The Full Right To Unionise

v.2026.3B See last page

by Ed McDonnell

The Essential RTU to page 6 then Contents

'… 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 the 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 working in economies dominated by high-volume production - of services as well as manufacturing - 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 how they get it isn't well known. Here it is - in our volume-production (industrialised) economies, most of them have many staff. They are stronger than each one of them not because they can get someone else from the unemployed but because, with so many others, 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 high-volume, large-workforce production, 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 and how we need to unionise to get nearer to actual equal trading with them.*

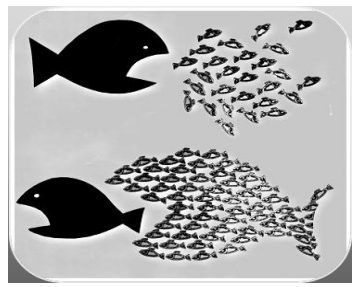
As said, most people not being unionised is the biggest *political* problem we have because it is how the business and employer minority get power over the majority, workers, and leaves not only earning a living but also the acquisition of wealth, and politics, to be dominated by business people, in 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*).



At page 9 is 'The Right To Unionise' - The Three-page Read'

'The Unions' ?

Conservatives and the media (much of it *their* media) always talk of 'the unions'', like a separate thing from workers. It is an attempt, successful to a degree, to get workers to see them as outside bodies, potentially misleading workers, not as themselves, organised or potentially organised. It enables conservatives to make laws restricting organised workers' freedom to act by pretending they are protecting workers, despite conservatives being 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 annoying, plain wrong, 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 organised more widely by members who serve as elected delegates to internal regional and national committees and conferences.

Another image conservatives present is of a union as just ***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. Now 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; 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 have over them as just individual workers by using the power 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 national politics, 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 trade union movement' or 'the labour movement'.***

A key aim of this work is to help get union organisation accepted as entirely normal; to help legitimise it, from the attitudes of individual workers, to membership of a union being 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 confident about doing it, in whichever employment situations, and so employers and governments are pressured to facilitate it as a civil right, one that should be guaranteed in the constitution.

'The Gig Economy'

Some say 'the gig economy' and zero-hours contracts make union organisation impossible. Not so. They do bring difficulties but there's nothing new about casual labour - employers have always used casual labour when it suits them - and organising in unions - job insecurity is one of the main reasons *to* unionise.

In the 1930's 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. And in the 1950's, aged 8, he first became aware of union organisation and that workers, by organising and acting together, could exercise power and stand up to employers, when, from his primary school playground overlooking Birkenhead Docks, he 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. In London, the many couriers and delivery workers have organised and acted together. They use modern social media to communicate. 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.

***They* Organise Us**

As said, the key feature of society, economics and politics is that business people associate together, 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 how we get to organising together that is different to theirs, that we need to be aware of.

Business people come together and associate and organise voluntarily. They recognise 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 of our fellow-workers readily see how we are in the same position as each other 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 workforces, 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

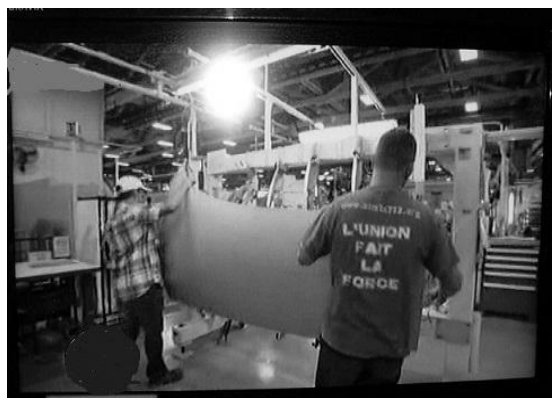
people coming together voluntarily based on our attributes and things we see we can do together, but as we find ourselves as recruited by the employer, with our varying personalities.

Think about workmates you've had - usually a motley crew, with many different takes on life, the job, the boss, each other. Most know the boss has too much power but some, not being up for challenging them, put up with it. Some aspire to improve their position by going through the ranks individually, and might be 'bosses (w)men'.

Making the case to each other for associating as fellow-workers, independently of employers, 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.

But the case we make for organising together and committing to joint action is a powerful one. And although not consciously decided, in taking a job you join your workmates as much as you join 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 doing the same or similar 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

'The Right To Unionise' is from
'Us, Politics, The System And Class' that is at www.uspol.org

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Work & Politics As Football

In the relationship with employers over terms and conditions, it's like you're playing football against the most assertive and possibly the most able people around.

They are organised as a team, as companies and public bodies. They wear the same kit. They pass the ball to each other.

You and your workmates don't play as a team. You don't wear the same kit and don't pass the ball to each other. You each play them as individuals, on your own.

So you usually lose to them.
You resent it but accept it as the way things are.

Most people like you 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.

The people playing against you as a team have the rules of the game on their side from way back. One of the rules is that you can't play as a team without a struggle.

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.

If you want to change the rules, they concede to you a remote regulatory political forum - parliament, congress.

Being organised and committed to their own best 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're better off voting 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 itself 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 unionise at work; and, in politics, at least talk to each other as people on the same side. You have to play as a team like they do.

But next - in The Right To Unionise - The Three-page Read, second page - the even more important advantage they have over staff - how the big workforces of volume-production and service provision enable employer's power.

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. Their activity *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.

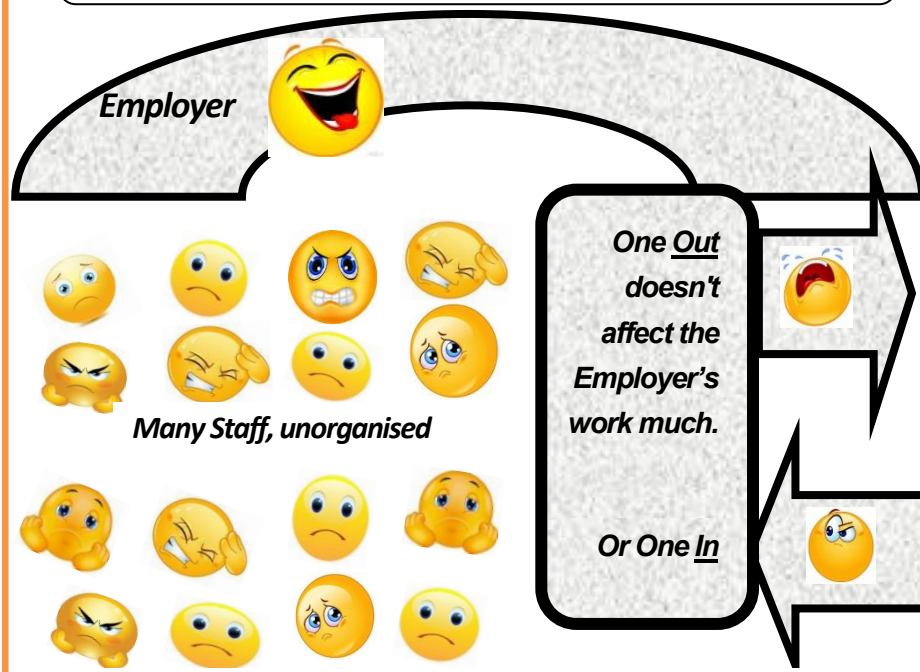
We are encouraged to see the vote and parliament as the height of social and political organisation. But while the vote is important, it's not enough, unorganised against *their* organisation, to get governments that will run society for the majority. As a form of collective organisation and action, 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 Personal Case For The Right To Unionise -
Weak Because Your Employer Has All The Rest –



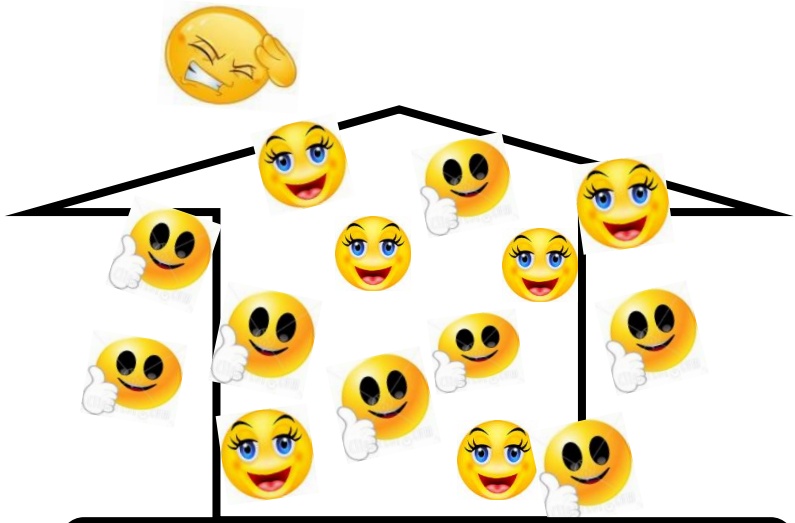
The work relationships shown above explain why individuals are not equal to their employers - because employers have many others. 'Many Others' shows the personal and the political right to organise.

Most employers have more staff than just you. While the others are working they can carry on without *any* particular one. That's what gives them power over you and every other worker, when starting a job, when working in it, and when sacking you. Being able to replace you from the unemployed is far less significant.

This unequal trade in earning your living is unfair. We've never approved it, it just developed with industrialism - volume production, where most work is collective, by definition. So to earn a living most people *have* to work for an employer who has many other staff, because volume production outperforms and replaces most small trading.

Only a minority can be business owners, most will be workers. The *opportunity* to be an owner only changes *who are* owners. There will always be *some.* And without staff being organised they will have unfair power over them. And so will the state as an employer.

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



People Unionised At Work – Negotiating and Acting Together

For society to be fair and civilised the majority, workers, have to have the right to correct the unfairness of free-market labour relationships by organising together in unions. It should be normal, expected, 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 include denying fellow-workers the 'freedom' to work on less than union conditions, to stop employers from forcing us into bargaining each other downwards. You see it happening. It is just obviously essential. It's for every worker's good.

It is perfectly right to require workers to join their fellow-workers, the rest of the staff, in a union. It's not against anyone's authentic freedom. When taking a job, in accepting the owner's and manager's authority, you lose freedom. Everyone knows that, it's why you call them 'the boss'. You should accept some authority from your fellow-workers too. Because it means you and everyone else *gain* freedom from the employer's authority. And you gain the freedom to act – collectively and democratically - to bring workmates who might drag your conditions downwards under yours and the others' authority.

It has to include helping and/or persuading workers in other companies to also work only on union conditions for the trade. Because in free markets, 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.

Intro to the full 'The Right To Unionise'

The Right To Unionise explains your personal job relationships, how you earn your living working for someone else. The great majority make their living this way. For each person individually, they are vital relationships. They are also vital relationships for business people, from their different position. They are vital to how the state functions, as an employer. So they are key relationships in society.

This book explains why employers are *bosses* when they should just be people you trade with as equals, like you do in other economic activities. *It's simply because, in modern high-volume (industrialised) work, employers usually have many staff. With them all working, they can manage without any one less or any one more – like you - without much trouble. That* is what makes each individual worker so terribly weak in their relationship with their employer.

Also, employers are usually *organizations,* with strong relationships of ownership and management. Workers mostly aren't in organized relationships at work. Most are isolated individuals in how they are employed.

The inequality of power that results from this, affecting most of the population, is what so-called 'free' labour markets are for. *The Right To Unionise* makes the personal case for people at work to counter it by matching business people's and public employers' organisation with their own**.**

Should employers have power over you and your workmates or should you be their equals? For that, you need to match their organisation with your own. People need to convince each other as workers, people generally, and politicians, of the case for themselves organising at work and of their entitlement to. *The Right To Unionise* gives you the arguments.

These are the basics - When not unionised, worker's rights are only those in job contracts. (And some sketchy and difficult to enforce 'statutory' rights that have got through the legislature). In contract law each worker is supposedly their employer's equal. That's nonsense when they've got many

staff, many of each of you. That gives them power over workers that they should not have. It's right and necessary to balance it by joining together in unions. It should be the normal, everyday thing. It is vital to everyone's well-being that this case for it is made and that it becomes common knowledge. This book enables it. Download or buy it, read it, and urge other people to.

It shows:

- *how people relate to business people and state employers at work*
- *how business and state employers get power over people at work*
- *how workers relate to each other at work*
- *why employer's power is unfair and excessive*
- *how workers should get even with them – the case for people to organise as workers independently from employers*
- *The Right, The Entitlement, To Unionise*

It explains:

- *the case for strikes*
- *the case for the right to organise and strike.*
- *the case against the anti-union laws*

Promoting Unionisation

In '*Us, Politics And The System', 'Why This Book and The Big Picture'* says 'There's little point complaining or campaigning about each separate political issue because the political system grants us little power to affect them. And, where unorganised, there's little point grumbling about each problem at work - the real problem 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. Maybe you should read the book first but it wouldn't be right to bury this, how to achieve the main practical alternative argued, at the back.

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 unionise 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 unionise.

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 enormously useful to do with their time and 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 badly treated workers would be provided with the powerful arguments for the right to unionise and act – maybe strike - summed up in the Three-page Read of this book, and laid out thoroughly in the book itself. ***The key argument is that the 'Having Many Others' mechanism we get with volume production 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 be organised and 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 unionise, along the lines of this writer's three documents, the Three-page Read of 'The Right To Unionise' and the two books.

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 are some excellent accounts of organising in the United States in this important book **https://www.amazon.co.uk/No-Shortcuts-Organizing-Power-Gilded/dp/019062471X** (Yes, Amazon, anti-union employer. But it's easier to unionise bigger workplaces, which the Amazon staff are trying to do.)

In the meantime, there are already two pieces in *Us, Politics And The System* and *The Right To Unionise* that refer to *Recognition.* They include the writers own experience of trying to unionise a workplace. An interesting experience! Everyone should try it! The first piece is *'The Bottle Problem'* at page 48; then the final piece on Recognition (at present) is *'Free Labour Markets - Workers Denied The Right To Associate'* and *'Associating - Getting Union Recognition'* at page 67-71.

The Start Proper... Setting The Scene

Why This Book

The writer has observed and taken part in organisation at work and politics since the 1950's. Time and time again the majority, workers, have been defeated at work and in politics by business people. By the business class. Unfair relationships explain it. People need to understand and challenge these relationships, 'the system'. Relationships at work are amongst the most important but are the least examined, the least understood.

It's All Over The World

Job relationships in Britain are the example used here but the same ones operate all over the world and the book is for people globally.

The Right To Unionise

It's nearly three centuries since work started to be industrial – large-scale - in Britain and Europe, and progressively all over the world. Large scale work activity is much more efficient than small trading so it dominates the economy and society. And so, therefore, do the people who own and run businesses. Large-scale operations include not just factories but also

services like public and private services and retail.

Conservatives claim this system is fair because anybody could 'make it' by running a business. This is a side issue because, independent of whichever people get to run business, the only practicable way for the majority to make their living is to sell their labour to them, to be workers. The majority will simply *have* to be workers. People have to sell themselves to a small class of business people or to state organisations who control them in making their living. As everyone knows, they are weak when doing that. But the astonishing thing is that the exact reasons why they are weak, why it is unfair, and why they should organise together, and have the right to organise, to defend themselves and promote their interests, have never been identified and written up.

Business people and state employers are organised, every minute of every day. In response, some people organise as workers. But not in anything like the numbers necessary to get equal to business owners and public sector managers, and not with the conviction that is needed and merited. In politics and everyday talk, the argument for organising is lost. But actually, it has never really been made.

It is everyone's direct, everyday experience that workers are dominated by and treated badly by business people, by other employers, and by the system as a whole. And it is widely acknowledged. *But people only criticise the outcomes – the treatment – not the process.* Even when people like Marx, and commentators today, do criticise this system, they mainly criticise it as a whole, as 'the economy'. They don't analyse and criticise the everyday, direct business and work relationships that enable it to be so unfair.

The best term for what we are considering is 'the Business System' rather than 'capitalism'. The inclusion of 'business' in the name makes it refer to economic relationships as we experience them every day, in the language we use every day. That enables us to have a clear understanding of it and how to challenge it.

It needs assessing at that level, at the level of business people operating each actual business, the level where they justify their power – the enterprise. The justice of relationships there, at work, has never been assessed. The case for making them fairer by workers organising together, the right – the *entitlement* - to organise in trade unions, has never before been coherently made and written up.

Business people justify their power with clear arguments. They point to their enterprise, risk-taking and entrepreneurial activity. This is true, in the key role of carrying out the business activity that creates the goods and services and jobs upon which we all depend. The counter-arguments, from the workers point of view, at this key level of the business, workplace and job relationship, need to be made and to become widely known and accepted. They are fairly

simple arguments. They show exactly how the inequality of power that each worker faces at work is unacceptable, and how to respond.

For all the pain people suffer from business owners' domination, all the pleading about how bad it is, and all the protests, what's really needed is permanent, thorough workplace organisation by the majority, workers, to match the organisation of business people and state employers. Based on that organisation, more power in the political system would follow too.

The arguments made here are addressed directly to the great body of ordinary people who are workers. Although they may be adults in other respects, they find themselves in the position of powerless children at work and in politics. They need to stop that.

The case against the outrageous laws against union activity is also made. They are shown to be simply class-biased law, made by the business class as a tool for oppressing the working class.

Setting The Scene 2 - It's A Class Society

Most people make their living by getting jobs. So they are workers. Others make their living by running businesses. 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. It's *the Free-market Business System* and that's the term to use. 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, outrageous.

This book shows just ***how*** workers are 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 Right To Unionise*** comprehensively. 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 things '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 24, 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

How are Business people organised? ***Each and every day, in 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**. Their business organisation, their business relationships, are the foundation of their workplace power.

Through being organised in 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, they 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 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.

It's true, to a degree, that business people's activity, their enterprise, justifies 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.

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 anti-union laws obstructing 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 excludes 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, business 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 Tories go all socialist! Our selfishness and greed 'ruins the country'! They insist that we should behave according to 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 act together in unions that prevent us from being nearer to being 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 people's rights and power that are endorsed 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, of 'their' wealth, of nearly all the money in the banks and the financial centres. And how the economy is organised is the biggest issue in

governments and politics.

We need answers to 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 -

How you Sell Yourself to Business people or the Public sector
How you Relate to your Workmates
Our right to Associate together as Workers
Classes and how to Identify and Organise by Class

How We Relate At Work. The Need To Be Organised And <u>The Entitlement</u> 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.

Selling Yourself As A Worker - Your Problem Is – They've Got All The Rest - Many More Staff

The main thing to grasp is that when you sell yourself as a worker you are weak because the employer has plenty of you. Someone who sells themselves to an employer who has 100 other workers is 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 *articles*. And then how we sell *ourselves* to employers in getting work, and how they buy us.

How We 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 well-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 had 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.

In the UK there are only a few supermarkets, with so much of the market farmers haven't many other customers. There was a whole TV programme about a lettuce-farmer 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.

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.....

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 – a business selling 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 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, and they don't like you, they can turn you and others down and 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 are Fired

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 So Many Others

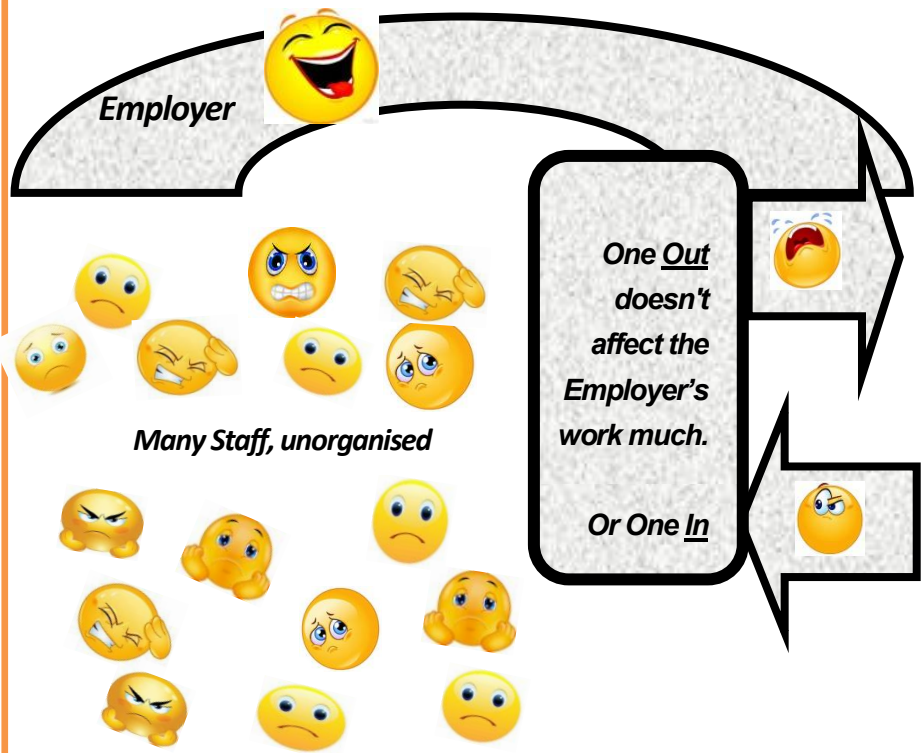
As said, economists know that the more a business has of something, the less necessary each extra one is. They are usually talking about buying materials or equipment but it applies to the far more important matter of buying labour. You and I as workers have only marginal utility for our employers.

Apply it to your 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.

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.

Next page – In chart form. The emojis might look naff but they do an important job that needs doing.

The Personal Case For The Right To Organise in Unions - Being A Weak Worker Because The Employer Has Many Others



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

Look at the chart from the point of view of an owner or manager.

Then from the point of view of a worker - 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. Conservatives defend employers with 'if you don't like it go somewhere else'. But because we live in volume-production economies with large workforces, you face the same unfair deal in most jobs.

This job deal in our volume production societies is a very unequal, unfair social transaction. In a decent society, such an important deal, the one where you make a living, wouldn't be. 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 is the biggest issue in politics. It's not right for people - the majority – to have to make their living on such unequal, unfair terms. To relate fairly to business people and public sector employers fellow-citizens have to organise together at work and be entitled to.

It establishes a personal right to organise. Not a right for 'the unions' but 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 All The Rest/Many Others* is why employers can treat workers harshly. It is the cause of our problems.

The Small Business Case

The more staff an employer has, the more '*MO*' works to enable them to boss each of them. Does it work less effectively for small employers? Each worker is a bigger proportion of the workforce. Isn't their labour more important to them because more of their business depends on them? Don't they have more power? Maybe. But the small employer still has more labour suppliers than just you. If there are four others, say, the business owner is 20 per cent short of the workforce they need if they don't take you on, when you go for a job, or if you leave or they decide to sack you. 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' Gets Even Such As Law, Beckham and Ferdinand

Can't workers with specialist skills bargain more effectively than most of us can under ***Many Others?*** 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 volume-production 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 *We've Got Many Others* mechanism. Even though Busby was probably Law's biggest fan - although 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 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 then 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 too 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 main book, *Us, Politics And The System* in *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 workers co-operatives strategy. It's why we have to have ***trade*** unions and 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 74.

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 All The Rest*.

Business class people and their conservative parties might still claim that the power *'All The Rest'* 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 high-volume production has to be organised, employers having A Lot Of Others enables them to dominate almost invisibly. But we don't have to have such work relationships, nor an economy, where most of us work 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 employers: whether they inherit their class position or whether they are 'self-made' people who 'made it'. However they got there, having a lot of others gives them more power over the worker class majority than they earn. It's too much power for a minority to have over the majority of the people in that most important activity - Making A Living.

To sum up this important argument - the *'All The Rest'* 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 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 ?

Manager's Power - Employment Contracts - Tribunals

That's dealt with how *'All The Rest'* operates for business people against workers when you *go for a job,* and when *in a job* and you want to improve your conditions. And when they want to *fire* you.

There's another problem with business owners and their managers - their 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 *'All The Rest'* 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 do it, ***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's 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 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
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. They 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. His name was actually 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 mangers 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 *Many 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 is - 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 employer 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 *All The Rest*. 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 their ***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 ***Many Others*** 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

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 *Many Others* 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. We shouldn't allow power and wealth to be decided by the overpowering, unseen, unfair, unapproved, mechanism of *They've Got All The Rest.*

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 embedded in UK and European law, through the Equal Pay regulations. It is used across the Civil Service and in the NHS. How much business people should get is looked into more thoroughly in the section called *The Rich, Are They Worth the Expense?* in the full book, *Us, Politics, The System And Class.*

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 moral.
- that if we organise ourselves together 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.
Use the fish. People like the fish.

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 <u>has</u> 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 Slight Return - 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 employers 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 of *They've Got All The Rest* 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 oganisation, 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, to far higher standards than the law gives. And even though anti-union laws place obstacles in our way, it's legal to do that.

Here's 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 pounds compensation – they rarely award you your job back. His workmates, strongly unionised, 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 got 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 For, The Entitlement, to Unionise

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 account, unorganised, you are all weak. You all weaken each other. Your workmates weaken you. You weaken them.

Here, from an unusual source, almost out of this world in fact, is a clear demonstration of how to deny business owners and public sector managers their main privilege, 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 Are You Gonna Get ?

It's the early 1960's. America is desperate to get the first human into space before Russia. Their 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.* (Though 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 astronaut's 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 just be a Hollywood version of the truth. But it shows 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. 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 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 Many Of You Or Me* still working or taking over your work.

The Case for Acting 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 conservative parties.

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, 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 one of us stops our business. Us striking only stops theirs.*

It's Not <u>Us</u> 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 the full 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 many others. 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.*** They never comment from the perspective of ***the worker***. Yet it's quite obvious that most consumers are also workers. We're the same people, just 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 just sick. *At best union organisation and action only enables we people-as-workers to get closer to equality of power with our employers. There's nothing wrong with that and everything right about it.*

But you've really got to hand it to the Business class. They are so good at *taking care of business* that right across the media, in politics and even in the heads of many workers, unions are never 'a good thing'. 'The press' is almost all owned by the most politically active business people and they and the Tories set a viciously anti-union agenda that is followed by radio and TV and, cravenly, by Labour. The image they create of *'the unions'* is absurd and so is the use of language. They talk of *'the unions'* as if they're something external to us, illegitimate, intrusive, troublesome, bullying impositions on workers, evil outsider agencies: rather than showing the plain and obvious truth that ***the Unions are simply workers organised together and acting to get some fairness and equality***. They're not '*the unions'* but millions of ordinary decent citizens, workers, organised.

Organisation, Organisation, Organisation

Because of *They've Got All The Rest* it should be obvious to all workers - anyone 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 much the 'free' 'labour market' works against us and takes the appropriate 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 conversation, 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 Is Acting, Instead Of Being Acted Upon

One reason some shy away from being 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 employer and their managers, have to keep on taking crap. Sometime you have to decide not to take it, simply for self-respect. People who are reluctant to strike often argue that it's a waste of a day's pay. (Most strikes are only one day). Tell them it's not wasted, it's spending a day's pay on their own dignity and loyalty to their workmates.

People sometimes argue against being expected to take part in union action by saying 'Nobody tells me what to do.' Well that's obvious bollocks. Day in and day out, and on night shifts too, the employer tells you what to do. And when you strike it's not really 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 strongly made that governments have many times committed us to the mass carnage of war without any democratic process.)

You are always being told what to do by your employer and you put up with it. Why not be told what to do by your workmates sometimes?

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. Yes - 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, let's spread the view that with the inequality of the Only One Customer While They've Got Lots Of 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 out 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 supervisor's

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 super-hero militant. There's braver people than me. Although in all the times I've been involved, although sometimes a bit concerned about it, I've done it.

What people have to recognise is that employers push you into a position where you have to decide to fight back. Sometime, you just have to stand up to them or carry on being mis-treated. *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, to 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 there on your own challenging fellow-workers who show no loyalty. Much of the time it's cold and boring with 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 the employer and their managers.

And 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 solidly, respectfully, turned round and went away without delivering. That was a little experience of power to set against all our experience of being powerless at work.

Sure, when there's a good picket and you get into it over a period, it's probably 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 far more of a Union man and that's what I'm relating to 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 all the others, we've got plenty of you' 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 employer 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 the length of a football pitch from Old Trafford where Ferguson said something similar many years later.

This story is about only a small dispute. But it was the first time this worker had the bottle (guts) to seriously take on his boss. So it's told 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 unionise 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 mentioned earlier, some 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 the employer and their managers, you find there's roughly three groups of people, but not necessarily equally divided. There's those who want to do something and are prepared to 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 trailers 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 based, and looked there. There was no rival trailer company. It didn't exist. Just anti-union mind-games.

They also tried another thing most managements 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 (work)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 those 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 unionise 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 to 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, if the others had wanted it!

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 myths, but just wonderful, lovely, tough people who see the unfairness and oppression at work and get up and do something for everybody. Albert Payne, Jack Pick, Joyce Evans, Tony Ormond, Frank Taylor, and many more.

The final piece on Recognition (at present) is pages 68 -72.

More Bottle

That was using this writer's first, small-scale experience to talk about the bottle issue when standing up to the boss. 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. *

* 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-owned media and 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 believe in so much. 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 employers.

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 a day or two at a time. Does it take 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 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 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. But (in 2007), that trickery was being challenged in the courts and they may have won some decent money.

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

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 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. An uncle was killed 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 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 *Going to Work on Real Identities*, section 2 of the full book *Us, Politics, The System And Class* at ***www.uspol.org***

(People might say 'Surely the Second World War was right, fighting Fascism?' It's a question dealt with in ***Related Debates 1 in the full book***)

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.

They Start 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 for their equivalent 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 democracy, 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 employers we are fighting - can stop us with legal action. The other side! When employers

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 Business class, anti-union 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 **the**y 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. Business owners 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 Unions' Are The Members

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 Many Of You. There's another one. These are high-volume-production 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. So 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.

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

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.

You have to call your ***own*** meeting. Preferably as properly-organised fellow-union members. You 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 *'All The Rest'* 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 *Many Others* allowing them to sack refuseniks individually. Because of *MO*, 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?'

Management's 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 side's 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 *'All The Rest'* 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 *'All The Rest'* 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 -

(you've got) ***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 *'All The Rest'* 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 *'All The Rest'* 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 in earlier times 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 You 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.

To many, that expression 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. Yours truly 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? You're 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 important analysis is covered more thoroughly in 'It's Your Money Not Theirs' at page 14 of the full work.

Rights To Associate and The Case for 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 union member
- 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.

We Are 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 was. 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 rich people's system. *They themselves* are in no doubt about that. See *They Really Attacked Democracy* in the full book. 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

This 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 separate, 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, to encourage business enterprise. Maybe so. But we too could do with protection.

'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 government departments; 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 volume-production, large-workforce industrial society.*

First, workers don't often trade with another *individual*. They trade with *organisations* – with *Businesses, Companies, Corporations, Government Departments (as employers) and Councils*. Our employers are usually a *team,* with partners, boards, shareholders, MP's and Councillors, with many managers, thoroughly organised.

*More importantly, the contract they make with any **one** worker, they also make with many others. Each is of only marginal additional usefulness to them. In the jargon of 'economics', each is of only marginal utility. 'MO', t*he full analysis of this important process is the first section of this work.

In 'free labour market' jobs owners, managers and government employers 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' or 'you can always go and start a business yourself'. 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 ourselves, the notion of workers being free in 'free markets' is nonsense and 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 and the employing organisation you work for 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 Cheeky

The Business class are amazingly cheeky. They argue in their newspapers and through their conservative parties *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 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 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 worker's 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 anti-union laws 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 concedes 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 is worth it for *advice* and *representation* in using the limited *individual* employment rights you have. You'd be unwise to tell your employer or their management you are a 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 has to be about bargaining collectively not 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 employer, you've no real right to union membership. There is a *limited* legal procedure, that we'll come to.

Some large 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 Unionise*e 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 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 unionise from getting the right to be recognised by the employer! Even though if the vote is won they won't have to join it!

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, 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 employer 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 unionise, 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 far 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 or workplace 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 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-unionised 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 employer eventually gets 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 *workers* 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 owner's and manager'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 have to accept that 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 *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 sanctions like banning overtime that anti-union law calls 'actions short of strike action'. But ... *nobody tells them what to do?* - what nonsense! The employer *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, 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 unionised, *They've Got All The Rest* means you are so weak that your employer 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.

End of the Recognition coverage referred from pages 17 and 51

Our 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, employers 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 employer 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 employer and their managers do? When you take a job you're not only making a deal with your employer. 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.

Next – More On You In Those 'Free Markets'

Free Markets, Your Work And Competition

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. This writer strongly believes the whole thing is best called the Free-market business system or, for short, simply '***the Business System'***, as that fits our everyday experience of it, our perception, and common usage.

What It Means

The free-marketeer'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 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'***, like when talking of, say, interest rates. ***We need 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 and in several places in this book, mainly between pages 23 and 62. And I 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 Low Cost, High Frequency 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 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 this 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 instead of, weakly, as single buyers. It is simply the buyers acting organised, democratically, 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 mis-treat 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-marketeers. ***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 more important than all the others shown above, the most important of all. 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 and 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.

As said, it is fully explained in *How We Relate At Work,* the first section, page 23-62. But it's so important - the most important relationship in public life - that it's worth running through here, in this assessment of the free market argument -

The fewer customers you have, the more you have to please each one. When you only have one, you really have to please them.

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 volume-production 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. This is how free markets operate on people in this industrialised, globalised world. 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 a volume-production, large-workforce 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 – which I call 'they've got all the rest' – gives people at work to the *right*, the *entitlement*, to organise together in trade unions. 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 simply 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 oligarchy, it did still contain the notion – expressed through Christianity - that all of 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 right-wing 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-marketeers claim. ***Let's take a look at the arguments for and against.***

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 business people to mis-treat 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 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 fully 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 my '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 big 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 <u>are</u> in restraint of trade. And proudly so. Because *competing against each other when We Each have just One Customer who has Many Other Suppliers* 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 <u>*we*</u> 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 our stupid little 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 Argument

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 Free-market 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.

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 a devout atheist, humanist and socialist 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 ***Related Debates 10 'Don't Blame 'the Germans' for the War' in the full book 'Us, Politics And The System'.)***

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 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 mis-directed, 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.

Work and Class - Real Identities (1)

70 per cent of people say 'working class' when asked what class they are. 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 – those in making their living in business and work.

There's No Middle Class. It's The Muddle Class

People talk mainly of 'the middle class' and the working class. Some, pathetically, evade too much political clarity 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 as consumers, by spending power and lifestyle. 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 also from us 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.

Do this, 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 clas*s 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.

'Middle' class just means 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 – mainly - 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.*** Although it includes small business people and professionals, 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 the same 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. Bows or Wows.*** 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 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' is a recent insert. Some points 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 they are 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 the key activity in life, *Making a Living*. It's a big difference in how they relate to other people in that activity. 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 values. If you can say 'values' for what Conservatives believe in.

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 Many of Him. Or Her*.

And they unionise. 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.

Let's call all those people who 'Go to Work', not in their own business, <u>Working</u> 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 other people 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 employers' thumb. We are not *free and equal citizens* to business owners, 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 business owner's authority so readily that they don't 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 employer's power over how you get the means to live. Mind you, employment law pretends we are equals to them. 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 is basing it on our vital interests. That's what Business class people do. They've great awareness of status and power in their *trade* and are always interested in 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, hours, holidays, pension. And not being easily sacked.* And on having big differences with business class people over these things while we are 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 that correctly because most of us ***are*** workers. If you work for 'someone else' – not usually in fact a *person* but an *organisation*, either 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*ower*. 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 s*elf-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 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 allow ourselves to be transfixed by more commonly but meaningless group identities than class. People have stronger feelings of shared identity in shallow groupings - town or city, regional, national, football-based – about which there's more in the *'Where You're At'* section of the full book.

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 wholly as classing the *person* but also the *relationship*? Would it help 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? 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 skin-colour-based, class-denying, nonsense of nationalist parties?

How To Class People - Slight Return

Excuse this further repetition/recap but the argument runs counter to most people's current 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 you and your 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. We all know that, don't we? We've got bosses and we know it.

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?"

(Say it like Billy Connolly would)

You Do 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. All you Shop Workers, all you Delivery van men. All you Electricians, Baggage Handlers, Gas Fitters. All you Roads Maintenance workers, Motor way builders, Lighting maintenance workers. You AA and RAC Patrolmen. All you Council workers, Social workers, Planners, Student Loans staff. Lecturers, Teachers, Canteen Ladies. Cleaners. All you Bar staff, Department of Work and Pensions Staff. You Inland Revenue Staff, Department of Trade Staff, Department of the Environment Staff. All you workers on Magazines, you Newspaper workers. You TV and Radio workers. You Coach drivers, you Food Factory Workers, you Sheet Metal Workers, you Welders, you 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 people 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 you self-employed Traders - Builders, Plasterers and Plumbers, Electricians and Taxi drivers. Strictly speaking, you're *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 and so are the shop workers, all those young lads and lasses. In the motorway hold up most of the people in the other cars and lorries and coaches are fellow-workers. On the bus, the train, the Tube – most fellow-passengers are your fellow-workers. When away on holiday most of your fellow-holidaymakers are.

We're all around each other but don't know it.

Next in the full book are sections on :

The Business Class Exposed & Defined
The Free-market Business System
Arguments against False Identities :
- The National Identity - What is 'the country' ?
- Place and Local 'Where You're From' Identities
Arguments for Real Identities :
It's Not Where You're From That Matters. It's Where You're At

Then the full book resumes with :

Organised Together In Our Unions - The Real We (2)
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 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 employer, 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.

Next in the full book –

Where You're From – it's over-rated

The National identity – How It Gets in Your Mind

How The Business class mesmerise us with the

Nationalist identity with 'The Press', Their papers

Then the full book resumes with :

'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 war 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 And The System* you'll find that although it challenges the existing order, which they like to portray as 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. *That'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 it 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 *Related Issues* in the main book, *Us, Politics And The System, o*n 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 employer having immense, unfair, bullying power over *you*.

So we were 'Holding *the country* to ransom', were we? Well, de-regulated labour markets means 'Having *the People* over a barrel'.

They go on about it being awful 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?

Next in the full book –

They Actively Promote the National Identity
But We Also Do It To Ourselves
The National Identity is the base for Racism and Fascism

People Over-do 'Where You're From'
Why Do People Identify so strongly by 'Where They're From?'
Because It Validates You With 'Social Weight'
Don't Say Tribalism - Say Social Weight
Identifying by Colour of Face - as Daft as by Place
Football identities .....
Football Expresses Working Class Collectivism?
It's More About Vicious Division ...
The Family - Women and Men - Gender Identities?
Religious Identities
The Humanist Identity
So What Identities Should We Have ?
Meaningful Groups
It Ain't Where You're From that Matters .....
It's Where You're At
Decent Folk
the full book then resumes with .....

The Real 'We', The Real 'Us' (3)

Real Validation. Real Social Weight

Here are some ***real social groups,*** groups of people who give and get real support, 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 employers would evict you from 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, the 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 - Our main identity – The Real 'We' (3)

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.) Hate to quote them for support, but might as well get some use out of them.

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) you see them as 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 joint 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 identifying with all the 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*, in the main book's *Related Debates,* 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 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 there were who 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, that 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 ***active***. 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. *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 a lot of seriously active people.

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.

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 representative of what happens on the courses I and others taught. For one reason, the courses are not run with tutor-centred lecturing. They are run with student-centred educational activities based on student's 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. We didn't have that in further education.

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 employer, 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 some daft banter there about place and football identities but it's not a real problem.

Solidarity – They're Better At It Than Us

We think ***solidarity*** is 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 each other as Krauts, Jocks, Eyeties, Frogs, Yanks, Japs, etc. etc. and fight over bloody football when we should work together.

Over the centuries and now, the rich and powerful classes, the Land-owning class and then the Business class, 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'.

In *Related Issues* in the main book, *Us, Politics And The System,* there is material about how the fiercely anti-democratic British Business class 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.therighttounionise.org or
on https://www.lulu.com search for
The Right To Unionise

(And to a business class person, if you think they're civilised enough to appreciate it (some of them are); or if you think it might it might help civilise them.)

How We Relate in Politics: 'Democracy' Operates Under The Business System.

Rights to Associate and The Case Against Anti-Union Law

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. 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. This is the sort of worrying nonsense you get caught up in.

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 it's 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 an ***oligarchy/dictatorship***, 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 trade in labour*** part of the Free-market Business system. And 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 Landed 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 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 <u>is</u> such a class, dominating the majority, and how they are able to.

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 and job 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,' and suchlike bumptious nationalist drivel. 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, Run 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 dictators, 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 the 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 state. 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 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 high-volume, 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 volume-production 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 etc. Now, they get wealthy more from industry and services than from land. So the argument about laws favouring them is now less about ***land ownership*** and more about their '***free market***' system of trade.

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 monarchy and their 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 now 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 those who strongly oppose the market in public services –* ***free markets in <u>people</u>.....***

Power and Wealth –

Through Free Markets In People -In <u>You</u>

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 are 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 <u>YOU</u> can be bought or 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 of how we got here – 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 have not won enough democracy or freedom to organise to challenge this class law. So let's look in more detail 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 ***manifestos*** - 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're still the best of the choices available. Even as the New Tory party it really is, it is 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

But 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 here 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 announced they were closing those two pits in the South Yorkshire Area - 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 owners 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 f*ederal* body. Members in each regional ***Area*** had the right to do a lot of things on their own say-so - like each State can 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 area 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 for support. 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 miner's 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 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, could have declared 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 miners 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 so-called 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 political 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?*

Business people get most of what they want because they run the economy. Particularly anti-union laws, that are simply class law made by and for the Business class to deny the Working class 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, at Peterloo, Newport in 1831, and in 1919. 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 *Related Issues* in the main book *Us, Politics And The System.*

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

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 *authority*. 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 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, how they behave 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, and 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 to get a leader 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 ***appoint*** 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 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 mis-led 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. 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 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 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 unidentifiable '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' ability to organise themselves and enable Business to bully us. (Have I said that before?)

Our Union Democracy Exceeds Parliament's –

<u>Controlling</u> 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 <u>speak</u> there.* (You could only <u>*vote*</u> 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 Union Democracy is better than Parliament's.

Meeting Each Other - Half Way

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 full, 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 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 and wait half the day with the cab's clock running before bringing her back. Over-rich scum.

But they take the trouble to be. 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 -

<u>All Those Issues</u> - What Do You Think About Them ?

MP's *select our government leader* with us having no 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 (1970's) referendum on Europe. (This all written before 2016.) 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.

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.

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* 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, branches send delegates to ***regional meetings***, typically every three months. 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 out 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 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 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, derived from our branches, 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?' Allowing 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 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'. After electing them we've no control over MP's at all 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 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 Vote 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 do we 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 actually, then, it was only landowners who 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 following their economic system clearing 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 place identity and community links are much weaker than they were. We work in far more diverse jobs, not 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 (2007), 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 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 employers 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.

Yours truly 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 made against union's freedom to act brought in through 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 issues, and affect we, the voters, in very different ways, though 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, for 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 it is 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 *feel*s that; but not many are saying much about it.

In all this, I've not even mentioned the monarchy or 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/the Business class and their press attacked mass meetings with a hostile imagery of 'wild-cat' strikes, and then, through Thatcher, gave themselves legal powers to stop us making our decision this way.

But we'd developed the use of mass meetings *exactly because 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. 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 employer 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 or factory 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 landlord's or boss'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.)

Next in the full book

You're Wasting Your Time Saying All This
Whoever You Vote for Business People Always Get In
We Are To Blame – It's Our Own Fault

And then - Their Capitalist so-called System .....

This book has analysed 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 it operates as a whole as an economic and financial system. 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.

Next in the full book are some Add-Ons

Nations - Just Regimes - Politics and Laws

Labour Is Fit To Govern

The Rich - Are They Worth the Expense?

How To Save The Environment

Racism – Look At 'Your Own' Sid

Anti-social Behaviour

Brexit, Trump and Populism Worker To Worker

Then these Digressions –

Fighting Fascism or a rival Business Class?

What Their Wars Are Really For

Don't blame 'The Germans' for the war

Many Ordinary Whites or 'fellow- Britons' are Brutal to Others

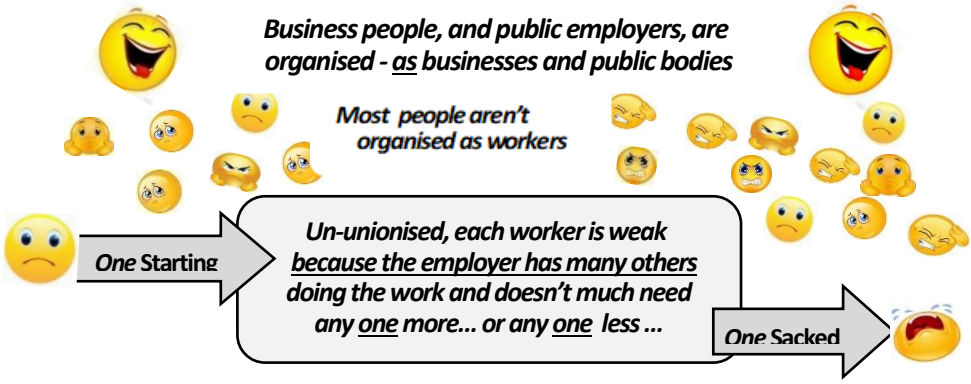
Business Class Papers Provoke Racism

The Business Class and a 'Coup' – Taking over the State

Vive la revolution! French and English!

Football Fan's Hatred For Each other

The Right To Unionise - The Chart



The Right – the Entitlement - To Unionise

*Most work is industrialised. Most employers have many staff. They can get by without any **one** leaving, any **one** new, or any **one** they sack, with **the rest** working. Each is weak in the job deal with their employer **not because the employer can replace them from the unemployed but because without them they still have all the others.** And, with most work industrialised and 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 anybody, whatever colour, gender, 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 Unionised,
Negotiate As One, As Equals,
With Business Owners
And Public Service Managers

Employers Are Organised - Workers 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.

The main points of The Right To Unionise, How much do you agree with them? Could you discuss them others?

- *They can sack you easily in Contract Law because They've Got All The Rest*
- *'All The Rest' explains business and management power over workers*
- *The case for Our Right to Organise and Strike*
- *Striking and the Bottle Issue – the comparison with War*
- *The definition of the Working class*
- *Exploitation means Paying Less than they Charge for your work*
- *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 comparison between Union Democracy when Striking and Parliament's lack of any over 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*

Why This Work …

To the author's knowledge this is the only full statement of the right to unionise ever made. It is overdue by 250 years. It is addressed to ordinary working people, who are the majority of people. They are oppressed at work and politically because they are not organised or when they are organised, they lack confidence in their right to act. They urgently need to learn the case for organising and acting together so they can bargain with their employers as equals and, in politics, counter business people's domination.

Some of the arguments are made by comparing the right to organise in trade unions to the rights of the organisation with the main authority in society - the government and 'the country'. The writer believes the arguments for worker's organisation have to be made in relationship to this form of organisation, especially in relation to the laws that restrict organised workers, made by governments. An example is that 'the country' means a compulsion to associate, and how it means workers have the right to associate. Another is the argument about how weak 'democracy' is.

This is a radical way of arguing the case. It is probably more radical than many or most union leaders would be comfortable with. Many may therefore be reluctant to use the book and to encourage

the reading of it. But though there is radical argument, most of it is straight-down-the-line basics that should be common currency anyway and it's because they aren't that workers are in the predicament they are in. It only seems radical because the case for Trade Union Rights, for organising and for the right to organise, is so shockingly marginalised. In the context of how badly workers are treated and in the context of an examination of society's basic relationships from the view of ordinary workers, the arguments are not so radical. Or if they are, they are justified.

About The Author

Ed McDonnell *lives in the UK, a retired lecturer in trade union education. He organised and tutored courses for union workplace representatives for twenty years. Central to this work was how people relate at work – how employers and employees (or bosses and workers) relate, and how workers relate between themselves. He also taught courses about the laws conservative governments made to shackle workers organisation and action. While doing this, he studied the key political issue of workers' right to organise together and to act, free from restrictions made by parties representing business people or subservient to them.*

His political and trade union education began in growing up in the 1950's 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 was appalled by how people were treated in the industrial revolution, in the 19th century, in the two World Wars, and in the Great Depression of the 1930's. That provoked a lifelong commitment to working out the rights and wrongs of

the economic relationships and political attitudes that enabled such awful treatment, and how to change them.

At university in the late 1960's he was radicalised by the student political activism of the time. Then he worked in a range of mostly manual jobs. In the Manchester engineering industry, he became a union rep in one of the biggest and best-organised workplaces ever. He tried to convince fellow-workers of the case for socialist revolution. But he saw, in 1979, how the working class (as a whole) allowed the Thatcher-led conservative government to win elections and power. He concluded that workers, as a class, lack conviction in the case for defending themselves even under the existing system; lack understanding of even the existence of the business class, and their own existence as a class; and of how their relationships with them and with each other are the main issue and problem in society and politics. Throughout his life he has found that whatever advances are made in making society fairer are repeatedly repulsed by conservative arguments and power. He concluded that the case for challenging and regulating the system as it is needed to be made.

Everyone has views about the system, the rights and wrongs of it, and will talk vigorously about it. But a work making sense of it has never been written and widely read. So conservative arguments, business people's arguments, that they are entitled to power and that workers organisation and political demands are not legitimate, remain unchallenged. This book aims to help you to change that.

More on page 231

The Essential

Us, Politics, The System And Class

(Pages 1-17 of the full work)

How we relate in politics and trade to produce the wealth. What's wrong with it and how to put it right. Worldwide.

Starting with The Micro-summary

We're in a state about politics. It's because we don't base it on 'the system' – how some people run businesses, producing goods and services, with multiple staff, industrially; and trade in free markets; and the classes it produces. We need to get each other to base 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 - the economy. They 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 the extreme differences in power and wealth is fair – anyone can 'make it'. But that's a fantastical view, it's not how the system works. In making goods and providing services, mass, high-volume production (industrialism) is more efficient than small. So, trading in free markets, high-volume producers constantly drive out small ones. So most production and work comes to be done not with everybody producing and trading as independent individuals but with a smallish number of large, collective operations, owned and run by a small minority, business people.

And in these large operations, the workings of the most important free market, the one in jobs and

people, is ignored. With multiple-staffing in most businesses, even small ones, they can keep production going without any one particular worker because ***They've Got All The Rest****. That means they can trade harshly with each separate worker over their pay and conditions. And so can sell their work for more than they pay them. And that's where their wealth comes from. Even though they might be enterprising and able and deserve more than the rest, that's actually how they get so wealthy – through control of the work process.*

So, with mass production, even at the small-business end, whose operations are larger than real individual traders, business people are not making wealth as individuals but, collectively. With many staff, they get wealthy more from the collective work everyone else does for them than from what they themselves do.

They trade as companies and corporations, with multiple staff, as collective operations. But the ludicrous conservative claim that this is all about individual rights and freedom is accepted and gives legitimacy to the freedom and wealth of business people.

It all means business people run most of the economy, not governments. They are a class, the business class. Their activity is the economy. That gives them inherent political power that drastically limits 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 or influence progressive parties. They protect their power over everyone else in the work process by making business freedom in free markets the dominant political view.

So the political parties are not, as a lot of people think, just different teams from a non-partisan elite of

managers just claiming to be the ones who can most competently 'run the country' or 'the system' for everyone's benefit. They come from the system, from people in it organising to protect their partisan roles and interests in it.

And the majority don't get what they want from work or politics because the business class put more into looking out for their interests than most workers put into organising as workers, at work, and into progressive politics.

For a foundation for discussing politics, we need a clear view of these basic political and trading relationships – the system. The works that make up 'Us, Politics, The System And Class' provide it. Then we need to put our relationships with the business class – at work, and in taxation and provision of public services – at the centre of political debate.

(End of Micro-summary)

The Original Essential UsPol

People all over feel they're not getting what they need and are entitled to. They expect political parties and governments to provide it, which they claim they can do.

But political parties and governments don't simply 'run the country'. People make their living, and some get wealthy, outside politics: where people work together, mostly in free markets that governments don't control, producing goods and services in the business system.

So political parties have a limited role in people getting what they need and they need to look beyond politics and governments.

The effectiveness of high-volume, industrialised production and trade in free markets inevitably leads to larger businesses displacing small ones. And that inevitably leads to a small class of business people

dominating work and wealth and using their power for their own benefit and against everyone else's.

To justify how the high-volume, free-market business system enables business people to have such power and wealth, conservatives claim it embodies freedom - the freedom for anyone to run their own business. Then they say - 'they're entitled to what they get from their individual efforts, ability and risk-taking.'

This vision of individual freedom might fit for the legendary little guy. But it gives political cover to how, with volume production, most business people take wealth from the system collectively – as companies and corporations with large workforces. They get wealthy through collectivist production, more from the work everybody else does for them than their own. It's the big basic wrong in the system and society.

Business people are, and run, the economy. And, through conservative media and parties, they maintain as the dominant political view that business people's freedoms are sacred, and can impose their rights over worker's rights.

They are a class and it is key to ordinary people and progressives getting anywhere to recognise them as one, the business class. Talking only of billionaires, 'oligarchs' or 'the'1%' obscures how it's the whole business class, with their strong belief in their rights, that they expressed forcefully in political argument, that achieves the wide acceptance of them, that is the main problem. It's the whole business class, and their political support for their rights, that enables them to run the world. As in the USA right now.

Everyone calls the system 'capitalism' but capitalism is just the investment stage of the business system. The term obscures the central process, the work process, in business, where we produce goods, services, and wealth before capital. It obscures that central process and the whole business class. ***See the graphic at p.173****.*

Political parties don't make, or much control, the economic system, except in state-run economies. It's the other way round – political parties come from people in the economic system organising politically to protect their role and interests in it. And ordinary people don't get what they need because business people put more into that and into political activity as conservatives, than they do.

We need a clear view of these basic political and trading relationships as a foundation for politics and for people getting what they are entitled to. This work provides one.

But everybody, including commentators and politicians, takes how we relate in politics and how we trade with each other for granted. They ignore the basic facts of how we do it and flail about, arguing about the wrong issues, supporting the wrong people, and blaming innocent people and each other.

So we get some ordinary people 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 'strongmen' who divert them from tackling those who are responsible, the business class, into attacking each other, often over 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. All because we don't base politics on the facts of how we relate to each other in politics and how we trade together in producing wealth and allocating it.

To do that, we need to put aside talk of left, right, capitalism, socialism, conservatism and communism and of Thatcher, Reagan, Hayek and Marx. And to put aside politics based just on political views and even just feelings.

*Before all that, we need to establish what **actually goes on** outside our heads. To establish the key facts of what we **do**. To get an observable, demonstrable, view of how we relate and trade with each other, a framework that people can agree on, and base political debate on it.*

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. And to go beyond leaders and what they 'are like' or do. Like Starmer being 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.

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

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 that to their leaders - they have independent activists owning and running 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.

*(See **'How To Talk Politics With Each Other'**, page 286 of the full work.)*

How Politics Comes From What We Do – Especially From How We Create The Wealth

***But before politics**, we need to persuade people of*

the importance of understanding how we trade with each other. Because who gets what is the big thing, isn't it? ***To understand that, we have to understand how we relate to each other in the work process, where most make a living and some get wealthy****.*

It means recognising this central fact - we exist by volume-production of goods and services. 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 in it, seen how they are unacceptable, and dealt with them. We need to. It's our most pressing task.

Producing The Wealth

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.

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

Conservatives push a fantasy that we do it trading as individuals, as if we are all self-employed. Some are, but they talk absolute nonsense when they say it's the basic way we relate. How they get away with it shows how we haven't got to grips with the industrial revolution.

High-volume production dominates how we live but we need the language to put the facts of how it works at the centre of politics. Industrialism, the usual term, to some people means 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.' 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.***

Volume production and selling is more efficient than small-volume and relentlessly displaces most of it. And from high-volume production we get large workforces. So it is collective. Volume production includes small businesses, because small businesses are crucially different from individual trading in having many staff, which determines how the key job relationship works. 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.

Call It The Business System, Not Capitalism

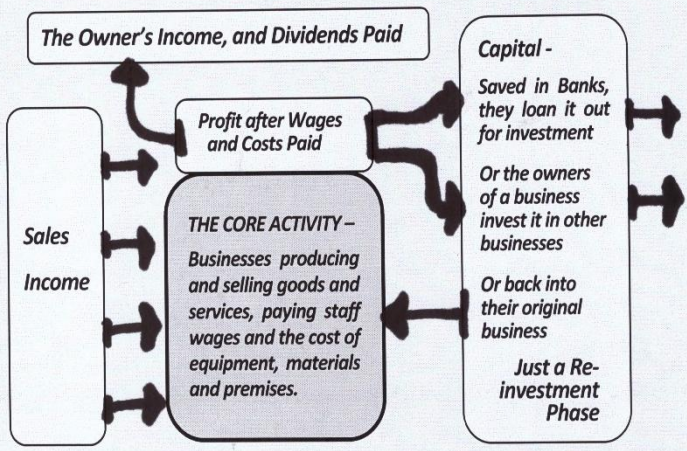
We generate wages and wealth by our work in familiar everyday business. 'Capitalism' is just where business people re-invest the surplus money they accumulate from that. Important, but only a supplementary process to the main activity, not the core process. That's normal business, production and selling. So call the economy 'the business system', not 'capitalism'.

See graphic on next page >>>.

www.uspol.org

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.

Conservative parties claim the system is about the individual and individual rights because they represent business people's interests in politics. Especially important is the right for anyone to start and run a business. That right should indeed exist. But their core imagery of the plucky self-reliant individual, and the 'self-made' wealthy, and of it being the essence of freedom, gives crucial political cover for business people. Because most of them are not the worthy individuals of conservative mythology. Because high-volume production inevitably takes the market from most small-business. And those who run it – even including those smaller ones - don't operate as individuals. ***They operate as companies and corporations****. Very* ***collectively****.* ***They are business organisations using large workforces for collective production.***

And the inevitable result of volume production is that a small number of businesses - as a proportion of the population - dominate the markets. So a minority of people will necessarily own and manage most work. ***That's the business class****. And most of the rest can only get work by working for them, or for public bodies. You can see it in how people always talk of themselves or others 'getting a job.' That's a vital fact 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.*

From all that you can easily explain to others how 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.

What It Means For Wealth Allocation

The business class allocate themselves huge wealth from it, justifying it with well-worn arguments about ability, risk and hard work. These are valid arguments but their wealth comes not so much from them but from the collectivism of companies with volume-production and large-workforces, and the key relationship in them, which

comes next.

With volume production, services as well as goods, employers, including public bodies and small businesses, 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 use that advantage to bargain hard. This is why workers are weaker than employers. This is not 'Well that's your opinion' or 'point of view.' Even a Trumper said 'Right - it's just the arithmetic', accepting it as fact, not opinion. *(It's the biggest 'bad trade deal' affecting American workers and Trump is on the business class's side in it.)*

Here is how the wealth extraction process works - with this power over staff, business people can pay them less than what they sell their work for, and keep the difference. That's how they get wealthy, not just from their own ability and effort.

That's how the business class dominate work. Here's how they dominate politics too. Simply because they run the economy, they can and do severely limit what governments can do. And they organise politically. They get wealthy enough to not need public services, so oppose them and the taxes to pay for them. Conservative parties represent business people's interests. They claim the system is about individual freedom to justify government having a limited role, as that leaves the business class as the most powerful actors in society. And to justify opposing worker's own collectivism, unionisation.

But, as shown, the business class actually trade not as individuals but as collectives. As ***companies****. The rest, the majority, mostly workers - people who need jobs - do mostly trade as individuals, un-unionised. And trading with employers as individuals in large workforces, and small government, doesn't mean freedom for them - it leaves them as atomised individuals, weak in trading with the organised business class at work, needing public services to make up for that, and governments that will regulate*

business people.

For actual freedom they need to match up to the business class's collectivism and organisation at work by organising too, by unionising. In politics, by organising too and voting into government parties that will provide basic rights and good public services and regulate the minority business class for the good of the majority.

We can debate the rights and wrongs of all that but it's not opinion, is it? It's fact? We should base all political debate on it. I do, and it works.

Do you think about how we relate and trade together in politics, business, production, and work? About 'the system?' Do commentators and leading political activists? And, most importantly, do ordinary citizens, as workers and voters? The answer is no, or not much. Isn't it?

We need to, because of people having a hard time making a living and getting basic needs; public services not being good enough; hostility between fellow-citizens and to people cast as outsiders; distrust in politics; giving up even on thinking about it and basing it just on feelings; turning to daft conspiracy theories, misleading nationalism and nasty populists. And even wrecking our own habitat.

So base political debate and opinion on these facts about the volume-production business system – most people can only find work with business people or state employers; are weak if not unionised; low unionisation enables the business class to take great wealth out of the production process; enough to also spend on commanding political debate. *Debate how to vote based on these facts of* ***how trading relationships in the work process determine wealth and income.*** *Refer often simply to the existence of the business class. On all political issues, ask 'What's the role of the business class in this?' And build*

what level of unionisation and political organisation you can.

To deal with it all, worldwide, we need a shareable knowledge base, a factual framework, like this one, of how we relate, how we trade and work together in producing wealth and wages in business, jobs, in politics. A common understanding of these basics of society to found political opinion and action on. This work helps to develop this, to show what it is about how we relate that causes our problems, and what we can do about it.

How The Business Class Dominate, How To Stand Up To Them

Here, once the start of this work, an alternative run-through of these observations. Repetitious, yes, but maybe that balances how little this crucial stuff is discussed.

It's through business, work and politics that we get what we most need - money, housing, clothes, food, wi-fi; public support, health services. In business and work we work collectively to make things and provide services, they are bought and sold or funded by public spending. We make our living, some get wealthy. Politics and government are supposed to run it all for us and insure us against its shortcomings.

So how we relate in this is central. Our problems start with not having a clear view of how we do, especially how we trade together, where some make their living and some get power and wealth; and how to make it work for everyone.

We call it all 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, everyday activities - business, work and trade.

Property is important but can be only about storage and transfer of wealth. ***More important than free markets or property are the relationships where wealth is created – relationships in production, the work process, the labour process.***

It's all not really a system, not laid down anywhere, just the

established customs of buying and selling, of contract law - including, importantly, but neglected, employment contracts.

These trades that we make every day are the basis of society, not politics and the state. Governments, public services and law come from the system, they don't make it. People actually get diverted from this central process by expecting to be able to sort everything through politics.

How we trade with each other enables business people, the business class, to dominate everyone else at work, annex obscene wealth, and dominate politics too. People accept the business system as if it's our natural habitat, like fish accept water. This explains how conservatives get themselves elected into government despite being hostile to most people's interests. They mistreat the majority as policy but because everyone accepts the trading relationships of the business system they claim to be working for everyone and pose as just managers of 'the economy', and, ridiculously, they get away with it.

They resist government regulation of the business system as that enables the power and wealth of their class. 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 conservatives who cast politicians as a ruling elite. But the business class is the elite. They run the economy and dominate government, the state and politics. They are the ruling class. 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.)

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.

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 can stand up to and regulate the business class minority, in the workplaces and in politics.

Uniquely, it identifies the basic problem - that business people are organised, at work as businesses, and in politics; that the rest, mostly workers, are mostly not; that employers overpower each worker because they have many others – ***All The Rest*** *– to rely on, that this entitles workers 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.***

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.

Again, 'How To Talk Politics With Each Other'
is at page 286 of the full work
and free-standing on the website.

Why This Work Is Needed

(Again, maybe repetitious but it's not heard elsewhere…) People think the everyday world is run by politics but it's the other way round - politics comes from the everyday world. Especially from how we relate in making goods, providing services, and selling them, to making our living or get wealthy - business, trade and work. With us only having flimsy relationships in politics it actually diverts us from the basics of society and wealth and power. It's 'the economy' then politics.

Most people think there's lot wrong with it, and that governments let us down. We're even wrecking our own habitat. But rather than tackle the system, many are diverted into phony loyalties and divisions and daft conspiracy theories. That's because we ignore the system. We need to build a clear understanding of it and relate all politics to it, including our own and other ordinary people's politics. And to relate discussion not just to someone's opinions or attitudes, like left or right, socialist or conservative, but to their role in the system.

People look to 'politicians' to put things right and see the parties as interchangeable management teams, all aiming to 'run the country', for everyone. As if from above the system. But politicians don't make the system, and not from above. They come from it, to represent the interests of different groups in it. That are often against the interests of other groups.

The key process where interests are different is in how we produce goods and services to create wealth and make our living. It involves working together so much, is so industrialised - including the service industries - so social, 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. They run this key activity, us making our living together intensely inter-connected, and they control the allocation of income and wealth. This obstructs protection of people

in their basic needs and democratic regulation of the economy.

The system is the business system. The minority, business people. The business class. But we don't see them as a class. And most people are workers but don't see themselves as the worker class either.

Conservatives say the system is about 'the individual'. Nonsense. It is industrialised, including the service industries, requiring people to work highly collectively, co-operatively, with millions of others, under the control of organisations, mainly of business people. And, doing this as individual workers, they relate to collectively organised business people on very unequal terms.

In claiming the system is based on people looking out for themselves, conservatives also say that makes it work best for everyone. That's nonsense too, borne out by the outcome - great unfairness, misery, instability and inequality of power and wealth. It's dynamic, true. But negatively almost as much as positively and, on balance, dreadful.

Conservatives also claim that this system works best (for all!) when governments don't regulate it. Conservatives think the government shouldn't govern! This - leave the system alone, 'laissez-faire' - is the core of conservativism. It's more nonsense. They oppose regulation of the business system because it favours business people and they represent them, the business class, and are mostly members of it.

Exploiting the majority to get great wealth, running the economy, dominating politics and the state - the business class are the ruling class.
Not all of them are bastards but their system pressures them to be. And it's them who create, support and sustain the conservative parties.

When people vote in 'progressive' parties who aim to govern for all, they can't do enough for people to vote them in regularly. 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 - we accept the system and don't give progressive parties the votes to regulate the business class and their system.

But people don't see how the system works and how it enables the business class to dominate. They don't even see that the business class exist as a class. So they can't make sense of how they are treated and some say politics is confusing. Some support politicians they just 'like'. Some do take positions on policies but others give up on politics and don't vote.

Some think political debate is exchanging broad views, in those brief social exchanges we have, on vague notions of 'capitalism' or 'socialism' or 'communism', as if in a micro constitutional convention. But we need to base politics not on abstract discussions of ideal social systems or 'isms but on what 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.

And people believe they can 'make it' on their own, especially in the USA. But the business system often means they can't. 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.

All this is because we've no accurate, widely-held, view of the system that exposes the absurdity of the conservative world view, on which to base political thinking, debate and actions. *We need to get it widely*

accepted that the main issue in society is business-class supremacy - that they have it because they organise, at work and in politics - that the worker majority - defined by how you make your living - must talk to each other about how they relate and organise and unionise widely and organise more in politics.

With this clear understanding of what is, then we can 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. ***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.***

Here is a stand-alone explanation of probably the biggest issue – the unequal distribution of wealth. It's been brought forward from later on in this work. 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 of the full work
'Why People Should Read
'Us, Politics, The System And Class'
'About The Author', page 366

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 should call this majority a class too, probably the working or worker class, but defined by their definite, vital, unarguable, role in the system, being a worker.

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 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.

The Twenty Minute Read Of Us, Politics, The System And Class *(v.2024.4)*

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 amounts 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 all, 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 <u>have</u> 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 <u>do</u> 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 <u>are</u> 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? <u>Is</u> this one society? What will conservatives and business people <u>do</u> 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 <u>on</u> 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 <u>un</u>fairness, 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, <u>and</u> 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, included here again as part of The Thirty Minute Read – 'The Right To Unionise' The Three-page Read

It has an independent, internally coherent (hopefully!) existence as a stand-alone, short version of 'The Right To Unionise' but covers some points also made elsewhere

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. Their activity *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.

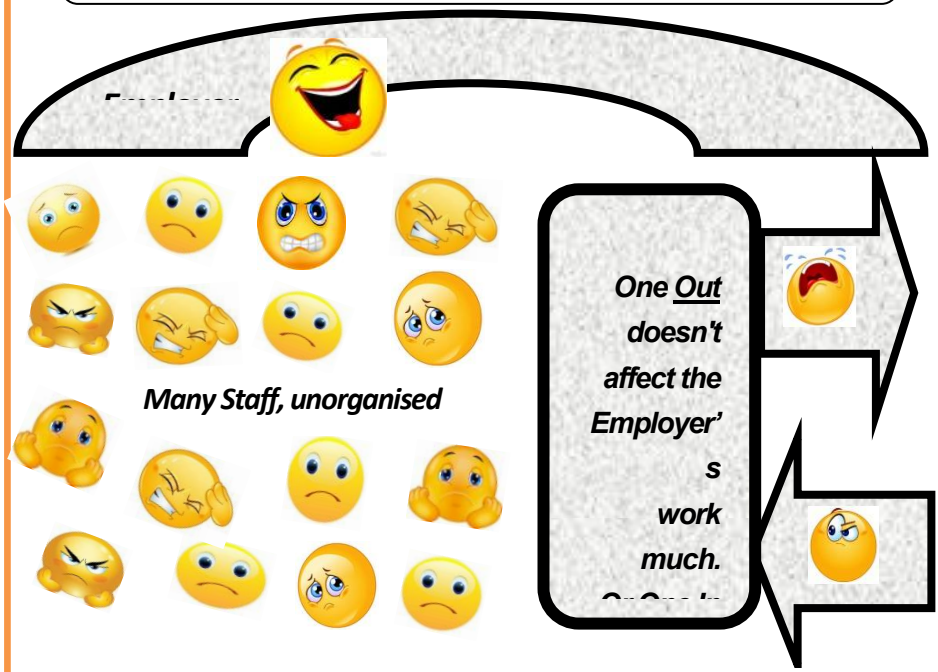
They are organized. All workers should be.

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.

The Personal Case For The Right To Organise in Unions -
Being A Weak Worker Because The Employer Has Many Others –



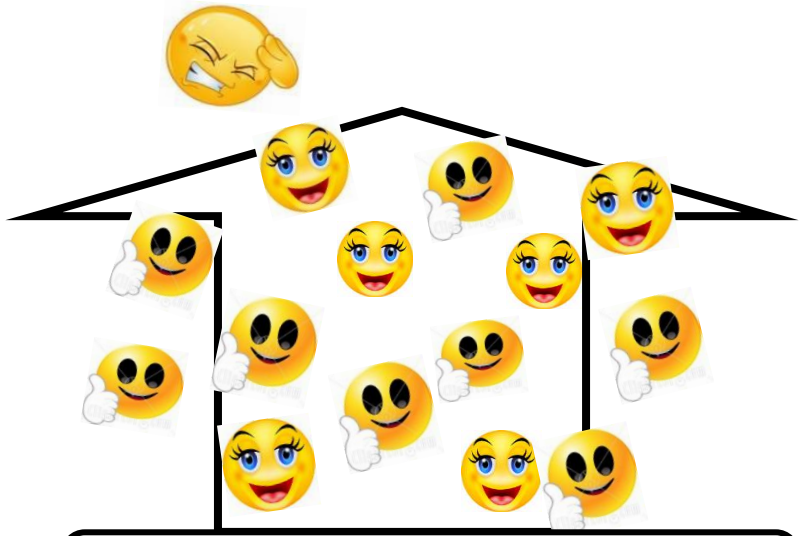
The work relationships shown above explain why individuals are not equal to their employers. It's because employers have many others. 'Many Others' shows the personal and the political right to organise.

Most employers have more staff than just you. While many others are working they can get the work done without any particular *one.* That's what gives them power over you and every other worker when starting a job; when working in it; and when sacking you. (Being able to replace you from the unemployed is far less significant.)

This unequal bargain in earning your living is unfair and has never been approved by anyone. It just developed with industrialism. With industrialism, most work is collective so to earn a living most people *have* to work for an employer who has many other staff. Not many can avoid it, because industrialism works better than small trading.

Only a minority can be business owners, most will be workers. The opportunity to be an owner only changes *who are* owners - there will always be *some.* And without staff being organised they will have unfair power over them. And 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 have to organise together at work and be entitled to.



People Organised at Work – Negotiating and Acting Together

For society to be fair and civilised the majority, workers, have to have the right to correct the unfairness of free-market labour relationships by organising together in unions. It should be normal, expected, 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 include denying fellow-workers the 'freedom' to work on less than union conditions, to stop employers from forcing us into bargaining each other downwards. You see it happening. It is just obviously essential. It's for every worker's good.

It is perfectly right to require workers to join their fellow-workers, the rest of the staff, in a union. It's not against anyone's authentic freedom. When taking a job, in accepting the owner's and manager's authority, you lose freedom. Everyone knows that, it's why you call them 'the boss'. You should accept some authority from your fellow-workers too, because it means you and everyone else *gain* freedom from the employer's authority. And you gain the freedom to act – collectively and democratically - to bring workmates who might drag your conditions downwards under yours and the others' authority.

It has to include helping and/or persuading workers in other companies to also work only on union conditions for the trade. Because in free markets, 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 The System - Who Gets How Much Wealth And Power?

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 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'.

The Right To Unionise – To Get Even – Re-stated

*Most work is in high-volume-production. Most employers have many staff. With **the rest** working, they can get by without any **one** leaving, any **one** new, or any **one** they sack. Each is weak in the job deal they make with their employer **not because the employer can replace them from the unemployed but because without them they still have all the others.** And, with most work large-volume with large workforces and most workforces not unionized, there's the same unfair relationship in other jobs they might go to.*

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

Next - Reviews

Reviews

'... 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, full of anecdotes about confrontations in the workplace... discussions of class and democracy... 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... clear and unarguable... clear about working class and middle-class identities, cutting through the idea that 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'.

Mark Thompson, *North West Labour History*

Reviews of the full book, Us, Politics And The System

'a great book to explain the essentials'
The late Tony Benn, socialist activist and politician -

'not so much a book as a toolbox for activists and thinking people'

Eddie Little, NW Labour History

The Author

Ed McDonnell is a retired member of Unite, the Union. His union experience began in Manchester in the 1970's, working in one of the biggest and best-organised engineering factories of the time. As a member of the AUEW and ASTMS, predecessor unions to Unite, he learned the job of workplace union representative or 'shop steward'. Then, as a college lecturer, he tutored TUC-sponsored courses for union reps for twenty years until retiring in 2001. He also served as a branch officer of the lecturer's own union, now UCU. This work relates his own lifelong experience and observations and while he believes it is of great value to his own union and all others, it is written in a personal capacity and nothing in it is officially representative of Unite's, the TUC's or UCU's views, policies or practices.

See also 'About The Author', page 166.

Improvements by Version

The book is continually improved. The writer can never just check it over without finding faults and improvements to make and usually makes them. Changes are usually minor. 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 print.

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.

For anyone who doesn't have this latest version, here's a record of recent improvements so they can read the improvements -

.2 changing HWR to UsPol.
Also changing industrialism to volume.
2026.2 – Just changing How Relate to Us, Politics, The System And Class. And 'starting with' on title page
2026.3 They've Got All The Rest instead of Many of/Lots of You
2026.3B Micro first para, and Our Money moved from end 30 Min to in Essential. Bus not Cap graphic in middle of Essential. Essential, Ten, Twenty,Thirty updated.

Page Formatting for writer's use –

Royal 15.59 by 23.39 cm

Margins
At 2023.8, Download and printed version made one. Meaning some page offset for printing is on download as well.
But reduced from
Left 2.8 Gutter 0.2 Right 2.2 Mirror
To 2.6 0.2 2.4

Download Margins were 2.6 ***Top/Bottom margins 1.8 and 2.1 Tabs before slow load – 4.25 ….. 1 cm***