ***It ain't where you're <u>from</u> (that matters.)***
It's where you're <u>at</u>.

Judge ***everyone*** not by ***'Where They're From'*** - including those in the same ethnic or national grouping as you. Judge them by ***Where They're At and What They Do***.

Anti-Social Behaviour Or Some Organise, Some Go Under, Some Turn Nasty.

Repressed by the business class, some workers become brutalised *little* conservatives and 'turn on their own'. It's our problem to sort out.

A piece on anti-social behaviour, street robbery and violent and otherwise nasty behaviour by working class people against other working class people – mainly lads and young men on other lads and young men – has been taken out because this work was too long. It said a lot of things that are well-known - blaming anti-social behaviour on some workers, brutalised by the neglect and abuse dealt to them by conservatives and the business class, needing to assert themselves when there aren't civilized ways available, their lack of awareness of the system, and the lack of class awareness and solidarity that afflicts the working class.

Brexit, Trump and Populism - Worker To Worker 2019.1

To Brexit, Trump and Populist Voters The Business class keep a low profile and people don't see how they run the system and politics. So people look for answers in nationalist solutions and big promisers.

This is written by a worker to fellow-workers. Not by a liberal, a commentator or member of any political elite. With the decision to leave the EU and the election of Trump, some of you responded to being badly treated by going for the wrong targets. And you allowed the real offenders off.

The people who oppress you are business people and the business system. It's that simple to identify and name them and their system. But we generally don't, yet, and while we don't, we can't get to grips with it. Progressives call it neoliberalism, a useless term; or it's called capitalism, free markets, maybe 'laissez-faire economics'. Its best called the free-market *business system*. Because that includes, that the other terms don't, the central process in the system - business and work. *Our* work. Without it, our interests and how we are treated are barely visible behind all the fuss about markets and the abstraction of 'the economy.'

The problem people are big business people, not so much small business people. But small and big, they all demand and support and get the system that allows them to mistreat the great mass of people – the working class. Some of 'the white working class' feel hostile to people of other colours and adopt white-ism but don't seem to notice that the business class, the people who really mistreat them, are mostly white.

In all the talk about Brexit and Trump, and nationalist populism in Europe, and the poor life conditions that prompted many working class voters in Britain and the USA to vote as they did, the provable fact that business people caused the real problems never gets a mention. The nearest, vague references are to 'the rich' or 'the corporations' or neo-liberalism.

And they aren't the reasons disgruntled Brexit, Trump and other supporters of populist politicians give. They blame foreigners, either 'them' in the European Union', or workers who move to get work, migrant workers. The nearest they get to recognising the real reasons are when they blame government and 'the establishment'; and when they vote just for 'change'. But that's not near enough. It's looking only as far as the politicians in the political system, and that isn't the real system.

There's a reason why government and the establishment and the so-called political 'elites' let you down. It's because they, and we, rely on rich business people to organise our economy. We depend on them to organise jobs, goods and services. And they demand freedom to do things their way – unregulated, unfettered – and to get fabulous rewards for doing so.

Truth is, well known, there's enough wealth in our societies to sort this out if we could just get them under control and prepared to work for their fellow-countrymen and women. We could regulate them and re-distribute what there is. Share The Wealth – and power – make union entitlement a basic right.

But not enough of us see it this way. So there's not enough of us pressurising politicians to take on business people. So we get parties like the US Democrats and the British Labour Party – this writer is a member - with reasonable intentions to the working class of all colours. But these parties are forced to recognise that we need business people, the business *class*, and have to work with them on their terms. We don't run the economy as socialists or producer co-ops, do we? So we rely on them.

And business people constantly reduce employment for us by investing in ever greater efficiency, automation, outsourcing, closing down in our areas and relocating. That's the cause of the Rust Belt - business people having no social loyalty to their fellow-whites, their fellow-countrymen and women. And their financial elements operate like crazies and are incapable of running the system responsibly.

Progressive parties are not set up and backed enough by us to challenge them. So, if progressive parties can't take from them, because they threaten to not invest and generate jobs for us, how do progressive parties improve our lives? By chasing growth. Growth enables them to let rich business people keep plenty of wealth, while allowing us a bit more too. It enables public services and support to be increased by tax raised off the growth, not off the rich. It enables more jobs to replace the ones that business people cut with automation and outsourcing.

Trouble is, none of it is under our control. They were allowed free rein up to 2008, produced a mad collapse, but helped and allowed to carry on, bailed out by us.

Instead of the biggest business people, the corporate 1%, many people voting for the UK to leave Europe, and people voting for Trump, targeted 'liberals' and 'metropolitan elites'. Why? Liberals are just business people or the better-off who care about poorer people. Do they prefer business people who *don't* care about them?

The hostility to them from disgruntled workers is because liberals have gone for the most obvious discriminations – skin, gender – and some of you feel neglected by these issues, being treated badly not because of these but because of class. Yes, class is the invisible issue. You are badly treated by class. So are women and people of colour. What's happened is that the reasons for treating people badly by class are not recognised or tackled. Outside my written work, business people's rights to oppress workers are still widely accepted. They are challenged in the rest of my writings – see www.uspol.org See the charts *Its Your Money Not Theirs* about how to tackle their wealth.

What liberals have done, is recognised the obviously unfair discrimination suffered by working class women and people of colour, and done a bit to correct it, but not recognised class oppression. You, oppressed white workers, have seen what liberals have done as favouritism and rebelled. But you've rebelled against the wrong thing because you are barely aware of the right thing to tackle – business people's power over

all of us. That stands to be tackled by us recognising and trumpeting our right to respond to business people's power by organising – see *The Right To Unionise*.

Business people, their power and their free-market business system are given a free pass. Their system is seen as just like a law of nature, a law of physics. Its oppressive relationships are seen as untouchable. So, that being the case, many Leave voters and Trump voters identified their interests by national identity, by nativism, by colour, white-ism or sexism. This is all nonsense, either way. Skin colours, whether white, Hispanic, Asian, or black, and gender, are not relationships. You can't ask anything of anyone by these shallow identifiers, they have no obligation to you. There's little real loyalty by colour, most of all not from the white business class to the white working class. There's no promise to stand by you in getting jobs, nor standing by you *in* jobs, nor in getting good health services, education, and justice. There's none of that available for you from the rich, from white business people, for sure. They are against you having job guarantees, against you having wage rises, against collective health services – they don't want to be paying tax for your benefit. You'd think identifying by nation – USA! – USA! – USA! And 'Take back control' – should guarantee you such things. But they don't, not with these people

There are real relationships to identify by. What we have and need to recognise are these real relationships, mainly the one we have as workmates, organised. As workers, unionised. One good thing out of Leave and Trump's support – the great unmentionable is back - the term working class has come back into use.

There's more to do on it though. Working class, in terms of jobs, the economy and politics, surely means anyone who works for someone else for a living. That includes the half of the working class who are masked and mis-defined defined as being middle class. This defines, people, uselessly, by income not job status.

The vote on the EU in Britain, and the votes for Trump, and votes for populist politicians in Europe, Italy, Hungary, Poland, are people taking opportunities given to them to strike out against being mistreated. But identifying by nationality, by being white, by white-ism is easy but useless. Many have taken that opportunity but it's going for the wrong targets.

It's easy because to identify instead by real, functional relationships, you have to do something. You have to join a real organisation – like a union - and make real commitments to each other. National identity and white-ism is easy because you don't have to do anything. No input, no commitments. Just express hostility to others, vote that way. But what results do you expect? Business people and Farage and Trump might do things against minorities. But they won't do anything real for you. No job protection, no decent wages, no housing policy, no health service.

Trump did attack Free Trade in the USA election for President, with some hostility directed at American big business people for exporting jobs. But far more towards foreigners, like China. Trouble is, free trade is better than protectionism, better for total trade. The thing is not to oppose it but to look at who gets the benefits. The big business people, the corporate owners, stock holders? If they want it, ok. But make them pay some of it down.

For those who are grouped as outsiders by national identity and by white-ism - the victims of discrimination and scapegoating - there's a strong trend to

seeing politics as being about identity too. But *positive* identity by colour and gender is also low in meaning. Yes, there is a shared issue of oppression, placed upon you by white-ists and some men. And it has to be opposed. But there are far more meaningful relationships. For example – working class women are more oppressed by their class than by their gender. Same with people of colour. There's no real relationship in colour and gender. No organisation relating to jobs, housing, education, health services and the rest. The discrimination is to be opposed, of course. But identifying by it is accepting it. There's more to you than your gender or colour so don't self-define by it. Those who do don't see the centrality of free-market business and job relationships, of the main identities - business class identity and working class identity.

Identity needs to come from real relationships. Maybe family. Maybe sports teams. Best – from being able to rely on each other at work, against bosses' bossiness. Not enough of us do. And talking politics to each other as organised workmates. Not just locally, but across your employers operation. Which is often worldwide.

Digressions

D1 : Fighting Fascism, Or Fighting a Rival Business Class?

Was the Second World War really to combat fascism and defend democracy? And was that really why people fought in it? When it was left up to you to decide to fight, only a wonderful 1500 UK people, the International Brigade, went to Spain to fight for democracy against fascism. Everybody else only did it several years later, persuaded by the anti-fascist argument to a degree, but mainly by 'for King and Country' moonshine from the vicious class of people who'd brought them the industrial urban misery of the 1700's and 1800's and the mass unemployment of the 1930's.

That's not to belittle the bravery and suffering of people close to me who fought in the Second World War, including an uncle I'm named after but never knew who fought in North Africa only to get blown up clearing mines at the end of the war. Far from it. If this work is angry (which has been said) the thing to be most angry about in all of world politics is the unnecessary bloody slaughter of hundreds of millions of decent ordinary people in the two World Wars. I lost a Grandad too.

It *was* right to fight the Nazi's though. But not *the Germans* - many of them, especially 'German' union-organised workers and Socialists and Communists, were the first victims of the Nazi's. But British workers should have refused to fight under the orders of the class that, with mass unemployment and great poverty, was so brutal to them in the 1930's. They should have fought in their *own* armies, like the International Brigade, and as the Free French and the Polish fighter pilots did. Under Allied strategic command you'd suppose, but independent of the business class's military command. Free from being ordered about by those most odious of smug smooth plummy-voiced business class brutes, the British military officer class.

That probably sounds fanciful to you, that we could do it like that. Probably, unfortunately so. But only because we haven't got the class awareness and independence to do it. And it answers that question 'What about fighting Fascism?'

And although the Second World War was rightly fought against fascism, that wasn't really why it was fought. Not for the British Business class anyway. It was a follow-on, a stage 2, to the First World War. And that was a standard-issue, same-as-usual war of competition between the business classes of the German, Russian, French and British

empires. Not a war for our freedom and democracy.

Before the First World War each business class in each of those countries and empires involved treated the working class and peasant majorities brutally, keeping them in terrible poverty; and un-democratically, with as little say as possible. The war made things even worse for the working class in each of these countries, along with the awful carnage of the war itself. So when the *Russian* soldiers, workers and peasants refused to fight any more in the awful bloody carnage, kicked out the Tsar and the Business class from political power, and made a revolution, workers all over Europe were trying to do much the same. The British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, wrote to his French equivalent, Clemenceau, in 1919 'The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of Revolution ..... the whole existing order in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the mass of the population from one end of Europe to the other'. In *Germany* between 1919 and 1923, there was a real possibility of revolution, with workers and soldiers taking over control of major cities; in *Hungary*, a Soviet regime was set up; revolutionaries led unemployed workers in an attempt to storm the *Austrian* Parliament; there were mutinies and massive strikes in *Britain* and *France*, including even the police; likewise in *Spain* and the USA. And in *Italy*, 'the two Red years' included massive factory occupations.

In each country, the business classes won these struggles, but not permanently. They kept attacking and we kept defending - as with the General Strike of 1926. Then in 1929, the business class's free market and capitalist system collapsed, causing huge unemployment and meeting resistance to such unnecessary madness.

Between the two wars, all national business classes were alarmed, with good reason, by worker's resistance. They called it 'the Bolshevik menace'. So by far the main concern of the British business class between the wars was defending their Business System, their rule, that allowed them their wealth and power, against 'the Red Menace', 'Bolshevism'.

In Italy and Germany the Italian and the German Business class's turned to Mussolini's Fascists and Hitler's Nazi's to defeat Working class struggle. Many of the British business class approved of that as a way of dealing with organised workers resisting the devastation of the business class's failing system. Churchill praised Mussolini; the Daily Mail carried a headline 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts', the British would-be Nazis; a section of the business class attempted to install fascism in the UK.

So rather than see Hitler and the Nazi's as an enemy, many of the British business class saw them as a potential anti-Bolshevik ally against Russia, seen (incorrectly) as the source of the main problem, working class Bolshevism. They weren't bothered about what Hitler, Mussolini and Franco did to German, Italian and Spanish democracy and to workers and their unions. They did nothing to help the Spanish Democracy, when Franco's Fascists brought down the Republic with the help of the German Nazi's.

Britain only got into a Second World War against Nazi Germany because it was expanding and becoming, again, a dangerous rival empire. Churchill, a very right-wing man, saw Nazi Germany as a threat not because of its Nazism but because of its expansionism. He and other British Imperialists won a difficult

argument within the UK business class, that instead of allying with the Nazi's against Bolshevism, they should oppose them because of their expansionism.

They sold the war to millions of ordinary British people as a fight for freedom and democracy. With the Nazi's being the mass-murdering barbarians that they were, it *did* need fighting for that reason. But it's not why the UK business Class did.

Look at UK history at any time you like and see if you can find examples of the British rich, the business class and their parties, Tories and the one-time Liberals, really fighting for freedom, other than their freedom to control bigger markets get raw materials cheaply. Like, recently, Iraqi oil.

D2 – What Their Wars Are Really For

The main function of the British state and its military has always been to protect the interests of the Property-owning Business class. 'The State', in this case the British one, isn't a separate thing-in-itself. It's always live people, protecting or promoting the Interests of certain real, live people.

It goes like this - all through the period they've been in power in the UK, since 'Elizabethan' times, the British business class has traded all over the world. To protect these trading interests, the British state, openly and exclusively controlled by the business class for most of that time, has fought many wars; against native peoples in Ireland, India, Canada, Africa; against other business class's - Dutch, French, German - to take over countries and protect British business people's trade in materials - iron ore, copper, oil; and to get control of markets for their manufactured goods. What happened over the centuries was the French, Dutch, Spanish and German and other business class's competing with 'ours' for control of raw materials and markets.

Fighting them, over that, isn't defending our freedom; it's defending the Business class's interests. That's what the British state goes to war for, not for our freedom and democracy. The struggle for these has always been fought internally, *against* the British state. Those controlling it have used the military *domestically, against* freedom and democracy. Most famously at Peterloo, Manchester, 1819. And at Newport in the 1830's.

How was it necessary to fight wars all over the world, *and take possession of one third of it, and of the peoples living there*, to defend our freedom and democracy? Were the American Indians; the people of India; the Aborigines in Australia, the Eskimos in Canada, or the peoples of Africa, threatening, from those distant lands, to come over here and attack our freedom and our democratic rights? I don't think so.

D3 - Don't Blame 'The Germans' for the War

People group people by nationality or ethnicity – as the Nazis did to Jewish people – far too readily, with spectacular inaccuracy. And, in reverse, blaming 'the Germans' – many of whom were actually Jewish of course – for what the Nazis did is another example. They were the first and longest-suffering victims of the Nazis.

You can't blame 'the Germans' for Hitler and the Nazis, for the Second World War and the atrocities because t**hree quarters of Germans did not vote for the Nazis**. For the last free election in Germany before the dictatorship, November 1932, look at the voting (and non-voting) behaviour of those entitled to vote -'the Germans'. (Percentage shares of votes actually cast is shown at the end of this piece).

Nazis only 26% ***Socialists and Communists 29%*** ***Non-voters 20%***

Other parties with 1 million votes+ –

Centre Party 10% German National People's Party 6%
The big, important point being made here is that :
only 26% of Germans voted for the Nazis. 74% didn't.

Their vote was lower than in the previous election, the Socialist and Communist vote higher. You can see that the Socialists and the Communists, who could have worked together against the Nazi's but didn't, had more support, with 29%. (Though in coalition with the National People's Party, the Nazis could have 32% combined.)

What Happened Next

Coalition governments had been collapsing, failing to cope with the Great Depression of the time. So after this November 1932 election, for six weeks the Chancellor, Papen, carried on governing by decree, decrees issued for him by the President, Hindenburg. In January, 1933, they allowed Hitler to form a Cabinet, Nazi but with two from the German National People's Party, but wanted another election, arranged for March.

Through February the Nazi's paramilitaries, the Brown Shirts or SA, attacked the Socialists and the Communists, breaking up meetings and offices. Their papers were banned. So too were those of the Centre Party, who 10% of the people had voted for. So the Nazis, with votes from only 26% of the population, physically attacked and terrorised the parties for whom 39% had voted and had the power to challenge them democratically – the Socialists, the Communists, and the Centre Party.

In the week before the March election somebody burned down the German parliament building – the Reichstag. A Communist was blamed, and the Communist party. Hitler got Hindenburg to pass an emergency decree drastically reducing civil liberties, 4,000 leading Communists were arrested. Socialist leaders fled the country. Big business and the state threw themselves behind the Nazis. Brownshirts terrorised the streets and 'monitored' the election.

Even so, only 35% of the population voted for them. They had to govern in coalition with the National People's Party. Then they banned the Communist Party. A few weeks later, with the Communist representatives excluded, they persuaded the Centre party to pass, with themselves and the National People's Party, an Enabling Act that allowed the Cabinet alone to make law, without parliamentary support. Within a few months the other parties were banned or terrorised out of existence and the Nazis had a dictatorship.

So, don't blame the Germans. They were the first victims. That includes ordinary Germans like those in the army who were sent to be massacred in the east, most famously at Stalingrad. (The Nazi SS did the really nasty stuff). And the ordinary population, who suffered the mass bombings and the misery of the last few months of the war.

Hitler was their worst enemy. And he was an idiot. The attack on Russia was stupid. And so, even more so, was this – Britain tried desperately to get the US to join the war in Europe and the US political leadership wanted to. But there was also serious opposition in the US, so they couldn't. When the Japanese (government) attacked Pearl Harbour in 1942, it provoked the US to fight them, in the Pacific. There goes the chance of getting them also involved in Europe against the Nazis, it was thought. But Hitler, ignorant of the world at large and of

America's power, declared war on the US, quite unnecessarily from a German point of view. So as said, as well as being a strong-minded nasty piece of work, he was an idiot and the German people's worst enemy. (Source for this – Galbraith in Sereny's book 'Albert Speer – His Battle With Truth'.)

To show how little 'the German people' were responsible for the Nazis getting into power, this paper has shown that, taking into account the 20% who didn't vote, the percentage of voters who actually voted Nazi in *November 1932,* the last free election, was only 26%. The percentage of the votes actually *cast* in **1932** were
Nazis 33% Socialists 20% Communists 17% Centre Party 12%
National People's Party 8%
And of votes *actually cast* in the ***March 1933*** un-free election, the Nazis got only 44%.
We can debate the role and possible wishes of those who didn't bother voting.
But it is a highly significant fact that only 26% backed the Nazis in the last free election.
The other 74% were not to blame
(unless by not realising the danger and doing differently than they did.)

Sources – Wikipedia, German Federal Elections

NOTE – For anyone who wants to say this piece is excusing the Holocaust, no its not. Just to be sure – it's just saying that to blame 'the Germans' is to make the same error as the Nazis did in blaming Jewish people. You can't categorise and blame people by nationality or race. You can blame them for being Nazis though.
My most recent reading on this subject is Ben Elton's novel 'Two Brothers'. Read it.

D4 –Many Whites Are Brutal to Fellow Whites

Some bastards, different ones on each occasion, robbed my kids and their mates on the streets, taking cash, mobile phones, bank cards, credit cards, coats, bikes, even trainers. Over the years, there's been about twelve robberies on my kids, and plenty more on their mates. It has just been rife - horrible, cocky, psychopathic young thugs, many of them White, some Black and Asian, robbing us, *their fellow-British*.

It's not just the actual robberies and attacks – there's the fear you then get, permanently, as a parent, every day and every evening, that your kids might be attacked again at any time. Once I said Oh, I worry too much, there's been nothing for a bit. That very same night my youngest lad was thumped at 2 o'clock in the morning and his mobile stolen.

The term *us,* meaning *the British*, includes those people. And it includes Everton fans who'd attack me for supporting Man United. Or fellow-United fans who might attack me for being a Scouser (it would seem to them.) Or a bunch of 'fellow-Manc' skinheads who once tried to knock me off my motor-bike - for being a biker.

We bought a static caravan in Wales for £10,000 from *white, fellow-British* people. They said they weren't like some sites that throw you off after a certain number of years, they did that mainly if it was in bad condition so if we looked after it we'd be alright. Over the years, we found people in neighbouring vans being told to go, and it turned out they *do* throw you off after a definite number of years, regardless of condition. The other people had been told the same as us - they tell everyone the same, to make a sale. But eventually they make you scrap a perfectly good van, to force you to buy a newer one. You can't take your existing van anywhere else because all the sites only allow vans they sell onto their site. Ours was as good as when bought, still worth £10,000 in use value;

but they gave us our notice and we had to leave it for them to scrap.

One time, over a couple of years, I completely stripped and rebuilt my motorbike. Chromed parts, special paintwork, re-built the engine, re-painted the frame, modified and even machined parts myself. Only a couple of months after putting it back on the road, some bastards stole it. It was sickening. Almost certainly, the bastards who did it were English.

A few miles away, that very same night, some other bastards, also, almost certainly, white and English, vandalised my wife's parked-up car, writing it off. And our white one-time next door neighbour burgled us twice. A foreman, white, English, once sacked me on the spot from a building site job, for nothing, just saying 'You - get your cards'. I've not forgotten.

D5 - Business Class Newspapers Provoke Racism

A Daily Express front-page monster headline in February 2007 bellowed 'Muslims Tell Us How to Run Our Schools'. Compared to the headline, the story was utterly pathetic. All that had happened was that one small Muslim group at some obscure educational conference had presented a paper or arguments for some pro-Muslim education that were, it is true, well out of order. *But so is also is the compulsory act of Christian worship in schools that the Tories and the Church of England forced on my kids*.

Presumably the Muslims who made the proposals vote and pay their taxes and are entitled to make religious proposals, just as much as the 'British' Christians who dictate to us 'British' Secularists. And, buried deep in the report, it turned out that several other, larger Muslim groups denounced the proposals. So a small and unrepresentative group of Muslims proposed things that were unacceptable; a larger number of Muslims opposed them.

But the power of the headline was in 'Tell *Us*' and '*Our*' schools. Many of us don't include ourselves in an *Us* and *Ours* with the people who own and write the Daily Express, who are devoted enemies of workers, workers rights, and decent public services *like* Education.

Checking their website in April 2008, the headline for the story is different to the one I saw in the newsagents – now it's "Muslims: Ban Non-Islamic Schools." A contributor to their readers responses forum says 'nobody called to ban anything' and points out that the Press Complaints Commission agreed the story was misleading.

A story in the Daily Mail – the prison service was closing a buying facility in Corby because the lease for the premises was expired. The Home Office said they were re-opening it in Leicester because it was *closer to prisons*, had *better transport links*, they'd be better *able to recruit qualified staff*, and be *better able to recruit diverse staff*. The Mail presented the story very strongly as 'Giving White People's Jobs to *Them*'. That was the sense of the headline – "The Town branded "too White and too British", and the main story. It put in quotes "too white and too British" as if the Government spokesperson had said that – but it didn't say that later on, in the proper quote. Very low down, near the end of the article, all four reasons eventually appeared, including the three the prison service had cited *before* racial diversity; but only at the end, after headlining and mainlining the racist view. It drew dozens of racist comments along the lines of 'They get

everything done for them at our (white) expense' to their website.

You could look at that issue and say, 'Hmm, you'd imagine the prison service might be overwhelmingly staffed by white people: you hear black people get jailed in far greater proportions than white people, even for the same offences: maybe they'd better not have staff quotas; but when an opportunity to be able to diversify the prison workforce arises, like a lease running out and a move being necessary anyway, use the opportunity'. And, diversity was only the last of four reasons the Home Office had for a move that was occasioned simply by a lease expiring.

The Mail posed as a protector of 'Jobs for Whites'. But the Mail has no record of supporting 'the Right to Work'. They don't attack businesses that re-locate to other countries and British white business people who invest in other countries, abandoning British white and other colour workers. But, posing, ludicrously, as protectors of white people's jobs, they attack job loss when it can be blamed on racial minorities or things allegedly done for them. They inflate trivial stories like this to point their readers at outsiders as the source of their lack of jobs, instead of at the class the Mail speaks for. They stoke up racism.

How do they get away with it? Sneakiness is one reason. In both stories, they used the headline and the main part of the article to promote racial or religious division and resentment and hate; but they took care to include some balance and accurate reporting, buried low down the report and at the end, to be able to put up a defence against the charge of racism. But just between ourselves, from one of us to another, we should spot it more readily and condemn it, and the anti-working class lies that such 'reporting' embodies.

D6 - The Business Class and a Planned 'Coup'

Maybe if we were to get as strong again, such a coup wouldn't be considered now? Isn't it a more open, egalitarian society, socially if not in the sharing out of wealth? Is the modern Business class now more ready to accept that we too are entitled to make demands on the system and it's not just theirs as of inherited status? I don't know, I don't mix with them much. Looking at how much wealth they unashamedly extract from the system, I can't see much humility in them, any more than there was amongst them back in the 70's.

But are Richard Branson and his like not so amazingly arrogant as the old guard business class? (such as you still see in the Countryside Alliance.) And there's plenty of people who were originally working class, our kind, who now mix with the business class Rich, but who haven't lost all sense of their roots. People whose ability and success proves that we're not where we are, and the rich aren't where they are, because they are somehow innately superior to us - like Paul McCartney, who sent his kids to the local Secondary school; like Noel Gallagher, Alex Ferguson; and all those artists who show their humanity in their support for Live Aid. Saint Bob Geldoff of course. Maybe there's a semi-political role for these people of working class origins, who've penetrated the business class's social circles, where the rich fawn on them because of their fame and success. If we get round to sticking up for ourselves again like we did in the 70's, would they put the human case to the rich, do they perhaps, already, educate them not to be so selfish and greedy and vicious? Get them to understand that we, the masses, are entitled to fight for a fairer share of what's good in life without them getting outraged and turning to military or fascist coups?

Macca and Bob and the rest do this sort of stuff already, in fighting world poverty. No reason why they couldn't extend it to badgering the wealthy that they now mix with, to behave themselves all round. You couldn't convince all of them because most of them are very hard and self-centred people, very convinced of their rights and the rightness of their view of the world. But it's always useful if we can get some of them to behave decently, and isolate the worst of them.

That's just speculating on the attitudes they might have these days, compared to the 1970's. But it would be a mistake to believe in anything other than our own strength and organisation for dealing with the rich Business class.

D7 - Vive la Revolution! English and French!

In England in the 1640's, the *Land-owners* and the emerging *Merchant and Business Class* and *Ordinary* people fought together, against *the Monarchy*, for Democracy *for all*. But after we helped them oust the King (or, properly called, the Dictator), the property-owners betrayed us. *Cromwell's class told us that you couldn't have a say in running the country – a Vote - if you didn't* ***own*** *any of it.* What an argument! So 'the country' *is* just the hills and rivers and streams, not 'We the People'!

The land-owning class and the new merchant and business class got democracy for themselves in Parliament, and then made their peace with the monarchy - a new anti-democratic alliance to rule us, denying us the vote, viciously repressing attempts to get any more, real, democracy.

Later, around 1790, the French Business class, Peasant, Farming and Working class started the same process. They kicked out the French King (i.e. unelected Dictator) and set up a wide democracy.

Everyone should read Mark Steel's book 'Vive la Revolution'. It's inspiring and funny.

So we in Britain had tried for democracy in the 1640's and got betrayed by the propertied class, but still wanted it. So when this *British* ruling class, the propertied class, supported the *French* King's dictatorship by waging war to put down the democratic French Revolution, which side do you think the people of Britain supported? *The Revolution, of course*. Huge numbers of Radical British people welcomed it, including Tom Paine, Mary Wollstencroft, and Wordsworth. Wordsworth wrote 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive' to see at last such a great upsurge in freedom and democracy. 'Fantastic! Great! Inspiring! Let's have Liberty here too' was the view of most British people. There were marches, demonstrations, all the usual stuff, in favour of the Revolution and for something similar here.

(Ten years earlier they'd supported the American War of Independence for the same reasons. Some of the Americans themselves remained subservient to the Kings and weren't for independence. A larger proportion of *British* people supported American Independence than *Americans* did.)

Let's remind ourselves of how vile the viciously anti-democratic British Rich of that time were. They openly saw themselves as a permanent ruling class, with a name, 'the Gentry'. They, the 18th Century British class of property-owners, newly in power having put the Kings in the back seat, stole the common land from us, thus denying us the ability to support ourselves independently from them, and

impoverished us. For using what had for centuries been our Common resources, like the streams and woods, they sent people like us to penal exile in Australia, without our families. They hung little kiddies who, starving, stole a loaf of bread. Remember the brutality of their armed forces – the press-gang, Mutiny on the Bounty, Billy Budd. They were slave traders. These were those appallingly arrogant people with the big wigs and perfume and brocade and the fancy coaches with footmen, those with the pompous manners. *These, the British land-owning Ruling Class of the 18th century, were amongst the vilest examples of humanity ever.*

In response to our support for the French Revolution, they brought in laws against 'Sedition', repressing our free speech, the freedom to even *argue* for democracy. They put on trial for execution those brave people – the Radicals - who published newspapers and pamphlets critical of the rich and powerful. Tom Paine, that great fighter for democracy in England, America and France, had to flee to Dover and France to escape a death penalty - just for arguing for democracy.

And they attacked our fellow-democrats, the Revolutionaries in France. The British Monarchy and their land-owning allies were determined to stop us following the French example. So in solidarity with the ousted French King (Dictator) Louis the Whatever-number-he-was, they started the long wars against democratic Revolutionary France, aiming to re-instate Dictatorship.

Now by the time of Trafalgar, 1805, the democracy of the French Revolution had gone backwards a bit. A dictator was in power by then, Napoleon, so not that much worth supporting.

But ... here's something interesting .... *What mainly caused the great Revolutionary Democratic upsurge to degenerate first into the guillotining of 'the Terror', and then into Napoleon's dictatorship, was those British and other anti-democratic monarchist foreign armies*. *They* caused the Terror – because they clearly stated they would execute the revolutionaries and all Paris. So put yourself in the uncertain Insurrectionary position of the Revolutionaries - not sitting securely in power, either internally or externally - you are invaded by half the rest of Europe's armies trying to re-instate a hereditary dictatorship and promising to slaughter you all; you are threatened internally by some self-demeaning or frightened people who would concede to the foreign armies and accept the King/Dictator returning; and threatened with uprisings by actual Royalist groups who plotted to get him back in and were in contact with the King's armies. Napoleon came to prominence putting down a Royalist uprising.

The beleaguered fighters for democracy were in a desperate position. There was deadly disagreement over whether to allow the King to return with some reduced role. The revolutionaries guillotined those who were for weakening the Revolution, or would have the King back, as such things opened them all up to execution *themselves*, as promised by the monarchist armies, that included the British.

On top of this weakening and deadly in-fighting caused by the threat of having the King/Dictator forced back on them, the fledgling democracy was subverted into Napoleon's dictatorship by the *French* property-owners, the new French Business class, who were, like Cromwell in England, for democracy only for themselves. *Just as had happened in England*, business class revolutionaries were satisfied with having ousting the Feudal powers (the Kings) and having got vital business freedoms. Like Cromwell, they wanted to exclude the poorer classes from democratic power. The last executions in the Revolution were these people executing the most democratic revolutionaries.

They invited Napoleon to take power, as a strong man who could quell their more democratic revolutionary rivals; and also prevent the British business class and the Prussian and Austrian ones from re-instating the French monarchy.

So, interestingly, it was very much like what happened in the English Civil War, where the poor fought alongside the propertied, business class for democracy for *all* ; then the propertied class, having got rid of the King, denied the poor the vote and made it just a business class democracy. Which is what we've still got, although we now get an occasional little vote.

Napoleon's dictatorship was a sad outcome; but it happened largely because the revolutionaries became divided and weakened by the threat of a British-backed return of the monarchy, guillotining each other over the issue, and the business faction was able to get power and hand it to Napoleon.

Taking all that into account, on the anniversary of Trafalgar, how could you celebrate on the side of 'Our' brutal British masters of the time? That is betraying the actual British people of the time, who were also defeated, inside Britain, by Nelson's class of brutes. And how could you side with Britain's rulers of the time by today's accepted standards of democracy?

Although you could say it was the dictator Napoleon who they defeated at Trafalgar, Britain's ruling class were still fighting the war they'd started against the *Democratic* French Revolution – they'd been doing that since long before it's degeneration into Napoleon's own dictatorship. '*Our' masters weren't fighting Napoleon because he was a Dictator. They were fighting – and in 1815 succeeded - to restore the* ***original****, inherited dictatorship of the French Kings.* At least Napoleon had been asked to take charge, by some elected politicians.

At home, 'our' masters fought the same anti-democratic war, charging us with sedition, threatening hanging and deportation.

So they beat Napoleon in 1805 at Trafalgar; in 1815 at Waterloo beat him again, and the French Revolution, and replaced a 'Revolutionary' dictator, Napoleon, with a hereditary one, Louis the Whatever. ***And in 1819 they beat us too; at Peterloo, Manchester****. People demonstrating for the vote were killed.*

So to sum up - why should any democrat, then and now, support the British Ruling class of the time in their war against those French people who were fighting for democracy, when they waged the same war on us?

The wonder of it is that in today's supposedly democratic times – listen to how Blair talked about democracy and freedom, when he tried to justify his invasion of Iraq – the very idea of celebrating Trafalgar isn't viewed with shock, with everyone speaking as I have just done about it, with much criticism of the British government of the time – Pitt and others – fighting their dreadful anti-democratic war against Liberty, here in Britain and abroad.

On Question Time, this was overwhelmed by the notion of 'your Country'.

In the discussion about the 200th anniversary *celebrations* of Trafalgar, none of what I've just recorded was discussed. The unthinking nationalist 'Us and Them' mindset against 'Foreigners' led to the daft position where Otis Ferry could win the argument against Tony Benn's humanistic but vague anti-war sentiments by saying

'But Tony, if it wasn't for Trafalgar we'd be speaking French".

Vous quoi, Ferry? Comment? Vous plaisentez, sans doute?

Simple, unthinking acceptance of the battered-into-your-mind-every-day notion of 'the country', the nationalist view of '*Us* against *the French*', put us on the wrong side of the struggle for democracy at that time, *in Britain as well as in France*. That's wrong.

Same Again, in Russia ....

It's the same story again with the Russian Revolution, another example of international solidarity by the rich and usiness classes, far greater than any we've yet attempted. When the Russian Workers and Peasants took democratic control in 1917, ten European countries including Britain sent armies to help the Czarist dictatorship fight against democracy. The Revolutionaries, in having to fight this Civil War, had to abandon much of their democracy for military discipline over the whole society. Many of the revolutionaries died fighting and although they 'won' the Civil War, the democracy of the Revolution had degenerated towards Stalinist dictatorship.

D8 - Football Fan's Hating Each Other

One big change was that fans started singing together. I was watching Liverpool from the Kop when it all started, singing along to pop records that were being played over the PA - 'There She Was Just a Walkin' Down the Street, Singin' Dooh Ah Diddy, Diddy Dum Diddy Dooh, Snapping Her Fingers and a'Shufflin' Her Feet, Singing Dooh Ah Diddy Diddy Dum Diddy Dooh'. That was a blast, singing that and other pop songs along with 20,000 other people!

People started not just singing along but changing the words to suit their team. Football had just started being shown on TV, and fans could be heard singing on Match of the Day. So, listen! That's us on the Telly! The TV commentators bulled it all up. They'd say 'And now you can hear the Kop Choir singing their famous anthem 'You'll Never Walk Alone'; or 'There's the Stretford End singing' or 'Now listen to the Boothen End singing 'We All Live At The Top Of Boothen End' (in Stoke's old ground.) They gave *national recognition* on TV to our newly-found group identities!

Then fans were able to travel to each other's grounds more, with cheap excursion trains and the new motorways. With the *Group Identity* each set of fans developed from all standing together and singing - the Kop, the Stretford End, the Holte End (Villa), they'd sing songs *directed at each other*. Then the singing confrontation developed into a battle for *territory*. The home fans had their 'End' and the away fans would try to 'take' it. The singing and the terrace battle with the opposition fans became as important as the game on the pitch. I recall being in the Stretford End one floodlit game in 1966, when Everton fans tried to take it. It was a bit crowded, and a bit heavy. But, to remember it's supposed to be about great football, Law scored what was, for me, his most memorable goal.

It all developed into the now well-established group hatred many fans have for each other. I've been in the middle of these scenes many times and it sickens me, to see and hear such vile hatred being directed by huge groups of workers at other huge groups of *fellow workers*. When they started killing each other in numbers, at the Heysel Stadium in 1985, I thought about why, and the thinking explained here developed from then.

D9 - 'Derby' Games – Hating Your fellow-Locals!

Manchester United fans are proud of being *Mancs* (those who are, which is plenty of them). So they sing 'Oh Manchester is wonderful' when they play, say, Liverpool. But *they hate and despise their Manc brethren - Manchester City fans*. I've read some entertaining letters in the fanzines trying to make sense of this for themselves. The best

attempt was 'Manchester is great; but everything's got its bad side. As far as Manchester is concerned, it's City!' Such deep philosophy in football, eh?

Manchester City fans themselves are sillier than most in trying to find significance in *place*. They claim city is the only real Manchester team because their stadium is inside Manchester Council's city limits; while United's is just over the border in neighbouring Trafford. City fans become experts in Local Government boundaries but I bet most of them don't know a lot about what the Council does and couldn't name the Leader of Manchester Council or any of the Chairs of the Council Committees.

And same as most clubs, few of City's players grew up in Manchester or live in Manchester, and never have done. In one game not so long ago, none of the City players were even UK born! Their players, and their manager, and their directors, all come in from and go back to the rich areas well outside Manchester - Alderley Edge, Bowdon, Hale Barns. The last owner would go back to Thailand if he was going home only I don't think he's allowed to or maybe he is but he'd be arrested. Something like that. I've no problem with any of this as a footballing thing - but City's local identity claim is based on nothing. And so is everybody else's.

You find this intense ***local*** rivalry, as well as that against outsiders, all over the world. Being 'a Northerner' I was surprised to find out, about twenty years ago, that Tottenham and Arsenal fans hate each other. I'd seen them both as far-away London teams, equally from darn Sarf (down South), all Cockneys together (not within Bow Bells, I know), so why would they hate each other? And football fans in Madrid, of Real and Athletico, hate each other; and Milan and Inter; Roma and Lazio; Benfica and Sporting Lisbon; Boca Juniors and River Plate.

In amongst place identity mania, it's contradictory group-identity madness; but I do know how it happens. When I've played in and managed football teams, it does feel special when you play the closest other team. When I managed a youth team, we felt it playing the team in our league closest to us. It's because they challenge your 'Where You're From' place identity, your feeling of significance from you being 'the locals.' So are they. But in our games against a neighbouring team, lads on each team knew each other from school, played together in the school team in mid-week. And their manager turned out to be an old team mate of mine from years back, from when we played together in a factory team.

But it's only a (beautiful) game. The group identification is totally over the top.

Why People Should Read 'Us, Politics, The System And Class'

Q. Why are people treated so badly politically and in making their living, in their jobs? Most people are workers: so why do anti-worker, pro-business-people, pro-the-wealthy parties ever get into government? Particularly conservative parties, like the Republicans in the USA and the others across Europe and all over the world?

A. Because that large majority of people who are workers don't understand their key relationship with business people. This book explains it, from everyone's daily experience of jobs and politics. It aims to convince workers of the case for

organising together. For people ever to win decent treatment, the kind of views and understandings presented in it need to become widely held, argued for and acted on. If people read it and urge others to read it, it will help people, worldwide, achieve better lives and a better future. It is easily, cheaply and freely available globally.

We never examine 'the economy' and 'the system' as relationships. Even though we suffer many problems when it works - if that's ever really true - and still more when it's in crisis. Instead, we complain about what's done in politics and at work, and the effects on us - "I think it's terrible what they're doing about this or that" but mostly just ask, just plead, for better treatment, in the public arenas open to us, from the weak position the current relationships put us in. As if appealing for fairness and common humanity might work. We need to do more than complain and plead. We need to examine the job, workplace and political relationships that empower business people to treat us harshly, and change them, so we have the practical power to be far more assertive of our interests in 'the system'.

Once, the key relationships were between big landowners and tenants or peasants. In Europe first, the business system replaced that system, and has now spread across the globe. They call that 'globalisation'. The business system defines how people relate to everyone else - the basic relationships in the workplace and 'the economy.' Those who it favours call it free enterprise. Others call it capitalism. *The Free-market Business System* is a better term. We need to examine it. Especially how business people and workers relate to each other. We need a clear view of what's wrong with business relationships and the changes needed. We need it putting across to workers by fellow-workers. This book is provided to help that happen.

We use the business system without ever having taken a close look at how it operates and whether it is right or not. And without ever having chosen to use it. We could have done with doing so at any time in the past few centuries. It runs according to relationships that enable those said to be the most able, energetic, most hard-working or ruthless to exploit, misuse, bully and discard the rest. It allows them to direct – or misdirect - the economy. It is claimed this is all reasonable because anyone can get to that position. Yet even if that were true it would be unacceptable for one very simple reason. That is that mass production of goods and services, involving most of us, is the dominant way of producing. Most people simply can't be owners, however enterprising they might try to be. Most will be workers. And it is not acceptable for them – us – to be treated as harshly as we are.

It allows business people to obstruct us organising together as workers. We have never written up the arguments against this, 'The Right To Unionise', nor put it out widely, to workers generally. It's urgently necessary that we do. This book enables it for the first time. For example, here is a statement of the unfairness in the job relationship, that should be commonly spoken of but isn't. Each 1 person - you, for example - who sells them self as a worker to those who employ 100 other workers is 100 times weaker than them, the 'employer'. Where the employer has 1000 workers, 1000 times weaker. That's not a fair, reasonable way to run everyone's most basic, important relationship - the one in which they make their living.

Those who champion the business system - business people, their 'news' papers, their conservative parties - have a set of arguments claiming that these relationships are

fair and just. And even that they are the best for everybody. They manage the impressive feat of getting these views widely accepted. We workers, most people, don't have a clear, thoroughly-thought-out response. That's why we keep getting defeated in politics and at work. As happened in the UK in the 1979 election, when the political arguments against us organising and acting together to stick up for ourselves in the system won. And they continue to win, even amongst some workers, despite them being outrageous.

This has been going on for centuries. In the UK, workers were always treated very badly up to 1939 - not so badly after 1945 - badly again since 1979. And now, even worse. Without a clear, commonly-held understanding of the unfairness of the basic relationships, and of the rightness and necessity of organising together as workers, we will just carry on being treated like this. There's always some who resist but it's never enough. It never will be while most people accept the business system's unfair relationships as the only way to run society. We have no common criticism of these relationships. We don't even have an everyday term for the people whose system it is. The all-pervasive false 'we' of national identity blinds us even to their existence and masks their responsibility for how we are treated. That leads to some blaming our problems on people of different colour and foreigners. The problem is the Free-market Business System and those who enforce its relationships - those whose system it is. The everyday term for them is 'the Business Class'.

Some argue for a radical change to a socialist system of relationships. That is too big a leap to make while we don't even have a solid criticism of the existing system, while most people accept the existing relationships. While we don't even have a widespread belief in our right to organise together to challenge their unfairness.

It's way beyond the time when people should have a sound criticism of the process, the relationships, that enable them to be treated wrongly. The book *Us, Politics, The System And Class* is such a criticism. The writer believes it is essential that many workers read it and urge others to read it, to help develop a commonly-held worker's philosophy that will support much more organisation and assertive action.

A philosophy that we can use to challenge business people, the Tories, and those many Labour politicians who concede to them. They all grant business people great freedom while restricting us from trying to get equal to them by organising together. Anti-union and anti-strike laws, when properly examined, are an absolute scandal. Yet there they are.

In making the observations in this work in person the writer finds people show real interest in this notion of examining the basic relationships. But few are actually getting hold of it, reading it and urging other workers to. Even revolutionary socialists don't 'get' the need to take a close look at how the existing society runs and at common, everyday attitudes to 'the system' and to each other. It's no wonder the business class, who do 'get it' and have their arguments sorted out and present them vigorously, dominate society and are able to treat us brutally.

A short piece, in 'The Essential UsPol' on the website, squeezed in here too

Work & Politics As Football

At work, in your trading relationship with employers over wages and conditions, it's like you're playing football against a team on your own.

They are companies or public bodies, organised to play together. They wear the same kit. They pass the ball to each other.
You and your workmates don't play as a team, you play them as individuals. You don't wear the same kit and don't pass the ball to each other.

So you usually lose to them.
You all resent it but accept it as the way of the world.

Most people like you outside work think the same and don't notice or speak about the significance of them being organised and yourselves not being.
Or that that to match up to their organisation you need to organise with each other too.

And the employers playing you as a team have the rules of the game on their side from way back.

They know the rules and take an interest in them. Most people like you don't, thinking they are just the way the world is. One of the rules is that they can obstruct you from playing as a team.

If you want to change the rules, they concede to you a remote regulatory political forum - parliament, congress.

Being organised and very committed to their own interests, they campaign for it better than you do.
You don't, much, so don't get much of what you want from it.

Their representatives in the forum argue that them beating you is actually in your interests - that they know best and wealth will trickle down to you from them, so you should vote for their people. Some of you are taken in by that.

They tell you your problems are from your representatives in the forum letting you down. Some of you are taken in by that.

Or they say your problem is that the remote forum is a self-serving elite. So, many give up on the forum. Or turn to alternative big-talking representatives put up by the other team.

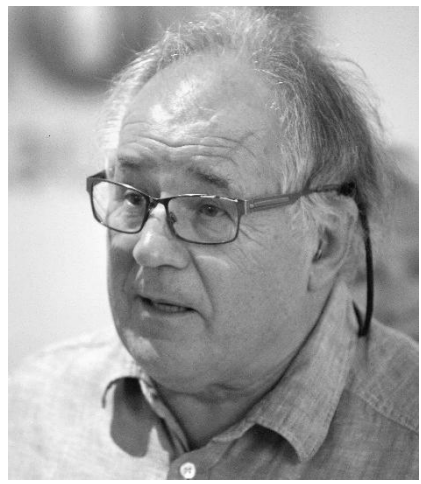
To play them at this game, you and your workmates need to play as a team like they do, and unionise at work.

And in politics, to see each other as people on the same side, talk to each other about the system, and organise too.

About The Author

Ed McDonnell *is a retired lecturer in trade union education. He organised and tutored courses for workplace union representatives, for over twenty years, in the UK. Helping reps to examine how people relate at work was central to the job. That covers how they relate to each other as well as to the employer. It is a key political issue.*

Some courses were to help reps deal with laws made by conservatives to shackle workers union organisation, and



the author had personal experience of them as an officer of the lecturers' union. In doing that, he learned a lot about the arguments for workers' rights to organise and act together, in response to employer's organisation, free from restrictions made in political systems subservient to business people.

His political and trade union education began when growing up in a community of dockers and shipbuilders on Merseyside, where people were fiercely working class; union; Labour; and politically argumentative. There and at grammar school studying history, he saw how badly workers were treated, as a class, in the industrial revolution, in the 19th century, in the two World Wars, and in the depression of the 1930's. That stimulated a lifelong determination to work out the rights and wrongs of the relationships and political attitudes that enabled such awful treatment, and how to change them.

At university in the 1960's he was radicalised by the student political activism of the time. Then he worked in a range of jobs. In the engineering industry in Manchester he became active as a union rep in one of the biggest and best-organised factories ever.

He tried to convince fellow-workers of the case for socialist revolution. But in 1979 he saw how a lot of workers allowed the Thatcher-led conservatives to win elections and get into government. He concluded that workers, as a class, far from being likely to organise a revolution and build a socialist society, lacked conviction in their right to organise and defend themselves even under the present system; didn't recognise the existence of the business class, their own existence as a class, and how their relationships with them and with each other are the main problem. He concluded that the practical need was to understand and become players in the system as it is.

Throughout his working life, he found that everyone, including fellow-workers, has views on how we relate in politics, business, production and work, and what's right and wrong with it and will talk vigorously about it. But a work making coherent sense of it has never been written and widely read. So conservative arguments that business people are entitled to power and that workers are not, and their organisation not legitimate, remain unchallenged. And whatever advances are made in making society more civilised are repeatedly repulsed by conservatives, representing the business class. This book aims to help you to change that.

Reviews

The late Tony Benn
" a great book to explain the essentials and I hope is widely read."

John the Milkman *and daughter* ***Sarah***
"I agree with all that" and "I think it's great."

Eddie Little*, North West Labour History*
"Not so much a book as a toolbox for activists and thinking people, or all of us who should be thinking".

Mark Thompson, *North West Labour History*
"This pamphlet by retired union activist and trade union education lecturer Eddie McDonnell, extracted from his book Us, Politics, The System And Class is as far from an academic handbook on your rights at work and how to win against the bosses as it's possible to imagine. The Right To Unionise has the feel of the shop floor, full of anecdotes about confrontations in the workplace... as well as discussions of class, democracy, nationalism, regionalism, religion, war and football. McDonnell looks at the basic relationship between bosses and workers and how it shapes class relations in wider society. His explanation of what happens when workers sell their labour power for wages is clear and unarguable.... he is also very clear about working class and middle class identities, cutting through the idea that your class is about where you live, how you talk, the car you drive or the school you went to rather than 'the most basic issue - how you make your money'. The Right To Unionise also includes a useful outline of how Britain developed from 'a dictatorship of a small class of brutal, undemocratic property-owners – the monarchy and the aristocracy ... who owned everything and had all the political power ... from 1640 this propertied class were forced to concede power to a semi-democratic Parliament of large farmers and merchants and manufacturers and not very long ago we workers forced these propertied business classes to concede us just one, occasional little vote".

Appendix 1 -

The Right To Unionise' is mostly extracted from 'Us, Politics, The System And Class'. But some starter material developed just in RTU - the Title page, 'The Unions' and 'The Gig Economy' - are here in UPTS&C as Appendix 1- The Essential RTU.

The Right To Unionise

by Ed McDonnell

The Essential RTU –

"...as far from an academic handbook on your rights at work as it's possible to imagine, The Right To Unionise has the feel of the shop floor."

North West Labour History

Everyone knows what power business people and public service managers have over people in their economic role as workers. And workers know it's too much. Especially where workers are not unionised, as most aren't. It means most people have to make their living, that most important of things you have to do, in a grossly unequal relationship. It should be unacceptable in national life, in all countries around the world, where workers are the great majority of citizens.

But people don't know how employers get that power and how to challenge it, ideologically and practically. They need to get to grips with exactly how they get it and how it is out of order. And learn how to speak up for their right to respond to it by unionising, in everyday talk across all of society, and in political debate. And, of course, to do it.

The inequality comes from us being in industrialised economies where most people have to get jobs in unfair work relationships. It is the biggest wrong in our economic and political systems. It enables employers to not only treat people unfairly in making their living but also enables the business class, the class that dominates humanity, globally, to corner obscene wealth and political power.

The Right To Unionise uses everyone's common experience of work, and everyday language, to show just how business people, public bodies and other employers get their power over the rest, how it is unfair, how unionising in response is a right and how union conditions should be expected in jobs.

It's an equality issue. Because even where more recognised inequalities are dealt with, inequality in earning a living, shared by people of all colours, nationalities, genders, lifestyles and ages, remains, unless unionised. It is a unifying issue.

But everyone takes employer's power for granted and just how they get it is not well known. Here it is - in our industrialised economies, most employers have many staff. Employers are stronger than each one of them not because they can get someone else from the unemployed but because, with so many other staff, they already <u>have</u> someone else. It means they don't have much need for any one worker and can drive a hard bargain with each of them individually. As they do. (See also Marginal Utility, below).

So job deals you make on your own with employers are unfair. So unfair, in such an important activity as making your living, it is totally wrong. This, the core of the case for the right to unionise, needs making to fellow workers, people generally, the media, and politicians.

It should include this point - businesses are themselves people organized together, *collectively*. So are public services. They act together, *as* organizations, all day, every day. Their organisation is recognised in law and, obviously, in workplaces. An argument to make against conservative opposition to unionisation is: you assert business people's right to organise and to act, collectively, in *companies* and *corporations*. The rest of the population are entitled to do that too, in their unions.

We can also argue the case in the language of the business class's own free market economics. *Marginal utility* is a term in business economics for how, when you have lots of something, you have less need for any *one. A*nd that puts you in a dominant bargaining position with anyone who wants to sell you another. In industrialised work, with many staff, business people use marginal utility on *people*.

They claim free market relationships are always right and reasonable. In them, employment contract law treats workers as trading with them as equals, which is clearly nonsense. If it is really equal, employers should not be bosses. *In this work, we'll look closely at why they are.*

As said, most people not being unionised is the biggest *political* problem we have because it is how the business and employer minority get power over the majority, workers, and leaves not only

earning a living but also the acquisition of wealth, and politics, to be dominated by business people, in their own self-confessedly selfish, private interests.

For society to be fair and equitable, their fellow-citizens, mostly workers, the majority, are entitled to organise too, in unions. Not as a right for 'the unions' but for themselves, jointly. They themselves need to see why they have the right to organize and act together, collectively. People do know they would be stronger unionized but need to be able to make the case clearly to each other and able to make the political case for their *entitlement to* be. This work aims to help spread widely amongst them the basic understanding of *how* employers can mistreat them and how it justifies their own organisation. For union activists and political progressives, it is a resource of observations and arguments to use in conversations and campaigns with workers and to put in political debate at all levels.

The Right To Unionise shows how business people having such power over supposedly 'all-in-it-together' fellow-citizens is wrong. It shows how business people and governments obstructing citizens from organising (as business people do) is unacceptable, how it should be a civil right, a constitutional right. It's time we caught up with the Industrial Revolution: they are organised, we need to be, and are *entitled* to be. (End of *The Essential RTU*).

'The Unions ?'

Conservatives and the media always talk of 'the unions' as if they are a separate thing from workers. It is a partly successful attempt to separate workers from unions, to get them to see unions as outside bodies that mislead workers, not as themselves, organised. It enables conservatives to make laws restricting organised workers' freedom to act by pretending they are protecting workers despite the fact that they are the political representatives of employers. They are the ones doing the misleading.

But most people, including workers, also see the union officials in the union offices, away from workplaces, as 'the union'. This is plain wrong, annoying, and greatly damaging to workers. ***A union is workers organised together, in their workplaces or in their trade.*** The officials do play vital roles. They are an administrative and professional support system servicing members organised in their workplaces. And, being employed by the union members, they can represent them with employers without having to fear for their job. They are an important part of the union leadership. But they are not, in themselves, 'the union'. The union is the members, organised in the workplaces by those of them who step up to serve as departmental reps, shop stewards or branch officers. And those who serve as elected delegates to internal regional and national committees and conferences.

Another image conservatives push is to see the union just as ***a service an individual can buy,*** like they buy car or house insurance from an insurance company, or gas and electricity from an energy company. Many workers take this view. Being an individual union member ***is*** insurance, on your job - surely as much worth insuring as your house and car? Membership is worth it just for that. You get information, advice and individual representation, including legal representation if needed.

But a union is far more than that. It is workers joined together, at work, to negotiate all together; committed to help and back any one worker with individual problems; and on occasion, to act together, to go on strike - to respond to the unfair power employers use over them as individual workers by using the powers of being organised, like employers do.

The Labour Movement

'The unions' are millions of workers organised together in their workplaces, in their trades, in the various industries. In the face of conservative and media hostility, they are citizens who are also workers and who legitimately organise together, as business people do. Rather than 'the unions', the correct term is ***'The Labour Movement'***.

A key objective of this work is to help get union organisation widely accepted as entirely normal; to help legitimise it at all levels, from the attitudes of individual workers, with membership of a union expected in ordinary social conversation, to international organisation and agreements on shared conditions. It makes the case for every worker's right to be organised, to help workers be fully confident about doing it, in whichever employment situations, and so employers and governments are pressured to facilitate it as a civil right. It should be a right guaranteed in the constitution.

<u>They</u> Organise Us

The key feature of society, economics and politics is that business people associate together and are organised but the rest, the majority, workers, mostly aren't. And the key point these works make is that workers should organise too, and are entitled to. But there is something about our attitudes to organising together that is different to theirs, that we need to be aware of.

Business people associate and organise voluntarily, recognising things about each other that means they can work together as a business. Workers don't come together and associate like that. Initially, they only associate under the direction of employers. They recruit us into their workforce, we each make our employment contract with them one by one. We join their operation without

considering each other. We are collectivised, but by the employer.

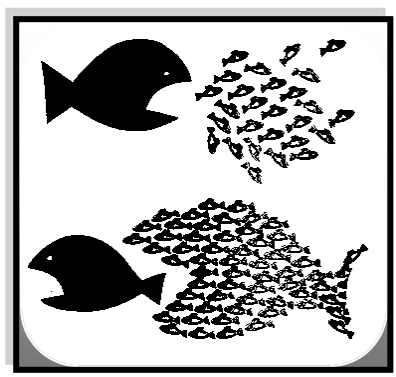
This explains some obstacles to organising. While many fellow-workers readily see how we are all in the same position and need to associate, for many it doesn't come naturally. They see they have a relationship with their boss but not with each other. It comes out in the saying 'The boss pays my wages, not the union.' (The answer to that is 'Only through a deal with them where you are many times weaker, and it enables them to keep a lot of what you generate.')

So, they organise us, as their workforce, for their purposes, under their rules. When we seek to organise, we are making a deal with each other not, in the first place, as people coming together voluntarily based on our attributes and things we see we can do together, but as we find ourselves, with our varying personalities, as recruited by the employer.

Think about workmates you've had - usually a motley crew, with many different approaches to life, the job, the boss, each other. Most know the boss has too much power but some, not being up for committing to challenging them, put up with it. Some aspire to go up through the ranks individually and might be 'bosses (w)men'.

Making the case to each other for associating as fellow-workers, independently of them, unionised, is something we have to do consciously, after the employer has got us all together. It means overcoming some attitudes like the one quoted above.

The case we make for organising together and committing to joint action is a powerful one. Although not consciously decided, in taking a job you join your workmates as much as you do the boss. We are the workforce, in a powerful association with each other. The overriding, shared issue is that the employer has many of us to do the same jobs and so can easily do without any one of us unless we band together.



L'Union Fait La Force – The Union Makes Strength

From a Bombardier factory in Canada

On 'The Gig Economy'

Some say 'the gig economy' and zero-hours contracts make union organisation impossible. This is not so. They do bring difficulties but there's nothing new about casual labour and organising in unions. Employers have always used casual labour when it suits them. Job security is up there with wages as a reason for workers *to* organise.

This writer's grandfather and his generation had to stand outside the dock gates hoping to be picked out for half a day's casual work in the 1930's. And in the 1950's, aged 8, I first became aware of union organisation, that workers, by organising and acting together, could exercise power and stand up to employers, when, from my primary school playground overlooking Birkenhead Docks, I saw lorries backed up for miles, unable to unload, because those dockers were striking for union rights.

Actors and musicians get organised in fragmented employment. And for all the talk of the gig economy, there are still usually 'core' workforces and when they are well organised, they help organise and protect the people on casual conditions. In London, the many couriers and delivery workers have organised and acted together. They use modern social media to communicate.

Next, in the full work The Right To Unionise,
is The Three-page Read of it (followed by
the rest of The Right To Unionise).
It is included in this work, Us, Politics, The System And Class,
at page 52, in The Thirty Minute Read.

Us, Politics, The System and Class's Main Points, for Discussion

How much do you agree with them?

How can you discuss them with other people?

- ***They've Got All The Rest Of explains business and management power over workers***
- ***They can sack you easily in Contract Law because of A Lot Of***
- ***The case for Our Right to Organise and Strike***
- ***Striking and the Bottle Issue - the comparison with War***
- ***The definition of the Business class***
- ***The definition of the Working class***
- ***Exploitation means Paying Less than they Charge for your work***
- ***The view of National Identity***
- ***The view of Local identity and Football identities***
- ***The argument for Real Interest Groups***
- ***The case for Working Class identity and Organisation***
- ***The explanation of UK society developed from the Land-Owner's Dictatorship to the Business Class dominating a weak Democracy***
- ***The inadequacy of 'the Vote' – Just One Little X***
- ***The comparison between Union Democracy when Striking and Parliament's lack of any over waging War.***
- ***Obligations, Rights and Deterrents to Associating with others***
  - Forced to Associate as 'the Country'
  - The Business Class's right to associate as 'Companies'
  - Workers denied Rights to Associate - 'Free markets in Labour'
  - Our Right to Organise and Act
- ***Comparing Democracy in Choosing Leaders – Union v Parliament***
- ***The argument for Having Your Say on Issues – Union v Parliament***
- ***Interest-group Constituencies***

Improvements by Update/Version Number

*The book is often **improved**. There always will be useful improvements to make. Also, the author can never just check it over without finding improvements to make and he usually makes them. They are usually only to the start pages, choice of words and sentence structure, and reducing the capitalisation. All the main analysis and argument were written long ago and remain much the same and (mostly) in the same place in any update/version.*

Note on out-of-date references

Being continually improved, usually these days only in The Essentials and shorter reads, doesn't mean the whole thing is continually checked to update present-tense references to the likes of Blair, Bush and suchlike.

Record of Recent Improvements

.19 - adding 'Class' to title
.20 Micro Summary inserted where belongs, first item
.21 Summaries at 276 – Our Money put second
2026. 1 Micro improved
2026.2 Just making the header Uspol not UsPoliticsandthesystem.org ;
And making the title Us, Politics, The System and Class (from Us, Politics, The System And Class')
2026.3 Removing unintentional blank pages at 25, 58, 103. Layout opened up up to p.17.
Our Wealth moved to 'The Essential..' Page ref's corrected. Business System Not Capitalism added to Essential
2026.4 Micro- re-arranged
24A fixing page breaks around p 205
26.5 Changing Lots Of/ Many Of You to They've Got All The Rest
TGART added to Micro-S. Business System not Capitalism p 17 improved
2026.5B First para (of Micro) re-done
2026.6 First para Micro/economic class/employed class throughout work
2026.7 – Essential thoroughly re-arranged and improved

Page Formatting Record for writer's use –

How to add a custom paper size - Control Panel > Printers and Faxes. Server Properties on File menu. Add your paper size on Forms tab.
Royal is 15.59 cm by 23.39. Margins 1.5

Margins For Printed copy on Lulu –

Margins - Inside 2.1 Gutter 0.2 Outside 1.2 Mirror.
Cover colour tangerine ee6920 Text Century Schoolbook Bold Italic