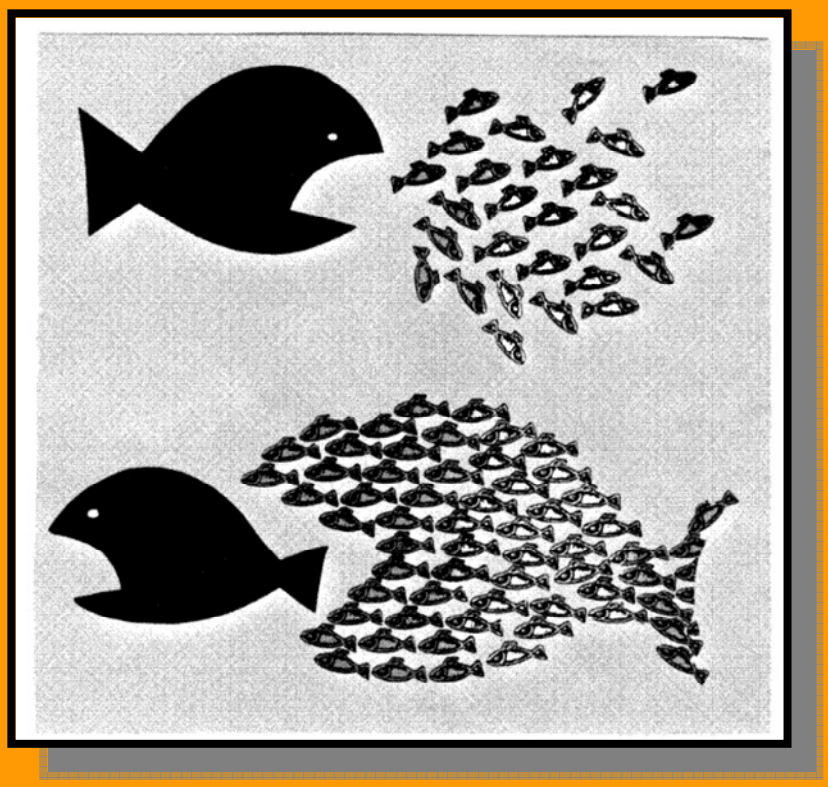

Challenging The System

The System :

How Everyone Relates To Each Other In Making Their Living And In Politics

by Eddie McDonnell

Version 30g

Page 299 - record of improvements by version

This book aims to :

- ***show how business people and state employers get power over the majority in making their living***
- ***show how that power is unfair and unacceptable***
- ***show how business people also get excess power in politics***
- ***convince that large majority of people who are workers to organise independently as workers***
- ***convince them of their right to do so***

It is about :

How we all relate to business people and state employers in jobs, in making our living in jobs - how we all relate to each other as workers - why employers are stronger than us - business people's excessive rights and privileges - exactly *how* this is a class society - they are the business class - the system, their system, the business system - the political system and class organisation (theirs as well as ours) - how they dominate us at work and in politics - how we can get even with them - the case for us to organise together as workers, the case for unions - the case for strikes - the case for the *right* to organise and strike, the case against anti-union law - why we shouldn't share national identity with the business class - the political system - the myth that we have democracy - place identity is false.

"It is a great book to explain the essentials
and I hope is widely read" ***Tony Benn***

"I agree with all that" and "I think it's great"
John the Milkman *and daughter* ***Sarah*** –

"Not so much a book as a toolbox for activists and thinking people, or
all of us who should be thinking"
Eddie Little*, North West Labour History*

"The ABC of living under capitalism" ***the author***

UK Politics Note

The need for the analysis and arguments in 'Challenging The System' to be widely spread, either using this book or in other ways, was re-inforced when people allowed the Tories into government in 2010, unelected. This was after their class, allowed to run amok by New Labour, caused a crisis in their system. It is because the system is not understood that we allow such an absurd thing to happen.

The author is a retired lecturer in Trade Union Education. He taught courses for workplace Trade Union Representatives or 'Shop Stewards' for twenty years. He grew up in a strongly union and Labour dockers and shipbuilders community. In 6th form he learned about the awful treatment of people in the Industrial Revolution and the first half of the 20th Century. At university he took part in the student radicalism of the 1960's. Then he worked in a wide range of industries and jobs, becoming active as a union rep, and then a Trade Union tutor. He always discusses the rights and wrongs of 'the system' and what to do about it with fellow workers. This book is the outcome of those discussions and is intended to stimulate them widely.

BOOK LAYOUT :
First, two Setting The Scene sections that overlap. They will be merged sometime.
Setting The Scene 2 is on page 13. CONTENTS and MAIN SECTIONS then follow from page 19.

Setting The Scene

The Link Between The Political System And Being Organised As A Class. Business People Are : We Aren't

People allow themselves to be seriously mis-led by some big political myths. One, that to look after their interests and to influence society, they should rely on voting for politicians, the political parties, the government. Another, that doing this in occasional elections is a sufficient and acceptable way to do so. Another is that the one simple vote they are occasionally allowed amounts to democracy.

Other related myths are: that all governments aim to run society in everybody's best interests; that they actually control society; and that with electoral debates conducted by the media, and between elections a lot of hot air in the media, we have a public arena where we discuss our common concerns. Another, that what you think counts for anything. It doesn't, much. But you already knew that.

These myths dis-empower people, in particular that clear majority of people who earn their living by getting jobs, who are workers. They are mis-led by these myths in the present crisis. They are mis-led by them during more normal times. They were mis-led by them in previous centuries during other crises and during more normal times.

The myths obscure the fundamental issues, which are: how 'the system' operates; who has practical power in it; how it goes into crisis; how to fix it; how to stop it going wrong; and how people can protect and promote their interests in it.

Governments aren't the central social authority. Business people are. They control the main element of society – the economy. They are by far the most organised and most powerful social force.

Governments could run society. But they allow business people to. The Tories and their equivalents in other countries do this enthusiastically because they are the parties of the business class. Some, like Labour in the UK, do it semi-reluctantly (at best) because they are afraid of the business class, afraid of subjecting them to social control.

So when people look to their vote as their only or main way to influence things - as most do - they are not seeing how 'the system' works. They are not seeing how Business people dominate politicians and governments because they control the basic, the most essential feature of society, the key public, political issue - 'the economy' - production, sales, profitability, investment, growth, jobs, wages, exports. Businesses – business *people* - *are* 'the economy'. ***** *but see next paragraph.* As US President Coolidge said "The business of America is business". As General Motors president Wilson said – "What's good for General Motors is good for America".

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

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

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

Conservatives talk of the economy, the economic system, as 'free markets' and 'free enterprise'. (Free, eh? Can't argue with that, can you? Well, yes, you can.) We'll find it easier to talk to each other about the system and to assess it when we call it 'the business system'. That brings it out from economists' jargon and into our everyday language and experience. In the UK business people set up the business system long before we won any mass democracy. And ever since we got the little democracy we have, they have worked, successfully, at protecting it. Ever wondered what Conservatives want to conserve? It is the business system, *their* business system, free from being regulated to protect non-business people, that great majority who are workers, from its unfairness and its brutality and instability. We do have cycles where we develop our case and strength, they are constrained, and society is run more socially, more collectively. Like in 'New Deal' 1930's

America. Like from 1945 to about 1980 in the UK and USA. But they repeatedly knock us back because they have practical economic power and a firm hold on our ideas.

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

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

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

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

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

public spending - limited by the view that what 'business' wants must prevail over the needs of the majority, workers.

How do they have such power and yet we don't challenge them as a clearly identified class? But look instead to governments to simply 'run the country' better, faintly influenced by our occasional vote? It's because many people, probably the majority, accept how 'the economy' is presented as a 'thing in itself'. Not, as said above, as actual people. Nor as a particular *class* of person. Not the same thing as the people who run it, those who own and run businesses. It is accepted as a *system* that government's job is just to manage. Many or most people accept the view that governments 'run the country': and judge the political parties and vote for them according to which they think manage the system more effectively than the others. It's just a choice of management. It's as if each parties' leaders are just alternative managers. People say 'Labour has failed, let the other lot have a go'. As if it's just a question of competence. As if there's no difference in each parties intentions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All their talk of 'free' this, 'free' that and 'free' the other sounds good and is probably their most powerful myth. But they're strongly against any freedom that doesn't benefit them, like us being free to organise together to match their power. *Because the key 'free market' isn't the much-debated one in goods and*

services. It is 'free' labour markets, how business people trade with workers. 'Free', unregulated, un-unionised labour markets give business people the power to oppress and exploit the individualised majority. They intimidate us and suppress us on *that* freedom, enterprise by enterprise, and by law. The unfairness and unacceptability of that is the subject of Section 1 of this book.

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

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

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

But the Business class win these arguments and have done for a long time. They established their system several centuries ago and ever since have got most people to see it as the only way to run society, as the natural order. They argue exactly that – that it fits human nature. It doesn't, it contradicts our essential co-operativeness. But they get away with this anti-social nonsense and, interrupted by occasional brief upsurges of support for socially responsible government, we allow conservative, business parties to govern. Which actually means

not governing, but freeing themselves as a class to run the system independent of government. That's what Republicans in the USA mean when they say the best government is the least government.

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

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

They play a key role in convincing people that they have democratic power, as voters, through the electoral system. But the appearance of control of society that voting gives is a smokescreen for what really happens. Business people, the business class, dominate every-day society and politics and the limited democracy we have won over time is a distant mechanism for influencing it.

Look at it. All we are allowed, to challenge their every-day class power with, and to wield our own class influence, is one very occasional vote. Only about fifteen times in your life, a cross scrawled on a scrap of paper with a pencil. We briefly 'unite' isolated from each other in the silent individual act of going into the local school for a minute every four years. Amorphously, in constituencies defined by the economically and politically meaningless connection of living within a few miles of each other. We're not organised in doing that, and certainly not by class. It's far from being a way of either building or exercising class power to respond to theirs. It diverts us, keeps us at bay, as much as it empowers us. As the history of Labour and Social democratic governments shows.

Even in the USA, where people have always had the vote (if white) the constitution was deliberately written to limit democracy by giving the Electoral College the power to over-ride the popular vote in appointing the President. They haven't dared do it in recent years but they can.

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

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

Seeking support only in the vague, disconnected electoral system, Labour has to appeal to people as they are - mesmerised and mis-led by the business class views constantly projected at people by their 'news' papers: unorganised, unable to have proper in-class independent debate. Seeking support for progressive politics in this conservative-dominated forum, they are unable and unwilling to put forward the arguments against business people's excess power. They disagree internally over whether to do so or not, and generally don't dare to. So much so that many people can't see any difference between them and conservative parties. Labour are not an everyday campaigning party, they don't try to educate and change people's ideas. They just go round putting leaflets through doors on the few occasions when there's an election.

It's is no way to challenge the daily bombardment of anti-progressive politics that people are subjected to. In the weak forum they restrict themselves to, they concede not only the general argument on free markets but far more importantly, the argument on 'free' markets in *labour*. Shamefully, they refuse to support our organisation and action as unionised workers.

So Labour parties, Social Democratic parties and the US Democratic party manoeuvre to find progressive policies that straddle enough of the existing business-dominated views to get elected. Sometimes they achieve it. But then, they let business people actually run things, woefully under-regulated, and because of the myth that governments run the system they get blamed when business people mess it up! That's what predictably happened to Blair and Brown's 'New Labour'

government. Voters then allowed the business class's own parties back in to govern! Without them even winning an election!

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

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

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

Some on our side will argue that if we do all this, get to the level of organisation and activity argued for here, the Business class will not have it, will not accept us as equals in the economy and politics. They will crank even higher their constant promotion of the class-obscuring politics of racism and nationalism, and even ditch democracy and resort to fascism. They've sometimes done that when worker majorities have challenged them - such as in Italy from 1922 to 1944, Germany from 1933 to 1945, Spain from 1939 to the 1980's, Chile from 1974 to the 1980's. Note that workers have also sometimes stopped them doing that, in France in 1936,

Portugal 1975. But the argument goes that when they react like that we'll have to go the whole way and transform this in to a socialist society.

But the evidence shows that we'll never be equipped for that when, never mind socialism, we haven't even got the arguments against the business system and for our right to organise within it ***as it is*** sorted out and widely held. Whenever we make progress, they always knock us back because so many workers are convinced by their arguments. That has been demonstrated numerous times, like when people voted for or allowed the Thatcher-led Tories into government in 1979, and let them in again in 2010.

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

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

But if they won't, then with these arguments we'd be in a state as a class to make them, and to prevent them from resorting to fascism.

And maybe, for the more ambitious amongst us, transform our society into one in which we inter-act with each other in socialist relationships. Peacefully, as we'll be stronger than the business class, having conclusively refuted their arguments for their system.

This is the original *Setting The Scene* section

Challenging The System explains everyone's experience of these key roles and relationships :

Jobs, Work & Bosses
Workmates & Business People
Democracy & The Political System

Setting The Scene 2

How This Is A Class Society

Some – most - make their living by getting jobs. Workers.
Some make their living by running businesses. Business people.
That covers most people.

In politics and in jobs, business people dominate that large majority of people who are workers. The most basic social relationships, the system of relationships in which we earn our living, favours business people. There are several other names for it but it's best to simply call it 'the Business system'. It is the dominant system all over the world. In this system business people are allowed to dominate everyone else, politics, and 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 we *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 Case for Unions'*** comprehensively. That's something that has never been done before and has long needed doing.

Business people present convincing arguments for the relationships that enable them to dominate. They argue, very successfully, that they earn that right by being active and enterprising.

Workers don't know, and don't present, the arguments for alternative, fair relationships. And, importantly - Business people are organised but Workers are mostly not.

The book starts from workers own experience. Rather than being written about 'the system', as if of things 'above' us, it starts with each workers direct experience of selling themselves to business people and public bodies to get work. But people aren't picking up on starting like that, on examining 'the system' from their own daily experience. So before that starts on page 20, this .... those two very important facts expanded on –

Business people are Organised. Workers are, in the main, not.

How are Business people organised? ***Each and every day, in running their Businesses.*** In running a business they are making meaningful links, meaningful contractual relationships, they are organising with, many other people.

A business usually consists of partners, shareholders, a board of Directors. That means those people are *organised* together. They make other meaningful relationships - in renting or buying ***premises***: in identifying ***Goods or Services*** that other people will buy: in buying equipment and materials from ***Suppliers.*** In making the goods or providing the services, they make contractual relationships with ***Workers – the Staff.*** They have complex management structures to supervise and instruct them. In marketing and selling the products or providing the service, they make contractual relationships with ***Customers***. So a Business is an ***Organisation.*** Business relationships, business organisation, is the basis of their power.

It gets political. Through being organised in businesses, they *are* ***the Economy***. That gives them power even before they organise openly 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 organise politically as well. In politics they present their preferred 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 business system.

Business people claim their activity, their enterprise, justifies their wealth and power. That's true, to a degree. It doesn't

justify their common brutality and ruthlessness but they do take the trouble to be organised in their own interests.

We workers should do the same. When we sell ourselves to business people and public bodies to earn our living, we 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 'the Business class'. Some workers say we should, instead, call them 'the Bosses' or 'the Boss class'. But that excludes from view how they get their power as bosses. As said, they organise much of the Economy - the provision of the Goods and Services everyone needs as Consumers. It's no use naming them solely by our job or worker relationship with them, when they have prior, stronger relationships with Customers and Suppliers and with partners or Shareholders, running their Business without us or with us, making money for themselves or for Shareholders.

Business people make a lot of the important things happen. We have to recognise this. They take responsibility, they 'Take Care of Business'. They run - or they *are* - the Economy. 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 we workers but we're not as organised and active as business people. If each of us did just a bit towards class organisation, we'd easily be able to negotiate with them at work and in politics on a much fairer and more civilised basis.

Saying, as the Working Class, thoroughly organised - look - this is *your* system. *You* like it uncaring and anti-social like this, not us. The least we are going to do is regulate you with strong Unionisation across each Trade and through proper Democratic government. If they'd go along with all that.

Are they Stupid? Or just Dishonest ?

We need to demolish their core arguments. The Business class, their conservative parties, and writers who defend the business system, argue that to be individualist and greedy is just how people are and must be, it is our unchangeable ***Human Nature***. And so, they argue, their competitive, dog-eat-dog, uncivilised, business system is the only way to run global society. They argue that aggressive self-interest, making as much profit,

income from shares, and millions-of–pounds-a-year salaries as they can get away with, is only normal. And they accept those who run their supplier companies doing it too.

Yet when we workers do the same and bargain hard for the best deal we can get, that's outrageous! When we try to get as much as we can from 'the system', Business class Tories go all *socialist* on us! We should behave according to the public good. *Our* selfishness and greed 'ruins the country'! But if humans are all self-centred, as they claim, why shouldn't we workers be like that too?

It's worth noting that many business people are alright, they just have ideas, initiative, and energy and don't want to work for someone else: that some of them work harder than some of us and deserve more reward because of that, because they 'take care of business'. But though some can be personally Ok, ***Competition*** is a key element of their ***system*** and pressures them to treat people harshly.

And ***as a Class*** they are thoroughly nasty and vicious. In our jobs, at work: and 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 anti-Union laws that prevent us Organising to be more nearly equal to them. And that also obstruct us from organising independently Politically.

Let's Examine It All – 'the System'

So from all that, we should thoroughly examine our relationships with them. Yet oddly, though these relationships are 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 bosses, business owners, public sector managers and each other, is very important to each of us personally.

It's full of problems isn't it? 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 bosses' power and business people's rights that are determined by the political system.

Our job relationship with them is important to each of us personally. But it's also as central to the economy as the customer and sales relationship. It 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 the people who run businesses and our working lives, particularly Big Business people, have the rights that enable them to dominate we workers, great wealth, and the right to dictate how countries and the world are run ?

Should we, the Worker majority, get equal to this Business Class by Organising together and by Acting together? And should we be free to?

To answer these questions, this book examines -

How you Sell Yourself –
to Business People and the Public sector
How you Relate to your Workmates

Classes -
How to Identify and Organise by Class

Identity Politics –
How people mistakenly identify –
as We, Us and Them - by national, local and football team identities

How it is claimed *'this is Democracy'*
How you (don't) have a say in Politics
The Political System, our Right to Associate together as Workers, and 'Democracy'

It is based on UK experience but is globally relevant.

Disclaimer

As the work of a retired trade union activist and trade union lecturer writing in a personal capacity, this book does not represent the views of any particular trade union body or organisation.

A NOTE on the Tone of the book
and text emphasis, the title,
and how to get copies is on Page 218.

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See Notes on significant improvements at page299.

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Why Bosses Are Stronger Than Us and How We Can Get Even – The Case for You and Your Workmates To Be Organised

As you surely agree, *Making Your Living* is the main thing you have to do in life and it's just the same for everyone else. Without getting an income in some way you don't have what you need for bare existence, never mind for enjoying life, for DVD's, cake, and going out with friends. So how you relate to other people in making your living is yours and everyone else's most basic relationship. Probably even more important than close personal relationships.

So the most vital thing you do is to ***Earn Your Living*****.** You probably do it by finding work. That's how most people do it - by *getting a job.* That means ***you sell yourself to somebody else***. And the biggest common problem in our everyday lives and in politics is how we do this. We complain about what's done to us, about how badly we are treated. But we don't examine and talk about the relationships through which it's done. We don't clearly understand what happens. And we don't talk clearly to each other about it. Do we?

In our jobs we each have a ***Trading Relationship*** with our Employer. We desperately need a clear understanding and a fresh political judgement of it. We call these otherwise ordinary people our boss. But they're supposed to be our *equals* not our *Bosses.* In law, you and your employer are supposed to be equal trading partners, each of **you *a free individual*** making a deal with the other. Just the same as when people buy or sell articles or services from others. Your *employment contract* works as if you are your boss's equal. But you're not, otherwise you wouldn't call them *the Boss*. So why *is* that ?

It's actually easy to understand. Understanding it explains the problems you get at work, and also politics, inequality, wealth, and power. This book spells it out more clearly than ever before. We, you included, need to get it across to everyone who sells themselves to get work. Which is most people.

It's most clearly expressed like this – the person who sells themselves as a worker to someone who has 100 workers is 100 times weaker than them. The person who sells themselves to a business or public body that has 1000 workers is 1000 times weaker than them.

And this is not right. It's not right, for people to have to earn their living in such a weak relationship. It's not right, to run society like this, through the politics and law that define how we must relate to bosses, workmates, and business people generally, politically.

Selling Yourself as a Worker

Let's take a very close look at what happens ***when you sell yourself as a worker*** and at why you should identify with and organise with your fellow-workers. Leave aside for now some old, emotional expressions of working class solidarity. This work doesn't argue that you should weep for nearby fellow-workers like kids working in McDonalds. Or for distant fellow-workers like Bolivian tin-miners or Asian sweat shop workers. It's not saying 'sing the Red Flag or the Internationale'.

Maybe you should. *But the aim is to show how the key thing about Working class identity is to see why you are weak when* ***Selling Yourself*** *in a society where contract law and anti-union law favour those who run Businesses and Public bodies over those who work for them.* What's being argued is simply that you should identify with other workers as a clued-up, sensible *seller of your labour*, being business like about it - for your own benefit.

Only One Side Can Play as a Team

You are an individual seller of your labour. But you're not usually selling yourself to another individual, one single person. You are usually selling yourself to an ***Organisation, that is, many people acting together***. Businesses are normally a number of owners or shareholders organised together. A *Company means* a collective *organisation*. If you sell yourself to the public sector, the Government too is a team. So is the Council. Each organisation also consists of many highly organised - compared to us - managers.

Yet UK law treats each of these ***organisations***, all these people, organised together and acting together, as a make-believe ***individual,*** 'the employer'. As said, the law treats employers as if they are individuals just like you. It says you make your employment contract with another, equal, person. So in contract law you are seen as being equal in power to them.

With management usually hostile to us organising together, with the business-owned media promoting images of our unions being non-human, intrusive, 'bad' entities, with anti-union laws obstructing ***us*** from organising and acting collectively too, it's like we're playing them at some sport – football, say - and they can play as a team. But we can't. Each of us has to play them on our own, as weak individuals.

However, that's only the start of how we are unequal to them. There's another, more powerful way, that involves all of us as fellow-workers. We have to examine how things are bought and sold. And then how *we* are bought and sold.

How You Sell Things ….

You probably sell *Things* now and again. Maybe a used item of domestic hardware. A car. A bike. Your house. Maybe something on E-bay. The basics of the sale are – you don't need the thing anymore; the person you're selling it to, the buyer, usually 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. Your house, that is a big issue. But in most situations where we sell or buy *Seller* and *Buyer* are pretty much equal parties in the deal. Neither is the other's *Boss*.

But it's different ***when you're selling something and the buyer has many of them already***. Then the *Seller* needs the deal more than the *Buyer*. People

might say, oh this is well known - it's called a buyer's market. OK, but read on. It'll be worth it.

Here is the most widely known example -

Marks and Spencer is a big chain of stores in the UK. They have a well-known buying practice with the supplier companies who make the clothes and food M&S stock in their stores, that puts them in a powerful position with the suppliers.

Marks and Spencer encourage or even insist on the suppliers making goods only for M&S. *The Suppliers then have 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 *also* 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 from each supplier. Because if they don't get the deal they want they can do without any one supplier. *They'll 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 one of those suppliers, in negotiating their Contract with M&S, *faces losing their one customer, all of their business*. They have to meet the buyer's demands or face going out of business. There've been firms in the national news in big trouble from losing their Marks and Spencer contract. In some ways the contract with Marks may be good for each seller / supplier. But that's their only or main customer; while M&S have other suppliers.

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

Another example. Yours truly once worked in a big GEC factory making electrical turbines for power stations, heavy switchgear, and control equipment for electric trains. My job was getting together parts for electric train switchgear, some from outside suppliers. We needed some wooden fuseboxes quickly to be able to ship some switchgear assemblies. You might have 'used' these parts, they were for London Underground. The works carpenter had always made them but GEC had made him redundant. So now he did exactly the same work supplying the same parts, as a one-man business from a little side-street workshop. 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.

Let's take a last, personal example. This writer has one ordinary motor-bike and another that's a rare design. There's only a small group of enthusiasts interested in them. One was emigrating to New Zealand and had to sell his. He phoned round the fraternity, including me. He was asking for more than £1000. The machine worked, so it was a reasonable price for its *use* value. But it's market or *exchange* value, how much someone will pay for it, modifies that according to how much another person needs it.

I had one of these machines already. I didn't *need* another one. I had the standard bike too. So I said 'Sorry, I'm not interested'. He pushed me to make

an offer. So 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 particular one, me, had plenty of what he was trying to sell.

How You Sell *Yourself* ……

They were examples of a seller's weakness through their customer having many other suppliers. And through them being your only customer.

But businesses don't usually have just one customer. They have many. For traders, small builders, shops and the rest, losing one or two customers over price, quality or poor service doesn't matter much. But the fewer customers a business has, the more they have to please each of them. When you've only got ***one,*** you ***really*** have to please them.

You - Selling Yourself as a Worker - that's your position.

To understand what your employer can do to you; to understand how you are treated in law; to understand what you can and can't do at work, on your own as just one employee - you need to see yourself as *a one-man or one-woman Business supplying only your Labour*. That's how Employment Contract law treats you, like a business, a one-person business that sells / supplies labour to a customer / business.

Most businesses or public services have many people doing the same job as you, many other workers who supply the same or similar labour as you do.

It's true that when you apply for a job the employer must need you, must have work for you to do 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 small part of their whole operation. You can't argue strongly with them over your *price,* the wages and conditions you'll work for, because *if your job relationship with them breaks down you have to re-start your whole business from nothing - meaning, you have to find another job.* That's a big consequence. But it's not for them because ***They've got plenty of other Suppliers, your Workmates,*** who sell to them just what you do.

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 -

When you go for any one job, you offer to sell
all of your labour to just the one customer.
That business or public service has many alternative
suppliers – their existing workers, the other 'Staff'.
So their need to buy you is far less than
your need to sell yourself to them.

That's a very unequal social transaction.
Such an important one should be fair.
We should change it.
This book provides the arguments.

They've Got Plenty of You

So *if being interviewed for a job* they don't much like you; or if you don't like the pay and the conditions on offer and you try to negotiate like any normal, equal supplier of goods and services would, about the terms of your *contract*, about wages, hours, holidays, pensions, workload, safety or whatever, *they'll tell you to take it or leave it*. Won't they? It's something we all know very well, isn't it?

While you are *in a job,* if you don't like what you're getting, 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*.

They've Got Other Suppliers of Labour - Plenty of You.

If you *leave a job* their business carries on running without you as long as those others carry on working. They'll be short of one worker who was useful but they can run alright with a little bit of overtime or a bit of a delay in production. They'll manage by doing just the priority work and leaving 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.

From all this writer's experience of talking to fellow-workers we are strangely blind to all this. Workers usually say they are weak because the boss can easily *get someone from the Unemployed to replace them.*

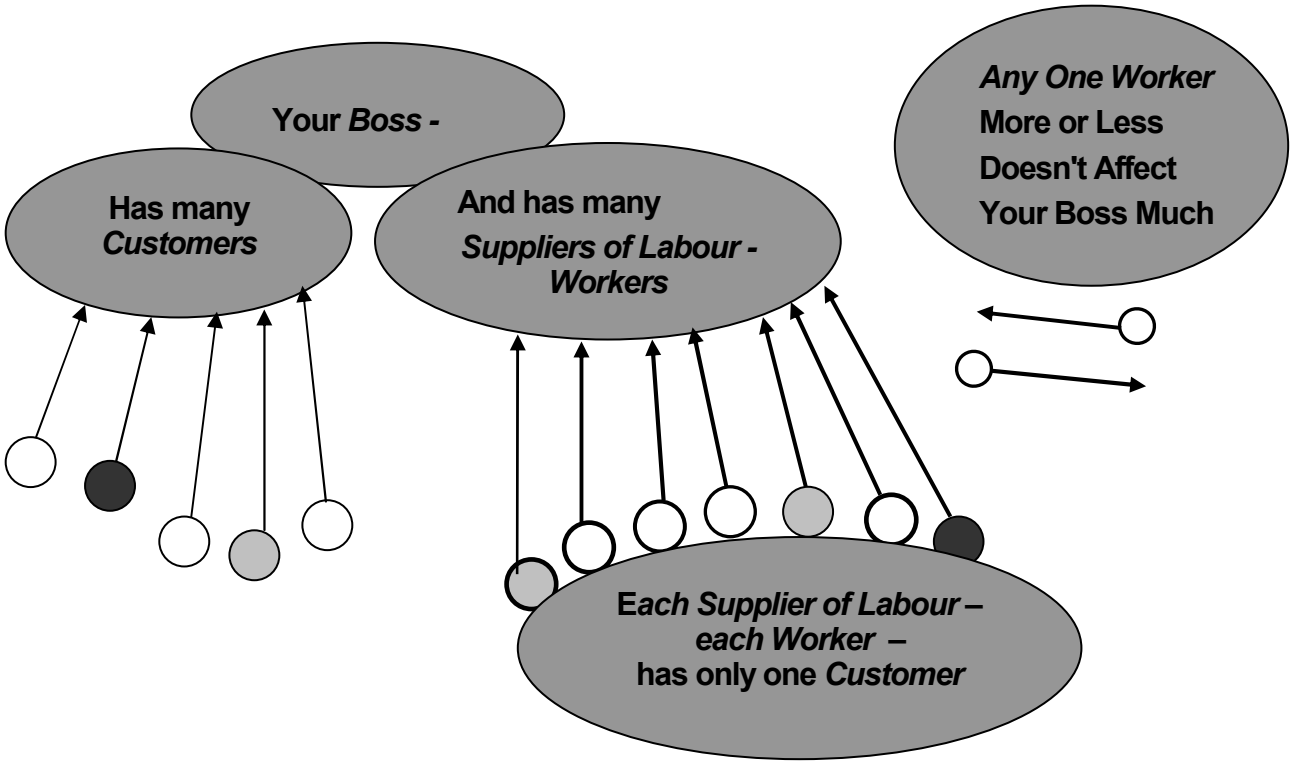
But that's a minor part of what's going on. It's looking in the wrong direction. The unemployed worker isn't your problem. You *or* the unemployed worker is a small gain or loss to your employer of the workforce they need.

Your real problem is all the others who also work for your 'Boss'. If not organised together in a Union, they, and for them, me and you, allow bosses to easily do without any particular one of us.

Once you look at this, isn't it obvious? Business Class economists, when assessing the supply of materials, say the more a business has of something, the less useful each extra one is. They call it *marginal utility*. You and I have only marginal utility for our bosses. That's not a good position for any of us to be in.

And - it's no way to run a Country, a Society, for people to be in this weak position when doing that most vital thing - trying to get the means to survive and live a decent life.

They've Got Plenty of You



This is how our bosses get power over each of us.

In your job, what percent of ***their l***abour supply or workforce are *you*?
Last time this writer did it he was just 0.3 per cent of it.
They could do without me for that small cost in lost output.

***What percent of their labour supply does your employer lose without you*?**

It'll be nothing like as much as you lose, without the job.
What percentage of ***your*** business, which is '*selling my labour*', is your job?
If you turn down a job because the pay and conditions aren't good enough.
If you walk out of one. If you get fired. What do ***you*** lose?

If it's a full-time job you lose all of your Business.

That's what bosses are playing on when they say 'There's the door if you don't like it'. Look at it from a boss's position. While you've still got plenty of workers still getting most of the work done, you won't take much notice of any ***one*** of them that wants a better deal, will you?

Most of our work relationships are determined under this unequal balance of power and that's why your pay and conditions and how you are generally treated are not usually fair and reasonable.

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

***They've Got Plenty of You – POY* - causes most of our problems.**

It's why your boss can treat you harshly. It's why you *call* them the *Boss*.

The Small Business Case

Is the *Plenty of You* formula less effective for Small business employers? You and each other worker is a bigger proportion of their workforce than with larger employers. Isn't *your* labour more important to them because more of their Business depends on you being there to do the work. Don't you have more power?

Maybe. But the small employer still has more labour suppliers than just you. If there are four others, say, the boss 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 you lose it.

And 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 provides enough work for themselves to keep them fed and housed.

And then the business expanded, and there's more work than they can do. They can make extra profit from the extra work, and they need you for that. But they might have started the business with just themselves. If needed, if they haven't got you because you don't accept the conditions, or they want to fire you, they can probably go back to that, run 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. The business has enough work for *them* to get by on. 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*.

We Never Decided This In Any Way

Business people claim they deserve their power over us, and their wealth, because *they invest their money and they risk losing it.* But most of the money they invest is originally *ours*, made from exploiting us and our work in an earlier phase.

They also claim they *work harder* and are *more able* than the rest of us.

But those aren't the reasons why they get their power and wealth. 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 comes from that unseen, crude, un-agreed power they get in jobs through you and me and her and him selling ourselves to *One Customer Who Has Plenty of Other Suppliers*. They get power from the inequality of *They've Got Plenty of You*.

And outside work, the social inequality that causes so many social problems is caused by the rich having this unfair power and wealth.

Business Class people and their party, the Conservatives, might still claim that the power *Plenty of You* gives them over us is fair and reasonable because they create our jobs 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 - we, Humanity, us as a species, a society, have found that *mass production* is a far 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.

But the inevitable, more efficient, large-scale mass production, with large organisations, large workforces, *has* to mean the great majority of the population work in large numbers in inter-connected workplaces for a relatively few Business owners.

So the *Plenty of You* mechanism dominates us simply from how modern industrialised production has to be organised. Business people get an unintended, accidental advantage over those who sell themselves to them in industrialised society. ***It means we have work relationships and an economy where most of us work under the unfairly-gained control of a minority.*** We shouldn't allow this minority to have as much bullying power over us, *the majority*, as they do.

> And it makes no difference which people *are* 'the bosses'.
>
> Whether it's people who inherit class position and wealth,
>
> or hard-working, talented, 'self-made' people who 'make it'
>
> from the bottom. *Whoever they are,* they have too much
>
> power over us, the Working Class majority.

Again, we can agree they may deserve *some* greater power and wealth than the rest of us. But nothing like as much as they get from the advantage of Plenty of You. ***It's far too much power for a minority to have over the Majority of the People in that most important activity - Making A Living.***

There are some 'good' employers. But ***Competition*** in the so-called 'free' markets of their business system limits how well they can treat you. Rival business people in the same trade who treat their staff worse will have lower costs and can undercut your employer's prices. So to stay in business employers often *have* to treat you as crap as 'the competition.'

That undermines the 'model employer' approach of Robert Owen in the 19th Century, and the Worker's Co-operatives strategy. It's why we have to have ***Trade*** Unions not just *Company* unions. It's why we demand the right, when Striking, to picket other workplaces than our own, to take *'secondary action'.* Because we need to persuade not just all workers in 'our' company not to undercut each other; but also to persuade workers in other companies in the same trade not to as well. We need them to not work for less than *Union Conditions*; and they need us to.

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, it's benefits, and the damage it causes to our lives and how to resist, is examined in the follow-on work *They Are The Business Class.*

To sum up an important argument - we all Earn Our Living working together, collectively, in one integrated, mutually dependent British and world economy. In that very important across-all-of-society relationship it's not acceptable for Business People to treat the mass of the population, their fellow-countrymen, as 'a marginal utility'. The Plenty of You mechanism is unfair and unplanned,

has never been chosen or endorsed in political debate and democratic decision-making.

By making most of us very weak in the important business of *Making Our Living,* it's just about the most unacceptable feature of our so-called 'Society'. It affects many things outside work as well as inside. It produces poverty, family breakdown, anti-social behaviour and many more social ills.

We should challenge it by all of us
Organising Ourselves,
together, in our unions.

And in politics, by demanding
the removal of anti-Union Laws,
in the UK and many other countries.

Plenty of You even gets the likes of
Law, Beckham and Ferdinand

Don't workers with rare, specialist skills have more bargaining power than most of us get under *Plenty of You?* What about computer specialists, say? Yes, the more rare and specialist your skills the better deal you can get, as

a worker, from your boss. In the extreme cases like top entertainers, including footballers, they can get millions of pounds a year. But only a few workers can do that. Most of us haven't got rare skills because we live in an industrialised society where most jobs are routine, needing only average skills that are widely available. Most of us are just one more standard issue shelf-filler / assembly line worker / teacher / driver / check-out worker. It's the usual case that business owners and public employers can easily get plenty of you or me.

And even for those of us who do have rare skills the employer *still* usually has more power. Take the top-class footballers. They're hardly exploited, but the 'clubs' still have the *only one customer but they've got other suppliers* mechanism working for them.

This is going back a bit (though I'll bring it up to date) but in the 1960's Denis Law threatened to leave Manchester United unless he got more money. For those who don't know, 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 what was 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 all Busby was doing was using the power most employers have through the *We've Got Plenty of You* mechanism. Even though Busby was probably Law's biggest fan - although that might have been me - like a bolt of lightning in the penalty box, Denis was; like a Kingfisher (a red one); OK, let's not go on – what Busby 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 very top players certainly do have more bargaining power than the rest of us.

It's because of the rarity of their skills in an un-mechanisable activity (though some clubs try to mechanise it.) Excellence is more important than the mass production jobs most of us work in. *Even so, They've Got Plenty of You still works for the employer*. David Beckham was sold by Manchester United because he thought he was bigger than the club. (United fans, discuss.)

Any United-hating fellow-workers reading this, don't let the United examples put you off (another one just coming up.) You could probably find examples from your own club. And all that football rivalry and hatred is strongly criticised in the third section of this work,
False Identities or It's Not Where You're From; It's Where You're At.

Again, in 2005 United's current 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 saying "United have Plenty of You, Rio". Rio signed.

Can They Do That ?

That's dealt with how *They've Got Plenty of You* operates for business people against workers when you *go* for a job; or when *in* a job you want to improve your conditions; and when they want to *fire* you.

Another problem with your 'boss' is their everyday authority over you at work. They're always telling you what to do, aren't they? And often it's something you feel you shouldn't have to do - something not part of your job or in your Contract. That raises a question you'll surely recognise. It is **"*Can They Do That*?"** It's what people, workers, say in those situations. It's a big, big workplace question for us. I'm going to work through it and the answer will be, again, not to your surprise "Yes, but it's only because they've got plenty of you." And we can deal with that by *Organising*, by backing each other up. A neat example concludes this section.

A commonly-occurring example of *Can They Do That* is,

'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 work late, 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 size of workplace disputes it was the same issue that provoked the great Liverpool Dock Strike of the mid-90's.

It's often a problem -

Well I went to the boss,
Said I got a hot date
The boss said 'No dice son,
You gotta work late'.
Sometimes I wonder
What am I gonna do?
Coz there ain't no cure
For the Summertime Blues

Eddie Cochrane, the Summertime Blues.

But there is a cure, Eddie … Organise with your workmates.

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

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

But it feels dodgy to do that doesn't it? Excuse the personal anecdotes but I'm sure you've had similar experiences and I'm using them to work out the answer to *Can They Do That?* 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 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 bosses 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.

We all know why, don't we? In our gut instincts we know they can get back at us. And the reason - the hidden reason - is because the Hairdresser / Manager could sack the Salon Assistant because she had other Salon Assistants, enough work to keep her own money coming in, and could cover the shampooing herself, if necessary. And where me and Dave worked, with a dozen more fitters they could easily sack us even if it wasn't right.

They had *Plenty of Us*.

Sacking You

But 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. Here's where your eyes glaze over as we have to look at *Employment Law*. But don't let that happen! It's easy enough. There's nothing really difficult about it. *'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 don't comply.* It's just that in particular situations, politicians and judges have said someone can do something; and someone else can do another thing. If, as you will find, the law of employment contracts doesn't work how you think it should, that's because the politicians and judges are under much more pressure from the much better organised Business Class than they are from you and me, the not-as-well organised Working Class.

From being offered and starting a job you've always got *Contract Law*. Even if it's only verbal it's still a contract, and if nothing was agreed or customary about *working late* you don't have to. So for this sort of situation, being sacked for not working late, it would have been *'wrongful'* to sack me and Dave on the spot when we hadn't done anything to deserve it, just worked to our contract and gone home. It would be *Wrongful Dismissal,* a breach of contract by them.

Now here's why they *can* sack you for it. You'd think it'd be illegal, so you could get an *injunction* stopping them doing it. It's just a judge's court order stopping someone doing something illegal. But they generally don't grant them to sacked workers. Employers are allowed to effectively sack you instantly, bar you from the workplace and stop paying you. You are expected to go to the trouble and expense of starting a court case and wait as long as it takes for the courts get round to hearing your case. And much later, if you won in court, they still wouldn't order your employer to give you your job back.

The reason why, and why they won't give an injunction stopping the sacking in the first place, actually makes sense. *It's because as long as they give you your Notice your boss can sack you for any reason or not even state a reason*. So if they did sack you on the spot, wrongfully, without your due *Notice,* whatever yours is, the court can later make them pay you some money in compensation. But it's normally just the pay for what your notice period should have been. You'd get your notice paid up. So even if it's wrongful they can sack you and just eventually pay up your notice period. 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 that fair and reasonable, that they can sack you for no reason as long as they give you your notice? Well, yes, in a way. Because 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 usually when it's us leaving a job they're only losing one of something they've got plenty of. So it doesn't much matter to them. Someone with rare skills may be a significant loss to them and those people might get sued if they go without working their notice out. For most of us though, leaving the job is not much of a problem for an employer because - *While it is just one of us, it doesn't much 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 the ***They've Got Plenty of You*** mechanism they can easily get rid of any one of us just by giving notice or paying our notice up. If they're prepared to go as far as that, to sack us with notice, contract law, that treats each of us *on our own* as if we're equal traders with our bosses, is useless. Applied individually, 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 we seem not to know about it – the relationship where -

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

The *Plenty of You* relationship you have with your employer.

Reader – think about which other people you can tell about it.

Practice describing it. Urge people to read this book.

Did you work out roughly what proportion you are of your employer's staff? What percent of their workforce they'd be without if you turn down a job offer

from them? What they'd lose by sacking you? How much they'd lose if you left the job? And 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 not fair but it's real. It's an unintended consequence of mass production and *Industrial* society. But we shouldn't allow power and wealth to be decided by that unseen, unfair, unapproved mechanism They've Got Plenty of You - ***POY***.

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 reward business owners get could be decided by an agreed fair mechanism, based on a political judgement made by all of us, of how much incentive they need to be as enterprising as they claim to be.

For example, Job Evaluation is embedded in UK law under the Equal Pay regulations. It is used across the Civil Service, including for the top Civil Servants who run the country, and in the NHS. We could use that to determine Business owner's income. How much they should get is looked into in *The Rich, or Are They Worth the Expense?* in *They Are The Business Class.*

We need every worker to :

- see how 'They've Got Plenty of You' works.
- see how it is unfair and unacceptable.
- agree that Business People's bargaining power in their relationship with Workers, and the wealth they get from our work, must be decided in an Equal Relationship.

For all workers to agree :

- 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.

For it to be clearly understood in public debate that :

- There's nothing wrong with *Unions.*
- There's nothing wrong with *Striking.*

Can you do anything to convince some other Workers of all that?
Use this book. Use the POY diagram.
Use the Fish. People like the fish.

Business supporters could argue that in their system of '*free' trade* and '*free' markets* they don't just treat workers harshly. They trade with each other pretty harshly and withdraw their custom when they don't get a good service or don't like the terms on which they get goods or services from supplier companies.

But most supplier businesses 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 to their business like it is to a worker. We all have experience, and tell each other in our role as customers, as *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.

But when business people themselves, like workers, have just a few customers or only one, they too complain that it's an unfair relationship. In the UK, the Supermarkets are so few and so big that farmers haven't many other customers to sell to - just the few Supermarkets, effectively. And they don't think it's fair. There was a programme on TV about a lettuce-farmer being driven out of business by a big supermarket demanding such a low price that the farmer couldn't make it pay.

By the way modern, mass production has to work, millions of us, the majority of the population, workers, can only live by Selling all of Ourselves to Business people who've Got Plenty. It's too harsh for such a basic need to work in this way. We lose our whole livelihood too easily when trading as individuals with Business owners or Government departments.

It's the biggest political issue.

It's why 'anti-union' laws are brutally unfair.

They're not truly anti-**Union** laws.

They are **anti-you-and-me-as-workers** laws.

Can They Do That – Slight Return

Now briefly back to the everyday problem in your job - *Can They Do That?* You, and all of us, have no protection from bosses *Breaching your Contract* by making you do something outside your *Conditions of Employment*. If we won't do it they just have to give you your notice or pay up that cash amount if a court eventually rules in your favour. It costs them a few weeks of our pay. It's not much of a deterrent to them. Because of *They've Got Plenty* it only affects their business a bit.

Since me having to work late painting the lorry in 1970, there is an extra legal right in the UK, extra to your contract rights. After a year in the job sacking you is ***Unfair Dismissal*** unless for a good reason – you behave badly, you're not capable, redundancy, or because the business is claimed to be in 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 *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 big mistake about Law-based Employment Rights - employers will say *it's legal* under Contract or Unfair Dismissal law to sack someone or impose something on you and people go 'Oh, well, if it's legal…' But that only means that the protection, the rights, that you are considering using are what we've won or acquired through the remote, Business-friendly routes of Parliament and the Courts.

Through our own Organisation, in unions, we can 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 it's legal to do that even though anti-union laws place obstacles in our way.

One More Time

A re-cap - ***They've Got Plenty of You*** is what explains why we feel oppressed at work. Most of us have just the one, full-time *Job*. That's most people-as-workers main income. In a business or *'free market'* 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 - from the same weak bargaining position.

It's easier if you're in a household and not the main earner. Some people are able to just walk out of jobs they don't like because they have domestic security and backup. Or if you've several part-time jobs, or you're a 'contract' *Self-employed* worker with several customers, you can do it more easily. 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 here in the UK 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 and I gained my soul.

Another re-cap - they shouldn't be *the Boss* because in contract law there isn't one, there's just two traders, one the buyer, the other the seller, doing a deal as equal parties. It's nonsense, isn't it? When the Business Class attack Union Organisation and demand anti-union laws and 'free, flexible, deregulated Labour markets' it's simply so we have to bargain with them weakly where -

We've only one customer.

But they've got other suppliers.

That's what gives them power over us.

It's not Fair to the Majority, Us.

But we let them get away with it.

How To Get Even

Your employer's power is being able to stop ***your Business*** without damaging ***their Business***. All they have to do is give you your notice. So if you want to match up to and counter their power and bargain with a degree of equality how do you ***Get Even?*** If you are exceptionally skilled and useful to them threatening to leave might work and sometimes does. But most of us aren't that rarely skilled for this to help. It's a mass production, mass workforce world with plenty of us doing the same or similar work.

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.

Earlier it was said that looking at the problem as between you and the *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.

Organise and Act Together
The Case for Unionising

The 'boss' can stop each of ***our*** business's without hurting their own. *So to get equal you have to be able to stop or threaten to stop* ***their*** *business.* That is done by agreeing with all or as many as possible of your workmates and colleagues who are also weak selling their whole business to that customer / employer to act together, to withdraw all your labour all at once.

To get Organised and if needed, stop your employer's Business,

by going on Strike. Then you can get Equal. Or nearer to being equal.

For that we need strong Trade Union *Membership* and the freedom to act together, as a group, *to go on Strike*, free from laws outlawing our activity made by and for the Business Class, acting together politically as the Conservative party.

And we should unashamedly 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 and the media they own most of and the politicians.

It's only the same as when they sack one of us.

That Stops *Our* Business. Striking only Stops Theirs.

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*.

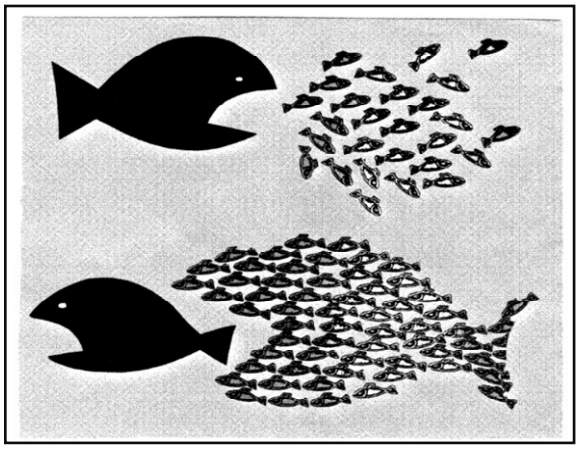
Well, pal, it's a bit of a burden on *a worker's Business* to get sacked unfairly.

Every day, all over the UK and all over the world, employers threaten to sack, or do sack, millions of individual workers. Each time they do that *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.

Striking - only the same as them sacking one of us



Us Too Powerful ?

But it's still commonly said that *'the Unions'* were too powerful in the 1960's and 1970's. It was said to me recently in an off-the-cuff chat with a guy on the Ffestiniog railway in North Wales, him saying how hard it was in the old quarries, me saying it was good how the quarry workers organised strongly in response. But he said 'it went too far the other way'.

And someone too young to remember the period said something should be said in this book about this view, that he's familiar with, that until Thatcher's Conservative government shackled us, we in our Unions were too powerful, *running the country* or *holding the country to ransom* when we went on strike.

This view is absurd, crass, complete *nonsense*. Although it's being said here that by organising we can get equal to them we don't ever actually achieve quite that. *Nearer* to being equal is the best we get. We don't often get very close to it because employers can often keep some production going by getting some labour suppliers – traditionally called scabs or blacklegs, people betraying their class - to stay working. Loyalty to your fellow-workers makes sense. Loyalty to country, covered thoroughly in the following, middle two sections of this book, doesn't. They get disloyal strike-breakers and managers to do the most urgent work and work extra hours.

Even if nobody scabs an employer can sometimes do enough work themselves to stay fed and housed. Probably not in the big firms where the directors don't have the skills or numbers to do that. But they'll have lots of spare personal wealth stashed away – that, after all, is what they do – so can get by better during a strike, personally, than the workforce.

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 long-term view of their own interests instead of the short-term, and refuse to take over work stopped by the strike.

Their media always comment on strikes from the perspective of *the Consumer*, never from the perspective of *the Worker*. Well, we're the same people in different roles. Consumers are also Workers. 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 it's not us-as-workers who should be held responsible for the effect of a strike on consumers. As workers 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 *the labour suppliers* just like they would with any other supplier and arrange the supply by negotiating an *Agreement* with us on *Union Conditions.*

t 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, bullies, greedy, holding the country to ransom. That's just sick. *At best union organisation and*

action only enables people-as-workers to get closer to equality of power with their bosses. What's wrong with that?

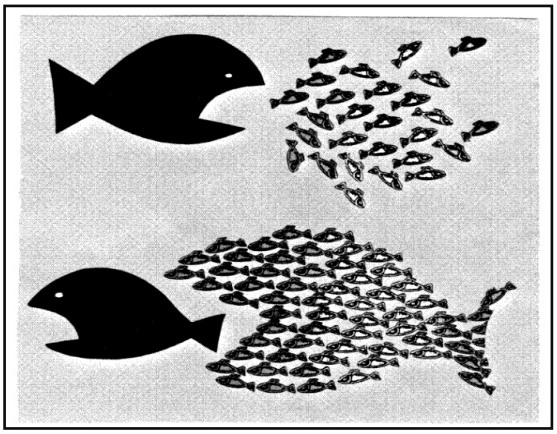
Spelt out clearly, all the above is bloody obvious. Many millions of us do recognise it. Union membership in the UK is somewhere around ten million and as many again would be members if they were able to be.

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 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 workers, decent citizens, organised. Unions 'R ***Us.*** (Sorry!*)*

Organisation, Organisation, Organisation

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



Acting instead of Being Acted Upon – Going on Strike

One reason why some people shy away from being a member of a union is the possible commitment to strike action that they could get drawn into. *Going on Strike* can be a big step - it's not always an easy thing to do. But look, if people won't do it, then they have to carry on being powerless with their boss, have to keep on taking crap. Sometime you have to decide not to take it, simply for self-respect.

People sometimes argue against being expected to take part in union action 'Nobody tells me what to do.' That's bollocks. The Boss tells you what to do, day in and day out. And when you strike it's not people *telling you what to do;* you do it as an equal part of a democratic union where you get your say on whether to strike or not. You get *a vote* on what to do; whether it is to simply negotiate for better toilets or breaks; or go on all-out strike over jobs or pay or pensions. 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 want to argue *for* action.

You will *always* get told what to do by 'the Boss' and you put up with it.

Why not also, sometimes, be told what to do by your Work mates?

Another argument that's been put to me by a member 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 Plenty of You*.

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 media and politician's social condemnation that makes some people feel they're being - socially naughty?

If so, we must spread the view that
with the inequality of the *Only One Customer*
but They've Got Other Suppliers mechanism,
Union Organisation and Strike action are absolutely
fair, normal, civilised, respectable, acceptable.
They only 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 supervisors earshot – they stop. All the moaning, whingeing and frustration stops.

*Because at last **we** are **acting,** not being acted upon.*

As for the actual fear of striking, yours truly is no fearless super-hero militant. There's braver people than me. Although in all the jobs I've done, although sometimes a bit concerned about taking action, I've done it.

But you have to recognise that the Employer, by playing hard ball, puts you in a position where you have to decide to fight back, or carry on being mis-treated. Sometime, you just have to stand up to them. *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 he'll be describing the first time.

It's not the organising of it and the picketing, not the actual action that's been great. *You have to get up for 'work' even earlier than usual!* to get on the gate before traitorous strike-breakers arrive, 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 scabs. Much of the time it's cold and boring with nothing to do but stand on the pavement and shiver.

But it felt good once, as the only picket on Morrisons supermarket in Eccles in the cold early hours of the morning, when the drivers of lorries with deliveries to make 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. But for me, no, not 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 hands' but of being one of those who stands up to 'them'.

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, how unusual, 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 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 boss 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 conflict. But it was the first time this worker had the bottle (guts) to seriously take on *the 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 organise and drawing lessons from our experience of doing it.

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

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

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

We started recruiting people to the union one by one. In these situations, where some attempt to stand up to the Boss, 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 these 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 neighbours 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 have somebody on your side. Even murderers as guilty as hell get that right. So Les convinced me and a few others.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I left there soon after to work at GEC, then the biggest UK industrial company. The factory was one of the biggest, best union-organised factories in the world, well-known, built by Westinghouse and variously owned by Metro-Vickers and AEI. Became a union activist there and learned about *Trade Union Organisation* from some very fine, strong, civilised class-conscious working class people - Manchester Engineering workers of that time. From the Shop Stewards and Reps, in particular, who aren't the wild militant troublemakers of media myths, but just wonderful, lovely, tough people who see the unfairness and oppression at work and get up and do something for everybody.

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 of you have no problem anyway. You're confident people and have no qualms about standing up for yourselves. *But many will only act with a lead from the Officials*. *

* boring-jargon-buster – Union Offic***ials*** are paid employees of the Union.
- Union Offic***ers*** are ordinary, lay members with jobs with employers, who organise and represent fellow-workers 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 boss's 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 anti-union laws 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 bosses are such strong believers in. We're just protecting ourselves and acting in our interests, same as they are. Maybe that's why American Trade Unionists are so solid – they can see it that way and have no shame about fighting rough with roughneck bosses.

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

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

They eventually won their long-delayed Tribunal case for Unfair Dismissal covering all of them and stopped picketing. Management then played games with the law and company ownership – the owner sold the company to a

mate who then wasn't liable for the Tribunal award. Then bought it back half a day later, or some such trick. But in 2007, that trickery is being challenged in the courts and they may win some decent money.

And People Do More Heroic Things than Striking – They Go to War and Kill and Die

People make out it's such a big thing to go on strike. And maybe it is. Yet many workers have been persuaded to do far more dangerous things, for some not very good reasons.

Millions of Working class people have been persuaded, and continue to be, *to go away to War for years and get maimed or killed fighting for the Business Classes of each country, the people who treat them like dirt*. In Britain, after the brutal treatment Working class people got from the Business class all the way through the 1700's, 1800's and the early 1900's, why did workers - including relatives of mine - go and die for them in their millions in the First World War, that was simply a war between rival sets of brutal Business Classes? And why did German workers do the same?

The answer is, they get convinced by a huge attitude-fixing job based on national identity, on *"patriotism',* on *'the nation'.* That is thoroughly examined in section 2 of this book, *Going to Work on Real Identities*.

Workers *do* go to war on the side of 'their' Business Class, despite them being far more our enemies than the ordinary Working Class people from other countries who we go to fight and kill and be killed by. And in war, people lose years out of their lives, some lose their limbs and minds, and some get killed, usually for no good reason, from a worker's point of view. As this was being written most people saw what these wars are about – 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.

You might say 'Surely the Second World War was right, fighting Fascism?' There's more on that in *Extra Stuff 1 at Page 220.*

But the main point here is - 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 of an ask than war.

And Striking is the fight that makes sense for you, when it's needed. Not the false one of supporting 'your' country. And not in war games, in sport; supporting some bunch of guys playing football or some cricket team; or somebody you've never heard of doing some obscure event you've never heard of in the Olympics; or a motor cycle racer, or whoever, just because they reside under the same government. More on all that in the *False Identities* section of this work.

Wars for Democracy Are Started In Contempt of Democracy

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

Yet we workers even, at times, allow the Business Class to *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 known and argued in comparison ever since Thatcher's crew laid down obstructive laws on how we decide to strike – that the British Prime Minister claims the right under 'crown prerogative' to declare war *just on his 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 Bosses we are fighting - can stop us with legal action. The other side! When the Business Bosses 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 class bias of political, media and intellectual circles. *But also by our own, people-as-worker's lack of self-conscious awareness of who We are, who They are, which loyalties serve us best*, and *what Rights we should have.* Those subjects are gone into a lot more in the later sections of this work.

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

Exploitation -
You Sell Yourself to Them at one Price.
They Sell Your Work On at Another

However harder working, able, enterprising and decisive and all the rest of it Business owners might be - or might not be - their wealth is made from our work not theirs. They use their 'Plenty of You' power to *Exploit* us. *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*.

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 whose windows your employee cleaned?
Answer, the usual price, three quid.

Why not two quid? What you're doing is charging customers full price for his/her work but keeping one pound for yourself. That's Exploitation.

Ok, 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 a lot more than just balancing the books and adding a bit on top. It's exploitation of my and your labour.

Bargain Jargon – Collective Bargaining

Business people see no wrong in exploiting us and also in getting the best price and biggest profits they can from their *Customers* for their own product or service. 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? Their conservative politicians tell us that greed and selfish motives are human nature. They say the dog-eat-dog world of the Business System is just natural, the only way the world can run. They say that 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 so many of the rich are - ah well, now suddenly there's something very wrong about *us* doing that*. The Rich, the 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 *Agreements* made with management if they don't reward people fairly, if there's not fairness in the pay scales and in who gets the better jobs. And fairness allows for and has to include 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 as long as you're there; 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 your 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 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.

Unions are *Us* – You and All of Us

One reservation people have 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 of that 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.

The Practicalities of Standing Up To Your Boss

This section has explained the global, moral and political case for organising. What about actually doing it, in your day-to-day workplace situation? From discussing workplace problems with 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 usual scenario is – a manager is proposing change that worsens the job for staff and they are much disgruntled about it but feel powerless.

In one such example, a manager called the staff together and gave them a dressing down for the objections they'd made in an e-mail survey he'd carried out. The worker telling us this had the common attitude – despite all of us objecting, it's going to happen, he or she is going to do it.

Common Knowledge 1 – Organise Independently

One worker involved in this social discussion away from the workplace thought their only chance was for somebody to be brave enough to stand up and oppose the manager in his meeting, that he had called.

But this is not at all the way to do it. Firstly, we can't rely on acts of individual bravery. 'Plenty of You' – POY - 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. No, there's nothing to be gained by responding individually, in their meeting. What you have to do is call your own meeting, preferably as properly-organised fellow-union members, and discuss and agree on a common response, to be adhered to by all. You need to develop a set of attitudes 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 POY works, and do it collectively.

In our social discussion, 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 of the meeting to ensure equality, one of which is 'No-one speaks twice until everyone has had the opportunity to speak once'.

The staff develop a position and, using the insight POY provides, request and expect people to abide by democratically-decided collective positions and stick to the decision outside the meeting.

There is some need for leadership. But for it to be effective it has to come out of this equitably-developed collective stance of a group of strong, confident workers. The leader(s) main job is to then to meet management and present the staff's decision to them, 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 just as 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 the essence of your rights. Contract law appears to grant you exactly that. But it's made meaningless by POY. Because of POY, it has to be asserted jointly, collectively.

In recognition agreements, the traditional statement of it 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' . 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 in which the status quo was being fiercely discussed. One union rep, who'd 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 in it. As far as I'm concerned, everything stays the same until you get our agreement. Right?'

Management's response to this 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 does not exist. According to the business class's own assertions about 'freedom', conditions of employment are agreed between

equal individuals and, like any contract, can't be changed without both sides agreement.

To challenge again the idea that what we need are leaders, it is the biggest complaint of those who are prepared to lead, those several million people who are prepared to be union reps and officers, that they are unable to properly defend everybody because so many ordinary workers are too easily cowed by management. They can't do much without solid adherence to a common line.

So, to repeat, what we really need is for the POY effect to be common knowledge, with the associated 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.

It's worth noting that the argument that POY must be opposed by joint action or else everyone gets bullied applies in a wider context than just the scenarios considered above. It applies to convincing workers 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 taking on your work, in enabling mangers to re-locate production to other sites. 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 your bosses.

How to Counter 'They've Got Plenty of You'

To finish this section off, here, from an oddball source, is a neat illustration of it, of how workers should counter POY. It's from 'The Right Stuff', the book and film about the 'Space Race' between the USA and Russia in the early 1960's.

We all need just a little bit of 'The Right Stuff', being prepared to stick by our workmates and for them to stick by you so whenever they threaten one of us, they can't fall back on the advantage of *Having Plenty of You or Me* still working or taking over your work .....

Who Else Are You Gonna Get?

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

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

That's a pretty big deal – to be the first man in Space.
(Although Russia's Yuri Gagarin beat him to it.)

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

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

Glenn backs her up -
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 ...

..... *They've Got Plenty of Him.*

But then one of the others says .....
Who else are you gonna get ?

Who am I gonna get ? splutters the Manager,
his face and tone puzzled and surprised.

another Astronaut **.... Yeah, who're you gonna get ?**

And another.

Exit manager, defeated.

Glenn *was* the first American in orbit.

If we can just stick together like that, all over the world, we'll be sorted.

That scene might only be a Hollywood version of the truth. But it shows neatly how boss's can only bully and abuse us because *They've Got Plenty of You,* and how *Sticking Together* stops them doing that, and makes them treat us with *respect* as the equals to them that we really are. I've experienced it on occasion. Not as often as I'd have liked. But it feels good when you've organised and stood up to them and they meet you across a table and deal with you with respect in the same way they do with a valued customer.

To sum up this section,

'The Case for You & Your Workmates To Organise Together' -

If we refuse to Sell Ourselves singly, on our own, isolated from each other - If we Organise together, in Unions -

They haven't got plenty of ***<u>you</u>*** - ***We've*** *got Plenty of* ***<u>Us</u>***

And the benefits of that can be – when 'the unions were running the country' - not that we were, it's an absurd saying – it was better than now -

It's been said already how absurd it is that They, the Business Class, their Media, and most politicians still go on, outraged, about how strong we were in our Unions in the 1970's. It didn't seem at the time that we were all *that* strong. A lot more than we are now, true, but nowhere near *running the country* as they hysterically claim. But we were organised enough to become 'players' in their game, so they had to treat us with some respect. They bitterly resent doing that.

But whenever you hear this ridiculous claim, remind yourself and anyone else you can talk to, of another thing about the 70's – that it's often said, about the figures on Wealth, that -

The late 70's is the most equal we have ever got, in the UK.
We had the greatest ever Equality in the Distribution of Wealth.

That coincided with the high point (so far) of our organisation and strength. *There's a connection there.*

Section 2 (of four)

Work, Class and Real Identities and The Invisible Class Made Visible

When opinion polls ask what class people are ***70 per cent say they are Working Class***. But few people say that readily in everyday talk, few comfortably identify themselves as workers or group themselves with other workers. Nothing like as readily as people declare *Where They're From* and boast about 'being from' some city, town, county, region, state, or country. As in being from London, being a 'Londoner'; being from Manchester, being a Manc; from Liverpool, being a Scouser; being from Newcastle, being a Geordie. Being Welsh, Irish, Scots, English. Or whatever you are. People do it all round the world – ever ready to boast about being Italian, Australian, Russian, Indian, American, or whatever; or about being from New York, Melbourne or Madrid. Or about being a supporter of some football team - Arsenal, Celtic, Witton Albion; Barca, Dynamo Kiev, Inter, Roma, Paris St Germain. And the rest.

Later on there's an analysis of this common practice of expressing *Localism*, of seeing 'where you're from' as being highly significant. 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 first, what does anyone mean by *Working Class ?* And what other classes do people speak of ? Seventy per cent of us being working class sounds about right for what I argue it means. So that means you, reading this, are probably Working Class, same as me.

That doesn't say everything about you and doesn't deny any other things about you. It's not to limit you in any way. It's not to stick a label on you, not to stereotype you, neither negatively nor positively. You are still a person with lots about you with 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 you and I and others ***become workers*** when we go to work. You are also one as you claim unemployment benefit / the dole, or incapacity benefit as a worker not capable of work, while you are in education preparing to be a worker, or when you are a retired worker.

Going to work, or needing or intending to, is what makes you a worker. If you go to work for someone else, you are a worker. It doesn't matter what the job is as long as it is a 'Job' and you get 'a Boss' along with it. And you are a worker whatever else you are – 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; whether from Essex, Cardiff , Yorkshire or Edinburgh.

Common Terms for Class

That's what I say. But almost everybody else talks differently about class. So what do people mean? By 'class' in general? And, for all the everyday talk of *Working* class and *Middle* class, how do people put themselves or others in one or the other class? Where's the definitions?

By *Class* in general, we're identifying someone as sharing important roles with other people, maybe as a member of an active *group*. We'd agree, wouldn't we, that it's grouping people by their position in society? But by what exactly - by *who* gets power and wealth and who doesn't? By *how* they get it? By the consequences for us all, at work, and outside work in society generally?

We should group people, class them and ourselves, by their ***own, active role in 'Society', now*.** Yet most people see class as being about birth, origins, upbringing and culture and accent. That's a useless definition, dating back to when the dominant class of *Aristocrats* and the rich *land-owning Squire-archy* labelled people for life at birth, regardless of what they actually did or became. They classed people by birth as nobles and gentlemen, *the Gentry* - themselves; or as *Commoners* - the likes of you and me.

Some other people say class is out-dated. What they mean is that *that* contemptible practice, of fixing your social position at birth, has gone or should go. Agreed. But people who argue this, who argue that class is outdated, also talk of *social mobility* or *meritocracy* as if they mean or would mean there'd be no classes.

But even if there was social mobility – and there isn't much, a lot of inherited wealth and power and privilege persists, unchanged - ***there is class defined by your current, actual role in society,*** defined by your relationships with other people. It's class defined by analysing the way we actually *are* and what we *do* in our own, living, functional role in society.

What is *Middle* Class?

Most people do think we still have classes. But they talk only of the *Working* class or, to avoid a definition too clearly political and meaningful, the working class***es,*** and the *Middle* class. Many millions of people who are clearly *workers* are called *middle class* by most of you and by the media and politicians. That confuses the proper meaning of Working Class. Some even say 'Nobody's working class any more, everybody's middle class.'

There's another, very interesting thing. People talk only of these two main classes, and not of any others. Just working class and 'above' them, middle class. As if that covers everybody else. *The way people use 'middle' class hides* ***another*** *class, the most powerful class, who are largely unmentioned and unidentified in everyday talk*.

I've briefly defined *Working* class, as those who are workers. What about actually defining *Middle* class? Although calling someone *working* class refers to the important issue of how they earn their living, *middle* class doesn't. Older ways of identifying somebody as middle class did refer to how they earned their living, to their job, saying they were *on the Staff* as compared to being *on the Shop Floor*; were paid monthly, wore *office clothes* to work. But those criteria have gone, with there being less manufacturing industry and with the growth of service industries where there aren't the old distinctions between manual and non-manual jobs. Also gone is that owning your own home makes you 'middle class'.

'Middle Class' Workers

What *does* middle class mean nowadays? It's a vague and not very useful way of classing people. It sometimes seems to mean those on middle-sized *Incomes*. But why class people simply by their income? It only gives us an idea of them as a consumer and the lifestyle they might have. It doesn't cover *their*

role in society, the role they play in *getting their money*. How do they *Earn Their Living?* What's their role in *'the system'*? It's like classing professional footballers by their expensive lifestyle, but not even saying they are professional footballers, which club they're at, whether they're in the team, and in what position.

What people actually do in using the term 'middle class' is to group those workers who've got a decent job and are better-paid, are better-off, together with those people who own Small and Medium Businesses, and with self-employed Professionals like lawyers, doctors and architects.

Such better-off workers are mainly the better-educated workers, those who have got A-levels and Degrees. (A-levels are the highest school-based qualification in the UK and are what get you into university). Workers who've got them get the better jobs, in positions of responsibility within 'the system', and with them, that 'middle class' tag. This writer is one. These better qualified and better-paid so-called 'middle class' workers *do* have things about themselves that Business and Professional people also have, that those workers who *are* generally called working class don't.

They usually have particular well-recognised *Skills* - they are Teachers, Designers, Engineers. They are confident in using precise, articulate speech and writing; are confident in finding and sorting information; are able to analyse information, able to analyse complex situations. They're confident about taking in information about issues remote from their own immediate experience and having views on them. They are confident about making decisions affecting more than just their own work.

So, they operate confidently within the decision-making structures of Business and Public Service and they share that confidence and some bits of culture with business people and professionals. They've usually got feelings of success, and possibly security, from being in responsible positions in 'the system'.

They've also got higher incomes than the less-educated workers who *are* called workers. But if higher income gets someone called 'middle' class, where exactly is the dividing line? The government's statistics people band people together at certain income levels. But surely, in everyday talk, nobody really thinks about them when they class somebody as *Middle* class or *Working* class?

It's all very vague. Try not to use the term 'middle class'. Please. It has some meaning, covers some values, attitudes, self-images and approaches to life and others.

But it doesn't cover the most basic issue - ***how*** you make your money.

Working Class - What 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.

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 *Employer has Plenty 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, Working Class.

Some are better-educated, in better jobs, better-off. But they are *definitely* workers. In how they earn their living most are in the exact same position as the poorer people usually called working class. The casual use of working class and middle class confuses this. It's important to clear it up. So I'll continue, a little, or very, repetitively? – to try to do that.

It's Not About Your Accent

Classing yourself and 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 Boss's thumb. We are not *Free and Equal Citizens* to them, as we can feel we are, at least partly, outside work. You're unusual if you don't feel subservient to 'the Boss' at work. For an awful lot of us, let's be honest, it's *fear*. Fear of their power over us in that ***so***-important activity, *Making Your Living*. I've seen some hard-looking lads, people who look like they're probably nasty or in people's faces outside work, behaving themselves at work because *it's their Job*. And some workers accept 'boss's' authority so readily that they don't actually feel fear or resentment - they accept their own lowly, powerless role and defer to them and admire them.

Whoever you are you need to be pretty confident about selling yourself somewhere else in '*the labour market*' to be free of the boss's power over how you get the means to live. Mind you, employment law pretends we are equals to our 'bosses'. So let's take a little something from that and resent that expression 'the boss'.

For bosses 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 and respectful of the other 'players.'

For us, defining ourselves as *Workers* focuses us on the key issues for us in that role - being able to get a Job, a decent job, with good Conditions; with decent Wages, Working Hours, Holidays, Pension. 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 *Money* and *Power*. It should strongly influence your *Politics*.

Being Working Class, Being a Worker

You are a *Worker*. It's got nothing to do with what your parents did, with how you talk or how you dress, or if you live on an estate. It simply means *you are a worker if you 'go to work'* and it's not for a business of your own but for *someone else's* business. Or for a *public body* like the Government, the NHS or the Council. *Going to work* makes you *Working Class*.

It doesn't say everything about you, doesn't define you as a person, label you, or put you in a particular box. It just means that in going to work each day *as you do that* you are a person-who-is-a-worker. How people earn their living is such an important thing. Not in what job you do, but in how you get work and *how you relate to the people who organise work*. Only a small number of people earn their living through self-owned and self-controlled work, *running a Business* or being *self-employed.*

Most of us earn our living as workers. Most of us talk about 'getting a job' and 'going to work' don't we? Look at all the big organisations we work for - the Companies, Government Departments, Schools, Health Service, Construction companies, Supermarket chains, Telecoms companies. Most of us work not for ourselves but for one of them.

So we are workers.

Yet people say 'Nobody's Working Class these days'.

The next time you hear that, why don't you say -

'**Oh. Why do we have to go to bloody work then**?'

But we don't clearly identify ourselves or others as workers. The common term *Middle 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 this work.

At times we do identify strongly as workers, as a group. But nowhere near enough. In terms of attitudes, it's why Business people run the world, to their

own benefit and to the detriment of the worker majority. And to the detriment of the planet itself.

Maybe see it not 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 colour-based class-denying nonsense of the BNP?

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 its 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 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.

Over the page – the Invisible Class who Run the Country.

The Invisible Class Who run 'the Country'

We workers aren't very class conscious, identifying ourselves instead by many other commonly-held but false group identities. *These next people are very class conscious, very well organised, are the most powerful people in society - yet they manage to remain largely un-named and invisible!*

Look again at how people speak only of the working class and the middle class. You'd think there were *only* these two classes. *But if there's a 'Middle' class, which two classes are they middle between?* 'Below' them there's less-educated workers, known as the working class. But what is the class, who are the *people,* 'above' the 'middle' class? Is there anybody there? We've no everyday term for any class 'above' the middle class.

We do know there are very, very rich people who live luxurious lives, have expensive houses, town flats and big country homes, go to Ascot, Henley Regatta, Badminton, to Gymkhanas, who've been to Public (Private) Schools, are socially linked, share unpleasant accents and arrogant manners. Or is that the other way round? You see something of them if you look in the newsagents or the dentists at magazines like Country Life. They are the sort of people who are in 'Who's Who.' But how often do we look in there?

We Don't See Them

One reason they're invisible is that we don't actually *see* much of them, do we? We see other Working class people, Small Business people, and managers, at work, in our districts, on our streets, in the shops, socially. But we don't see, meet or talk to the *very* wealthy and powerful. They don't live in our districts or use the same shops, pubs, clubs or restaurants as us. They've got their own world of 'posh' districts, security-gated mansions, expensive shops, exclusive clubs, VIP lounges, and Executive Boxes. If we did see them in our districts we'd spot them by their pretentious clothes and accents, their arrogant manner, and the sheer snottiness of many of them. But they don't mix with us do they? They occupy a different world to us, buffered from ours by their flunky class, Management, and by the obscure relationships of Company Ownership.

We see a lot of those of 'the Rich' who are music and film 'celebrities' (yuck) in the papers and on TV because they live on their fame. But the rest, the rich people who own and run Big Business – what do we see of them - *the large Shareholders, the Directors from the Boardrooms?* We can't see inside their boardrooms. We are oblivious to what they do there. Yet that's where they exercise the power that runs our lives.

They slime around from boardroom to boardroom, from repulsively luxurious homes to repulsively luxurious offices in repulsively luxurious cars, private jets and helicopters, to London flats and second homes in Scotland, France, Spain, Switzerland and the West Indies, New York and LA, *and we hardly notice them and haven't got a name for them*.

We urgently need to Name Them

We sometimes talk of them as ***Posh*** people or ***Toffs.*** But we need to identify them by more than just their social awfulness. It's of pressing importance for us Workers, as a class ourselves, to identify them accurately and have a useable everyday name for them.

Some talk of them as ***the Wealthy,*** or ***the Rich and Powerful***. But these terms don't say anything about the big issue of *how* they get wealthy and *how* they get to be 'the Rich'. From what activities do they get wealth and power, in relation to the rest of us? How much do they deserve their position? Do they get it *fairly?* Is it from their own effort and skills? Is it a *reasonable reward* for what they do? Or is it not? Is it from screwing us?

Or people speak of them as ***the Upper Class*** or ***the 'Ruling' Class***. But neither term gives us a useable image of any group of real, recognisable people. And '*Ruling Class*' says nothing about how there can *be* a ruling class in what's supposed to be a democracy. People sometimes talk of ***the Establishment***. But that only describes the political and legal and military organisations that support them - it doesn't describe ***them,*** as a class.

Some of my fellow-Marxists call them ***the Bourgeoisie.*** But that's off-putting jargon. The term *Bourgeoisie* is only, originally, French for burghers, townspeople, merchants. To distinguish them from the older class of Landowners. It means *Business* people. So why not *say* ***'Business people'?***

Some call them ***Capitalists.*** But that term has been available for a long time and we've not become comfortable with it, not taken to using it for everyday discussions of the world we live in. Nor the ***Capitalist Class.*** With our better understanding of the problems of (their) Globalisation and with the September 2008 financial crisis, maybe we'll start using it? But I doubt it, doubt that we'll ever use the term amongst ourselves, on the street and at work.

The Suits are just middle management. ***The Bosses*** or ***The Fat Cats*** are the best everyday terms we've got for the invisible class above 'middle' class. But they're not good enough, not accurate enough to define *a class*.

The fact is, we've no useable, commonly agreed, everyday term for those above 'Middle' class. Most people use 'middle class' as if to mean *everybody* 'above' the poorer working class. The really rich and powerful are pretty much invisible to us. *They run this show but they're invisible and un-named*! We've not even got a word for them! It's like science fiction, as if there's some all-powerful un-knowable 'Force' ruling us!

What's going on when there's no word in everyday language for the most powerful people in our societies? It leaves us unable to identify them and talk about them in everyday talk and in serious political discussions. Since we don't clearly sense the people 'above' the 'middle' class we can make little political judgement of them and what they do and don't do. But there is a way of describing the Class that runs the Country, that would do fine for everyday use. It's actually very easy to name them.

They are **the Business Class**. **They are the people who Run Businesses.**

The working class are those who sell themselves to them or to a Public Service. The two main classes aren't the working class and the *middle* class.

They are the *Working* class & the *Business* class.

There's other useful ways to group people but these two are the primary ones. The others are only modifiers, sub-divisions or exceptions to them.

Why We've not Named Them

How is it we've got no everyday word ***for the people who run the Economy*** and who own most of ***the Country?*** Do *you* have a clear image of them? Do you recognise them as people, *as a class?* You don't hear people talking about them so it seems most of us don't. How come they're invisible? There are two main reasons -

Reason 1 - "Anyone Can Make It if They Want To"

Business people argue that *'We're all free to start our own business*', that they are no different to the rest of us, that they only do what anyone and everyone could equally well do if they wanted to. They just take the trouble to start and run Businesses, be enterprising, take risks with their money and work hard. And the rest of us don't bother or haven't the talent.

So if you don't like being *a worker* they'll say "Nobody's forcing you to. You can always go into business for yourself". This is a big political argument, used to justify Business Class *Free Market* or *Free Enterprise* economies and anti-Working Class laws and policies all over the world. It convinces many of we workers. Even though a lot of workers know full well they are being mis-treated, they accept the business owner's power over them and their wealth because of the apparent openness of the system to anybody. Many workers know or know of people who've *'made it,'* sometimes from having been ordinary workers, and simply admire their success. I know some. Do you?

But this key argument of theirs is very easily countered. *Modern industrial society runs on Mass Production and has to, because Mass Industrialised production outperforms Small-scale production. There can never be an economy of small producers.* That means that whichever people 'make it' and get to be ***the Business Class,*** most of us, all of the many millions of us, the vast majority, can't. Most people are *always* going to be Workers, working for Business or Government.

And even if they all 'made it' from the bottom - which they don't - it doesn't justify them treating the rest of us harshly. We should insist on them treating us fairly and decently as workers *whoever* gets to run the inevitable mass production. Without our only alternative being to go off and open our own pet shops or start our own airlines.

*Their power comes not as a fairly-determined reward for being harder working and enterprising but from abuse of the 'They've Got Plenty of You' mechanism that mass production accidentally gives them. So **We** should, all of us, the great majority, respond to 'They've Got Plenty of You' by acting together, insisting on making deals with them only on a fairer basis, insisting on our right to Organise, in unions, and doing it.*

*Then say 'OK, you're enterprising, take risks with 'your' money, you're due some reward for business talent and energy. But how much you make, which is from **Our** work, we'll decide by fair negotiation between equals'.*

But would they accept fair and equal bargaining without severe political dispute?

Reason 2 - They Come in All Sizes

That argument that we could all start our own business confuses the view of them being a separate class. The other thing is that *there's all **Sizes** of business.* From the smallest they get very gradually bigger and bigger, all the way from *small Traders*, our relatives, neighbours and friends who are Self-employed electricians or plumbers, on up through *Small Businesses* employing just a few of us to *Medium-size Businesses*, and on up to the *Corporations, Multi-Nationals*, and *the Banks*. There's no obvious point where you can draw a line and say people who run or own businesses bigger than *that* are a definitely a distinct class, clearly different to us.

So for example in the Retail trade - there's the working owner of your corner-shop off-licence like Apu in *the Simpsons*; and a range of small and local shops, then the medium-sized and larger and larger ones, on up to the size of Morrison's, Tesco, and the multi-national Wal-Mart. Computer businesses range in size from the owner of your little local computer shop, up in size to Dell, HP and Microsoft. In the Building Trade there's the small builders who do the work on your house; then all sizes of bigger building companies way on up to the mega-construction companies like Laing's, Costains and Balfour Beattie.

It's hard to see some of the small business people as a separate class. But the importance of ***how*** you *Earn Your Living and Make Your Money*, to them as well as us, means we have to see Business people as the other main class and need to name them clearly in everyday talk and politics.

Identifying the Business Class - *They* Know They're a Class

Despite us finding it difficult to identify and name them, *they* identify themselves clearly. They talk of *being in Business*, of *being in Business for themselves,* of being *Business people, Businessmen, Businesswomen.* This very significant role affects their thinking, how they speak, what they do, their social relationships, and how they dress. As said earlier, they've actually got a uniform, the 'business suit' and tie! They are far more class conscious than we workers, have a far clearer view of the arguments for their Business rights and freedoms and of arguments against our rights as Workers than we have of ours. That's how they are able to mis-treat us so much, and get outrageous things like anti-union laws made, for their benefit.

In Politics they identify themselves as a class. In the UK many or most of the Business Class organise together as the Tories / Conservatives and so are visible that way. You sometimes see interviewed on TV at their Conferences local Tory party activists, nasty selfish people, viciously attacking the Taxes to pay for Welfare and Health and Education for their supposedly-valued English or British fellow-countrymen and women. This is from a Guardian article about the 2008 Tory annual conference – " I'm at the Tories" a startled reporter texted me before I arrived; "There are THOUSANDS of them….. From the … peachy skinned young bankers and frosted trophy wives, to the impeccably groomed elderly couples, the overwhelming first impression was one of money." Clearly they are business people, members of the Business Class.

If Business people aren't themselves Conservative activists they are usually Conservative voters. *The Conservative Party largely is and exists for the Business Class*. Some, usually smaller, business people are Lib Dems and they can even be New Labour now. But the Conservative Party is their natural home. Labour politicians sometimes say, mildly, that the Tories want certain

things done 'for their friends in the City.' But that avoids a blindingly obvious thing - business people and those in the City are not the Conservative's ***friends - they are their class.***

Are All Business People *Capitalists?*

We and they can easily identify all business people as a class.

But do we need to, can we, distinguish between sometimes-worthy Small Business people and big 'real' *Capitalists?* Many Traders and Small Business people are often just able and energetic, do some of the actual work of the business, and are mainly just following some enthusiasm or skill they've got. Like my sister when she ran a restaurant in Llanduddno. At first, they just try to get enough sales to cover costs and take an income for themselves. Even when they expand and become *Employers* and are then, in their relationship with us, properly Business Class, we can hardly call some of them *Capitalists*?

What makes someone a 'real' Capitalist? *Capital* is surplus money above someone's immediate living needs, above what you need to live, that they invest to make more money. *Capital**ism*** is just *investing* it, *'putting money to work'* to *'get a return on Capital.'*

And whatever the size of the business all business people use capital. All 'returns on capital' are made by business activity in all sizes of business. Putting *Us* to work on invested money / capital in some sort of business is what makes new money. Except for the self-employed, all 'returns on Capital' are made by exploiting our work in some Business. Even those who just exploit price changes in commodities and property really draw it from the only real generator of new money, business activity. *Business activity is the process that makes Capital.*

And of course, Small business people as well as Big business people use and make Capital. They might borrow it from the bank; invest money made in their business back into it; invest it in a new business; or through banks and investment funds, in other people's businesses, from which they get *Interest* or increased *Share Value*.

So whatever the size of business we can describe all business people as capitalist. They all exploit our work to make money and then they put us to work on it again to make more still. And again and again. That's Capitalism. So Business and Capitalist activity are the same thing.

Most of the capital they bravely risk doesn't come from mortgaging the family home or the family cat. Most investment capital is made *in business,* as *Profits,* by *'Paying Staff Less in Wages than they Sell Their Work to Customers for'*. And if the business fails - as they do - they may indeed lose money. But so do other people, like their creditors, the people they owe for supplies, who've also risked and lost money without the possibility of profit that the owner got if the business was successful. Business owners, so sainted for taking risks, easily escape responsibility for the risk other people took by just going Bankrupt.

As said - we urgently need to name the class 'above' the so-called 'middle' class, the 'invisible' class with most of the power in most countries. It is ***the Business Class***. But obstructing us from usefully and satisfactorily identifying and naming a recognisable *Capitalist* class is, as said, the *infinite range of sizes of Business.* Business people grade up seamlessly from one-person Small businesses, through Medium size, to Big business Multi-nationals like General Motors, Mitsubishi, and the rest, and the Banks. Are they all Capitalists? Are

they all Business Class? Can we divide them into Small and Big Businesses? Where exactly do you draw the line? An attempt will be made below, as follows. But really, the conclusion will be -

We should call them all the Business class, not the Capitalist class

It fits well into our everyday use of language. They and we commonly talk of them *running a Business, being in Business, being a Businessman or a Businesswoman. Business people* and *the Business Class* roll off the tongue and fit into sentences and conversations easily. Capitalist doesn't and *Capitalist Class* even less so. And neither we nor them normally talk of them being *a Capitalist.* And there's too many syllables anyway.

Capitalist Class isn't a term you can use in everyday talk.

Business Class is.

Self-Made Small Business People

But let's attempt to distinguish between and sub-divide them.

Self-employed people and independent Traders are, technically, small businesses. But if they make their money from selling only their own work, not from ours, we can pass them by for this analysis.

In ***Small Businesses*** that do employ some of us the owner might have built the business up through their own efforts. They might still do a lot of the real work themselves. The notion of them earning their money and power fairly has some merit. We might know them personally. I know some. You probably do. Their kids might go to school with yours. Some did with ours.

But you also know from your own experience of work, and that of family and friends, that small business people employing even just one or two of us are no longer simply the self-made, hardworking, enterprising, worthy, individuals of conservative political mythology. Many of us experience and see them mis-treating workers in any small business, like Hairdressing Salons, Pubs, Nurseries, Garages, Shops and so on.

*And once a Business Owner employs even a few Workers, their wealth doesn't come from **Their** work. It comes less from theirs and more from **Ours**.* It comes from them exploiting us, our work. Although the owners might still do some of the ordinary work, they also make 'their' money from we who work for them. It's good that we get a job and an income, sure, but we also put money in their pockets. We literally *work for **them**,* for their benefit. That means their wealth isn't only earned worthily from their much-trumpeted enterprise and hard work, but from their unfair power and control over we workers, that was explained as *They've Got Plenty of You* in the first section of this work.

Big Business

Going up in size, beyond a point not easy to exactly identify, but certainly when the business employs dozens of us; when there's a chain, of shops or factories or warehouses; when the owners manage *our* work rather than do any of the real work themselves; and when it's a large business organisation employing thousands of us, and most of the work including Design and Sales and key management decision-making is done by employed senior Managers - the owners are probably Capitalists.

One reason it's difficult to *talk* of them as Capitalists is that we rarely know how much money a particular person has. How much those who own large

sums of capital have and what they do with it is private information, far removed from the our everyday lives. Except it's our work that generates it. It might be possible to identify them starting with, say, the Sunday Times Rich List - which the writer has a copy of to hand as he writes - and maybe somebody should do the full job of cataloguing the Business Class?

Real Capitalists

There certainly are real Capitalists, people with huge amounts of money, who invest it, *put it to work*, wherever it can generate more Money / Capital, to *make a return on Capital.* And that's all their involvement is about. They've nothing to do with the actual work. A Small Business person might own a Flower Shop and actually be a skilled florist. A 'real' capitalist buys, owns or sells *chains* of flower shops according to how the return on capital compares to investing in something entirely different like an airline or somesuch. These people own *the Merchant Banks* (those who mainly loan to Business) and *the High Street Banks*; operate in *the City*, on *Wall Street*, and in other *Stock Exchanges* and Financial centres around the world; own large *Shareholding*s of big Industrial companies. They have big Shareholdings in this and that, are on the Boards of many Companies, use Capital for *Take-overs, Asset Stripping* and *Re-selling.* They've no skills in any particular trade, no personal enthusiasm for or interest in the Product or Service. They just want their money to make money - that's Capitalism. They are Capitalists.

It's getting easier to see some of them as individuals as they show up more publicly to take over what was once our game, Football. Well-known examples of people who clearly *are 'Capitalist's* are those who've taken over both Manchester United and Liverpool Football 'Clubs' and many others in recent years, purely to exploit the club and the players to make more capital. And there's quite a few of them. Some *are* interested in football, the actual game.

But the point here isn't about them buying the 'clubs.' *The point is seeing how many people there **are** who have hundreds of millions of pounds to spend on buying Football Clubs*. Like Jack Hayward at Wolves, Mike Ashley of SD Sports at Newcastle, the late Jack Walker, steel dealer, at Blackburn Rovers; the Thatcherite anti-union Dave Whelan of JJB Sports at Wigan Athletic; Abramovitch at Chelsea; and the brutal dictators of Abu Dhabi who've bought Manchester City. But although there's a ready supply of them with hundreds of millions to buy our clubs, we can't name many non-football examples, can we? Richard Branson? Alan Sugar? Any others?

Even in football they manage to evade our scrutiny. You'll know how the footballers get criticised for their high earnings by the Business Class-owned 'news' papers. That's their main job - wind up the masses about somebody else than themselves'. But millionaire footballers and music stars, the Rooney's, Henry's and McCartneys, are just very well-paid workers or self-employed people, with rare skills, who we are prepared to pay a lot to see. Greedy buggers maybe, but they don't make their millions from exploiting other people's work. But the Business Class owners of the clubs do. Recent owners of Man United, Manchester City and Newcastle United made far more - 80 and 100 and 50 million pounds, I think – by *owning* the clubs, than the Footballers and Managers who at least do the real work, yet get all the media criticism.

The 'real' Capitalists can seem invisible but they are actually all around us. The Bank of Scotland, now HBOS, ripped off my wife's 85-year-old widowed mother for most of the value of her house in one of those schemes to release

some money from it's value. I wrote on her behalf to all the people on the Board. They're not just 'the Bank', they are real people.

One of them - a woman, let's not think male stereotypes - had also been a Director of a chain of bars and pubs. It includes the half-timbered Olde Worlde pub that people see as part of the fabric of our district, where our son was working behind the bar, and being mis-treated in the usual ways.

It would be useful to be able to separately identify this sort of very rich and powerful Capitalist and name them as a class, distinguishing them from the sometimes more worthy Small Business class with a suitable term that we are prepared to use. But it's unlikely that *Capitalist* will ever really catch on and this writer himself doesn't want to start using it.

It is common to speak of ***Big Business,*** and Americans talk of the ***Corporations*** and ***Corporate power,*** to distinguish big from small business. That's useful. But it's one of our biggest mistakes, to talk of their organisations, their *Businesses* and *Companies* and *Corporations* and *Banks,* as if they are free-standing entities, not even human. It allows the *Owners, flesh and blood humans*, to hide behind the name and the institutional fronts. So saying 'Big Business' or 'the Corporations' still doesn't name ***the Business Class People*** who they really are and actually hides them from us.

People also talk of 'the City' and 'Wall Street' and, ludicrously, of 'the Markets'. What are they then? Alien creatures from Star Trek or Dr Who?

Let's name the actual *Humans*.

> **They are *People* and we need to identify and name them as a class. *Business Class* does it, is the best overall term. Don't you think?**

Look at Them from Above, not Below

In trying to divide the Business Class into Big business people and often more acceptable Small business people and take different attitudes to them, there's still the problem of the infinite variety of sizes of business, going up from the self-made Small Business to the genuinely Capitalist Corporations. Where to draw the line? And they are all Capitalists of a kind.

But the whole analysis fits. There is a clearly-observable Business Class.

We can confidently see that we, the Working Class, have a major and very problematic relationship with all of them and the economic system they prefer. (But it goes against their interests, if they'd get clued up about what's important in life.)

And let's not do as they and their defenders, which is to look at them from below, conferring on them all the imagery of the plucky individual Small Business person starting up on their own from the bottom.

Turn that view round, look at them from the other direction, from above.

Start with and centre the analysis on the Big Business people.

Any analysis of *Business Economies* shows the big players have most power. For instance, for all the many small businesses in the retail trade, it's said that one pound in every eight spent on shopping in the UK is spent at Tesco. In the US the hundred biggest firms own half of Industry; and it's the same in the UK. The 500 biggest Transnational Corporations control as much as 66 per cent of world trade.

As said, at the centre of the definition of the Business Class are the Shareholders of the Merchant banks and the High Street banks that spectacularly collapsed in September 2008, the people in the City, Wall Street. Then there's the majority shareholder owners of the Multi-Nationals; then those of other Corporations, and big Companies. They don't run their firms, they just own them to get a return on capital. They employ senior managers to do the real work. In football, compare the work of former Chairman of Manchester United Martin Edwards and that of the current owners, the Glazers; to the Managers, David Gill and Alex Ferguson.

The Products and Services sold are not the owners work, but that of many design engineers and technical workers. They don't sell anything, employed Sales teams do. Production and Delivery is done by thousands of us working as a team. Any original self-made small business owner has long ago sold out to the bigger Company, and maybe retired. Clearly, then, these are Capitalist operations.

But still, *can we* clearly and separately name these people? As Capitalists? Masters of the Universe? Fat Cats? 'The Man'? Plutocrats, Oligarchs, Multi-millionaire businessmen, Entrepreneurs? Their media sometimes calls them *Magnates* or *Tycoons*! Maybe they're genuinely Big Business People when they have *chauffeurs?* Own private jets and helicopters*? Maybe it's those who travel … Business Class*?

Back to Small Business People

From looking *down* from above, from Big down through Medium-sized to Small Business people and Traders, although still unable to draw an exact line, let the analysis of the Business Class tail off. The problem of where to draw a line that we get when working *upward*s in size matters less. Probably Small business is where the work of the owner is still central, where there's not many of us Staff, and no multiple sites or chains of shops.

So what attitude should we workers take to these Small Business people, with some of them being closer to us than Big Business, often being involved in real work, maybe able, decent, enterprising people personally involved in the business, not just distant exploiters. Like, for example, the commercial printer who helpfully scanned the picture of the fish cartoon at the front of this book, as a one-off job for somebody who just walked in the door and asked for his time as a non-commercial favour.

But as said, Small Businesses exploit us, and many bully and mis-treat us just as much as bigger businesses. Many of them identify strongly with the Big Business members of their class and ally with them politically, enthusiastically, as nasty little grassroots Tories, backing anti-union laws that hinder us from organising ourselves together to be nearer to being equal to them.

And even if some don't *want* to mistreat us, Competition in their '*free market*' system *forces* each of them to drive our conditions downwards.

Big businesses and owners of big capital have such power in 'free markets' that decent Small business people get shafted by them like we workers do. Small business people are always being put out of business by the real capitalists and the big firms re-investing capital - such as small shops in town centre shopping areas being replaced by the big chains. And they suffer as we all do when the insane practices of 'real' capitalists throw *the Economy, their Business System,* into crisis.

We workers can make common cause with small business people in challenging the stupidity and brutality of the whole business system. Maybe we can look favourably on small business people who'll treat us decently as employees, recognise our right to Organise ourselves in unions, and observe Minimum Labour standards like a proper Minimum Wage. And we can try to educate them in the stupidities of the Business System, and to be our allies against the Big Business owners. Even in a Socialist economy, there'd still need to be a place for enterprise and small businesses.

The Business Class Not The Boss Class

To conclude in a practical way this backwards and forwards discussion that we need a term for the class who *run the Country* - all Business people employ and exploit us. Calling them all Business Class fits our everyday experience, our everyday use of language, and corresponds with how they and we do already talk of what they do - run businesses.

So let's call them all the Business Class. Let's say 'Business Class' as the overall term. Then, ***Big Business Class*** and Big Business People; or the Rich Business Class, Rich Business Class people. Make allowance for the worthiness of Small business people as appropriate. *Calling them the Business Class cuts out a lot of confusion in everyday political talk*. We can talk to each other about them much more clearly, about what they do and what they don't do, and what we do or don't do about them. Let's start using it. *Try it.*

Some workers argue that we should call them ***the 'Boss Class'.*** But that misses out something very important. It misses out *why* they are allowed the power and privilege they have to be bosses. It's because they play a key role in *the Economy.* They organise the provision of the *Goods and Services* everyone needs as *Consumers*. Providing us with *Jobs* comes after that and jobs only happen if they are successful in that. There's no point naming them solely by our job / worker relationship with them, by the fact that they *employ* us, when they have stronger and prior relationships with Customers and Suppliers, running their Business with or without us, making money for themselves or for Shareholders. They run - or *are* - the Economy.

And that's why they get all they want from Governments that are supposed to be representing all our interests, but don't.

The Business Class are much better organised than us.

They are organised every day, in the very activity of running their Businesses. Their claim is that that justifies their wealth, and it's true, to a degree. It doesn't justify their brutality and ruthlessness, but they do take the trouble to be organised in their own interests. We, the Working Class, need to do the same, to all be organised in our interests. It's because we're not that we have to put up with so much shit from them.

Business Classes of the World

This is written in the UK but there's a Business Class in most countries. There's a Thai one, an Indian one, a Pakistani one. An Australian one, that Rupert Murdoch comes from. There's a Turkish one, a Russian one, a French, a Spanish, a Moroccan, a Nigerian. A South African, a Chilean, an Argentinian, a Venezuelan. There's one in the USA of course. And pretty much everywhere. And they always organise themselves together in at least one business-supporting *Political Party* capable of getting into Government. The really big

ones don't actually have a national identity of course - they are multi-national or they choose a nationality to best avoid paying tax.

The Business System

The term *Business Class* enables us to name those who bully, exploit, and discard us better than the nerdish term *Capitalists* does. But their *system* has problems aside from mis-using us. It is unstable, helter-skelter madness. It fails for reasons unconnected with anyone's real needs, disastrously for the billions of us and even for some of them. So *Capitalism* remains a useful term for their system, for analysing and explaining how it operates.

That's not being attempted here. This book is about explaining how, through our basic relationships with them and with fellow-workers, we allow them to run this system.

Some key points of how Capitalism works can be stated here though

Invest money mostly made from workers in the first place into
new equipment and new materials for a new product or service.
Use us to make the new product from
the materials and using the equipment.
Our work 'adds value' to the money
spent on equipment and materials.
The added value results in the product's sale price.

It is mainly determined by how much of our 'labour time'
has to be put into making it (that's why 'time is money')
and not only by what people will pay for it.

Use the obscene imbalance of power business people are allowed to
have over we staff to pay us less than the value added by our work.
Keep the rest for yourself. That's what profit is.
That's what 'return on capital' is.

What you can't spend on a luxury lifestyle, re-invest to make more
money by again paying us less than the full value our work adds.

Justified by risk-taking? By enterprise? Maybe.
But also treating the majority, including me, my family,
friends and workmates, and you, brutally.
And it's unstable. And it wrecks the environment.

Here is a book that does the full job on Capitalism's failings -
'Economics of the Madhouse' by Chris Harman, ISBN 1-898876-03-7.
It may be out of print. An alternative - 'Explaining the Crisis', same author.
Both published by Bookmarks ***www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk***

To summarise on the Business Class, we should talk of -

- ***the Business Class,*** of Big and Small Business people.
- ***the Business System.*** It completes the term *the System.*
  Use it in everyday talk about what's going on.
  It all becomes easier.
- ***Capitalism*** to talk of how it works - or doesn't - <u>as</u> a system.
- Or when you need to give it it's full name –

the Business System, Capitalism.

You Can't See Them but They Are All Around Us

Later, let's look again at ***us*****,** the Working Class, and why we're not as well organised as they are. But first let's develop our everyday awareness of Business Class people. Here's some simple everyday ways of spotting them ***as a Class****,* a separate class to we workers.

As you go about your daily life just look about you. In the shopping areas, the town and city centres, the industrial areas, look at the Business premises and Commercial and Industrial property. There's a lot of it. On the streets and motorways, look at the buses and lorries. Clock the business names on the lorries, the names of the big companies. How many lorries do you own? The Business Class own them. Look at the trains and boats and planes.

Look at all this commercial property and think ***Who owns all this?*** It's not me and probably not you. The seventy per cent of us who are Working class own a bit through our savings but mainly it's not ours. Most belongs to, is under the control of, is used for the benefit of, a small number of very rich people. The big Shareholders. The people on the Boards of Directors, the Managing Directors (MD's.) Many of *them* are big Shareholders. The Chief Executive Officers (CEO's.) The Financial Directors, the Marketing Directors, the Manufacturing Directors; the non-executive Directors. Many of them have Directorships in many companies. We don't see much of them as people but there's their Business property out in the streets right under your nose. Use it to confirm their existence as a class.

Run through a list of big companies in your head. I'm doing it just off the top of my head while writing – Vodaphone. BA. Virgin. Nestle. NTL. ICI. Pfizer. Astra-Zeneca. Esso. Glaxo-Smith-Kline. Bose. Wimpey. Costain. Laings. British Aerospace. P&O. Littlewoods. Top Shop. Northern Foods. Eddie Stobart. United Utilities. British Gas (Centrica.) Arriva. Stagecoach. Ticketmaster. EasyJet. Morrisons. B&Q. Tesco. HMV. You can just go on and on. Why don't you have a go, now? And think *Who owns them*? Wouldn't you agree we can call the owners *the Business Class?*

Another way of confirming their existence is to look in the newspapers, especially the ones they read. Don't just read the sports pages first (as I do), but *look instead at the financial pages*. You won't really want to read them, it's often incomprehensible if you're not a Financial and Business wheeler-dealer. But just glance over the pages and reflect on the sheer size of the coverage of business deals, wealth and big money. It's often three or four pages. Who reads them? Not most ordinary people. But somebody must do, or else they wouldn't be in there. *They* read them.

Judge Them by Results

Look at the dramatic ***Inequality of Wealth*** *that is the end result of all the relationships we all have with them*. There are a lot of ways we inter-act with them through work and government - production costs, sales, prices, shares and dividends, wages, savings, taxes and benefits and tax breaks, that determine Income and Wealth, each an issue of political debate. So look at how it all pans out in the end, at where the wealth ends up – look at *the financial end result* of all the economic and political activity – the figures on *Wealth Distribution*.

It's so obviously wrong it's all been over the half-decent media. From the Independent on Sunday, 2 September 2007 – "In the City, fat-cat pay awards, with top Executives earning 100 times more than their employees…… In the

US, the average Chief Executive .... Now earns 364 times the pay of a typical US worker ... The average take-home annual Income per head of the population in England is around £13,500 ... "Increase in basic pay of Directors over the last five years averages well over 7 per cent; that of Technical and Professional staff, 3.5 per cent."

Wealth inequality is almost twice as high as ***Income*** inequality. That's because most people spend most of what they get as soon as it comes in, and have to. But try though they do, the rich can't spend *that* much more than us on the basics. So a lot of their Income sticks to them as a surplus, retained as wealth, as *capital.* The end result is that -

1 per cent in the UK own over 20 per cent of the wealth.

The top 10 per cent own 53 per cent.

Which leaves 90 per cent of us sharing less than Half of the Wealth.

The ***United*** Kingdom, eh?

Another piece of evidence is the *Rich Lists* that appear in *the papers.* They often pick out the star entertainers prominently amongst the top 50 or so. In highlighting star performer's high earnings the papers aim to impress us with their achievements – that people can 'make it' - not to criticise them. But we shouldn't have as much of a problem with them – they're rich off their own abilities, not from exploiting us. We could tax them more though. But though they feature amongst the richest, entertainers are a minority. The full story is the accumulated wealth of the Business Class. The Sunday Times Rich List of the wealthiest at ***www.timesonline.co.uk/sitemap*** and search for Rich List, *isn't* all 'celebs'. Most people shown there are Property-owners, Industrialists, Financiers, people who get rich out of *our* work.

People sometimes say that through Life Insurance and Small Savings and Pension Funds we own a lot of business so 'we all own the Economy'. Well, most workers haven't got a pension fund, it's a big political problem. And that figure above, that showed most wealth to be in the hands of a few, will include Savings and Pension funds. Pension funds and savings are heavily owned by business people and their better-paid lackeys, less so by the majority of us. "A wealthy elite accounting for only 4 per cent of Savers holds 40 per cent of all savings by value" (the Guardian, October 2008.) And if to some degree we work *and* also own capital we're just exploiting ourselves as workers, probably losing more as a worker than we gain as a capitalist.

There's more on all this in 'Rich Britain – the Rise and Rise of the New Super-Wealthy' by Stewart Lansley, published in March 2006 by Politico's.

There is a Business Class

So to sum up the Business Class - they own the businesses we work for, own a great share of the wealth, made from our work, they own *the Country* and are clearly a distinct class. They are *in power* at Work, in Business, in Finance, and in Politics. There's maybe 3 or 4 million of them. There's a lot more of us Workers, 55 million in the UK, including kids, unemployed, ill and retired, but we're not as organised and active as them.

If each of the 55 million of us got involved in class organisations and did just a bit more than we do at present, we'd easily be able to negotiate with them at work and in politics on a much fairer and more civilised basis. Saying, as the Working Class, organised - look – it's *you* who want this Business system, not us. It creates great unfairness, insecurity and poverty and over-rewards you. So

let's regulate you - with strong Unionisation across each Trade; and through Democratic government.

That's if they'd be prepared to accept such regulation. On the historical and present day evidence of how vicious they get when we get strong, they won't. And that's a big issue that is called up by all that's written here. But if we could persuade them, things would be a lot nicer than they are. For everybody, including them. We might even have something worth calling Civilisation, which, at present, we don't.

Class isn't Fixed. But It Gets Most People in the End

Defining class isn't an absolute science. There's people with a foot in both camps and some in neither. And since some of us worker *Wage Earners* also have Savings and even Shares, people sometimes say they can't be working class. But if someone depends mainly on wages and their savings are small compared to wages, they're still working class. Combined circumstances and minor overlaps like this needn't stop us from drawing an accurate and important conclusion – *that there's a fairly small percentage of the population, a class of Business People, who own and control a huge proportion of the businesses, property and the wealth.* And we, the majority, *the Working Class*, work for them in the important matter of making our living.

Most of us, including most 'middle' class people, are Workers, are Working Class. The other main class is people who own and run Businesses. But someone's class isn't permanently fixed - some move from being a worker to being self-employed or a business owner and back again if the business fails, while remaining much the same person with the same friends.

But give it time as a member of one class or another and almost certainly someone's political attitudes will change. *The way people, both Business and Working Class, do that most basic thing, Make Their Money, Make a Living, defines their trading and political relationship with other people. It tends to determine their needs and therefore their attitudes*.

Business people are keenly interested in customers and it influences their behaviour to them. They're very polite to them - before making a sale, if not always afterwards when there's a problem. It's very different to how they are to people who work for them. They are keenly interested in *the state of Trade* in the markets they operate in. Interested in Government protecting that market for them, interested in prices and the costs of materials. They see Staff, Workers, mainly as a cost. Our Employment Rights are, to them, unnecessary, unacceptable, burdens. And their most obvious class attitude is their hatred of us getting something like equal to them by Organising together in unions.

Some of Them Are Alright !

Traditionally, we organised workers and socialists can talk a good line in class enmity and this work criticises business people as strongly or even more than anyone does. But it's important to say that you can't call them ***all*** complete bastards, because it's simply not true. It doesn't fit with reality, with mine, and probably your, experience. You can't completely pre-judge any of them from their class role in society. We should allow that some of them, as people, are alright, socially, in the right setting. Even in business some of them are nice people, are positive, energetic and enterprising, work hard and are very capable. More so than some of the rest of us, perhaps.

They get the Business going initially, think of products and services to sell, find customers and get the orders in that keep us in our jobs. This is less true of Big business, really Capitalist people. Their role is far more parasitic, as analysed earlier. They make decisions. And for us in our role as consumers they organise the availability of all that stuff we buy. They persuade us to consume too much. But that's another argument.

Business class people make a lot of the important things happen. They take responsibility; they *Take Care of Business*. They organise much of *the Economy*. That gives them enormous power *even before they organise politically* and is why Labour, set up by the Working Class to make things better for us, constantly fails. We leave it to the Business Class to make or run the economy and so Labour politicians like Blair and Brown come under immense pressure from these people, to which they give way, to do things their way. Electing Labour Governments with only the extremely weak form of class organisation that just voting every four years develops, it will remain so. That is examined thoroughly in the last section of this book.

So give *some* credit to the Business Class for organising work for us. Business people probably deserve more for what they do than some of the rest of us. How much that should be, and how it could be worked out, is explored in *The Rich – Are They Worth the Expense?* in They Are The Business Class. But they give us jobs only because it's the only real way they can make more and more money. They only employ us if they can use us and won't if they can't – it's not a social service they run, except as a side-effect

Although *some* of them are nice people, ***their system*** pressures – forces - them not to be. ***Competition*** is a key element of their system. It forces harsh treatment of each other.

One argument for competition is that it's a free, democratic thing – anyone is entitled to have a go at winning some of the market in any particular trade. (Although Public-ownership is far more genuinely democratic.) But competition puts each business person, nice person or not, under pressure to out-bastard each other, particularly in mis-treating us workers. Competition may be good for us in another role *as Consumers*, by getting things made cheaper and maybe better. But *as Workers*, it forces our bosses to threaten, abuse and mis-treat us and draws us, too, into going for each other's throats, threatening each other's ability to get the means to live and survive. That stops us living decent, secure lives.

And though, because of their enterprise and hard work, business people may deserve more than the rest of us, what they *actually* get, and the excess power they get over us too, isn't for such good, socially and politically agreed reasons. *They get their wealth and power not from their own hard work and ability but from the most important mechanism in the Job Market – They've Got Plenty of You.* That unfair, un-agreed mechanism enables them to make money out of your work, not theirs. They strenuously defend it by opposing us organising and acting together as Trade Unionists.

Don't Merge With Them in National Identity

This book is written to and for you *as a Worker*. *They've Got Plenty of You* showed how business people become bosses. Accurate definitions of Working Class and Business Class have been given.

So use ***Working Class*** for your own group identity - if you are.

And ***Business Class*** for them.

But there are some far more widely-held false identities. It's necessary to challenge them and along with that, many people's self-image, maybe having a go at your own thinking and attitudes. That might annoy you. But it's being done because of how harshly Business class people treat you and me, workers, and what we get out of life. Because while too few of us see ourselves in an identity group with *all other workers*, most everybody does place themselves or allows themselves to be placed, in other social groups that are mostly meaningless; that stop us identifying our real group selves; that hinder us in defending ourselves and promoting our interests. And some of them are nasty and dangerous.

The main problem identity is the 'the nation' - the idea of us all being English or British together. *The notion of the 'the country'. It merges Working Class people with Business Class people even though they are the problem people in our lives.* Not just in 'England' - there's the Welsh and Scottish variety. And not just 'Britain' - there's American, French, and all the other images of 'the nation'. Other ways we group ourselves will be examined later. But nation is the biggest and is examined next.

They 'Look After Number 1'

While Some 'Die for their Country'

Most people believe strongly in the ideas of nation, of the English or Scottish or Welsh or British or other group ***We's*** and ***Us's***. Yet these ideas are never examined. Here are two big questions to ask about them -

How do 'the British' actually behave towards each other ?

What kind of society is this 'nation' ?

The answer to both questions is that Business Class people's most firmly held political belief and practice completely negates the idea of 'the nation.'

Clearly stated, often defended and practiced, you know it. It is -

"Self-Interest is Human Nature. I just look after Number One. That's all anyone does. I make as much money as I can for myself, look out only for myself. What happens to other people is nothing to do with me."

They're wrong about Self-interest being all there is to human nature.

We're actually strongly social, very co-operative.

And they themselves say that, say the opposite to 'Look after Number 1', when they talk of Britain, of England, of being 'British' and 'English'. They demand such strong mutual support that they even expect people to fight and kill and die for each other, for 'the Country.'

How can they promote and enforce the ultra-social duty of going to fight a war for a country they claim is based on nobody caring about anybody else?

There's no bigger scandal in UK (and German) history than the horrific slaughter of Working Class lads and men in the First World War, that followed the misery of 19th Century industrial life; and was immediately followed by the Business Class treating Workers with utter contempt, with more poverty and mass unemployment between the Wars; and then *again* expecting them to fight and die for 'King and Country', as my uncle did.

Thankfully, those workers who fought the Second World War were smart enough to not be fooled again and in 1945 voted in a Labour government that made this writer's life as a post-war baby boomer a lot better than it would have been otherwise. *But that 30 year 'post–war settlement' is the only time in UK history when they've treated us at all reasonably.* And it ended in 1979 with the return of the old relationship, re-launched by Thatcher's Conservatives - basically the same old Business Class philosophy – which is, sod you people; we'll get rich from your work; and when we don't need you, we don't care what happens to you. And the New Labour project has to been to cravenly go along with them.

Together with *Them ?*

There's a bit more to say about this. But the very well-known business, Tory, capitalist philosophy of raw individual greed and uncaring self-interest, and the employment practices and the politics they use against the Working Class, is the key evidence against belief in *'the country'*.

You'd think being *'British',* sharing '*the country', 'the nation',* would mean all sticking together, supporting each other in the things that really matter, like Incomes, Jobs, Houses, Health services.

So how come the Business Class treat their *countrymen* and women and kids as harshly as they do – directly as our employers at work; as the Tories, in politics? How come there's their obscene anti-social inequality in wealth?

In business they treat us as just a commodity - a Cost, a resource, to be used to the maximum (intensive working, long hours, short holidays etc) and discarded when not needed. Most of us are just decent, reasonable people, just wanting to live reasonable lives, without being aggressive and greedy like them; but when we have difficulties in their selfish, competitive, uncaring, chaotic, dog-eat-dog system the Business Class, Tory view is a callous "You're useless, or idle." In politics, as Tories and Republicans, they try to treat us as an underclass whose problems are nothing to do with them.

Despite the Union Jack waving image of all-Britons-together, many of the Business Class and the Tories - including those self-obsessed local ordinary Tories - regard the three-quarters or more of their 'fellow-British' who are Working Class with contempt. Most of them, and certainly them as a class, behave at least uncaringly, sometimes brutally, to their fellow-Countrymen and women. Their selfish, greedy *Individualism,* oppressing their fellow-'Britons' as workers, and leaving people to sink or swim, are key features of *the country.*

Conservative political speakers and writers are *weird* thinkers. They defend these selfish, uncaring, relationships towards fellow-Citizens while also enthusing about the social unity of 'the country'; and even that strongest of social duties, military service. That's arguing against wide social obligations.

Then arguing the exact opposite. Maybe different parts of their brains aren't joined up. Or else they do see the big contradiction in what they say and just hope we don't notice. We appear not to. We do all know how badly they behave towards us at work and politically and it should be obvious that the Business Class's system is no basis for 'the *c*ountry'. Yet most people feel and speak with a strong sense of British and English identity. Let's argue against it, to each other. You get about twenty opportunities a day.

Seeing yourself as British together with the Business Class is nonsense in their Dog eat Dog, Look after only Yourself, You're-on-your-own system.

To have any chance of getting enough votes to get into Government they have to pretend to care for other people, for their fellow-British. But there is this plain and obvious opposing practice of theirs - how they actually run the country. Openly, when the Tories are in Government; indirectly as the Business Class when Labour is in office, when they refuse to be commercially active or invest here unless they get hugely rewarded, which New Labour, scared of them, concedes.

Freedom to Neglect fellow-Countrymen and Women

How ***do*** they get away with it? Answer - they have some superficially powerful arguments about how society should be run that carry the political argument with a lot of us.

They promote uncaring selfishness and extreme wealth as ***Individual Freedom***. They argue that we can *all* can all be alright, can all 'make it' if we just take care only of ourselves, ignoring each others needs. The financial crash of 2008 showed the crass nonsense of it in a world of market anarchy. But the idea is so effectively presented in the UK and even more so in America that huge numbers of workers are fooled by it. American workers fly the Stars and Stripes on their lawns in a country with the most ruthless Business Class of the lot, who've cut Working Class incomes drastically in the last thirty years to make themselves ridiculously wealthy; that doesn't even have a Health Service, far less job security or decent unemployment benefits.

The idea that everybody could 'make it' is a nonsense. Because a*ll societies around the world are now based on Mass Production.* With mass production most of us *have to be* just ordinary, insecure, disgruntled workers. You know that, every time you go to work. You do have a freedom, to move from one job to another. But that's overwhelmed by your lack of freedom in each job when working for any particular one of the Business Class, because of the *They've Got Plenty of You* relationship.

So 'making it' is simply not going to happen for the vast majority. Enough do, either in business or in successful careers as workers, to buy off enough people for the Business classes to get away with what they do, globally. But in that most important activity *Making Your Living*, the majority haven't got individual freedom -unless organised. Even though you may be hard-working, well-qualified, or talented, you're insecure, under-rewarded, under-recognised, oppressed.

Conservatives also promote as something good about *the country* is *'the freedom to Do What You Want with Your Own Money'.* That's their argument for low *Income Tax*. With that, they tap into ordinary folk's obvious wish not to pay tax. It induces in some workers short-sighted 'little Tory' views so that some even, for that reason, vote for their Bosses' party. But taxes are just

Collective Spending, necessary for mutual support between the Citizens of 'the country' - when properly spent.

And most of *'Their Own Money'* the Business Class keep from being taxed isn't really *their* money. They get it by paying staff less than they charge for their work. So Working Class people who support them on low taxes don't support their own right to 'spend their own money' – they back their bosses robbing it off them at work, then turn down the opportunity to get it back through tax-funded spending on Public Services.

Freedom, huh? Everyone is for it. But what does it mean?

When Business Class people like George Bush and Cheney talk of *Freedom* they mean only *Business* freedom – freedom for business people in unregulated trade in 'free' markets. One key market is *the Labour Market* - the trade in labour, the trade in you and me. It's a market where business people dominate individual workers and have the freedom to make money from their work.

With many other freedoms like *political* freedoms and the freedom to do what you want in your *personal* life, the Business Class are and always have been, repressive. ***Right Wing*** means business freedom but political and personal repression.

If They Cared More About Us

There *are* some supportive things about 'the country'. But they exist because the decent people have worked hard politically to get them and to retain them. They are under constant political attack from our most selfish and powerful fellow-Citizens - the Business Class / the Tories.

A strong sense of the nation, the country, would make sense if this was a very different, more caring society, with real, thorough systems for supporting each other. Maybe a Socialist society. If the answers to the questions asked earlier *'How do we behave towards each other?'* and *'What kind of Society is this?'* were solidly *'Supportively'* and *'Co-operative.'* That's not only the relationships between the Business Class and the Working Class but also those between ordinary fellow-Citizens - if we were more supportive and co-operative in ordinary daily dealings with each other. But it's not like that is it?

You can allow that some business people are alright as individuals. You can't judge any in advance simply because they are Business Class. But you can judge them *as* a class by what *most* of them say and do to us, individually. And by what they do to us together, *as a Class*.

This is not an abstract political work. It comes from my experience of life. You should use yours too. Think about your experience of them, and that of your parents, children, other relatives, friends, neighbours, and other people you know. Judge the Business Class by the presumption and harshness most of them show to us at work and in politics. The actual *Owner* bosses are often hidden from us by remote ownership and their Management hierarchy. But where we encounter them indirectly or directly, the whole everyday ordering-you-about "You're sacked" 'boss-man' role makes sharing the national identity with them a nonsense.

You do get some decent ones. And they often try to manage us with some decency simply because it can be more effective. But the full picture includes all this - they won't pay you the proper rate for what you do; make you do tasks that aren't part of your job; make you work late, work long hours, work

evenings and weekends and split shifts, impose shift changes, on-call working, that wreck family life and social life. They cut staff, impose health-destroying workloads and targets, re-organise you out of your Job. They neglect your safety. They employ us on temporary contracts or as agency workers because we are cheaper and more easily disposed of that way. They sack us. They sometimes sack those of our fellow-workers who stand up for us against them as union Reps.

You know from your own experience and that of people you know or have known that the usual experience of how Business Class and Tory people treat us makes laughable the notion of being all one community together with them as 'the British'. (Or as 'Americans', or whatever, in whichever country.) Them bossing us about is out of order. As People, and as fellow-Citizens, We are or should be their equals. We should tell them - Business owners, the CBI, the Institute of Directors, conservatives - what to do with the a national identity shared with *Them*, until they behave towards us with more respect, as fellow-Citizens.

Capitalism? It'll Never Work

Their whole *Business System* is a problem. Despite the claim that their capitalist free markets run by individual decision-making, it is actually a very *Collective* economic system, one that we all depend on and take part in. It's unstable, prone to collapse, with ridiculous events where huge sections of the population, many millions of decent ordinary people, willing workers, are thrown out of work, for no rational reason, nothing to do with anything they've done or not done. OK, it's dynamic (but too dynamic - they persuade us to consume so much that we are destroying our habitat, just to keep them in opportunities to make profit.) But discarding people wholesale in such numbers means the Business Class and the Tories can't claim that the country is any kind of society worthy of our loyalty. In anything worthy of the name *Society* that couldn't be allowed to happen. Or if it did we wouldn't be blamed and abandoned, we'd be looked after.

Let's be clear about this problem with *their* Business System. We – all of Humanity, including them - go to work, make things, sell things, buy things, to meet our needs and wants. Although we are too readily mesmerised by their promotion of living by consuming, our *real* needs, and even the false needs and wants they foster in us, don't go up or down all that much year on year. Yet at times their system collapses, for nothing to do with our needs changing. We need to grow up as a species - to go beyond the Business Class's dynamic but chaotic methods, and organise our production of what we need so that it can't collapse irrationally and unnecessarily, ruining our lives.

The ridiculous, unnecessary world-wide financial crisis of September 2008 underpins everything argued here. Their crisis exposed their system, showing it to be not so much about enterprise but a greedy madness, harming all of us, collectively. But it's likely *we* will pay the price, in unnecessary unemployment and hardship. To resist that we need much greater awareness of class, theirs and ours, much stronger Working Class awareness and class organisation and readiness to act to defend ourselves.

They Even Stop It Working Deliberately

In the early 80's, in government as the Conservatives, the dominant faction of the Business Class *deliberately engineered* a partial economic collapse in order to teach us a lesson and to change the balance of power between us and

them. They knowingly, deliberately used 'monetarist' policies that destroyed much of the Engineering industry, much of Liverpool and Coventry and other cities; attacked Public Education, Public Health Services, Local Government; and dumped a million unemployed School-leavers on the crappy YTS (Youth Training Scheme.)

Such anti-social behaviour had serious consequences for decent people and their lives and relationships - poverty, broken homes, dispersal of communities, lasting to this day. Their abandoning of people, coupled with their encouragement in them of 'self-importance by consumption', has made too many working class people into nasty ***little*** Tories - those who have adopted the Tory individualist philosophy so fully that, selfishly aggressive, they rob and assault other workers on the streets, behaving brutally, horrifically to their own class. Blame the numbers of dysfunctional, anti-social poor people on the Business Class - and on New Labour, Blair and Brown and Mandelson for conceding Business everything they want.

So judge the idea of loyalty to '*the country*' by all that. And by the grossness and depravity of their personal consumption; by the way they're ruining our planet. As a class, they are self-centred, nasty, stupid people. What they do to us is far worse than anything that *'foreigners'* may do to us. Most of *them* - as they get called - are just decent ordinary people, just like us.

Hating ?

Many people hate, or feel hostile to, groups of other people. Many 'British' people hate large groups of *other* 'British' people. Many football fans hate those who support other teams. Some '*northerners*' hate or despise *'southerners.* I've known *'English'* people who don't like *'the Scots'*. Many of these *'Scots'* feel antagonistic to *'the English'*. Some men feel antagonistic to women. Some women, to men. Some people hate or fear 'black' people; some hate Pakistanis; some hate or fear Muslims. Some 'British' people hate *'the Germans'* or *'the French.*

There's no sense in hating any of these people, as groups. But there is some sense in hating the Business Class. Not all of them. Not to the extent of attacking them personally, being brutal, like they are, with their callous treatment of their fellow-citizens and their bloody wars. It's not really what we, workers in the organised labour movement, are about. We're about building decent, civilised, non-hateful behaviour. Of course, many of them hate us, organised as what they call 'the unions', and make laws against us.

But with their spectacular wealth compared to the poor kids from the estates, who make that money for them staffing the call centres and the check-outs; with their expensive and under-used yachts that could, instead, be hospital wards; with their stupid Ascot hats - I feel like spitting on the floor and have sometimes made as if I am doing when they slime past in their ridiculous, pretentious cars, their smug Rolls Royces or Mercedes or their daft-looking squashed-down Ferraris. With those childish personalised number-plates that, strangely, always seem to spell *Prat*. (Is that the right word?)

This isn't 'the politics of envy', as they say. We wouldn't *want* to live lives so shallow that their sort of gross wealth, so inhumanly obtained, meant anything to us. It's not *envy*. It's *contempt* for such anti-Social people. Pretend spitting on the floor? Small beer, sure. But that's better, expressing valid feelings, than, like some, being deferential to their wealth or envious and admiring of it.

They say you shouldn't hate - it hurts you more than the people you hate. Hmmm. Could be. They say 'See the good in everyone.' Hmmmm. Maybe. But that's difficult when you look at what the Business Classes have done and caused to be done to me and mine, you and yours.

Wars are always presented as being for freedom and human rights. But always, really, they're about Business Classes getting or holding onto resources like cheap oil, and access to markets. And look at how brutal they are - bombing and slaughtering people in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq to defend their wealth and power. You have to reflect, that's an *awful* thing do - bomb innocent people, blowing them to bits; or condemn them to live on, maimed. You and I would never consider doing that, would we? Bush and his imperialist crew clearly waged the Iraq war for the benefit of the American Business Class, for cheap oil and also to prove their power to the rest of the world.

Consider also the brutality of what they've done in Vietnam, Chile, Nicaragua, Iraq, and what the British Business Class has done over history, and look at what happens every day to millions around the world as a result of them cornering so much wealth, unfairly.

So, is it right to hate them? Maybe. Maybe not. I'm not sure. But when you look at the common hatreds spoken of above, like the extreme, virulent hatred and violence football fans, like those of Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester United and Manchester City and Everton and Leeds and the rest, throw at each other; at whole political parties being based on fearing and hating people on grounds of skin colour, provoked by a constant blast of hate-inducement from the Business Class press; and note that these hatreds express some deep-seated frustrations - then we have to point at the people who cause those frustrations and at whom the frustrations and demands should really be directed.

Hate them or not, we can, for sure, feel superior to them. Me, for instance - I'm a decent person who's done right by my fellow-Citizens and Workers. Despite their 'success', their wealth, the suits and posh accents, the presumption of superiority, *they* aren't. Any of us who behave decently and civilly towards others - you perhaps - should feel superior to them.

They're Not Like You and Me

They *are* different to us, you know. In some ways we're all the same. But have you ever been close to wealthy businessmen or women? When I have I've noticed they really are different. They are so pink and well-scrubbed and groomed they look like puppets from Fireball XL5.

Once, in the early 1970's, we travelled down to Kent on my bike and sidecar and slept in the sidecar in the car park at Heathrow. In the morning, in my greasy Barbour jacket - when only motorcyclists wore them - and with my long hair, I wandered about exploring Heathrow and into the VIP lounge. VIP eh? – what a vile expression. It was so plush and the people in there looked so odd it felt like being on another planet, amongst aliens. And I looked odd to them - one of their flunkies made me unwelcome.

We carried on, on our way to spend Xmas with a friend's parents in Kent. Through them we spent Boxing Day in the company of a very rich Tory family in their opulent country home. How arrogant they were! What cocky presumption! What casually-delivered hatred for us in our unions!

When around these people, *the rich Business Class*, Conservatives, I feel the kind of seething resentment racists must feel when seeing Black or Asian people. For those many of them who are just arrogantly all for themselves, get rich off our work, and attack our ability to organise in unions and defend ourselves against them. Like those Tory activists at their conferences. I can't see these selfish people as *'fellow-Britons*'. Can you? The callous way they behave to their fellow-Citizens, it's no exaggeration to call some of them barbarians.

Sometimes they show signs of humanity, so we shouldn't *completely* give up on them. Some can be alright as individuals. David Gower is OK. Nice chap. People born rich like Paul Foot and Tony Benn can come over to the side of decency and *Decent People.* 'He's got no side' is a nice expression about those of them who aren't snobby. On UK TV there's a programme called 'Dragon's Den' that features 'self-made entrepreneurs', most of whom show signs of humanity.

Interestingly, despite their claim that we are all really about self-centred individualism, they seem to need other people - family, friends, football clubs to support. Walt Disney was nasty, anti-union, right wing. But his films were sentimentalist. It's been noted that Fascists balance their political brutality by being over-sentimental, over-doing their feelings in other areas, like family or childhood. We have to leave open the possibility that we could civilise them.

Are they Stupid? Or Dishonest ?

The Business class and their conservative parties and the writers who defend the business system must be either stupid or very dishonest.

Because they argue it's just unchangeable *'Human Nature',* just how people are and must be, to be individualist and greedy; and therefore that their competitive, dog-eat-dog, uncivilised, business system is the only way our world can be run. So they argue it's right for them to be aggressively self-interested, to make as much profit and income from shares as they can, millions-of–pounds-a-year salaries. And they accept the people who run their supplier companies doing the same. They justify super-wealth and the incomes of various layers of middle-wealthy with this claim. Even when some of them get wealthy from property-dealing and speculating on the stock exchange without doing anything useful, they think it's smart to get yourself into such positions.

Yet when we workers do the same and bargain hard for the best deal we can get, maybe even including being idle like many of the rich are - ah well, now suddenly there's something outrageous about that! When we try to get as much as we can from 'the system', *Business Class Tories go all Socialist on us*! *Our* selfishness and greed 'ruins the country'! *We* should behave according to the public good. But if we humans are all self-centred, as they say, *why shouldn't we workers be like that too?*

They are thoroughly nasty and vicious about *us* standing up for ourselves or trying to be as hard as them. *But by their own arguments,* that they use to justify their wealth and greed, it's a perfectly normal, acceptable and respectable thing for us-as-workers to get what we can. Including messing about on the InterNet at work to break the tedium of the day; or pulling a sickie on a Monday. Or Striking to get the best deal for ourselves.

But they resent and obstruct even our weak Individual rights like Unfair Dismissal. And they pass anti-union laws that prevent us Organising to be more

nearly equal to them and that also obstruct us from organising *Politically.* As said earlier these are not really anti-*union* laws. Because unions are just us - *'the Staff'* - organised. So they are anti-*me* laws, anti-*you* laws, anti-every-*worker* laws. They're *class law*, made by and for the Business Class, to prevent the Working Class from standing up to them.

Admittedly, they can be hard in their business dealings with each other (in B2B trade, as they call it - Business to Business.) But that has far less impact on businesses than it does on workers. Because businesses make multiple purchases, have many customers and contracts, so don't depend on any one of them. Workers don't have many customers. We – you - as a worker, have just one customer – whoever it is you work for. And they've got plenty of you.

Just Minding Their Own Business?

Many business people will think they just doing what they're doing, harming no one, minding their own business (sic), being self-reliant, running their business, without ill-will towards us or any responsibility for us. As far as they can see, what other people do to look out for themselves, or don't bother to, or if they struggle to get by, is none of their concern.

To repeat, you can't pre-judge any particular one of them just because they run a business. Many Business people are just working hard at running their corner shops, café's, garages. They can be decent people, and often fail through no fault of their own. I've some good friends who run small businesses and they're OK as people and as employers. And I recently bought a car from one of those most suspect of business people, a second-hand car dealer. He was a lovely bloke. In buying the car then getting him to replace the radiator, he was shrewd but reasonable in negotiations. He was a pleasure to do with business with. And I told him so. Many business people are just people with initiative, energy and ideas who don't want to work for someone else. Many of them work harder than some of us and deserve more reward because of that, because they 'take care of business'.

But a big question is *How Much More?* That's examined in

The Rich or *Are They Worth the Expense?* in They Are The Business Class.

And although you can recognise how they 'get things done', that's easier when their reward is great wealth for personal luxury consumption. A primary school teacher's efforts are just as admirable but done for only ordinary wages.

There's something in the view that they are just doing what they're doing and mean no harm to anyone else. Some people do take more trouble than others and some (only a few) don't take much trouble at all.

But as an overall view of society it's simplistic, self-serving, Business Class, conservative nonsense. It doesn't stand up to looking at the real, everyday world and the plain fact that they and we, all of us, operate with a huge amount of inter-action. Even the self-employed and individual small business people operate in close, definite relationships with the rest of us. What all business people do and what we do is inter-linked - as Sellers and Buyers of articles and services in their precious Markets; and particularly as sellers and buyers of *Our* Labour, from which they make '*Their*' money. And we live in integrated economies linked by their markets and their Financial system - or lack of one. It's one economy, one society, a global one. Everyone knows that, especially after their financial crisis of late 2008 onwards. We're so inter-linked

it's unbelievable. That's why the state of the economy is always a huge political, *collective* issue.

What *is* 'the country' ?

Despite all the nastiness of what they do *to* us, and what they don't do *for* us, the expectation of sharing *'British'* identity with them is all around us and almost universally assumed. Isn't it? It can seem odd but it's explained later.

When people expect it of me, I reject it. They'll sometimes say '*Surely you feel loyalty to your Country?*' My answer is no, why should I? How is it mine? I was just born here, a baby with no choice in joining it. There are many ways in which 'it' and some of the people in it work against me. And I get very little say in how it works.

And then, what exactly do they ***mean*** by '*the country'* ?

The way some people boast nationalistically about the landscape, it seems we are supposed to feel loyal to the hills and streams and towns. The countryside is nice, for sure - the Highlands; Northumbria. The Lake District - Great Gable. Langdale. North Yorkshire. The Yorkshire Dales; the Peak District. Cheshire. Cornwall. Snowdonia - the Carneddau, the Glyderau, Tryfan, Snowdon. Kent. Shropshire. Some of the urban stuff is OK too.

But they don't really mean the landscape, do they? If they do, it's daft – it's mostly just there - we didn't make it. We can enjoy it but not be proud of it or loyal to it. Anyway, lots of the rest of the Earth is nice - the Rockies, West Virginia, New England; South Africa, Thailand, Australia; Patagonia; the Alps, etc etc. The Himalayas. Coral seas.

So what *do* they mean by *'the country'?* Is it the *People?* Maybe. But I and you don't actually know most of them nor have any real supportive links with them. *And some of them cause me all my major problems*.

Do they mean a shared British culture? There isn't one. There are many cultures, even amongst white people. We don't *all* like football; or Eastenders. And there is a huge cultural difference between the ultra-expensive lifestyle of the very rich Big Business Class and that of the poorest Working Class.

The basic thing is, 'the country', any country, is just a part of the globe where power in human society, political power, has, over history, become authorised and regulated in particular ways by particular institutions.

All *'the country'* or *'the nation'* means is that on this piece of territory, certain classes of people have established *enduring political institutions* that control how people inter-act. You can follow how they actually did it on the History Channel - how Wessex and Northumbria and other bits that were first separate, became England, and Wales, united brutally by barbaric thugs like Edward 1. How Scotland was created by similarly barbaric feudal warlords like Robert the Bruce. How, between 1640 and 1688, such dictators were brought under some democratic control in the form of Parliament.

Through power exercised in these political institutions certain people make rules - laws - governing our behaviour towards each other. Strong identification with it and allegiance to it is being questioned here. But it's all very meaningful in practice. The British State, made up of Parliament, the House of Commons, the House of Lords, the various Government Departments, the Monarchy, the Courts, the Police, the Military, is *the established* ***Authority*** and authorises all

the subsidiary 'authorities' like the Councils and the Fire brigades. The answer to the question "What *is* 'the country" is - it's these governing institutions.

So when people expect me to believe in 'the country' *they must mean these institutions*. But me for sure, and surely most people, don't feel so intensely loyal to the institutions of Government, the law-making systems, Parliament, the Courts and so on, as people seem to be when they talk of 'the Country', fly flags, and support national sports teams? Why identify with 'the country' as fervently as so many do?

There's a Government, that's all

'The Country' could and should mean how we, *the people*, work together, with a high degree of concern and support for each other as fellow-Citizens. *But plenty of people, especially Business Class people, work against their fellow-Citizens*. The country is a very real set of political relationships; but that's *all* it is – ***Political*** unity, the rules that control power and people. That's not the same thing at all as ***Social*** unity. How could it be, with the Tories being a prominent part of it? And with quite a few other people who work hard to promote social *dis*-unity - like those who own and run the Mail and the Sun; and the people who write for them, such as hate-promoting nasties like Melanie Philips, Richard Littlejohn; and with their race-hate promoting headlines and anti-Working Class bias?

Yes, the fact of the country, the *State*, means we all have some things in common. Even with Business Class people. But you can have something in common yet not have a common interest. The prisoner and the prison warder have something in common - that they are both there in the prison with a definite relationship to each other. But it's hardly a common interest, is it?

So take the anti-union laws - being UK law, 'we' all have them in common. But for the Business Class, who made these laws, acting as the Conservative party, they are a good thing. For me, you and any other workers they are a deliberate, direct attack, by them, on our ability to organise together for a decent life.

This is not abstract political debate. This writer has bitter experience of trying to defend his vital interests and being defeated by their anti-union laws. The biggest and most important strike action I've helped organise was a national strike to oppose our employers ending our *union-negotiated contracts* and replacing them with much worse ones with drastically increased *workloads* and *working time*. Our strike was ruled illegal by a judge whose decision was laughably wrong in law, in favour of our employers. Yours truly experienced the bitterness of going round on the morning we were to have started our strike putting up notices calling it off. We held out for years but that caused us to lose that fight in the end.

That hard experience is something I have in common with those supposed fellow-countrymen of mine and yours. It's one example of many things some of my fellow- British do to me that makes me scornful of national identity. You must have examples too. What are yours?

They Believe Only in Themselves

They talk of loyalty to 'the country' and give you Union Jacks to wave. *But surely 'the Country' includes you and me?* Yet they've little loyalty to *us,* have they? They argue that the uncaring system that suits them is actually good for

us all! To get votes they pretend they do care about us. But they don't, not really, not at all.

To make money, they need us to make their products and provide their services. And they need some of us with enough money to buy them. And they need us to fight for them in their wars.

Yet when their unplanned economic system goes into crisis for no reason to do with any of ***us,*** as it does, and we have *Mass Unemployment*, do the Business Class accept their responsibility and argue for, and support, and provide, strong social security and other necessary backing for their fellow-British? No, they find reasons for blaming the crisis on us. Like we don't work hard or long enough, or cost too much in Wages or Pensions. They attack the Unemployment Benefit that is the supposed to be *'the country',* a *National Insurance* system protecting us from the instability of their system. And they work hard and viciously to persuade us to blame various kinds of innocent, harmless 'Outsiders' – Immigrants, Foreigners.

And for all their *talk* of 'the nation', aimed at smothering the differences between them and us, when you look at what they actually *do*, in their own self-interest, *they can be pretty **Inter**national* - global, even, clocking up the air-miles. They close our workplaces to re-locate to other countries where they can get people who'll work for worse wages and worse conditions than us. They'll claim cheaper competition forces them to re-locate or the business fails. But competition is *their* system, it's not ours. And in fact they often re-locate to other countries not from necessity but just to make more profit.

Do they loyally even keep their money in the country? No, they re-locate that too, move it to wherever in the world they can make the most out of paying workers the least. One of the first things Thatcher's goons did when getting into Government in 1979 was to remove controls on her class moving their capital outside the country, that had enforced on them a bit of loyalty to the rest of us, so that they could invest abroad instead of in the UK. And they don't bring it back into the country for our benefit – they put it in developments in Hong Kong, Malaysia, wherever; and in tax havens like the Channel islands, the Isle of Man, Bermuda. So much for their real belief in 'the nation.'

Traitors - in Exporting Our Jobs ?

But belief in it blinds many of *us.* The Business Class use the image of 'the nation', of 'us', against *'foreigners'* so that many of us don't even *see* ***them,*** far less challenge their lack of loyalty to 'Britain' and their fellow-Brits. Their 'news' papers tell us about the 'British' jobs supposedly being taken by immigrants and 'foreign' workers. But at least as big a problem as foreign workers coming *here* and 'taking our jobs', and maybe a bigger one, is British Business People ***exporting '***our jobs'. As said, they re-locate our existing jobs and invest abroad, locating new jobs in other countries. We shouldn't attack our 'foreign' fellow-workers when we don't attack disloyal British Business people.

The main reason some people do is because British imagery dominates their thinking. But then there's also the problem of the British Business Class's power. Taking them on is no small matter. They are serious people. Racists, and racist parties like the BNP, haven't the sense or the strength to attack them for their anti-British-Worker *exporting* of Jobs or over jobs lost by all workers when their Business system goes wrong.

So instead, weakly but dangerously, they attack weak minority groups, of other, innocent workers. The slogan 'British Jobs for British Workers' is weak

because it ignores the central role of the rich *British* Business Class in there being jobs or not, lets them off from their British social responsibilities and turns instead on other workers.

But those weak workers who fall for the anti-outsider diversion aren't the real problem. *The real problem is that **most** people believe in 'the country', accept the imagery and the notion of being 'British' and express it every day in many ways. **And that's the base, the framework and the platform for the really racist, anti-outsider views and politics.***

We don't, most of us, clearly identify the Business Class, nor their responsibility for our problems, like their economy going wrong and millions of us losing our jobs; feel weak and powerless in relation to them; lack a clear understanding of Working Class identity, and a sense of loyalty to other workers; have instead a strong image of being English or British that smothers Class and leads straight into anti-outsider attitudes that get us nowhere in tackling the real problem, of the Business Class and their crazy system.

We need to be clearer in our shared thinking on these issues so that those workers who fall for the delusion of the 'British' (or American or other) nationalist and racist approach are challenged everywhere they go by relatives, mates, and workmates, and get some sense argued into them to counter the mis-direction they get from the Business class papers and politicians.

Using Us

Another instance of them using the ingrained mental images of 'the country' and 'foreigners' to get our support is in the internal dispute they have over Europe. Since liberating themselves from the obligation to the rest of us to keep their capital in Britain, many British Capitalists invested heavily in Europe. But some invested more in the USA. So when Murdoch in 'the Sun', and the Tories, use nationalist imagery to pose as defenders of good ol' British independence, of 'the Pound Sterling' against the European Union, the *real* reason is that they speak for those capitalists who are more involved in the US economy than the European one. (But this is not to promote Europe.)

Writing in 2009, some of the Conservatives - the Cameron leadership - are trying to appear nice instead of nasty. They're all for public services and looking after the poor before the rich now, it seems. We're not that easily fooled, are we? Take it as a compliment to our good sense – they've realised in losing three elections that they can't get away with being such bastards as they'd really like to be (and were when they were in power) and still expect to win elections. We've pulled them leftwards – but it's not sincere now, is it?

Business Class and Tory ways don't provide what you should expect from 'the country'. If we had decent social and work relations with them and between each other, if we had a lot more mutual care and respect and freedom, then there'd be some sense in it. But we don't. *The image of 'your country', so strong and widely held, is a trick to dupe us into accepting the uncaring, free market society that suits them.* It obscures our view of *Them* and obscures our view of *Ourselves* and generates in our minds a set of political assumptions that misdirect us, at great damage to ourselves. That includes separating us from 'outsiders' - 'foreigners', workers who are in the same position as us in 'their' countries. Like French workers, German workers, American workers, Chinese workers, and so on.

Why should we share an identity with these 'British' Business Class people? Why believe in *the nation* and *your country* and an immensely strong with-

them-to-the-death-in-war bond with *them? They* don't really believe in it. They believe only in their selfish and class interests. We, the non-business people, should do the same.

Not by being as selfish and vicious as them but by -

Putting Decent politics and our real, Working Class identity

above the class-denying myth of 'a country' shared with Them.

There is Such a Thing as Society

Actually, there isn't. But it's handy shorthand for the key issue of how we all relate to each other. And when we mostly relate to each other in 'free market' conditions we are reducing human society, human relationships, humans themselves, ourselves, to just commercial items. You can't do that. People are more than that - people sing, dance, laugh, joke, cry, have kids, partners, love the same things as you. We're all that, not just things that create wealth or cost money. The key philosophical and political argument that decent *Civilised* people have to have with the Business Class / Tories is that uncaring, even ruthless *selfishness is no way to run a 'society' or a 'country'*. Sure, we should allow each other as much freedom as possible; but their rich-person's exploitative selfishness is too much - it's simply deeply anti-social.

Why Compete with Each Other?

Capitalist ***Competition***, already criticised, is no basis for a country. As said, as well as most of them treating us harshly to make money from our work, their system of Competition forces even decent employers to be as bad as their worst, cheapest competitor. Competition sets us all, supposedly fellow-countrymen and women, at each others throats over getting the means to live. Where's the social sense in that?

It's partly our own fault. When we buy things only on price, we do better as consumers. But that does each other down as workers. We should buy only from unionised firms, and Fair Trade shopping.

They tell us '*we've got to match up to the competition'* as if there's no answer; as if 'competition' is like a Law of Physics, beyond human control. But we, Humanity, can choose to co-operate as well as compete and we do. Competition is just a humanly-implemented feature of *your* system, you lunk-heads! 'The country' itself is *supposed* to be a co-operative thing.

And even for them competition is something that can and should be controlled when it's that nasty kind, *foreign* competition. Then, the nationalist mind-set dupes us into joining together with them in 'Blame the Foreigner'. *But 'foreign competition' putting you out of work is no different to your 'own' countrymen and women doing it - which happens just as much.*

It wouldn't be so bad if they admitted that competition is a major problem in their system and tried to reduce the worsening of our conditions that it causes. If they agreed to the things that limit that - strong Legal Minimum Rights at Work applying to all businesses across all trades, like the Minimum Wage, effectively enforced (which the Minimum Wage isn't); and strong union Organisation bringing union Conditions across all the competing businesses, *world-wide*.

And yet - for all that Business people bang on about competition, using the pressure of it as an argument to reduce costs by attacking your wages and conditions – despite all that, don't they manage to extract monstrous private

wealth out of it all? The luxury homes, cars, holidays, private jets, the second homes in Scotland, Wales, Switzerland, New York, the Caribbean. The walled and gated houses, the revolting expensive cars, the yachts, the grotesquely expensive lifestyle. £10,000 watches! They're only for telling the bloody time.

Freedom and Free Speech - Won Here. From Them

The argument people often make for believing in 'the nation', in Britain at least, is that *'It's a Free Country*'. *'We've got Free Speech.' 'You can say what you want'.* That's broadly true and Free Speech is a great thing.

But people need to realise that free speech and things like it, the good things about 'Britain', weren't won by being passive loyalist subjects, weren't freely given. They were won by being dis-loyal, challenging things as the rich would have them be, by brave rebellious types.

And for all that it's boasted about, does anyone know exactly how and when we actually *got* Free Speech? We didn't have it at the time of the French Revolution, 1790 onwards. Tom Paine had to flee to France for his life for arguing for Democracy against the tyrants who enslaved Britons then. And Thomas Hardy (not the writer) was tried for treason for organising the movement for democracy, his life saved only by a jury who, influenced by mass support and demonstrations, acquitted him.

But a loyalist mob stirred up by the Government attacked Hardy's house and Mrs. Hardy, pregnant with her sixth child, had to escape out of a back window. Soon after this she died in childbirth and the child was still-born.

And there was no free speech for those British people demonstrating for the Vote who were killed by *British* troops at Peterloo in Manchester in 1819.

Maybe somebody should research and write up how we got what free speech we have. This writer thinks we maybe got it by agitating in outrage after Peterloo, and the Ruling Class of the time conceded it to us in the 1820's by repealing the Sedition Acts they'd tried Paine and Hardy under?

(But look here - in March 2009 the Observer newspaper reported that an MP was trying to include in an Act going through Parliament an amendment to get rid of the 1819 Sedition Act. It seems it's *still* an offence punishable by life imprisonment to publish 'any seditious libel tending to bring into hatred or contempt the person of his Majesty or the government and constitution of the United Kingdom as by law established, or either House of Parliament'. How do I stand on that, with some of the things said in this book?

And you're not safe either because any house can be entered to retrieve copies of material containing Seditious libel. It's said they'll not actually do anyone unless they're advocating violence against the Constitution and I don't think we're doing that. As said elsewhere, anything said in this book is arguing strongly for more fairness and *more Democracy*, so you'd like to think you're safe in doing that, wouldn't you? All the same - what's all this about Free Speech? The definition given below says it's mainly for criticising Government and it seems the right to do even that is something of a myth.)

What was done to Paine and Hardy is ancient history now, of course, and there's not now a tyrannical Ruling Class in such a clearly identifiable form. (I said before reading the Observer piece.) But Free Speech is put forward by their 'Establishment' and their 'news' papers as if it's somehow been given to us by 'the Country', by that apparently free-standing entity. They do that to persuade us that we're doing alright, better than people in other countries.

And yet their predecessors brutally *resisted* free speech - as they did at Peterloo. It's 'No you're not having that'. Then 'Oh, you've forced us to concede it'; 'Now look how lucky you are, isn't this a great place, don't complain, it could be worse'. Anyway, all somewhat-democratic countries have much the same free speech – France, Germany, the US and so on. It's hardly a unique thing and nor should it be. It should be the most basic right, not one they should expect us to be grateful for.

Free Speech is to Criticise *Government* not *Skin Colour*

But what *is* 'Free Speech'? Many people - Government, Christian and Muslim religious zealots, Racists and Fascists, and decent people, Trade Unionists and Socialists, all claim to use it to try to say certain things or stop other people saying certain things. And from how these various people put their arguments it seems we haven't got *a clear definition of free speech*. We need one so here it is.

Free Speech is, mainly, the freedom to criticise those in government. It's the right to criticise the Institutions and Workings of the State, the Law, 'the Country' itself. To criticise and challenge those people who are in power. To comment on and criticise ***what they Do or what they Don't Do****.*

It also includes criticising each other, fellow-ordinary Citizens, for what we do or promote that affects each other. But it's not the freedom to say just whatever the hell you like. *It's not, never has been, never will be, and shouldn't be, a freedom to Say Anything About Anybody*. Particularly, it's not the freedom to criticise, attack or discriminate against people for characteristics they were born with and are stuck with and that have nothing to do with their voluntary behaviour towards others. Things like their Gender; their Race; their Age; the Country they 'come from'.

So making Sexism and Racism illegal isn't a denial of free speech. We've just decided, rightly, that although you can have go at people for what they say or do, you can't have a go at them, or whole groups of the population, for their basic physical characteristics.

Free speech includes critical debate about beliefs, and therefore, *criticism* of religions. But doesn't allow *discrimination* on religion.

As well as free speech there's other good things about 'the country.' The *Vote*; the freedom to *Assemble and Demonstrate*; the freedom to *Organise,* politically and at work - though that right is severely restricted, in breach of Human Rights.

But there's a big myth about all this - the myth that when '*fighting for your country'* you are defending such freedom and democracy as we have. That is simply not true. Fighting and dying 'for King and Country' or for 'Uncle Sam' is usually just fighting for the rich and powerful Business Class of Britain or the US in wars of competition with rival business classes in other countries. Or helping them get control of resources and markets.

Doing that didn't win or help us defend what freedoms and democracy we've got. Such freedom and democracy as we have was won by struggle *inside* this country by some people who won it for you by challenging *other* British people, namely those rich and powerful Business Class people. *They* fought mass democracy all the way. Free speech and the other freedoms and the vote were won by hard political struggle by the heroes who fought the Civil War, by the heroes of the Workingmen's Corresponding Association, by the

Chartists and the Suffragettes. They were strenuously and often viciously opposed by the very class of English or British people who most want us to believe in *the country*. Freedom was won and is still being defended, by some 'British' people against other, anti-democratic fellow-countrymen.

The Second World War might be different. That war did appear to be about defending democracy - what little we have of it. But in *Extra Stuff 1* it was argued that the British Business Class didn't fight that war for freedom and democracy but to challenge a resurgent imperialist rival, Germany.

Extra Stuff 2 on page 222 says more about what their wars are really for. For example, the current war in Iraq is typical Business-led Imperialism, isn't it? Sorry about the jargon - imperialism - but that's what it is, empire-building. It's not about anyone's freedom, not ours nor the Iraqis. But about the US Business Class's demand for cheap oil.

All Together in a Democracy ?

The joint decision-making of democracy could give meaning to the collective notion of 'the country' and 'the English' or 'the British.' But democracy is very weak in the UK. What we've got is worth having but really, it's a hardly-developed democracy. You know it is. Think about how much influence you feel you, me, and the mass of ordinary people have. When they talk about footballers, cricketers and athletes and the like, ordinary people speak of what *We* and *Us* are doing or are going to do.

But when they talk about the use of real power, not just sporting achievements, it's *They.* It's the Government, the *Authorities*, the Council, not 'us'. That confirms by how we speak that it's not 'our country.' It's not in ownership of the economy, and it's not in exercising political power.

This British *we*, supposedly all together in a Democracy, don't even have an elected and accountable Head of State! We're called not Citizens but *Subjects.* Of the Windsors! That, fellow-Citizen, is a big insult to our adult dignity. "Britons never shall be slaves" goes the song, doesn't it? When do we get to be Citizens?

Business Class 'whites' Don't Care About Fellow-'whites'

So, there's a lot been said there about how Business people don't care about their fellow-British, the Working Class, and how that makes it daft to share a strong, class-obscuring national identity with them.

There's another way of looking at it. When their headline writers say *We* and *Us* they don't only mean fellow-***countrymen*** – *they really mean fellow-* ***whites***, consciously winding up white people against non-'whites'.

It's funny, it seems to read very naturally, all that is written and said about *'whites' or 'white people'. But have you ever found anything about anyone being white-skinned that means anything?* I haven't. I'm 'white' and so are most of the people I know and have known well in my life. But this is the first time I've ever thought or said it. I kind of notice when people *aren't* 'white'. But *being* 'white'? So a lot of people have similar colour skin to mine. So what? It means nothing. Not just to me - it means nothing to most whites, judging by how many white people have behaved towards me and others. Don't you find that too?

But all round the world 'race' and skin colour can divide people and be used to divide people. Where's the sense in it? In pre-industrial times and societies,

identifying as a group by *'ethnic origin'* made some sense because it usually corresponded closely with the *real* social groupings, ***Tribes,*** groups with real common economic inter-dependence. But there's more to tribes than common *colour.* In Africa, tribes can be hostile to people who are of the same colour but not members of the *tribe.* There's been some brutal behaviour between people who share black skin colour in Uganda, the Congo, Zimbabwe, Somaliland, Darfur. Same in Asia – in Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia under Pol Pot. *Skin colour is not significant as a positive social unifier.* Whatever colour it is. Being together with people on colour makes no more sense than it does being against them.

And ethnic and tribal identities that do have some meaning lose it when the Business Class industrialises us and most people have no practical alternative to being not tribal or clannish, but *Working Class*. Ordinary English white people found that out in the Agricultural revolution when the *white* English Land-owning Squire-archy enclosed the Common Land and cleared tenants, demolishing age-old village communities, so they, the big landowners, could operate large-scale farming. The tribal groups of the Highland Clans found it out by being defeated at Cullodden by the Lowland-backed modern Business Class; and a century later in the Highland Clearances, abandoned by their chieftains and cleared off the land for more profitable sheep farming.

Despite this obvious fact of the lack of any sense in *colour* and of the importance of *class*, the Business Class very powerfully and successfully promote in people's heads the idea of a white '*us'.* And a '*they*' that means non-white people of only recent immigration. They create the belief, strongly held by many, that the country ***is*** white, is for *'whites.'* Just look in the newsagents now and again at the front page headlines of their 'news' papers. They're repeatedly about *We*, *Us* and *Our.* You'll see for certain that they do it deliberately and consciously to promote a *white* group image to obscure the *class* image that reflects our real relationships with them.

But those expressions of *We* and *Us* and *Our's* meaning whites don't square with the Business Class's individualist, self-centred, *uncaring politics.* Nor with the politics of hundreds of thousands of ordinary members of the Tory party and the millions who vote for them. White / British images, attitudes and loyalty make no sense in Industrial, Class society. They're outdated by at least two centuries - and didn't make sense even before that, under the Monarchy-led dictatorship of Aristocrats.

But an awful lot of us *do* fall for the Us-Whites-English-British identity myth. The Business Class do soak your brain you with the imagery, from the earliest age and relentlessly every day of your life. *People falling for it need to adjust their heads to the real, class-based groups operating in the society they're actually living in*. They should catch on to how *Industrial* society works and realise that ethnic and colour-based groups make no sense at all in it. They have no basis in reality, because being 'white' doesn't mean 'white' people actually care about each other.

Of course there's no reason why they should, not for that reason. But nationalist, racist and fascist politics assumes they do, or should.

Ethnic feelings decline amongst immigrant groups eventually. *Real* group identities are based on how we *actually* relate to each other. That's why this work argues for a clearer view and stronger image of *Working Class,* based on reality; and for us to name *the Business Class.*

Have a Go at Foreign Workers, Not Us, They Say.

But Let's Do That

In their 'news' papers mainly, and as the Tories, the Business Class push strongly at Working Class people the myth that immigrants or foreign workers are 'taking your jobs' and are favoured over 'whites' in the use of public services. And they succeed, with some workers. To counter that and to tackle racism in general, on union courses this writer did in the 1980's we'd look at 'the Facts About Immigration', that challenge the racist myths that exaggerate the numbers of immigrants; that take into account how many British people ***Emigrate***, to Spain and France and Australia and Canada (I could name half-a-dozen easily); that look at figures this writer saw then, that showed there were more Americans here than Pakistanis (Americans are just more dispersed and don't look much different to the mainly-white natives); that highlight how Black and Asian people keep the NHS going, do the crap jobs. All that anti-racist stuff.

But we were doing this as the *white* Tory Thatcher government was viciously attacking *her fellow-whites.* Yours truly got thinking - why even *look* at immigrants, 'black' people or Asians as if from a view of a white *us?* Why look at '*them'* at all, at whether *they* are a problem, taking *'our'* jobs and benefits, ruining *our* culture? Or, alternatively, a help, taking the crap jobs, staffing the Health Service? Never mind all that, one way or the other. It's a minor issue. *Where is the 'Us' anyway?*

Turn It Round the Other Way

Look in the other direction, at 'white' people. *Who **is** this **Us** that we are supposed feel part and to see others as outsiders to?* ***Who Does it Include and What are they Like*?** Once you just ask that question it's obvious that too many of 'Us' are people who are against me and you and our chances of a decent life. They're a minority but they're still too many. They - the white *Us* in Britain - includes Thatcher and the people who put her in power - the Tory party and those who voted for them. They are some of the nastiest people on the planet, some of the most ruthless and barbaric.

They don't really believe in the British *'Us'.* Thatcher called people like me, decent ordinary organised workers, Trade Unionists, 'the enemy within'. But we work for a decent life for all our fellow-Citizens. Her and her selfish, anti-social, Business Class don't. They are more truly an 'enemy within', enemies of decency to other citizens.

To some people younger than me Thatcher and Tebbitt will be old, unknown enemies. Their successors aren't so easily named – those kinds of Tories are being kept in the background at the moment while the Cameron leadership tries to present themselves as civilised. But there is still their Press, still showing us the ugliness of raw Business Class Toryism. The '*white'* English or British '*us'* includes we-worker-hating people like those who own and run the Express, the Daily Star, the Daily Sport, the Telegraph, Murdoch's Sun and his Times. They virulently oppose benefits, public services and unions. *That is opposition to their fellow-whites, and non-whites, getting any support, any common Welfare, from 'the country' or being able to organise for their own self-defence*! The owners, editors and the columnists and probably some of the readers are my – and your – most serious enemies. Not 'the French' or 'the Germans' or other 'foreigners'.

They are our enemies not just because of their direct nastiness to us. But also because they brutalise large numbers of our poorer working class people, especially young working class men who, feeling a need to assert themselves, make some of our streets unsafe to walk on at night.

The Business Class Make a Lying Promise to 'Whites'

Jobs again. For jobs we depend on the Business Class needing our labour in their businesses. But that's only because capitalist industrial production *forces* us into that relationship. Before early capital owners organised industrialism our forebears didn't sit around helplessly unable to support themselves. They ran small farms and trades. The famous Luddites opposed industrial production because, it being more efficient than their small-scale production, it forced them out of business as independent producers and into having to be factory workers instead.

And so it is for us - mass production is so much more efficient than independent small-scale production that we all now effectively *have* to work in it. *That's* how we are going to work and produce things. With some room for small production, especially in new products. If we could get more mature in how we organise ourselves, our society, we could run mass production and services without depending on the Business Class. That would be Socialism. But we haven't grown up enough to do that yet. This book covers enough ground already, without exploring that. But if we can do it in war time, we can do it in peace time.

So at present, We, the masses of workers, depend on Them and their Business System for our jobs. And they depend on our work to get rich.

But the Business Class deny this truth that we live in an industrialised world where jobs come from *Collective* activity, with all the many millions of us necessarily depending on *the System* that they own and run, for work. Instead, they present themselves as independent, freely-operating, entrepreneurial individuals (that's nonsense, they themselves operate as collectives, *Companies*), denying overall social responsibilities. And they don't *set out* to provide fellow-white 'Britons' with jobs. They only do it to make money. They avoid employing us, as far as they can. Cutting staff is one of the key skills that keeps 'the Suits' in BMW's. In this set up, they say they are on their own, looking out only for themselves, and so is everybody else.

Fair enough, maybe, if that's a consistent political position. But while denying Society-wide responsibilities, their leading activists and politicians also promise all the other mostly white, English, British people that they are **not** on their own. That 'Britain' will look after 'the British', will solve their problems. That 'Britain' is an institution they should believe in, be loyal to.

Yet although they own and run *the Economy* and most jobs come from their businesses and their system, they've no intention of doing anything for British people and fight very hard to avoid being forced into any contribution. Look at the attitudes of the Conservatives and Business people to any policy that actually involves caring for fellow-white 'Britons'. They're against all forms of welfare and mutual, social support, in Health Services, Education, Unemployment and Sick Benefit and Pensions. They stress *the individual,* because, with them having the wealth made from our work, they are rich enough, strong enough, independent enough, to get by on their own, to buy private Health Care, to buy private Education for their kids. They make gestures towards Public Services because they need votes from at least some

of the rest of us. But they work hard in politics to minimise such support for their fellow-country(wo)men, and what it would cost them in taxes.

So 'white' workers who base their politics on the notion of 'the country' and 'it' doing much for ordinary whites are being taken in by a lying promise. They are ignoring that key fact about Business Class British white Conservatives – *they don't care about their fellow-whites*. That their most basic political belief is "Selfishness and looking out only for yourself is Human Nature; and it justifies not caring about other people". Whenever this view is put, it's overlooked that most of the other people not cared about are fellow-whites.

But the lying promise that 'Britain' will see you right convinces and shapes the world view of many, too many, working class people. Let's be absolutely clear - *the Business Class and their System are responsible for the shortage of jobs and other necessities like housing*. But 'Britain' and 'the British' creates in many people's heads a primary political image that masks the key role of the Business Class, and insulates them from being held responsible. Most people haven't got a clear image of them and their role, so they leave them unchallenged. The 'British' ideas direct many working class 'whites' away from class awareness and any antagonism to them.

Through their Press and their party, the Business Class urge people instead to blame their problems on each other, with press campaigns demonising people on benefits as scroungers on the rest, and on one kind of outsider or another.

They make a lot of headline points about what working class 'white' people are not getting and should get. But it's white and other colour anti-racist Trade Unionists and Socialists who *do* far more for 'whites' than the news paper owners and writers of racist headlines do.

But they succeed, and we get ridiculous but strong racist political views, that, amazingly, *ignore the fact of the Business Class's role as 'the economy',* ignores their most basic beliefs and the irresponsibility of their system. Taken in by a half-made lying promise that 'we British' are due jobs and houses as of right (we should be but without strong Class organisation and action, we aren't going to get it), many people in need of them and other public support plead to be placed before *'outsiders'* - recent immigrants or foreign workers. *But they don't make that claim directly on the Business Class*. The notion of 'the country' leads them to place the demand instead on 'the Government'.

The Government then could and should take on the Business Class, pressurise them and legislate for them to take care of the mass of the British population. *But because Business **is** the Economy the Business Class has the power to refuse to co-operate, to be less active or take their money and business activity elsewhere. And when threatened with having to behave with Society-wide responsibility, that's what they do.*

So when New Labour, in government, give business people whatever they want, it's for that reason, that they own and run the economy. Labour should say they *have* to do that because the Business Class are so much better organised than us, and that we need to be better organised so there'd be the political force to negotiate with them more equally. To open up the big political debate there should be around the issue. Blair, Brown and Mandelson have actually openly said it. Except they are so defeatist they don't say the second bit – that we need to be more organised.

New Labour seem to actually believe in allowing them to operate with minimal regulation. Look how soft they've been with the Banks since 2009, after bailing

them out with mind-boggling amounts of Taxpayers money. The Lib Dems would do the same. When the Tories are in government, that's the Business Class themselves in government, so obviously they'll not 'take on' themselves.

Instead, talking of what people are owed by 'the country', not by themselves, they say a lot about what working class whites should have, and use 'Britishness' to whip up victimisation of outsiders, immigrants, asylum seekers and foreign workers. For non-organised workers, and New Labour, *acceding to the racist argument, blaming outsiders, is easier than taking on the Business Class*. Labour Governments only try to do things *on behalf* of ordinary, mostly-white working class people, without a strongly-organised Working Class *demanding* they do, so are limited by what the Business Class will accept.

Pleading to the Government for *'British' Jobs For 'British' Workers'* ahead of *'foreign'* workers is really pleading, weakly, for the Government to ***make*** the Business Class support their fellow-British. They sometimes do if it only involves victimising outsiders. But when that's done, then what? If racists and fascists actually got their way, if there *were* no coloured or any other kind of immigrant, would this British Business Class, of mostly white rich people, deliver on 'the country's' promise? Would they voluntarily run the country, the economy, to ensure jobs and houses and so on for their fellow white, Working Class, British? Have they ever? Do they now, when they could? Of course not. It goes against their most basic and fiercely-held 'individualist' beliefs.

As said, their Business System is so unorganised and chaotic it collapses for no good reason, nothing to do with human needs changing. But when it does, when their system fails to deliver jobs and houses, the Business Class won't accept responsibility. When it goes into recession, depression, slump or crisis, do they spend their many billions of pounds of accumulated Capital on their fellow-whites, keeping them in work, paying wages to do socially useful work? Do they propose, support, or accept strong Social Security for their suffering white fellow-countrymen, and the taxes needed for that, giving those made redundant enough in benefits to carry on living properly, pay the mortgage and so on? Of course not. In the 2008-on financial crisis, it's being done the other way round - ***we're*** **bailing *them* out!**

Forcing these tough, wealthy, mainly-white 'It's human nature to be ruthlessly self-interested' Business class people to look after fellow–whites based on such an empty thing as being the same colour is an unlikely project. Have racists never *noticed* how opposed white Business Class people are to supporting their fellow-whites? Pleading to them on the flimsy basis of shared colour and living under the same government is weak and ridiculous because *the Business Class believe much more strongly in Self-Interest, Individualism and Class, their Class, than they do in loyalty to fellow-whites*.

Getting our needs met will be a difficult enough task for a Working Class united across Gender, Nationality, Origin, Colour, Regionalism and Religion. Politics that just pleads, weakly, for white workers to be put above other workers has no chance.

It's an unlikely project also because most 'whites' actually have far more sense than to go along with racist politics. They can see that point, that it's daft to beg from the selfish white Business Class Rich on an empty argument of shared colour and meaningless 'British' ethnicity, that ignores what should be the obvious need to unite by *Class* to develop the strength to challenge them and *demand* the provision of Jobs, Houses, Health and Education.

It all just does what it is intended to do - divides us, splits off some of us, deluded into not challenging the Business Class but, irrelevantly and weakly, attacking weaker workers, minority group workers.

To repeat - the Lying Promise the Business Class make that 'the country' cares for 'white-English-British' people is exposed by their most basic political and economic belief - that we're all On Our Own and the Strongest can get Rich while the Weak go to the wall.

Many Ordinary White People Don't Care About Each Other

That's been showing how there's no 'white' ***us*** or ***we*** together with Business Class people, the Rich and the Tories. But the image of *Whites*, of *the British,* has large numbers of ordinary 'whites' thinking there's a *we* of *ordinary* working class people and small traders, a meaningful group who should treat non-whites as the cause of our problems. But again, turn that around - instead of looking at immigrants, foreigners, foreign workers and whether or not they are a problem *let's look in the other direction.* Let's look at 'ordinary' 'whites'. What sense is there in talking of ***ordinary*** white British people as 'We' and 'Us'? Is concern for the needs of other 'whites' common amongst those who are 'white'? How much do your fellow–whites *care* about *you*? How do they actually treat each other? Is there a meaningful group based on colour?

Many 'whites' don't care about *anybody* else much, other whites included. They just *'Look after Number 1.'* It's a reasonable view in a sense - white or 'British' is only a vague association based only on living under the same government system. And then many who claim to believe strongly in *'their country*' - Conservative voters and Republicans in the US - don't *care* much about their fellow-countrymen. They say "Why should I be taxed to support somebody on welfare?" Well, with your belief in 'Britain' or 'the USA', surely that really means 'the people' - so shouldn't it mean you have concern for your fellow-countrymen and your fellow-whites?

So the *'we' of* 'whites' are ***not*** all one, caring about each other. Nor should they, not for that superficial reason. Yet nationalist, racist politics makes a whopping big assumption that they do. Without actually saying so. But it's not true, it ignores real people and real relationships. *We just happen to live on the same piece of territory under the same law-making institutions and have similar colour skin.* It's a flimsy basis for grouping us together and it doesn't mean anything in reality.

Many, most, 'whites' or 'English' or 'British' people are ***alright,*** and do care about fellow-whites - and people of other colours. They do it from shared universal *Human Decency* and shared *Working Class* identity and solidarity, not from meaningless shared *whiteness.*

And although a lot of 'white' people don't care about other 'white' people, a lot of the Black and Asian minorities do. Here's a small example from the writer's experience.

During the Miner's Strike we had to pick up a load of Geordie miners, doing a tour of meetings to raise money, who were stranded on the motorway when their coach broke down. Actually they were stranded because they wouldn't wait near the coach for it to be fixed but went across fields and found a pub and by the time they got back hours later the coach had been fixed and the driver had given up on them and left. We got a few cars out there and found

about fifty of them sitting on the embankment. An unlikely number crammed themselves into our medium-sized Fiat. Taking them back to our district where we were putting them up, and driving through a neighbouring district with some black people - but actually mostly white – one young Geordie said, disapprovingly, 'There's an awful lot of they 'blackies' round here'. I said 'Yeah, well, some of them give to the collections we have for you on the precinct on Saturdays. And some white people don't'.

And Some Are positively Bad to Each Other

But it's not just those 'white' people who don't ***care.*** There's too many white people being ***actively bad*** to others for identity based on skin colour to make sense. Plain and obvious on a daily basis - millions of fellow-British people hate each other viciously as football fans. Where's the white or British identity in that?

In ordinary everyday life you get various kinds of behaviour, some offensive, some dangerous, from some white fellow-countrymen and women to others. Some of them are straight-up selfish pigs as drivers, causing danger, congestion and stress with their cars. They park on pavements where I'm trying to walk; at junctions, making it dangerous and awkward for me; on double yellow lines, blocking off my progress and yours and that of hundreds of others every minute. They're people who think they own the place and don't give a monkey's about inconveniencing others. And if you ask them to behave you'll get a mouthful from many of them or an invitation to a scrap. And I'm supposed to feel a common identity with *these* people?

There's worse crimes than the next example. But is there anything so *casually* anti-social to fellow-countrymen, so disgusting, as shitting all over public places? Millions of 'British' dog-owners *shit in public*. They do it all over the pavements and roads. You step on it going to your car. So it gets on the carpets in your car; on the wheels of the push-bikes your kids bring into the hall (so they're not stolen.) Many times, I've had to wash dog-owner's filth off my shoes and the wheels of the bikes. They shit in the parks. When I was running kid's football I'd have to wash crap off a dozen balls. Think about how we'd see it if it was really *people* really doing it. But it is. Back in the 70's racists used to claim Asian people were dirty. Try your fellow-white British dog-owners. (Dog-owning readers – most have been behaving better since me and others complained enough; but what a thing to do) .

And you get vicious, brutal behaviour from some ordinary white people. There's a lot of good ones; but when a lot of people, like my old Mum, daren't walk the streets or parks, especially at night, for fear of being attacked by fellow-whites (and other colours) what sense does it make?

Some - *some* - white people, fellow 'Britons', and some non-whites too, have done things to me and mine at street level that show that there's not much caring by skin colour amongst ordinary folk. At *Extra Stuff 3 at Page 222* are a few examples of robbery and street attacks just from my experience that hit me hard and are easy to recall. I could also easily recall instances where some people who were white and British did bad things to other British people than me. You too will have experienced some bad treatment from some bad white-English-British people. My experience and probably yours shows no sense in grouping by colour with quite a few ordinary white or any other colour 'British' people.

The *We* of national identity includes some *'white' 'British'* people who've robbed from my kids and yours; stolen my motor-bike; broken into your car, or stolen it; bullied us at work, sacked me and you and your relatives and friends. 'Fellow-countrymen' and women have done you over - they've sold you faulty goods in shops and so have ordinary people you bought things from; 'done' you with shoddy central heating and building work. I'm sure you've had problem neighbours? Been burgled, robbed, Assaulted? All of that is enough to sharply reduce the power and significance of being *English* or *British*.

Many 'British' people *criminalise and imprison* other 'British' people just for putting substances of their own choice into their own bodies. How cheeky is that? How outrageous. A 'Free Country', is it ?

Some Substances can harm people. It depends on the substance and the person. Tobacco, Alcohol, Crack, Cocaine harm. Others don't, or don't much. Even Heroin is OK if it's clean and you put up with being dependent on it. But harmful or not or a little, it's insolent, arrogant and outrageous of some 'British' people to do this to their fellow-countrymen. *It breaches your Human Rights to invade your freedom by criminalising you for what you do to yourself.* It's also absurd – *it's a victimless crime.* The Criminal and the Victim are the same person!

And although substances don't directly harm anybody but the user, the failed, stupid policy of Prohibition *does* cause immense damage to millions of us, non-users and users alike, causing huge amounts of crime because people can't get substances legally.

Then, to repeat, there's attacks on the street. The Business Class, the Conservatives, can be pretty brutal. But they don't generally attack you at random on the street, at night maybe, and rob and maybe stab you. But a number of poorer Working Class people, particularly young lads, do, and are psychopathically brutal to each other. This is analysed more in *Anti-Social Behaviour or Some Organise; Some Go Under; Some Turn Nasty*, a section of They Are The Business Class. It's argued there that it's mostly caused by the brutalisation, the *You're On Your Own, Look Out only for Yourself* philosophy and social relationships engineered and fiercely defended by the Business Class / Conservatives.

But whoever causes it, since some ordinary, working class people do brutal things to each other, it's another fact that shows the group 'white' national identity to be a myth.

It's not *outsiders, 'foreigners'* doing these bad things to me and you – it's fellow-British people, often white. It's a fact that most of the people who've actually done bad things to me and probably to you are white and English and British. (And some have been Black or Asian British.) I've given some examples of fellow-British people being bad – what are yours?

In Politics, at Work, and on the Street, mine and your most serious problems come not from the foreigners and immigrants and asylum-seekers that we are encouraged to see as causing our problems; but from substantial numbers of our supposed fellow-British.

But most 'whites' – most people of any 'colour' – *are Alright*

Of course, that's nowhere near to saying **most** white British / English people are bad. You or I could just as easily list, at greater length, the decent acts done to or for me by fellow-white citizens.

It's just saying that when you take together the Business Class, the many ordinary people who just 'look after number one', and the actively bad people, there's no sense in the commonly held images of colour and nation.

And now we're travelling and holidaying abroad can't we all see the decent people amongst other *'nationalities'*? I could for some French people, Spanish, American, German I've met. You could too - you know some nice people who aren't British or white. They're just ***Decent People***. Let's use that as the first way of grouping people, wherever they're 'from', instead of the nationalist and colour-based ones.

(Though there's a disadvantage, the tabloid papers use 'decent' for an assumed group who follow their pretended moral(istic) standards.)

Most People Are Alright. Maybe that's the term to use – *'People Who Are Alright'*. Most, including most of us 'whites', are mostly good people.

Of the generality of people who are alright we can easily name particular groups. Like all those people, maybe you and your workmates, who support Red Nose days for raising money for the world's desperately poor; the actors, musicians, writers and other artists, and everybody else who perform at Make Poverty History concerts; people like those who run all the charities and staff the charity shops. And just ordinary people - like all them on 'Who Wants To Be a Millionaire', a TV quiz show - seem OK.

It's been argued here that even some of the mostly white business class are alright. *A lot of people, the majority, mostly white (as it happens) are civilised, decent people*. If you add Labour and Lib Dem Voters together, there's clearly a decentish 'Social Democrat' majority in the UK. We should always remember that the Conservatives, even when they ruled us thuggishly under Thatcher, never got the support of more than thirty percent of those entitled to vote.

But the problem is that although most people are *alright,* huge numbers don't actually *do* much, are not active politically, with and for other people. The numbers *doing* anything consciously and actively to tackle the not-alright Business Class people and to build decent support systems for each other are nowhere near enough. Some do. But lots don't.

And many decent people, particularly those called 'liberals', are confused. Their political thinking is a mid-way muddle between the two main political philosophies –

- the Conservative individual free-market view
  if you can make it, you can keep it (and sod everybody else);
- and *the support-each-other* civilised view, once Labour's.

Too many decent people aren't sure what balance they want between these two positions. New Labour and the Lib Dems both try to present a package balancing them and decent people vote for one of them or the other. That results in a split in *the majority civilised vote* and allows the anti-social Tory minority to be the largest party. That's how they got in to government for eighteen years; and it's how they might get in again.

Another weakness of liberals like the columnists at the Guardian newspaper, Polly Toynbee and others, is that they too believe the Lying Promise and write as if this ***is*** actually a caring society, when in it's essentials it's not. They write intelligently on social policy to influence politicians, showing how things could

be better *for* the real *Us*, the masses, as if there's really *'a nation'* that genuinely cares about the citizens.

But they don't see how the Business Class, with their central role in '*the Country*', in *the Economy*, have much more influence over Politicians than liberal newspapers. They don't see that because politicians defer to the Business Class it is not enough to make a reasoned, rational, civilised case to the decent politicians, it is necessary to seriously challenge the Business Class itself. Which they don't do. And they, 'liberals', don't see an active role for us, the masses, in getting organised and making that challenge ourselves.

To sum up - most white 'British' people are alright. But there aren't at present enough organised and active together for us to achieve a decent society, that wouldn't be based on colour. And there's so many who aren't alright that 'whites' just doesn't work as a group. It's nonsense when you look at what rich white Business Class people do to you; and also what some selfish and even vicious ordinary white people do to you.

And just to be clear - not all people from ethnic minorities are nice people either. Most are, because most *People* are alright. But you can't tell by the colour of anyone's skin.

If You Dig, Whites Are Mixed Race Anyway

It's common knowledge that there's no really racially pure 'whites' anyway. Here is a useful exercise done on Union Representatives anti-racism classes, called 'Dig Where You Stand'. Reps are asked to find out and report on where their parents and grandparents lived, what they'd done for a living, if they'd moved, and why. That uncovered some *real history*, stuff you normally learned from the history books, but here it was coming from real people's stories.

It turned up all the usual 19th Century Agricultural and Industrial Revolution stuff, of people having had to move to the towns because the Landowners enclosed - robbed - the Common land, and the mechanisation of agricultural work; then having to move again as industrial jobs kept collapsing too. We got all the Irish and Welsh immigration – as with my ancestors. And also people descended from all sorts of immigrant groups. One rep was descended from the Huguenots who were expelled from France by a Catholic King for being so independent-minded as to be Protestants. And there was Tony, descended from White Russians, the landed and Business Class who fought against the Bolshevik Revolution, who emigrated to the UK when they lost. But Tony was a Shop Steward in a factory and therefore now on the right side.

Dig Where You Stand always showed what a mixed bunch we are and how '*white-British*' identity is shallow, as is fairly common knowledge. Everybody must have some fairly recent immigrant people in their family. But if your skin is 'white' you're soon lost in the mix. Black and Asian immigrants aren't simply because they're more of a different colour. But that's all it is – a different colour. Yes, some come with different cultures.

But the white British Rich have a very different culture to most of us.

No National Identity Shared With the Tories

Summing up the argument - national identity means putting yourself in the same identity group as a self-obsessed, anti-you, and often thuggish class – Business Class people and the Conservatives. We can say the Business Class are thugs, as a class, because of the poverty, brutality, race hatred and wars that

they, the UK one and other Business Class's, consciously create. And it means being in a group with some uncaring and even vicious ordinary people.

Yes, the existence of *'a unified Governing System for a piece of Territory'* has some definite, significant meaning. And there is *some* real, definite, mutual interest between all of us who live in the same country, at least because we do actually live under (under?) the same law-making and economic and financial systems. You might argue that *the Country* provides us with mutual support through the National Insurance system, the Benefit safety net, the Health Service, Education.

But they have nothing to do with nationality. *They are not fixed rights guaranteed by your Britishness and not guaranteed to you by all your fellow-British*. They've been won by some of us ***Decent*** British people organising politically and fighting against the opposition of the ***Rich*** British and by enough of us voting for these things. They can be and are taken away as the Business Class, as the Conservatives, try, as ever, to escape any responsibility for us, their so-called fellow-countrymen and women.

There's nothing like the kind of mutual support guaranteed to British people by fellow-British people to justify the easy assumption of national common interest relentlessly pumped out by the Rich and the Business Class, and accepted by most of us.

The argument needed to be put at length, as has been done.

But it can be put in just two words – The Tories.

Maybe with a third word between those two.

That might all have seemed like a class-war rant. It challenges the established view of 'the country' more than is normally done. But the Tories actually realised it themselves, way back in the 1880's. After conceding the vote to the better-off of the male half of us, they started talking of the need for 'One Nation Conservatism.' They meant, as has been vigorously argued here, that the way they really want to do things shows the idea of 'the nation' to be nonsense and they would need to treat the worker majority better if they were to get any votes from us. *So they themselves agree with all this.*

But they've never foregone their selfish greed enough to do enough about it.

National identity obscures the far more real identities of –

Business Class people.

Decent people.

Working Class people.

A note - this work obviously argues on the side of the Working Class. But as said when talking of some ordinary people's bad behaviour and street thuggery, working class people are not *guaranteed* to be decent. However, they are generally more civilised, not being amongst the aggressively selfish who self-select themselves into the Business Class; they're on the wrong end of the Business Class's ruthless uncaring ways of running society, so they have an interest in *Decent, Collective* ways of running it. And *our Working Class ways of Organising are as Decent, Fair, Collective, Civilised as we are yet capable of.*

It's the Same All Over (but it doesn't Have To Be)

It's not just 'the British' who get taken in by being grouped together as a '*nation*' with people who don't, many of them, offer you much help and support in life. People fall for national identity all over the world.

And people generalise about supposed *national characteristics* of 'the French', 'the Germans', 'Aussies', assuming *they're* all together more than they really are, and more different to the British '*Us*' than they really are. But examine these collective stereotypes made about 'foreign' people just because they live on the same piece of territory and you'll usually find they don't stand up to the examination. The *'Welsh',* the *'Italians'*, the *'Spanish'*, the '*Americans* (or *Yanks*) and others aren't necessarily all the same and aren't necessarily nice to each other.

The 'Welsh'

Quite a lot of the writing of this was done in a caravan in Wales. People here in 'Wales' have a strong group identity image. They're mostly lovely people but some are hostile to *English* people. It's because (they say) *'the English'* are buying second homes here, driving up house prices so 'local' or 'Welsh' people can't afford them. *Or that's how it looks to those who hold strong perceptions of people as 'Welsh' and 'English',* who use those easily available notions of national identity that make people ever-ready to identify some as outsiders.

But it's not *ordinary* English people who are driving up house prices in Wales. It's *wealthy* people. Many of them are indeed 'from' England. But why be hostile to every English person because of what English *wealthy* people do? I'm not one, and I'm not responsible for them. They are as much of a problem to me as they are to the Welsh would-be home buyer.

And if (some) Welsh people are going to be hostile to the *'English' Buyers* of houses there for driving house prices up, why not also blame the *Sellers,* their fellow Welsh? They take the money offered by a wealthy English person instead of selling for less to a fellow Welsh person. It could be racist to do that so I'm not actually recommending it - just pointing out how badly-thought out the nationalist attitude is. It's casually used to attack the *outsider* but it's not noticed what little it means between themselves. The nationalist myth readily makes (some of) them hostile to 'the English'; but ignore what they do to each other.

Maybe they'd argue it was excusable for the Welsh seller to take the money as they'd be less well-off than the wealthy English buyer. OK then – it's about *Wealth Inequality*, isn't it? Not about Welshness or Englishness.

And there's some Welsh people who'll rob and attack their fellow-Welsh; or maybe drunkenly assault them on a hard-man's Saturday night out.

So how much sense does 'Welshness' make? Some, maybe. They were colonised, back in the years around 1300 CE. But not by *'the English,* but by *Norman* Kings and Aristocracy - the same people who'd invaded and oppressed 'the English'.

Maybe the English rich colonise the Welsh now in some way. But they've got their own Rich too. As with other national identities, too much is made of national identity. Thankfully, many of 'the Welsh' are in fact firmly Socialist before being nationalist.

The 'Italians' ? Lombards – Romans – Neapolitans – Communists - Conservatives – Fascists – and more

People who live on that bit of territory we call 'Italy' do share a language and a law-making and government system. But they're not all big supportive pals together. Many (although not all) Northerners feel superior to and despise and hate the poorer Southerners. There's a political party – the Northern League - based on a Northern self-image and hatred and contempt for Southerners. Romans too have a strong regional identity thing.

We talk very readily of *Italy*, of *the Italians,* as if Italy is clearly united and defined and uniform. But it's not been one single, unified country for long, only since around 1870 when, led by Garibaldi, some small mini-countries joined together. Doesn't that just take the biscuit, to treat them *so* much as one people? And as well as regional divisions, there's plenty of 'Italians' with a clearer sense of Class than of nation. On the Working Class side, they've a much stronger Communist Party than anything we've got in the UK; and on the Business Class side, people like Berlusconi, and the neo-fascists.

And people talk of Italian stereotypes, such as them all being supposedly demonstrative and stylish. But though there's a lot of nice things about Italy and 'the Italians' there's not much style about their cynical, boring defensive football, their callous attitude to the Beautiful Game.

The 'Spanish'? - Castilians - Catalunyans - Basques -

Take for another example *the Spanish*. Again, they're not the single, clearly-identified group that people have in their heads when they say 'the Spanish.' They've deep divisions between Castilians – from around Madrid - and Catalunyans. Ask someone from Barcelona. Ask a Basque if they are Spanish. In the regions they pretend they can't speak Spanish because they resent centralised rule from Madrid, and speak local languages.

Mah Fellow-Americans, I Don't Care If You Die

Take the USA. Americans are friendly enough people in conversation, but are deeply divided in wealth and power, from the neo-Con Republicans in their antiseptic plastic shiny luxury to the poor-white 'trailer-park trash'. And deeply divided between White and Black - the New Orleans disaster illustrated the point. They care so little about each other they've not even got a Health Service! (Hope for the Decent ones in electing Obama though?)

Indians and Pakistanis

Indians and Pakistanis are not as united as you'd think from the way people just call them all '*Indians'* and '*Pakistanis*'. In India Hindu Nationalist extremists do awful things to fellow-Indians; and the *Caste* system, a Medieval class system, is divisive and means un-caring treatment of fellow-countrymen and women. Pakistan is a cobbled-together state, a result of the disastrous way the British Imperial Ruling Class (or, more accurately, the Business Class in politics) got out of India, which until then included what was made into 'Pakistan'. In 'Pakistan' there's serious differences between people with different class and regional interests.

Anti-Colonial Nationalism

You can make exceptions for nationalism in countries in South America and Africa and Asia where the people have a common fight against the imperialism of the US and it's flunkies like Blair. Their national identity often represents something worthwhile they're doing together.

But most countries aren't the sort of caring Socialist Republics that might make sense of national identity. That's fact. Most, all around the world, are business-dominated. Very rich Business Class people successfully, and sometimes brutally, obstruct the poor trying to get their countries run for the benefit of the majority, but run them for themselves and their US backers instead. For example, the way Brasil play football is one of the most beautiful collective human artistic achievements ever. But where's the substance in bigging it up about being 'Brasilian', when there's been murder squads killing poor fellow-Brasilian street kids? When so many live in those awful slums, the 'favellas', without basic hygiene? When the poor Farmer's Union leader is assassinated? When Brasil is the most unequal society on earth, last time I read?

In Argentina there's plenty of class rule and inequality. In the 1970's and early 80's fascist Generals secretly murdered Working Class activists, *the Disappeared,* dropping them from planes over the Atlantic after torturing them. They used the nationalism generated by the Argentina football team to boost support for their regime and tried to use Diego Maradona for that. But Diego, being a poor boy from the Barrios with loyalty to his Working Class community, wisely kept his distance from them.

Agreed

It often feels like it's going against the stream to argue these unusual, radical views against national identity. But we internationalists are not alone, you can get agreement, and I did with two of these examples. One Welsh guy I got talking to came up, unprompted by me, with that same argument made above - that you could blame rising house prices in Wales on the Welsh *seller* for not selling to a fellow-countryman but taking the extra money from a wealthy English *buyer* instead.

And once when starting to say to an Italian guy 'Italians are all supposed to be stylish but what about the boring football?' he responded to 'Italians are all supposed to be stylish' with *"Oh, that's not **Us**! That's **the Rich**".*

In conclusion - *where, really, is the substance in nationalism in any country where the Business Class have a free rein to run their uncaring, selfish, brutal Business System?* This work says a lot about the lack of meaning and the dangers of believing in Englishness or Britishness, because that's the nationalist myth most apparent around me. But it's a common problem around the world.

What About You and 'Identities' ?

In the next section -

The False Identities of 'Localism'

and Why We Use Them

False Identities
or
It's Not Where You're
From That Matters.
It's Where You're ***At***

Expressing Your Individuality…..

This work says a lot about grouping by class and not grouping by national identity. But we identify ourselves in more ways than those. How do *you* define yourself? Maybe you are, just, ***you*****?** Many people invest a lot in their personal life, in their sense of identity simply as themselves, an ***Individual,*** often expressed through buying things and having things through consumerism or through their appearance, what they wear, how they look. Through their social lives or their houses and their cars, in improving the house or customising the car or motor-bike. In taking holidays, travelling. Around their jobs, 'their career'. There's a lot said about 'the individual'. Marketing and advertising emphasise 'you' and your individual needs and desires. And politicians bang on in a variety of ways about the Individual, or *Individualism*, in business, in culture, in identity. They maintain it is the be-all and end-all of existence. You, you, you. You want to be yourself, right? Don't we all?

Individual self-expression through ***Consumerism*** is one of the things, along with celebrity-dazzlement, Britishness and being football-mad, that you are allowed and encouraged to indulge in; while you are discouraged and prevented from exercising any power at work, and in all the decisions made in politics. Much of consumerist individualism is shallow and insubstantial but although we're highly social, we are indeed individuals with varying personal interests and tastes. So self-expression as long as it hurts nobody else is a human right.

And for people in well-paid work in the UK, the US, Europe, Australia, a few other countries, individualism expressed through what you own and consume obviously makes some kind of sense, certainly to many people. Because although work is often boring, meaningless, oppressive, with harsh workloads, long hours, not enough time off, and is insecure, *outside* work most of us can enjoy a lot more stuff, consume a lot more of everything, express ourselves through what we have and do, than we did a couple of decades ago. Consumerism in the UK today is *amazing*. When this poor boy was growing up, the rich, the Business class, enjoyed lives of excessive consumption, but only let us have just enough to get by. Not now. Now, they throw consumer

stuff at us and easy credit so we can buy it. Because 'the economy' is so productive it only works by force-feeding us iPods, HDTV, fast food, DVDs, flights abroad, and on and on.

They need us to buy their stuff, much of which we don't need, because of their crazy need for constant ***Economic Growth*.** It's consumer heaven if you've got enough 'disposable income' - as their marketing creeps term it. Even if you haven't, they recklessly throw credit at us to keep growth going, keep retail spending ever upward. For many, that's good enough, and I understand consumer individualism without agreeing with it.

But for all the talk of the ***Individual,***

a lot of people have strong feelings of ***Group*** Identity.

What about all the talk of

We, Us, Our and Them

- about Local identity

- about 'Where You're From ?'

I bet you're not simply an individual. Despite the talk of individualism, people have an awful lot ***of Group Identities***.

I bet you also identify as one of these, or things like them:-

English or Welsh or Scottish or African or Asian-English? British?

Or French or German. Italian or American or Argentinian. Whatever.

A lot of you see yourselves as Northerners, in England. In Italy too.

If you're from Merseyside you probably see yourself as Scouse, a Scouser.

If from Manchester, a Manc.

Maybe you're a Yorkshireman? (What about Yorkshirewomen?)

Maybe you're a Londoner.

Maybe see yourself as White, or Black, or Asian?

Do you see yourself in and accept other people placing you in one of these many, many identity groups that are mostly based on ***Where You're From?***

For myself I don't. But almost everybody else seems to accept them as meaningful. Every day, in one or more ways, people expect me to identify myself as being in one or another of these groups. Here are some of the group identities that I could claim for myself and that people try to use to and about me:-

A Scouser, Northerner, English / British.

White, Middle class. A bloke.

A Manchester United supporter.

(Those of you reading this who are ABU - Anyone But United - read on, don't let that put you off. The whole argument of this section is that it means little in the real relationships we have with each other and that we have a lot in common that football support gets in the way of.)

I reject all these group identities. People often try tag me with them but they don't mean much to me and I ask people not to apply them to me with any great meaning. They don't describe or define me or anything I think is significant about me. Maybe there's some little significance in some of them. But nothing like as much as is usually made out.

Here are some of the things about me that *actually* mean something, things that matter about me :-

There's all sorts of personal stuff, that come from upbringing, emotions, likes, dislikes. Me, what I'm good at, what I'm not good at. What I'm like to other people. What I like about other people, what I don't like.

I'm a decent kind of person. One of the good guys.

I'm *Working Class*. That's not just a self-image, not something taken up voluntarily. I'm that because I've lived by working not owning a business.

I'm a Trade Unionist, *a Union man*.

I'm a *Feminist* even. Yes, really. You can't properly be a trade unionist without being for women's rights (as well as men's.)

I'm a *Socialist*, a Marxist. I'm a revolutionary by belief. (Not much by practice. I just think it'd be a good idea but only when an awful lot more people do too.)

I'm a lot more things – a husband, a lecturer (retired), a dad, a motorcyclist, a football man.

And so on – things about me that have real meaning.

None of that is meant to sound boastful in any way, as if they somehow make me superior because of any of it. It's just to say these things describe my *real* identity, far more than all those more readily-used '*where you're from*' identities.

And from my real personal qualities there are far more significant groups you can put me in than any based on *Localism*, *Place,* on where I'm from.

Couldn't you do the same exercise for yourself? Think about what your real qualities are, and see whether they mean more than 'where you're from.'

Go on - Do it now!

The Real We - the People Who *Really* Look 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, the whole of ***Challenging The System***, because things won't get better until we re-build.

A lot of you reading this will only know the national and local group identities being criticised here. *You won't have experienced the feeling of being one of the 'Us' of a group of workmates organised and acting together in a union.* You might even be influenced against unions by the anti-union bias that the Business class, it's so-called 'newspapers' and business-friendly politicians (that's most of them) pump out.

But in place of the fake group identities where you support sportsmen and women and teams just because they're 'English' or 'Scottish' or 'Welsh' or 'Irish', ***Union*** activity gives you a real solid group identity based on *real* links and *real* action together. When you organise with your ***Workmates*** to stand up to the boss, to challenge their unfair power, to take that risk and seriously act together, you get a real nice feeling of togetherness.

It's nothing magical, not as exciting as your team winning a trophy. But it's more meaningful, more real, more satisfying. It's good for your dignity and for your workmates dignity, for your collective dignity. It means you can look each other in the eye and see mutual respect. It sounds lefty pretentious to call it *comradeship* but that's what it is. Old soldiers and football team mates who've been through struggle together and stood by each other use that word readily, unashamedly. I'm not going to make much of it, here. But it's a good expression, really. It means you respect each other not so much for being funny, chatty, or such like less important 'sociable' attributes; more for the support you give each other in difficult, dangerous situations, for your common humanity and strength.

There *is* quite a lot of comradeship and *solidarity* about. There's just not enough, that's all. You get it even in the USA. You can get the impression that all Americans are seekers after the American Dream – you know, the full development of the personal success, selfish individualism, "I've 'made it', sod the rest of you" approach. But that's not the full story. American workers are, in their union attitudes, pretty solid, those who are organised.

Where You're From is over-rated

People are always making assumptions about you being in many *Where You're From* identity groups. But these Place-based identities are mostly nonsense and they're often *dangerous* nonsense. They're not usually based on anything very meaningful and they cause major problems for you. Yet they are so readily assumed, adopted, used, by so many of you, that you can feel out on a limb disagreeing with them. But there's actually a fair few who disagree with them too, it's just not often written down like this. Let's see about getting your support on it .....

National identity – How It Gets in Your Mind

The biggest example of people expecting you to feel part of a big social grouping is national identity, 'patriotism'. A lot was said earlier about how it just doesn't make sense, because of the selfish, sometimes brutal, actions of

the Business class and even of some ordinary Working class people. Now let's take a look at *How It Gets Us*.

and after that :

How they deliberately put it in our minds;

How they use it against us;

Why we help them do it.

'British' somebody-or-other wins

Gold for Under-Water Wellie-Chucking !

You're expected to support and rejoice in the triumphs, and be downcast at the failures, of any sportsmen and sportswomen from 'your' country. Take any day, today, or yesterday perhaps. How many times, in the papers, on TV or Radio, or in ordinary talk with friends, neighbours, workmates, have they and you assumed that you should support some person or team, maybe an athlete, maybe a cricket team? ***And isn't it simply because they live in the same country as you?*** Even though you've never heard of them, know nothing about them as people? They're often doing some obscure sport you've never heard of, like under-water wellie-chucking! But the media present it like you're going to fervently identify with them.

While writing, some bloke called Henman is trying to win Wimbledon and I'm supposed to be interested. But I don't know the guy. He could be alright, or he could be a Tory. (A real one – don't be fooled by the pretend-cuddly Cameronians of 2008.) If he is one – I've no idea if he is or not - it means he doesn't care about me and is hostile to me. He doesn't care if I've got a *Job* or *Income*; if I do have a job, he'll want me on the lowest pay possible, working the longest hours, with fewest holidays, no pension. If I don't accept that, he'll want to sack me. He'll support laws that stop me organising with you and other fellow-workers to protect each other from the boss's power at work. He won't care about my health or whether *the Health Service* can look after me. He'll not care about the *Education* me, you and our kids get.

So if he is a Tory, I hope he does terribly at his tennis. If he's not, then I just don't care how he does. Who is he to me? And who is Andy Murray? Mind you, Jenson Button, the Formula 1 car racer, seemed an Ok bloke in one interview I saw. But Lewis Hamilton – good on him for being the first black guy to win the car Formula 1 title. But what kind of fellow-countryman is he, going to live in Switzerland to get out the payments to support public services that 'the country' has decided he should pay?

You get bombarded with the assumption of shared national identity. Motor Cycle News would be better called Motor Cycle Nationalist because every week there's some feature or headline that assumes we care how 'British' riders are doing in MotoGP racing.

But do we really know enough about these sportspeople to support them? How does them and me or you being born in the same 'country' give us any reason to support them? ***The Country*** is only a piece of land with a unified law-making system. It doesn't tell us a thing about whether these people are worth supporting or not. Who are they to you and me? And we usually have

had no role at all in their development of their sporting qualities, either the individual sportspeople, or the national football, cricket and rugby teams.

It's not just in sport that you get this expectation. Motor Cycle News assumes I will favour Triumph motorcycles because 'they're British'. But the owner, a man named Bloor, gave £100,000 to the Conservative Party at the time Thatcher was cutting Public Services, attacking our Health Service, and attacking my Union. All of which means, not to be too 'politically abstract' about it, he was attacking *me*. And it hurt. So fuck him, his motorbikes and shared national identification about motor-bikes.

Every minute of every day from being just a toddler, you encounter expectations of shared identity about the Country or 'your' country. Or negative ones about someone else's country or the people there – the *Germans* … the *French* …….. the *Yanks* …..

It's a dominant feature of the attitudes expressed to you and expected of you by parents, uncles and aunts, primary school teachers and the 'newspapers' and TV. Yet it's never explained or examined. In the UK, it's about being English or British'. But it's the same in the other countries, being French, Greek, American, whatever. It's so firmly established and so ingrained in most people that challenging it is a big job and that's why this work goes on about it at such length.

Some progressive people are timid about criticising national identity, and the patriotic myth. Rather than oppose it, some decent progressive people argue we can 'reclaim' 'English' identity from the Rich, the Tories and the far right by highlighting decent English things. Like celebrating, for example, the English (and Scottish and Irish) folk music traditions, that were built around decent sentiments of caring for people, of social warmth; like celebrating the history of English Working Class people's struggle for Democracy.

But how much is this worth picking out as *English*? Isn't it simply *Democratic, decent and Working Class culture and struggle* that people have done, and do, here and in other countries all over the world? We should identify with that wherever it is done, by whoever does it.

There's no problem at all in identifying strongly with the English heroes like the Diggers and the Levellers who fought for Democracy with Cromwell. With Tom Paine and Thomas Hardy, who fought for it and were tried for their lives by the Rich at the time of the French Revolution. With Cobbett, Tom Mann, Sylvia Pankhurst.

But you can identify equally well with James Connolly, the Irish socialist who the British Rich executed for fighting for Irish liberation; with Danton and the rest, in the French Revolution; with the Viet Cong. With Nelson Mandela. And so on.

And it makes no sense to identify with the democratic progress made in Britain as 'British' when the people who viciously opposed it were also English or British. The brutal ruling Propertied and Business Class of the 18th and 19th and 20th centuries opposed Free Speech, the Freedom to Organise in Unions and Politically, and the Vote.

And they, those who opposed and still oppose Democracy, have always been the people in the positions that really define 'the Country', the people who actually embody the British state. The Establishment - the Kings and Queens, the Magistrates, Judges. Their Generals and Admirals, their Armies and Navies.

The Chief Constables, the 'Lords' in their unelected pomposity. Parliament when only the rich had the Vote. Even Parliament now - the people we've managed to get to be able to elect – the MP's - get seduced by the prestige of being at the heart of the system and rarely promote any further *'Freedom and Democracy'* for us. So the freedom and democracy we have isn't *British*. It was and is '*Us-the-Ordinary-People'* winning and defending some freedom from our rich and powerful and oppressive fellow-British.

People in all countries do the same against 'their' rich and powerful. There's probably a distinctive 'British' local flavour to it here that varies it interestingly from the similar struggles that have gone on and go on in other countries, France, Germany, Spain, Mexico, wherever. But the thing to identify with is the across-the-world struggle for freedom and democracy by the mass of ordinary people against rich and powerful people. It's the same struggle, whatever country it is fought in.

If we really need to be patriotically proud of the particular English or British involvement in these struggles we could have some fraternal banter with people in other countries in the manner of *Extra Stuff 4 at Page 223.*

But why, anyway, should anybody in any country be boastful and claim status or pride from what 'fellow-countrymen and women' did in the past? You may be living in the same country as them or even directly descended from some of them. But that means not a thing. Because *they*, real live people, did what they did; and fine work maybe it was; but since it was all done before you even existed, *you* contributed nothing to it.

If you respect what these people did, then fine. Respect it and try to emulate it. If you do, if *you* have a go at improving things, then be proud. But not because of what was done earlier by some people who happen to have lived before you on the same patch of land as you. People should only be proud and boastful of what *they* do, or contribute to.

National Boasting Messes Up Our Thinking

For an example of the problem, take the often-expressed claim about Britain that "this is the best country in the world". It undermines criticism, challenges those of us who believe things should be improved – it means "you've got the best, shut up". But is it *really* the best? Who's ever done a real comparative study on this? In other countries they get a direct Vote for the Leader of the Government and for the Head of State. The French have better transport and pensions. Have we really got a better society overall than any other? Have we really house-trained our rich and powerful Business Class more than any other Working Class has?

Even if it is the best, which is unlikely to be provable, there's a hell of a lot of room for improvement. The struggle for Democracy against the rich in the UK and in other countries goes on. What about us not having a say in Blair waging war in our name? And we need to fight *reductions* in freedom as we've had with ID cards, and other reductions in our freedom and increased state powers brought in for 'anti-Terrorism' by 'our' own war criminal terrorists.

This next piece was written on the morning of the terrorist attacks on London in 2005, known as 7/7. We get ourselves into terrible trouble by allowing people in other countries to associate us with the British Business Class. There's no question about it, the terrorists are responding to the attacks made on their people every day by 'western' Governments acting in the interests of the western Business Class.. The unfair trade; being lumbered with Governments

of 'their' local Business Class promoted, funded and armed by the USA; the direct military imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq, the indirect in Palestine.

And because national identity is so strongly promoted, we, all of the 'British' people, are seen as the people doing it. Because of the powerful image of a single British national identity that we allow, in so many ways, sporting and political, to be presented to people in other countries all around the world, *we* are seen as oppressors. Terrorist attacks are us getting blamed for the vicious things the Business Class do to control the world and its Raw Materials, like oil, and to get Markets for their Goods and Services.

Not just now, but over the last 100 years in the Middle East. It's not actually *us*, is it? But we allow ourselves to be grouped together as 'the British people' with the Business Class on whose behalf it is done, and invite being caught up in brutal reprisals to *their* brutality. And the nationalist identity is the main thing that enables them to get away with fighting their wars in our name and with our money, and risking our lives, particularly those Working Class lads and lasses short-sighted or desperate enough to fight for them.

Terrorists should have enough sense not to blame us, since so many of us do make it clear that we oppose what the British State does, on behalf of the Business Class. And the terrorists are almost as brutal as Blair and Bush, even though on a much smaller scale.

But we could do more for ourselves over this. Given the terrible nature of what the thugs in Downing Street and the White House do in our name, and the consequences for us, not enough of us do enough to stop them. I don't. We talk and grumble to each other but the great majority of us are pretty much passive about Blair implicating us in his terrible crimes. Many of us did and still do protest, fantastically. But many more don't. It can be done - look at how people in Eastern Europe got very big political changes since 1990 simply by *loads* of them turning out for massive, really big, weeks-long demonstrations and strikes. If we'd done that sort of thing over Iraq Blair would not have been able to get away with his criminal slaughter and we'd be less likely to get caught up in the slaughter he caused.

The least we should do is challenge everyday, wherever we can, this *we*, *our Country* stuff in all it's forms, so it's clear to the terrorists and the world that it's not *us*, the millions of decent people who live in the UK, causing their problems, but the brutal idiots who are in Government here.

National identity - Is It Business Class Mind-Control ?

But until we do that the widespread assumption of national identity will remain common and unquestioned. You grow up with it, it feels completely natural. It comes at you from just about everywhere, it's possibly the strongest social influence you experience. It comes at you from your own family. From school, neighbours, sport. Particularly from 'the papers' and TV and Radio; from Prime Ministers, the other parties; from media coverage of the Windsors. That's how it gets so many of us. It influenced me for ages, until finally it clicked while Thatcher was viciously attacking me and mine yet at the same time expected us to be 'all British together' while she attacked the Falklands on behalf of Business Class interests. Me, Us, and the Conservatives, all together on the same side? It just suddenly didn't make sense.

But if National identity is such nonsense as is argued here,

how is it so strong in so many people's heads?

First, here's how Rich Business Class people actively

promote the association, consciously and deliberately.

(later - *How They Use It Against Us* and *How We Help Them Do It).*

How The Business Class mesmerises us with the Nationalist mindset

The Press - *Their* 'Papers'

Their main tool for mesmerising and misleading too many of us is cheap, mass circulation 'Newspapers'. They started them after we won the Vote (for some of us) between 1867 and 1888 (roughly). Before that the Business Class, then clearly and openly a *ruling* class, taxed newspapers to restrict mass readership, so they could afford to keep them selves informed and we couldn't. But after we forced them to allow us the vote they started their cheap tabloid 'newspapers' to 'educate' us in how to think and vote.

It's bizarre how 'the Press' is often spoken of as if it's a respectable institution, as if it's part of *the Country,* part of the Democratic system. It's sometimes called the *Fourth Estate* (which are the other three institutions – Parliament, the Courts, the Monarchy?) That's absurd. Most of the 'news' papers are simply the political activity of a few very rich and powerful business people - Murdoch, for example. - independent of the Tory party.

It *is* important that Governments are scrutinised by a '*Free Press*', free of Government itself. Journalists in Russia are having to be very brave, some are being assassinated, possibly with Government complicity. *Free Speech* is for monitoring what those 'in power' do, and challenging them to justify what they do.

***But almost all of 'the Press' is owned by rich Business Class people*.** They certainly do scrutinise and challenge what Government does, but it's with their powerfully Business-Class, anti-Working Class, anti-progressive arguments. They print blatant mind-bending propaganda every day to pressurise Governments, and get voter support, for the kind of Government that does what they want – like low tax of the Rich, like anti-union laws - and to undermine opposition to themselves. The way they influence governments and voting we need not so much a free press to scrutinise government, but Governments free of being relentlessly pressurised by the Business Class's Press.

And easily overlooked is the fact that each of the 'news' papers is a Business in itself. So they will, of course, exploit their staff and be anti-Union and Business-biased on most issues.

It is ridiculous that they are talked of and respected as *news*papers. Newspapers accurately *report* what's going on in the world. It doesn't take much observation of what 'the Press' prints and the way they present it to see that they are simply pro-Business Class, anti-Working Class, nationalist and racism-provoking rants, not *newspapers*.

But it's our own failure as a class that we don't have our own papers.

The Guardian / Observer and the Independent are probably the only UK papers that could reasonably be called *news*papers, which requires factual reporting of 'the News' without mutilating it with their own agenda. But even the Guardian isn't as left as it's made out to be. It supports progressive policies

and causes but not the necessary tool to achieve these things - strong self-Organisation and self-directed Activity by Working Class people.

The Business-Class-owned tabloids or 'Red Tops' – the Sun, the Express, the Star, the Mirror; and the Mail, the People and the News of the World – use these well-tried and successful techniques, below, to divert our attention and steer us away from criticising their class – and from even identifying them -

Titillation !

They present as 'news' a vivid diet of scare and scandal stories about minor or 'moral' issues – Shock! Horror! They present such stories as if they've great significance when they're often only about people's private behaviour, most of which is nobody else's business. They attract, entertain and distract people by dramatising almost every item in the paper. They systematically present the meaningless private doings and partnerships of 'celebrities' as if it's *news*, so readers can feel they are in touch with lives more meaningful and fulfilling and apparently 'successful' than their own. They titillate and excite workers with that stuff and, of course, over-excited Sports coverage, treating that great game, Football, as a matter of far greater significance than it really should be, being *only a game.*

These Things Threaten You !

Having got workers to buy and read their so-called 'newspapers' for the titillation and sporting coverage they create the News agenda for them, and for the Media in general, with a daily, relentlessly pursued range of stories about supposed threats to *Britain, the British, Britons*, or *Whites*, or to a mythical British *'way of life'.* At times, it's internal threats - Drug use, Family breakdown, Gays, Young People. Or supposed faults in the Education system, using education as a scapegoat for the failings of the Economy and Society whose faults are caused by the power *they*, the Business Class, have over it and the way they run it..

The Daily Mirror isn't as guilty as the rest – because they recognise there is a market amongst many us for a paper that is not as obviously anti-Working class as the others are.

Don't Blame Us - Blame These People !

They attack workers on benefits to make those in work feel virtuous and so to split workers from each other. They attack '*the Unions*' as if they are unacceptable, intrusive outside agencies that are against the interests of *the Country*. Yet *the Unions* are simply those of their fellow-countrymen, who they pretend to care for, who are *Organised* as workers.

Blame Outsiders (your real enemies tell you)

The most obvious use of national identity to divert attention from the Business Class's uncaring and exploitative ways of running the Country is their inventing of threats to 'Us' from various kinds of 'Outsiders', inducing in people notions of superiority to them, fear of them, and antagonism to them.

They do it to outsiders of all kinds - always cranking up hostility to '*Foreigners*' - the *Germans*.... the *French*..... *the Poles* .... Brussels ... with derogatory terms for them to help you feel antagonistic - Frogs, Huns, Eyeties, Dagos, etc. Maybe there's less of this these days ....?

And they promote fear and hostility towards *'outsiders'* who 'come here'. Over the last fifty years they've successively and successfully demonised West Indian immigrants in the '60's; Asian immigrants in the '70's; Asylum seekers in the '90's and 00's; then Muslims; and most recently, East European workers. Huge headlines spread fear and antagonism to *'They'* and *'Them'*, when the plain fact is that most of these 'outsiders' – Polish plumbers, for example – are just ordinary decent people trying to get by. Unless you know any problem Polish plumbers, of which, of course, there must be some.

There may be problems from immigration like strains on Health Services, Housing and Schools. But there are anyway and if the immigrants are working – which they usually are – they're paying taxes. (They'd probably say they avoid Tax - but Thatcher transferred a lot of taxation from Income Tax to VAT. You can't avoid paying that unless you are her class, Business people fiddling VAT.) And the very last supporters of good Public Services, and Jobs, are these 'newspapers' and their rich, Business Class owners.

It's obvious from this 150-year long practice of scare-mongering campaigns against '*outsiders*' that the Business Class owners of 'the papers' deliberately provoke anti-outsider nationalist race hatred to divert the thinking of millions of us away from them. And yet to those millions, it *isn't* obvious. Many people accept 'what they read in the paper' as reliable information, and do actually perceive these 'outsider' people as threatening; when as groups they are no more harmful, possibly less so, than many of the ordinary 'British'; and definitely less harmful than those who tell them the scare stories, the rich Business Class people who own these 'newspapers' .

They defend themselves against the charge that their demonisation of outsiders is racism by claiming to be merely 'speaking up for' the poor oppressed white Brit. But them pretending to support (often white) workers ahead of '*outsiders'* should make them a laughing stock amongst us because the Business Class exploit or discard British white workers ruthlessly.

Their use of the commonly-accepted *we* of the national identity to delude millions of workers into seeing *asylum seekers* as a major problem was an impressive stunt. The Mail and others spent six or seven years banging on about asylum in a quite clearly anti-outsider, race-hate promoting attempt to wind people up about what is basically a minor issue and deflect them from having a go at the Rich. It worked. Several times when discussing politics with fellow-workers, even a Shop Steward once, talking about Jobs or the Health Service or some real issue, they've brought up Asylum, saying that's what really worries them. But it's nonsense.

Because even if asylum seekers were some kind of problem, there's *much* bigger issues to attend to. Just list them – Wealth and Poverty; Health; War, Jobs, a decent Minimum Wage; Pensions, Transport, Climate Change; Education, University fees, Hospitals; War, Jobs, Rights at Work, Crime, and on and on…. There's no way asylum was or is an issue worth the place the Business Class press gave it at the top of the political agenda. Yet papers like the Mail and the Sun made it so because they know people find it easier to attack *the outsider* than to tackle those ***real Issues.*** To understand the real issues and take a position on each of them you have to do a lot of fact-finding and thinking. Like on Pensions; or on Housing policy. It's much easier to simply *blame outsiders.* That's also easier than challenging the Rich (which includes the 'newspaper' owners) on these real issues.

Although they take care to position themselves independent of their main party the owners of 'the Press', these so-called 'Newspapers', are the most politically-active members of the Business Class. *You can readily spot from their front-page Headlines that they know exactly what they are doing* - diverting people's attention from bigger issues like the inequality of power and wealth, creating a news agenda that doesn't cover issues like taxing the Rich, providing Jobs and Houses and Pensions - where their wealth and power and what they do with it would be questioned. They create instead a news agenda that diverts the spotlight from them. And they shamelessly crank up racism amongst their readership that even results in innocent people being murdered.

It's the whole national identity myth, the pretence that we are all one together, that makes it possible for barbarians like those at the Daily Mail to put issues like asylum at the top of the agenda for a fake Us, the 'white' population. What nonsense. Look at *the wealthy*, that very much includes the owners of the tabloid papers - the Sun, the Daily Express, The People, The News of the World; and the Mail, Telegraph and the Times - *they* cause most of Working Class people's problems, not desperate ordinary people escaping from desperate circumstances in other countries, often from war-torn countries.

At *Extra Stuff 5 on Page 224* are two examples, from the Daily Mail and the Daily Express, of stories with deliberately provocative, race-hate provoking headlines and slants being put on stories that don't merit it.

They do a pretty good job with their scare stories, distracting many of us, much of the time, from noticing how badly they treat us. And they make a good job, to be fair, of putting the nationalist image into your head - taking every opportunity, sporting and otherwise, to implant in us the imagery of *We*, *Us*, *Them* and *Your Country*. Seventy six per cent of people read the Business Class's mind-bending papers. That explains a lot, doesn't it?

It's easy to slag them off. But what they do is fair enough in a way. What *else* would you expect them to do, those rich, ruthless people, but to mislead us with mass propaganda that promotes their interests? Of course they'll do that. *It's up to us to see through them.* But we don't - many of you allow them to get away with it. People talk about things having 'been in the paper'. I read it in the paper.... It was in the paper.... But these are not *News*papers. They are *Weapons of Mass Distraction*, used by the Business Class on the Working Class. (WMD's? A bit obvious, sure. But true).

Tell Each Other Not to Read Their Mind-bending Stuff

Sometimes when you challenge a class-conscious worker about them buying the Sun or another of the Business Class mind-fixing 'newspapers', they'll agree they're rubbish but say they only buy them for the horse-racing tips or the football. Yet those same people always say things about politics that they clearly got from that 'paper'. They get you with the scandal and the sports coverage. Then with the rest of the 'paper' they put stuff in your head.

But more usually when you put to a working class reader that their nationalistic and sometimes racist views are shaped by rich Business people to fix their heads, they don't easily accept that. It's not an easy thing to say to anyone, to challenge them like that, without being rude to someone you want to work with. But we have to challenge people reading them. People when challenged in any argument often don't change their minds on the spot. I

don't. But later, when our ego's have calmed down, we'll accept what someone told us that we disagreed with at the time. So let's all make it our habit, a normal thing, to scoff at and challenge what people get from those 'papers' and challenge fellow-Workers who read them. It's about time we, you and me, talked of them as WMD's instead of giving them the status and authority of *newspapers,* which they're not.

One way to challenge them is to say at the very start of those many discussions with fellow-Workers about what's 'in the news', 'Look, the reason this is even in the news, and the way it is being presented, is because *the Business Class* owners of 'the papers' want to attack Public Services / Benefits for workers suffering from their system / create scapegoats to exercise your outrage on what's wrong with the world / divert you from attacking them and their system'.

And that's an example of how very useful the term *'Business Class'* is.

We don't often get the chance to tell them what we think of them. So this writer was pleased that when he did, he was sharp enough to use it well. I picked up the phone once to be asked by a plummy voiced person who introduced himself as journalist *from the Daily Mail* if my wife could help them contact her old classmates. They wanted to do a 'schooldays' article on one of them who was a New Labour politician.

My wife was out. I thought "Wow, the Mail! *The scum!* The very worst of the Business Class *asking **me** to do something for **them***! Opportunity knocks! .... how to handle it ? ..... just tell him to fuck right off ? No, listen, think, wait.....". My wife wasn't actually in contact with old class mates. But to put myself in a position where I could refuse to help, I said she was. And then said that I wouldn't help and she probably wouldn't. (Which was correct.)

Why not, he asked? "Because we both think you and your organisation, the Daily Mail, are a foul bunch of barbarians, attacking and whipping up hatred against single mothers, trade unionists, people on benefit, racial minorities, immigrants, asylum seekers". He tried again, saying it was to be a human interest piece only, not hostile to the politician.

(At that time they'd given up on the Conservatives and were cosying up to New Labour in an attempt to influence them.) Thinking about the hell I'd endured at work in Education after the Conservatives attacked the Colleges, and about all the anti-Union laws I, personally, had to struggle through to organise our defence against these attacks I said again - "your organisation contains some of the vilest, most disgusting people on the planet and actively works to attack and worsen my life. So no, I'll not help you".

In his presumption, he kept at it, not taking 'No' for an answer.

So I said -

"Look, mate, I don't seem to be getting my point across here -

I wouldn't piss in your ear if your brain was on fire".

A good ol' factory floor insult that came in very handy.

'Oh. I suppose I'd better leave it there then' he said.

"You do that" I said.

We should take every chance we get to challenge these disgusting, anti-social people. How do people as bad as those at the Mail even have the nerve to ring decent people, as if they believe themselves to be an acceptable part of society? We should let them know they're not. They are the lowest of the low. With their fear-mongering and pro-Wealthy politics, they cause a huge amount of injury to millions of innocent people, poor people, young people, Working Class people, Immigrants, people descended from Immigrants, Foreigners. And to all of us, attacked on the streets, suffering from the brutalisation of Working Class youth that they and their class cause.

We can take encouragement, though, from how they work so hard to stoke up fear and resentment of relatively harmless, or even innocent, people and things. And to stoke up nationalism and anti-outsider racism. To put so much effort, daily, relentlessly, into weakening our ability to see things in Class terms, they must be right worried about our potential to rumble them and challenge them. And that's right – most of us, most Working Class people, aren't fooled by them.

The problem is that they don't need to fool *all* of us, just to part off a minority of workers from the majority, just to divert a significant number of our Class. And to confuse some others so they give up trying to develop a coherent political view - like those thirty per cent of people, the majority of whom must be Working Class, who say, daftly, of the political parties 'They're all the same' and don't even vote. It all helps make us not strong enough to take them on.

But in them, the Business Class owners of the 'newspapers' – the Harmsworths at the Mail, and Murdoch, and the others - making that effort to distract us, let's remind ourselves that it's an acknowledgement of our real strength and, if we can do it without being rude, we should challenge those many people who read them.

Educating Their Masters (Us)

The argument is that they *consciously* use their Press to manipulate us. It *is* obvious if you just look at the news stands, at their front pages and their headlines, and ask *Why?* are they highlighting that story (whatever it is) and not others. *Why?* do they write their headlines as they do.

They were certainly doing it consciously when they started to do it, after 1867. That isn't all that long ago in the development of a Society. My Grandparents parents would have been alive then. In the UK, the organised and active Working Class had forced the property-owning and Business Class to concede the Vote to some of us - the better-off of the male half of the population. A Business Class politician then famously said ***"And now we must educate our (new) masters".***

He was saying **"*we've given them the vote, now we have to control their thinking*"**. As said, before this they'd restricted mass readership of newspapers by taxing them so we couldn't afford to keep ourselves informed. But after we forced them to allow some of us the vote, they started the cheap tabloid 'newspapers' to 'educate' us.

Another way to educate us was - Education. They brought in mass education in the 1880's and why and how they did it was clearly told in a TV series shown in the late 1990's by Ian Hislop of Private Eye. He showed how they used flag-waving Empire days and other propaganda stunts in the schools to indoctrinate little kiddies into loyalty to the Monarchy as a symbol of National Unity that masks the power of the Business Class.

Education isn't used quite so blatantly now, to socially engineer us into national identity. Good. But it has been proposed, in 2008 .

Another thing they did after conceding the vote to some of us was to wheel Victoria Saxe-Coburg out of pampered idleness, to revive the ritual of pompous and ludicrous buffoonery called the Monarchy that continues to this day to bolster the myth of national unity, and to undermine Working Class people's consciousness of their own class.

'The Monarchy' is a massive insult to all of us. We should be seeing ourselves and being seen as Citizens, adults, equals. This writer is proud to say that even when at primary school in the 1950's Mrs Windsor toured our town and we were let out of school to see her, a few of us resented being expected to be impressed, looked with scorn as she cruised by in her limo, and wagged it off school for the rest of the day as an act of rebellion.

There is one thing to be said for the Windsors though - there's nothing wrong with their being of German origin. It's for good reasons. Roman Catholicism is a very authoritarian, anti-democratic belief system, with just one person, known as 'the Pope', in complete charge of everyone's beliefs, heads and lives. (This writer was brought up Catholic.) The development of Protestantism, although that too is pretty authoritarian, was, historically, a big, progressive step forward for *Freedom Of Religion*. And in the UK, the desire for *Religious* freedom was a major reason for the struggle to get some degree of *Democratic* control over the monarchs.

Over the period 1600 to 1745 in the UK a lot of people died to win the struggle for freedom of religion (within Christianity) and some democratic Parliamentary control over the Monarchy. In that period some Kings and Queens tried to force everybody back to Catholicism and to re-claim the Monarchy's dictatorial powers. Parliament eventually ejected one would-be such dictator (a Stuart whose son and then his grandson 'Bonnie' Prince Charlie tried to get back in power in 1715 and 1745), and from then on would only allow Protestant monarchs who accepted Parliament as the real authority. Kings and Queens William 'n Mary 'n Anne did that. After Anne died the nearest relatives they could find in the 'family tree' for the 'Succession to the Throne' who would accept the democracy of Parliament (for rich landowner's only) were the Hanoverians. They were about 48th in line but never mind, they agreed to behave themselves.

How They Use the National Identity Against Us

The Business Class's relentless nationalist brain-washing with their 'newspapers' pays off all the time, day after day. But it's particularly useful when they face a crisis and we are strong.

Here are a few examples from History -

The Zinoviev Letter is a clear example of them using *national identity* and it's partner, antagonism to *foreigners*, to weaken our ability to see ourselves ***as*** a class and to act independently of them. Around 1920, after the horrific experience of the First World War, workers who had sacrificed such a lot for a better life organised in Unions and as Socialists for a fairer society in the UK, in most other countries in Europe, and in the USA. Russian Workers and Peasants were temporarily successful, overthrowing the undemocratic Czar. Along similar though less radical lines we in the UK voted in the first Labour government.

The UK Business Class was outraged and alarmed. Because Labour's majority was tiny, they had to hold another election.

Now many of us quite rightly supported the Russian workers in *their* struggle for Freedom and Democracy and Socialism. And they supported *us* in ours. The Business Class twisted this mutual support into 'foreign interference in our country' by the evil foreign revolutionary Bolsheviks. Our Labour government, formed by political organisation and struggle by politically class-conscious Working Class *British* people, was demonised as *a foreign-inspired threat to the British way of life*. On the eve of the election that most vicious of Business Class newspapers, who else but the Daily Mail, published a letter that they claimed had been intercepted, from the Soviet Foreign Minister, Zinoviev, to the Labour Party and 'British' workers. It said something like "Let us know as soon as you get back in and then we'll send our troops in". That letter caused Labour's defeat in the election. It has since been proved to be a forgery.

That was a particularly cheeky lie by the British Business Class because five years before they had ***really*** sent troops, to ***Russia***, to kill and maim Russian Workers and Peasants in the civil war started by the anti-democratic, Czarist and Business Class forces of Russia against the Revolution. You might have seen the films 'Dr Shivago' and 'Reds', set in this Civil War. Churchill tried to get the British forces to use poison gas against Russian workers and peasants. Organised British workers eventually started planning a General Strike against the intervention and that forced the British Business Class to stop it.

But under the pressure of the British-assisted military attack the Bolshevik government had to put aside their Democratic processes for the sake of the military discipline needed to defend the Soviet state. They did defeat the counter-Revolutionaries and their British Business Class allies; but the abandonment of their Soviet Democracy, forced on them by military necessity, left it open for Stalin to establish his dictatorship, that retained the name Communism but was nothing like the Worker's Democracy that it was meant to be. The Revolution was effectively defeated.

The BBC was set up in 1926 by the British government on behalf of the whole Business Class after our General Strike in 1926. It's job was to fix our heads with the notion of national community, a one-nation mind-set, to weaken the radically independent Working Class consciousness that we had developed around the General Strike.

(Although these days the BBC is a valuable haven of balance and intelligent broadcasting, under attack from Media Business people like Murdoch who want to establish the kind of rabidly biased Business Class commercial broadcasting that he and others run in the US, with Fox 'News'.)

"'The unions' were too powerful In the 1970's". Really?

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 post-war settlement that had meant they treated us half-decently. Under Thatcher's leadership *They* took us on and they won and *We* need to draw some lessons from that. That's what most of this book is about.

Challenging Democracy ?

Throughout *'Challenging The System'* you'll find that although it challenges the existing order, which they like to portray as us being subversive, it's for far more Democracy, not less.

The Miners Brought Down the Government (allegedly)

In 1974, so the myth goes, the Miners made an unacceptable challenge to *Democracy*. According to the often repeated, widely-accepted story, they brought down the elected Conservative Government. But that's a class biased, propagandist distortion of what happened. The miners wanted better pay. That's a normal thing. They went on strike for it. That's a normal thing for organised workers to do. The Conservatives called an election on the issue and lost it. *The Electorate voted them out.* Not the miners. It's Democracy. They don't really understand it, y'know.

They *Really* Attacked Democracy

But they *were* worried about us being as strong as we were back then. It was no Golden Age, mind, it didn't feel like we or our unions were *running the country* as they put it. That they exaggerate our influence so absurdly only goes to show how bitterly they resent us having any say at all.

But we *were* better organised than currently, and a retired General and other Business Class rogues set up a political organisation to launch ***a Coup***. The BBC showed a documentary about them in March 2006. They owned up to having *planned to depose the Prime Minister – Harold Wilson – who we had voted in; and to murder Trade Union leaders.* Arthur (Scargill) no doubt; and probably Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon (leaders of the two biggest Unions.) How's *that* for a challenge to Democracy?

And the reasons they gave were - that their Stocks and Shares were going down in value, there was high inflation, and 'the Unions' needed taming. But they way they put 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 *Military 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 *Extra Stuff 6 page 225* on whether that planned coup was the last gasp of a crusty old ruling elite who for centuries arrogantly assumed

that they were themselves 'the Country'; and whether today's trendier, less stuffy Business Class wouldn't consider it now.

But it shows how much political coverage is class-biased, that our Union strength then, and how supposedly outrageous it was, and the Miners having supposedly brought down the Government, is far more prominently and repeatedly highlighted than plans made by a group of Business Class people *for political murders and a coup against Parliament*.

Again from that period, there was a documentary on TV in 2006 about *the decline of the British car industry in the late 70's*, based on the familiar theme that we-in-our-unions were supposedly too strong. In the documentary, a pompous 'industrial relations correspondent' spoke about when management at British Leyland (the biggest UK owned car firm) couldn't tell him about their production plans because they hadn't yet cleared them with the Unions. The 'industrial relations correspondent' spoke about it with quivering outrage. But what's wrong with it? In planning their car production, didn't British Leyland managers agree the terms of trade and supply with their outside *Component* suppliers, with Dunlop, Monroe, Girling, Triplex, SU, Lucas? So why shouldn't they have to negotiate with the Workers, the Labour suppliers, just the same, as equal partners?

In that same period when we were strong the Business Class and their Establishment wheeled out *the Royals again* to make us feel part of one big harmonious national family.

In the 60's society had, thankfully, become more open and democratic and egalitarian and the Windsors had been left to wither into a state of gradually increasing and well-deserved nonentity. But around 1976, at the end of *every* bulletin of the 10 o'clock evening television News they began to have some stupid 'news' item about the pompous, meaningless doings of one or other member of the Windsor family. That looked very much like a deliberate act, a conscious piece of head-fixing done to make us feel part of a *'national family'* at a time when our strength had them worried. Through what network of TV heads, Business people, members of 'the Establishment' – whatever that is, exactly - Politicians, Military people, at which weekend gatherings in which stately homes, was this decided? It doesn't happen now, does it? Was it quietly dropped when it became unnecessary, in the 80's? Or when the Windsor's behaviour became so embarrassingly bad?

In 1977, for the same reasons, they organised another piece of nationalist mind-fixing, a ridiculous *Jubilee* to 'celebrate' Elizabeth Windsor having been 'Queen' for 25 years. Almost the entire population debased themselves by having street parties. Sanity was saved by the Socialist Workers Party organising in opposition a *Stuff the Jubilee* campaign; and by the Sex Pistol's monster-selling classic album *Never Mind the Bollocks* with the song 'God Save the Queen' with lines about 'fascist regime' and 'she ain't no human bein'.

If you find the anti-monarchist ranting offensive, I suppose she and her relatives are human beings. If they'd just drop the offensive and absurd claim to be 'above' us as in being a 'Highness', got proper jobs and behaved, we Republicans would let them be. It's nothing personal against them, it's just that the pretentious role they are prepared to play insults us.

Holding *the Country* to ransom?

Media commentators and politicians always talk critically of our strength then in the 70's when we *were* more strongly organised, in our unions, and more active in defending and promoting our interests. They coined expressions like us *holding the Country to ransom* that are still current and form part of younger people's perceptions of the time, that just show how much they resent us challenging their power to bully us.

As with the talk of the miners 'bringing down the government', that is such a huge exaggeration, it just shows up how much they resent and fear us standing up to them on anything approaching equal terms. But all we are doing when strongly *Organised* and *Acting for better Conditions* is getting nearer to equality of power with them. In Striking, we lose all our income but also make them (nearly) lose theirs. That's just us getting nearly equal with them *as our Employers*, bargaining with them about the Pay and Conditions we'll work for. How is that holding *the country* to ransom? It's got nothing to do with *the country* unless, like them, they see *themselves* as being the Country and *us* not being.

If you really want to see people holding the Country to ransom, look at them. At various times in post-war history they've organised the collapse of the Currency, the Pound, to bully elected Labour governments to cut public spending. They export their capital, opening businesses in Poland, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Pakistan, the Czech republic, anywhere they can get workers cheaper and more compliant, absolutely in their own interests and regardless of the needs of *the Country*.

They've threatened not to invest here, to successfully bully Blair and Brown into having *'de-regulated labour markets'*. But 'de-regulated Labour Markets' simply means your Boss having immense, unfair, bullying power over *you*.

So we were 'Holding *the Country* to ransom', were we?

Well, De-regulated Labour Markets means 'Having *the People* over a barrel'.

They go on about how awful it was in the 1970's when we were stronger. Yet it's often stated that up to the late 70's *Wealth Inequality* in the UK narrowed continually, historically *and has worsened since*. Well now isn't *that* a coincidence? That when we were most strongly organised, with a peak of union membership and *Collective* instead of weak *individual* bargaining, our society was fairer? And that since they battered us and shackled our organisations and actions with legal sanctions, our society has become less fair?

They Actively Promote the National Identity

Sometimes it can seem that their nationalism isn't just some cynical ploy, consciously used to create in our heads a mind-set that obscures our real relationship with them. Maybe they *do* actually believe in it, in all that *This England, this Sceptred Isle* stuff?

But then look again at the deliberate, relentless eight-year onslaught of the Mail, the Sun, the Express, the Times and the Telegraph on Asylum Seekers, blatantly, unashamedly stoking up sometimes-murderous race hatred with the notion of *Outsiders* threatening 'Us.' It's obviously Business Class newspaper and TV owners *deliberately* fixing our heads.

They seem to have dropped asylum since finding East European workers to demonise. But they went on and on about the issue for all those years, blowing up what is a minor problem (for the 'Country', though a major one for the Refugees) into a huge, huge thing. It's a joke. The fourth richest country in the world getting a few of the people whose lives have been destroyed in some troubled country, almost always with some Western i.e. British Business Class interference. Last time I saw some figures, about eighty per cent came from Afghanistan; Iraq; Burma; Somalia. All troubled places with British involvement. The numbers of asylum seekers the UK gets - about 100,000 a year applying (at the height of the scare-mongering campaign, down to about 25,000 in 2007); maybe half of those getting refugee status in the end; are trivial compared to a poor country like Pakistan getting millions from Afghanistan; or the countries round the Congo, Rwanda - millions.

And if 100,000 or so asylum seekers get £39 a week until they get work - that's not a huge cost. It's only about the number of extra people you'd get on benefit if some stripe-shirted Hooray Henry financial chancer sneezes in the City of London. It's not a big issue.

It's easy to show how the Rich, the Business Class, *deliberately, consciously*, *actively* promote the myth of one national identity. Even, ludicrously, claiming they care about Working Class people by attacking outsiders. They constantly *talk* of a national *We* and *Us.* But in everything they actually *do* they oppose and repress anything that involves a *real* We or Us, like State Education and Health, or any notion of a Right to Work. They promote instead competition, individual greed and uncaring exploitation.

But enough about them manipulating us. *You have to expect that.*

The real question is *How Do They Get Away With It?*

We Do It To Ourselves !

Here, after all that, is the main point I want to make to you, my fellow-workers, my Working Class readers, about 'Where You're From' identities -

The false 'We British' imagery doesn't just come from the Business Class manipulating our view of ourselves and others. They do start it. But so many of you, so many of us, are so enthusiastic about it, we do their job for them.

The Tebbit Test ?

Football

An obvious example is the mass hysteria over the England football team every two years in the football championships, the European and the World Cup. All that mass public display of *Englishness,* with workers displaying 'the flag of Saint George' (whoever he is) all over the place. Is that all manufactured and put in your heads by a manipulative Business Class? Sure, they do give it an almighty push because it does help them get us all over to their side and it sells beer, satellite subscriptions and papers too. But it's not all their idea - almost everybody seems only too ready for it without their pushing it.

You can get called a traitor for arguing against supporting the England football team. Let's look at that. First, the relationship we have with the players is empty of real meaning. Who is Steven Gerrard to me? Or any of them? Yes, we see them play football a lot. But that's all, we just know them as players of a

magnificent but only-for-fun bloody game. Stevie seems a nice enough guy but does he, or any of them, care about me and mine and yours? Does he support good Public Services and Welfare? Maybe he does, maybe he doesn't. We don't know - it's not that sort of relationship, is it? That's what's wrong with it. I don't keep tabs on them all but recall that Terry Butcher, one-time England captain, was a Tory. Which means he *attacked* me and you. And some say the current one, John Terry, is dodgy in some way. Seb Coe, a great runner, turned out to be a Tory.

Apart from the lack of any real links between fans and players, does supporting the team mean anything *between the fans themselves*? In real life, in things that matter? Outside the heady moments of supporting-our-lads and the goals going in – Yeeeeeeeaaaasssss!!!!!!!!! - do the fans *care* about each other? During the footie tournaments there's a short-term New Year's Eve type of broad sociability, which is OK; but what does it mean next day? Are we in a Socialist Republic, where all those millions of people getting off on the flag of St George care about each other having a Job, a decent job, decent Housing, Health Service, Education? Do they care if you're handling life or if you've got problems? If so, maybe there'd be some sense in it. But it's not like that, is it?

Real Support

Quite a lot of so-called British or English people do, to a degree, care for each other, support each other on some things that matter – the National Health Service, Unemployment Benefit, Sick Benefit, and so on. *But that's not a British-English thing. It's Decent People and Working Class people organising and campaigning* for these things, in the face of bitter opposition from a significant, large, selfish, brutally uncaring section of the same British, represented by the Tories, who oppose these services and work to undermine and dismantle them every single day.

Supporting anybody because they're *English* or *British* has no real meaning. It means you are allying yourself with people an awful lot of whom are complete bastards to you. And to me. Supporting English sports teams, you betray yourself, and your Class, the Working Class, by allying yourself with the grossly rich and powerful who do you in, daily; and by allying yourself with those others of your ordinary '*countrymen*' (and women) who, away from the football, would rob you or otherwise mistreat you.

To join in that national identity *with* those bad people, but *against* many Decent people and Workers in other countries, I'd feel myself to be a traitor, and an idiot to myself. A traitor also to those many of you in this country who are either Decent or Working Class. *I'm* not a traitor - I'm very loyal, to decent people and working class people and their organisations.

The Rich, the Business Class, are unbelievably, cheekily confident in expecting us to be all-one-national-family with them. Norman Tebbitt, Thatcher's chief fellow-thug, challenged the loyalty of British Asians and Afro-Caribbeans with the question "Who do you support at cricket?" Most commentators accepted it as if it was a valid question. But there's a plain and simple answer to give to Tebbitt, that *anyone decent, of whatever race or colour*, should give him –

"I support nobody that includes *you* and your kind "

Yet we hear white Working Class lads and blokes singing 'God Save the Queen' and 'Rule Britannia' at England matches. Are they really so fervently devoted to the British State, the Windsors, Parliament, the Courts? Or are they just boosting their feelings of power and social significance by identifying with the

strength of the British State? It's terrible. It just shows up the state of us, the real Us, *as a Class*, the Working Class – prepared to abandon our self-respect and share a shallow, boastful sporting identity with the rich and powerful who we are subservient to in daily life. Sharing the 'English' imagery with them, like this, with bugger all class awareness, is one of the things that lets them get away with what they do.

What's 'St George' and his flag about anyway? What's he got to do with England and 'the English'? He was a Lebanese guy who knocked about in what is now Turkey in about 500 CE. He had nothing to do with England. Have you ever wondered how he got to be the 'patron saint' (whatever that is) of 'the English'? Here's one explanation - the 'flag of Saint George' is all over the place in Genoa, Italy, it's on crests on all the buildings. It's on Barcelona's club badge too. One story is that in about 1500, English merchants (Business Class people) paid the Genovese for the right to use the flag on their own ships because the Genovese were the most feared sailors and merchants in the Mediterranean, the only people the pirates left alone. This might explain how this bloke became 'the Patron Saint of the English'. But where's the meaning in it?

The problem is we're easily fooled by national identity into being on the wrong side of an argument. For example, on BBC TV's 'Question Time' programme in 2005 they discussed the 200th anniversary celebrations of '*the British'* beating '*the French'* and Napoleon at Trafalgar.

But the Napoleonic Wars were started by the anti-democratic Ruling Classes of Britain, Prussia and Austria, who attacked the democratic French Revolution. It's a good example of the Land-owning, Property-owning Classes acting in solidarity *across* national identities, far more than we do. The Question Time discussion showed how the notion of *the Country* misleads us, puts us on the wrong side of a debate, taking positions contrary to our own real interests. Tony Benn was good, as usual, arguing against celebrating the awful slaughter of war. But Otis Ferry, the fox-hunting guy who invaded Parliament to protest against his way of death being abolished – I'm sorry, his way of life - said "But Tony, if it wasn't for Trafalgar, we'd all be speaking French". Tony, like a lot of people who go along with the myth of *your Country* and the casually accepted *We* that goes along with it, had no answer.

But in 'our' Ruling Class's war against the French Revolution, which side should democrats and ordinary workers have supported – the vicious anti-democratic property-owning class who controlled us and Britain? Or the Democracy of the Revolution?

The answer is easy. And our kind of people *did* support the revolution. And it wasn't just for solidarity, to support them. Nor is that why the Land-owning and Business Class rulers of Britain interfered, with the terrible bloody violence of military action, on the side of the French Monarchy against the Democracy of the Revolution. It was because *we, the People,* wanted Democracy *here* and they didn't.

We fought this British Property-owning class for nearly three centuries, from the 1640's - long before Trafalgar to long after it - 1926, to get the small amount of Democracy we have, to get the Vote and the Freedom of Speech to criticise them and what they do.

At the time of Trafalgar we ordinary folk had no Democracy at all.

More on this, and how the British Ruling Class's threat to execute the Revolutionaries caused 'the Terror' in the French Revolution in *Extra Stuff 7 at Page 226.*

National Identity is the base for Racism and Fascism

The first problem with National identity is that ***it masks and obscures the divisions inside the Country*** between the rich Business Class and we people-as-Workers. It bonds us together with them in false unity as *the British* instead of at least keeping our distance from them and doing so publicly and clearly. It disarms us, puts us on the side the people who cause most of our real problems. It means we Unite with 'Them!'

And then it also divides us Workers country-by-country. The nationalist self-image means you, a worker, see an important division between you and various kinds of 'outsiders' *who are often also workers.* Or they are at least Decent People. It means you see them as rivals, competitors, even enemies. Some of us blame them for our problems, feel antagonistic to them, fear and hate them. Yet most of them are mostly just Ok, ordinary, mostly working class, people, just trying to get by, same as the 'British' section of the Working Class.

But nationalist thinking makes them your competitor or enemy. And the notion of national identity instilled in so many ways such as by football and all the rest of the national sporting mania definitely plays a big part in fixing people's heads - yours maybe - into that *We* and *Us* way of thinking about *the Country* as if those in it have a lot in common and that outside of it are *Foreigners*, *Them*. You see it happening, for one example, with the debate over membership of the European Union. People just casually say *Us* or *We* meaning the British; and *Them,* meaning 'foreigners'. French, German and Italian fellow-workers, most of them.

And when some of the so-called '*Them'* immigrate here, as many workers do, move from one country to another, racist divisions follow directly, 'logically', from the false nationalist group self-image. *'Blame the Outsider'* racism against immigrant workers is just a more vicious extension of the everyday nationalist mind-set.

You can see it in the hostility to East European workers 'coming here'. People write letters to newspapers attacking *Them*, European workers*,* for working for low Pay and Conditions, bringing down *our* pay and conditions or taking *our* Jobs. The Business Class press use headlines such as "Britons lose out to cheap East European Labour".

But it's not only immigrant workers who cause workers to have to compete downwards on Wages and Conditions and attacking them does nothing to solve it. *'Britons' lose out to cheap British labour just as much.* Under the duress of finding work, or as anti-union scab types, native-born British workers undercut each other and bring down conditions for everybody.

The solution isn't in being hostile to 'foreign' workers but fighting for the entitlement to Union Organisation for everyone; for *Collective* bargaining for

Union rates of Pay and Union Conditions; and for a higher Minimum Wage enforced by workplace inspections by a stronger Wage Inspectorate.

And while we allow ourselves to be divided by nation, the Business Class actually co-operate a lot internationally when it suits them, trading goods and

services and exporting Investment and Production, and making Political deals with other Business Class's.

To counter the accusation that nationalism leads to racism some decent people try make a case for what they call *Patriotism.* It's claimed to be different to and more civilised than nationalism. They claim you can have a harmless pride in 'your country' without the aggression, ugliness and plain nastiness of nationalism / racism. But 'patriotism' still separates Decent People from *Decent People* in other countries. And patriotism, just as much as nationalism, groups you with some right bad rich bastards and some bad poor bastards, people who you have terrible relationships with. And it's still the foundation identity myth upon which racism and fascism is built.

And with patriotism just as with nationalism the *Us* of the English or the British really means *white* and is meant to exclude 'immigrants' or Black or Asian British people. In their 'news' papers the Business Class consciously use the language of *We*, *Us*, *Our*; and *Them* with devastating effect on many, many people. It's amazing, the strength of image of 'the British' they create. And ridiculous, given the unsupportive attitude the Business Class take to their 'fellow-Britons'. Yet strong enough to delude some white Working Class people into the attitudes that lead them to vote for the racist, Fascist BNP; whose politics consist of a mindless ignoring of real relationships, of the Business Class Bosses and what they do, of their Wealth, their Financial Crisis, the role of the Bankers, and simply says -

"Just blame this group of other ordinary people - they're a different colour."

Many of the people with different colour skin to the long-standing 'white' type are joining in with the *our country* thing, supporting the English football team for example. And well-meaning people and Ethnic Minority people who are as 'British' as anyone else are trying to make the 'British' identity inclusive of all groups. But whatever your skin colour or origins, *whites included*, Britishness is the Business Class Rich ***de-identifying us*** as Workers. *None* of us should be including ourselves in it. Certainly not as strongly as people do.

People Over-do 'Where You're From'

National identity is the strongest of the *Where You're From* group identities. It's clearly promoted by the Business Class and clearly we de-class ourselves by joining them in it.

But it's not *just* them messing with our minds. *We do it to ourselves*. Look at how people identify by ***Place,*** not just by national identity. National identity is just one amongst many *Where You're From* social identities. People talk about Place and use it to group themselves and other people daily. Almost everybody adopts some place or *Local identification*, by town, city, county, or region. Most fervently in supporting a Football club.

And people believe in these ***Place, Local, 'Where You're From'*** *identities without any noticeable Business Class head fixing.*

Class identity can be strong at times but it's way behind, almost invisible, compared to *Local* identity. Isn't it? Unless they're asked, almost nobody *declares* Working Class identity. There's none of the daily expression of it. And when there is it's just people identifying *themselves* as Working Class. They don't say anything that shows any group identification with *other* workers. Most workers don't, in any everyday way or at all, express sympathy, support,

or hopes for the successes, of fellow-workers who are defending themselves or trying to get better conditions, at work and in the community. And don't feel hurt at the defeats, like they do with their football team.

Why You Do It To Yourselves

Yet Place identity, Localism, is so strong, frequently expressed, many times each day. Let's examine that, understand why it happens, and see how it's nonsense. Understandable nonsense because it fulfils a need that people have to belong to something big and significant. But having understood it, the argument will be that we don't have to agree with it because it's nonsense and because it harms us. It means having a go at yours and many other people's dearly held beliefs and identities. Hope you don't mind that. I'm doing it because these beliefs help the Rich make the world a much worse place to live in than it needs to be. It helps them to Divide and Rule us.

Here's just one of many examples that made me realise how *Where You're From* is nonsense. In the 1980's there were over a million school leavers who, because the Tories deliberately created mass Unemployment, were put on a crappy Government scheme called the YTS – the Youth Training Scheme. Far from identifying with each other by their role in the Economy as Unemployed Workers, their main way of getting a group identity was in their support for 'their' respective football teams. Being from Merseyside but living in Manchester, watching football, I'd notice maybe more than some the daftness of the hatred and violent attacks the (very like each other) young lads from Liverpool and Manchester made on each other. They were all unemployed, and for the same reason - Thatcher's Tories. They were all on the same crap Government scheme, same Conditions, Working Hours, same £35 a week. They could have done with recognising that, got organised together, and bargained for better treatment. Sure, 17-year old kids weren't really likely to. But all these kids in both cities had then, and do today, a lot in common, are actually pretty much identical in many ways, clothes, attitudes.

The hatred between Liverpool fans and Manchester United fans is a horrible case of workers hating and attacking fellow-workers over empty 'place' identity, leaving the Rich to jet around in smug luxury, running our world and getting away with mis-using *both* sets of fans.

Teenage lads sometimes also hate kids from other Districts or even *Postcodes*. That's ridiculous, that such a dull thing as postal delivery arrangements should give people cause to create a strong group identity and hate each other.

But Don't Blame the Business Class ?

But unlike with national identity there's no evidence that Where You're From, Localism and Football identity and the hatred that goes with them is ***created*** *by the Business Class*. With national identity you can see how they work hard to promote it. And they energetically boost the partisan fervour around football. That's partly to sell newspapers and satellite subscriptions but it's also because they know it diverts people's aspirations and rivalries and hatreds away from themselves.

But they don't *create* place and local and football identity about your town, city or region and team. At times, in certain places, they *have* consciously used it - in Ireland and India they stoked up religious and regional divisions to *'Divide and Rule'.* But is there any sign of them doing it between cities and regions inside the UK, consciously? It seems to come very naturally from people themselves.

Yet place and football identities don't really *mean* anything. There's no real, functional, social connections in them. And they divide Us (meaning Workers) and overwhelm the possibilities of building identities based on real connections, real interests, economic and political interests.

So Why *Do* People Identify so strongly by 'Where They're From?'

Why do people identify so strongly as

- Northerners, Southerners, Mancs or Scousers?
- as Londoners, Cornishmen or women, or as Geordies, Scots?
- or as whatever *you* are?

Each of us has far more significant personal qualities than any we get from place identities. And those place identities include in them people who are your worst enemies. Whatever your locality, wherever you're 'from', your rich, powerful and antagonistic class enemies in the Business Class are not far away. They live in the better districts, but that Town or City identity puts them into that shared identity with you.

A lot of local identity is really working class identity finding expression through localism. That's what a lot of the tripe about 'the North' compared to 'the South' is about. In letters to the football fanzines, lads claim extra Local credibility over fellow-supporters from the leafy suburbs by being from the poorest, roughest - i.e. most obviously Working Class - areas. But if it's being Working Class that matters, why go on about locality? Just do it as class.

At your teams football ground or mine, the Rich, the Business Class, are there with you as fellow-supporters. Sometimes you see the class identity, noticing them in their Executive boxes. But fans don't seem to have noticed something more important - how do they get so rich that some of them have *hundreds of millions* to spend on a football club? Are these people 'one of us', really?

Also at the football ground and on your streets sharing the place identity with you are some bastards who are Working Class traitors, who attack and rob fellow-workers. It's not been Scousers, Southerners, Leeds fans or asylum seekers or some other kind of 'outsider' who've robbed and assaulted my kids on the streets of Manchester. It's been fellow-Mancs.

Of course it needs saying repeatedly that there's many good people too. Wherever you are the vast majority are decent people. Nick Hornby, the writer of Fever Pitch, High Fidelity and About a Boy, said how in touring the bookshops signing and promoting his books he realised that despite all the crap things some people do and all the crap in the world *"Most people are alright".* (Mind you, the kind of people who go to a Nick Hornby book-signing *would* be alright.) But yes, *Most People Are Alright.* That's true in Newcastle, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Buenos Aires. Remember that while you read the criticisms made of a lot of people in this work.

Of people who are Alright, in particular there's the fabulous, straight-talking, strong, working people who, when they see something wrong going on at work, don't just whinge about it but stand up and do something about it – workplace Trade Union Reps. And Workers generally, they're the best people in the world. As well as the organised, class-conscious ones, there's many millions who are just straight, decent people just trying to live a good life alongside their neighbours.

The trouble is, we just want to live that peaceful life and we let the ruthless Rich and the bad bastards amongst us get away with bad things. Most people are interested in more than just accumulating money and power regardless of anybody else. But a mean minority are. We, the decent people, are not organised enough to guide and control the Baddies amongst us. We've got better things to do, better ways to be, live a peaceful life. But that leaves us passive and unorganised compared to the aggressive ruthless minority, theirs and ours, and that enables them to dominate, even though they are a minority. We've not got the social organisation between us that's necessary for developing and enforcing civilised living.

The local identification makes no sense. We don't, in the main, have real local *Communities*. Some of us are organised, perhaps. *At work*, about 10 million of us are, in unions, and many more would be, given the chance. *Outside* work, where are the organised communities? There are amateur Football clubs, Parent-Teacher Associations, Civic Societies. Maybe Religious groups? But really, most of us are just *Individualists, Consumers*. We're living close together in our towns and cities, but we're actually quite atomised because we spend a lot of time inside our houses watching TV or playing computer games. We now travel widely outside our neighbourhood to work. Friends are often made at work so seeing them means we travel outside our neighbourhood and so don't spend our leisure time with neighbours, don't mix much with them.

There *are* real communities, groups of people who share things like musical tastes or some such interest. But they don't correspond to the *Places* that people identify with so strongly. Yet Place is so strong in people's minds and attitudes! Despite having few real links with other local people and despite the disgusting behaviour of a fair few of them, many, many people identify themselves by locality – saying 'I'm from ……' Yet that groups you with many people you simply don't know and wouldn't get on with if you did. With some right bad bastards. Why?

Tribalism?

It's often said that it's *Tribal*. *But where's the tribe?* Tribes or clans were, and still are in some parts of the world, functional social units. A tribe is a real, working social organisation in pre-industrial societies. It's members lived together, doing the necessary work collectively or by specialised roles. They protected each other. They were *Society*.

Place identity is not Tribalism. There are few real links between people who identify by place. It's not me, or you, and the neighbours we hardly know. It's not me and the thugs who rob me and my kids. It's not the people in the local Tory club. It's not me and the rich in Bowdon and Hale Barns (places around Manchester where the rich live.) We could all be called *Mancs* but we are not fellow-members of any tribe. We live far too individualistically, with too many inequalities, isolated from each other, with far too many antagonisms, to describe place identities as tribalism.

Feeling Ownership of 'Your' Streets?

Another common explanation is that it's ***Territorial,*** like animals defending their patch. Maybe. It is remarkable how deep our feelings are for our physical surroundings, how much the visible landscape, even including in the inner-city dumps where many of us live, affects us. We feel secure with the familiar physical environment – what you see, knowing where you are. It's your main view of *the World.* For you, it's the centre of the physical Universe. That is a

sort of territorial reason for place identity, the place where you feel you belong, physically, where you literally know where you are. But it's a lesser thing than with animals, surely? We don't feel we own our patch and have to defend it from outsiders, do we? Though some teenage gangs do.

Being Familiar with the People?

To get through each day we have to accommodate to and find ways of living comfortably with the problem people in our area. Even though we don't like what some of them do, we have to either take on the social challenge of dealing with their mis-behaviour, or shrug our shoulders and put up with it. Mostly, to avoid conflict, we put up with it.

Here's an example of that from my experience. It's not local-based putting-up-with-people but it works in the same way. As a Trade Union officer, I did a lot of negotiating with managers and had what appeared to be a civilised relationship with them. Before meetings between Union and Management, while waiting for everyone to arrive it's common for people from each side to chat and joke a bit about everyday things, the weather, the footie, holidays and so on. You accommodate to them, accept them as people.

Then the meeting starts and you get down to business over the negotiations. But beneath the social accommodation you make to them, and beneath the business-like manner, I have been in a state of mind to feel almost like killing some of them for their brutality to me personally and to others. But I'm not really up for that sort of activity. So I accommodate to them. They are familiar, everyday problem people. Despite hating some of them, we all accommodate to our Bosses, don't we?

And in your *District*, where you live, don't you, and other Decent people accommodate to problem people or ignore those you don't get on with, for the sake of avoiding tension? You avoid trouble as far as you can, and put these people out of your mind. Because you have to.

You don't have to do any of that with Outsiders. You can feel different to them and make a lot of the differences between them and you and your fellow-locals. You can feel a false sense of superiority, take the piss out of their accents, feel superior to them in a variety of ways. And you can hate them and fear them. All because they are not a familiar part of your locality.

Yet we all know, don't we, that if you actually get to know them, say by some of them moving to live in your town, or work with you, or meeting them on a holiday somewhere, you get on with them? These days we are dealing as Consumers or as Workers with people from far and wide, far more so than a few decades ago. People travel the world for their employers, we use the InterNet, and realise that many non-local people are actually OK, not much different to us, and better than some local people.

Along with this civilised mixing and co-operation there's still some 'Where You're From' banter, which could seem harmless.

But why are we always having a go at each other about Where We're From – when there's no jokes having a go at the Bosses and the Rich?

Knowing Your Patch ?

Our feelings about belonging to a locality are strongly based on being comfortable in the actual physical environment. Knowing your way around, knowing where to get the necessities, where home is, we feel ownership of our streets. When we are somewhere else like on holiday or working away we feel the strangeness, the differences. We may *enjoy* the differences but also we might feel a bit of insecurity. Things like just the basic layout of the place are not familiar. And we assume that because the people who live there are all familiar with the place and each other that they are a stronger group together than they probably are and that we're outside of it. But it's largely an illusion. Just because they all know where the supermarket is or share an accent doesn't mean they are any more of a strong group than the one back home, that usually isn't. But the differences and the strangeness do make us feel like an outsider.

And when there, somewhere else than our home patch, and we meet other people, we feel a sense of ownership about *where we come from,* maybe defensive, or maybe proud. And we trade on our knowledge of it. Don't you, when on holiday, swap knowledge about *Where You're From* with people you meet? You tell people *not* from your area all about it; with people you meet *also* from your area, you swap notes?

This is powerful, because nobody and nothing can dispute your local knowledge. You may not be of the same status, as 'well off', 'successful', wealthy, educated, qualified, as confident as somebody else. But you don't need skills, certificates, wealth, status to get a boost from *where you come from*. You're bound to be good at local knowledge, especially compared to someone not from your locality. Your knowledge is yours. It can't be taken away from you. You are proud of it.

Now that's OK. Nothing wrong with it. It's a nice way of getting on with people. Those not from your area, you tell them the best places to go. Those that are, you find out the places they know and the people they know, that you know. It's all good stuff.

But it's not as meaningful as people make it out to be. For many people 'Where They're From' is the core of their social, group identity, and dominates the way they see – and often hate - people from other places.

It's done *so* readily, so cruelly, so unthinkingly. I was sat watching United at Old Trafford once with my sons and they sang along with the chant "If you all hate Scousers, clap yer 'ands". I said 'Er, excuse me. Your Dad here who bought your tickets is one, if you don't mind'.

But we do it, we do it a lot, identify ourselves by *Place*. Why?

Here's Why We Do It – 'Where You're From' Validates You With 'Social Weight'

They, above, were some commonly put forward explanations for Place identity. But they don't explain it.

Here's the real reason you and other people make so much of Where You're From – *because through Place, through Localism, you can enlarge your own Identity, can Validate yourself by including yourself in a big group Identity* made up of many thousands and millions of other people.

Your City, Town or County or Region has *Social Weight* because of all those other people who also live there. It's just like effect of 'the country.' The country is even stronger as it also has the social authority that comes from it's institutions having sole control of the exercise of physical power – arrest, detention, fines, prison, maybe even execution.

'Place Validation' or '**Social Weight'** works like this - in any nation, big city, town, county, or region there's loads of other people there. That gives it great human, social significance. People not from there have heard of it, or of things that happen there; or they've been there, or heard of famous people from there. It's significant. *So you hitch a ride on the bandwagon, you make yourself part of something significant*. We like to feel we're part of something big, some human group, something socially significant, that other people recognise. Your country, town or city or region does it most easily, if it's big enough to be well-known. Notice how people from smaller, less well-known outlying areas attach themselves to the nearest town or big city.

There's very little meaning in the *non*-national *local* connection. What's interesting is, it's the same thing as people feel about *the Country*. But although 'country' is pushed very hard by the Business Class, the establishment and the media, *local identities aren't pushed anything like as much; **yet they are almost as strongly held**.*

And that's why, though we can partly blame the rich for brainwashing us about the Country, we also bring it on ourselves *with Country as well as the lesser localisms.*

Social Weight works on us like this - most of us need to have ourselves and what we do shared, validated, by other people. We feel better about what we do if other people are involved. That's a very basic human need for assurance that what we are, or what we are doing, is seen by others as being worthwhile. Like, you find out if friends are doing anything, and arrange to do something together, rather than stay in at home on your own. Go round to someone else's, have them round to yours, go to the pub. It's a basic human need. Even when you all end up doing something pretty naff - a bad night out, something boring, you would have enjoyed yourself more staying in – it doesn't matter as much, if you did it with friends. We need validation from others. You're not alone. It was a shared experience. You can grumble about it to each other. You can feel that whatever you did, *and you yourself*, is socially validated.

So look, if you want a strong, permanently available validation for who you are, *associate yourself with the thousands and millions of other people also 'from' your city, town, region or country.* It's dead easy - you don't have to put any effort or abilities into it to be able to boast about being a Scouser, a New Yorker, a Geordie. *You don't have to do a bloody thing except be born near or live near a load of other people!*

So if you're from Manchester, for example, big yourself up. It's partly because of the place, the buildings but really - *it's because of all the other people and what they do.* Some of them are famous so you can proud of *being from* the same place. The Stone Roses are from Manchester. So be proud of being a young Manc. Oasis are fellow Mancs too. It's like supporting a football team – it's the same process. Attach your self to a load of others then you're not just little you. If you're for example ... a Londoner - that's The Capital City. When in London, though I hate the over-developed closed-in feel of the place, I get a funny feeling of being at the centre of things. If you're 'a Yorkshireman' you're from God's own county. Apparently. If you're a Scot, there's a lot of stuff you

can latch onto about being Scottish. Or Irish, or American. Even the Cornish have their own nationalistic myth, a flag. They sing about Trelawney, an ancient hero who rebelled against the English monarchy. Good for him.

Everyone allows you to associate yourself with all these other people, ordinary and famous, who live near you. But what real, meaningful links are there between you and them? When there's famous musicians from your town most of us get a lift from being able say 'Oh, yeah, they're from just down the road'. But so what? Maybe sometimes there's a real link between you and them, a shared musical culture developed between people who live near each other, and then some of them got famous. So maybe you did play a part in making that thing you're getting credibility from. But mostly not. Not to the degree that you can go round boasting about *just being from there*. This writer is from Merseyside and of the Beatles generation. But what part did I play in their wonderful music? What part did most Mancs play in that of the Roses?

Some of my friends did actually do stuff on the Manchester music scene, stuff that has been successful round the world. People whose work you'll have heard. But I can't recall anything much I did that contributed to the music that was successful. Maybe I had some small influence that I could feel good about if I knew what it was?

And the music my friends made was not solely Manchester-developed - the influences were very much wider. Very American if you want to place-identify it, such as the Blues, Dylan, Velvet Underground and Love. And although many a Manc lad walks with a swagger because Oasis are from Manchester, and hates lads from Liverpool, Oasis themselves allow that they owe a lot, musically, to those very Liverpudlian lads, the Beatles.

It is nice to associate yourself with fame and success. But to build permanent identities and boastfulness and hatreds of outsiders around *Who lives near you*? It doesn't stand up.

Identifying by Colour of Face - as Daft as by Place

It's also common to group people by the colour of their skin, seeing face and race as significant. Being antagonistic to people from different towns and regions; and to people of different colour - it's the same thing.

There's a lot of racial identifying about, of various skin colours. But it's all meaningless because whichever colour you group people by *it can't define what any actual person actually is or actually does*.

It's true that for historical and geographical reasons some societies have been largely of one colour and religion for long periods. So there can sometimes be some meaning in seeing them as a group. Most Pakistanis, for example, share a lot of culture and one of the religions, Islam, as well as Colour. But as said earlier, there's actually significant *Ethnic* and *Class* and *Regional* divisions inside Pakistan, which is only an artificial state created by the British (Business Class) when they left India.

Whatever things various groups of people have in common are simply *not* fixed by the skin colour, not fixed forever, and there's no sense in labelling either yourself or others by skin, certainly not in today's cosmopolitan global society.

You can sometimes, for convenience, carefully generalise about people in some way, some shared group tendencies, traits. But never so you can make any assumptions about or judge any *individual* person from their 'ethnic'

origins. For example a Catholic I know married an Iranian and they had to meet with a priest beforehand because the Iranian wasn't Catholic. The priest, trying to helpfully include something from the Qur'an in the service, started to say to the Iranian husband-to-be 'With you being a Muslim…' only to be interrupted by an irritated *Atheist* 'I'm not a Muslim'. His father was in the Iranian Communist Party. '*They*' in the Middle East are not *all* Muslims. You just can't judge and generalise and group people by skin colour and the 'ethnic group' they appear to be in.

Racism is a massive delusion, a complete meaningless nonsense. Yet it is very strong and has a terrible effect on us all. If you actually lived in a society structured round ethnic or tribal community relationships, in the Amazon jungle maybe, it would probably make sense. In today's *Industrial* society, with clear *Class* divisions of role, it makes no sense at all.

Don't Say Tribalism - Say *Social Weight*

As has been said, many people are content to explain place and football identities by simply saying 'Oh, it's Tribalism'. But that sounds as if it's explanation enough. As argued here, place identity and allegiance to a football club aren't tribalism because they involve none of the real social duties, obligations and support that a tribe or a clan has. *Tribes were definite social groupings, meeting people's material and social needs* for support in surviving and living and were usually based on family links. As said, where's the tribe now, in urban, industrial life? It's not really being in a *tribe* to boast about being a Yorkshireman, or Welsh, or a fan of whatever big football club. It's all just bigging yourself up by an empty association with loads of other people you don't know and have little or no real functional relationship with. That doesn't sound like *tribalism.*

Place, 'Where You're From' and Football identities enable us to feel more secure, not so alone and insignificant - as each single one of us really is, politically. We are simply fulfilling the need we have for *validation of ourselves by other people* and for a feeling of Social Strength. It's only psychological, only in our heads, not based on real relationships. But it's important to us. We should understand these identities; understand how they fulfil a need many of us have, as not-so-great individuals, to belong to some significant Social Grouping*. Then call it* ***Social Weight*** *and, while enjoying the sporting side of it, the tension, triumph and disaster of supporting Our Team, keep it in check because, unchecked, it is bad for us.*

Just saying "It's tribalism" seems to accept it, to endorse it. Say instead "it's people having a need to get shallow, low-in-real-meaning backing from Social Weight; it's people wanting to be part of something strong and it's something we should realise and grow out of" enables us to deal with it.

And say further - "It's people using the social weight of the locality or the football team as a substitute for the social weight that should come from real, Class Organisation – Decent and Working Class people fighting together not to have to work longer for their State Pension, for a Works Pension, for decent Conditions at work, for Houses, Health care".

But place and football identities are much more widely adopted and assumed than real Working Class identity. People-as-workers aren't class conscious enough and not well enough organised and to be honest, not brave enough, and that includes me. So to get some Social Weight we turn to *Where You're From* and *Football* based identities as substitutes.

And put the other way round, it's because we take on - and are fed - this easy, undemanding role of place, local and footballing significance, we're not as Class-conscious and as organised and strong as we should be.

That doesn't apply to everyone, obviously many do both, are active and also follow footie. But broadly, 'Where You're From' and football matter too much *because* class doesn't.

And so, properly, to Football identities …..

I'd better say in warning that a thorough examination of the practice of supporting Football 'clubs' is coming up here. (Apologies if there's a still a bit of repetition, maybe some points could be combined in one place rather than saying something similar a few pages later.)

Football is the most important example of people getting fervently group-minded through sport because many Working Class people have extreme, fervent, disgusting, often violent hatred of other Working Class people expressed through football that they don't show to the Rich, the Business Class, who are far more worth hating.

But it's only the biggest example. People also get fervently chauvinist with cricket and rugby and motorcycle racing. And probably even with under-water wellie-chucking. For any readers who don't subscribe to football mania, read on. You'll find support for your views. Those who are footie maniacs, you also should read on. You'll find it interesting. It'll be saying 'Love *the Game*; but hate *the War Game between the Fans*'.

Football is commonly said to be an expression of the *Collectivism* of Working Class people, a self-affirming group response to the powerlessness and alienation we experience at work as under-unorganised individuals.

And so it is. But it's not so much to be admired for that. It's the soft option to *really* organising and resisting and fighting the Business Class. And it's only a second-hand, vicarious response. In football, as a supporter or a fan you're not actually involved. And what you're not actually involved in is just a game, a war game. It gives you all the tension of a war and when your team scores – Yeeeeeeeeeeeeaaaaasssssss!!!!!!!! – it's like the kill, when people go hunting wild animals. It's raw, it's primitive.

It's got it's uses if we really have a need to express those primitive urges without actually killing anything or anyone, without being maimed or killed, without the actual blood and gore. Without risking anything real, like your own safety. If you can treat it as just a bit of fun, OK. Chess, Darts, and Snooker are competitive too and also give us the tension before defeat or glory. But no-one hates anyone and no-one gets hurt.

But with Footie we people-as-workers build false collective identities that do real damage to the possibility of *the real co-operative relationships* we should have with each other in the *real* world of *real,* business competition and political power. And from the extreme fervour, and hatred, and despair, and desperation, that many fans express in supporting their team, it seems to be about something more serious than just a bit of fun – something sick. And we do get real blood and gore, off the pitch, when fans attack each other .

This writer is, though, what they call a Football Man. I've played in and managed adult Sunday League teams, coached and managed Primary School and Teenage teams. I've Refereed. I've followed the Professional game closely

for over fifty years as a Manchester United fan. But I'm a *Football* fan – the *Game* – and which professional team I support is not very important to others.

I talk a lot with football fans. And following a team in the way so many do, when you consider the sheer passion of it all, including the angry expressions of discontent with their *own* sides performance and the crude insults aimed at players *of their own side* who aren't good enough to represent them; the angry criticism of team selections, and of Referees; is substituting for something. Surely people are expressing something here that they can't express through themselves, through their own lives? *It's because they don't take enough interest in real issues and the real opposition.*

Take the average football fans interest in the game, their whole knowledge of it - like me, reading the sports pages first everyday, before reading the News; knowing all the players, the tactics, the transfer speculation. Compare it with how little interest most workers take in *their own rights, in their most basic need, Making Their Living, in their Rights at Work*. Because most people whinge plenty about things at their work, like their boss treating them badly, about their Conditions, Hours, Workload, Pay. But how much interest do most people take in really standing up for themselves at work, in having a go, finding out what *Rights* they have - how much do most people know about their Contract, about Agreements made by themselves organised as a Union membership, about all the rights they have in Health and Safety, Dismissal, Redundancy, Working Hours, etc? About their Union, or Unions generally?

Sure, that's not as exciting as football and it's not easy taking on the Bosses. The main reason for that of course is *They've Got Plenty of You*. But just at the level of being interested in and knowledgeable about what we've got going for us in the important stuff of Making Your Living - the fact is that most people are nowhere near as interested in that as they are in football. Much of the passionate interest in football is because it substitutes for that more difficult task of challenging the Business Class.

You could argue 'Yeah, but Business Class people themselves follow football pretty fervently'. But there's a big difference between the passion Business people show for football and the passion Working Class people show. Business people have far too much awareness of what is in their real interests to ruin the name of their business with excess hatred for fans of other teams. They'd lose *customers* for their washing machines, cars and hotels and airlines by hating and attacking them for supporting other teams. And they won't hate and attack over football other Business people they could do deals with and with whom they co-operate in Politics to keep Working Class organisation at bay.

And they come to football having got more out of their own lives than most of the working class fans, who show a desperation about what their team does that goes beyond a bit of harmless escapist fun war-gaming; that goes as far as hating and attacking other working class fans; who support their teams for just the same reasons as them and with whom they actually have far more reason to Co-operate than they do to hate and fight.

Unlike what a lot of people think, hating fans of other teams wasn't always part of the game. It only started in the 1960's. Until then, football was about you supporting your *own* team, at home games. Even there, at home games, fans didn't have the group identity they have now. And you were hardly aware of the opposing team's fans. They weren't there at your ground in any

numbers or readily identifiable. Any who were, were dispersed around the ground in twos and threes.

Where there were two teams close together there was rivalry and hatred, like in Glasgow and Sheffield. But generally there wasn't and people marvelled at the Glasgow and Sheffield rivalry. Mostly it was more positive – you supported your team, mainly at home, and applauded the other team if they played skilfully and with enterprise.

A few things to do with singing together, and travel, and TV coverage happened in the mid-60's to change that to what we've got today, where fans hate and fight each other. There's more about all that in *Extra Stuff 8 at Page 229* along with a few other footballing observations. Non-footie people should find it interesting, though, as it explains the development of these fierce but basically meaningless football rivalries.

Football – Love the Game

I am, though, a Football man. But that means enthusiasm for *the Game.* It's a great game and a great way of communicating, across the world. But it is *just* a game. People often ask me 'Do you like football?' Of course I say *Yes*. So, we've established a shared interest. The next question is always 'Who do you support?' They always take '*following football*' to mean rabidly following one of the professional teams, to get what is only vicarious, borrowed status. But I said I like *Football* - the game. As said, I've played it and managed it at university and Adult amateur level and managed a youth team. I've refereed the game. Saying I like football includes all that, it's not all or mainly about who I vicariously follow. So I say that.

Then they say 'Yeah, but you must support *somebody*?'

I'll say *Well, I still say I like* ***Football.*** *But OK - I support United*.

(Just *United,* you ask ? Alright, *Manchester* United.) Then they say

'But you're a Scouser! Why don't you support Everton or Liverpool?'

I've supported United, since 1957, because for all or most of that fifty or more years they've played the game positively, with flowing, attractive, skilful, successful football.

They'll say 'You should support your local team'.

But *Why* ? There's no real, socially meaningful connection between us and the 'club' or the players. Even way back in time when the Professional players *were* locals – which is a long way back - the local group identity was shallow. And it still is even where in the *Amateur* game, teams do still have more local players. Because if some young men or women who live near you are good at football *So ... what*? What connection have you really got with them? Probably none. Why should you support them or get off on their success? How does living near them give you anything to get partisan about, at either professional or amateur level?

But the professional teams aren't local, and haven't been for well over a hundred years. As far back as the 1880's people were complaining that there were too many Scottish players in the English leagues. That doesn't matter at all to me, it's fine. I've enjoyed and admired the play of many a good Scottish or Irish or Welsh player - Law, Brady, Vernon. Dalglish, Keane, Rush.

Now, people make an issue of the number of 'foreign' players, saying there should be more British players. But football clubs supposedly represent

something only local (which itself is empty of real meaning) not national. And they haven't done that for a very long time.

Professional players move between clubs so much there's no real club identity. If the team's no good, wheeler-dealer managers 'clear out the dead wood'. Players are just bought and sold. Fans go along with that if it works.

So do I, as it's just a game, a very competitive one. *But where's the group identity*? Take any game you see on TV and look out for the crossovers in loyalties amongst the players, managers and coaches. Take 'my' team, Man United - Joe Jordan, Gordon McQueen, Eric Cantona, Gordon Strachan, Alan Smith, Lee Sharpe all moved between United and Leeds and so at one time were 'scum', playing for United's most hated rivals; at another, they're our heroes.

It's nonsense to make as much of the club or team identity as fans do. Managers too are hired and fired. These days the whole 'Club' is often just a Business belonging to some Big Business people, Capitalists, buying them to make money out of them. Like United, and Liverpool. It's really just a ground and a shirt, and at best a tradition and practice of playing the game the right way. The only really permanent thing about the professional clubs is the fans belief in the Shirt. It's just a bunch of guys playing football and I love it. But to big yourself up like so many do on a local or fan identity through these guys - it's great but really, you know, it's actually bollocks.

Even at amateur level teams are barely *local*. Managers get players from well outside the locality if they're good enough. Watching a local amateur team once I spoke to the manager, picking out two of his players as being good. He moaned that he couldn't get them to come to mid-week training because they each lived thirty miles away. In opposite directions. In North Wales many or most of the players in the 'Welsh' league are from Merseyside. There's a lad who came through the school teams I started, still living in Manchester, who plays in the Welsh League.

There's no need to be against any of this. It matters not where the players are *from*, it's just a great sporting contest and I love it. But the teams haven't got any of the local significance that so many people attach to them.

In the sort of ordinary amateur Sunday League team that yours truly played in and managed, even *within* the team, the players, it's not usually a real community. Playing and managing, I've been able – occasionally - to take pride in what we've done as a sporting activity on the pitch. But quite a few of the guys I've played with and the lads I've managed have been toss-pots. I could name a couple who would probably say I was one. Off the pitch, there's not been much linking us and we wouldn't have a lot of time for each other. It's just a bunch of lads and lasses pulled together from various friendships, people who know someone who wants to play, to get enough players together to put a team out. You can cheerfully despise some of your team mates. It's not a real social grouping. Sometimes it is, but not usually.

That's true of actually *Playing*. So in just *Supporting* a professional team, what's really involved? As a supporter, you just shout a bit, sing, buy a shirt. You just watch some players who you don't really know as people. Sometimes you hear things about some of them outside football. It's not always nice.

It is *beautiful.* We express great emotions like Hope, Joy, Triumph, Ecstatic fulfilment. Glory, even! Is *Glory* the highest we ever get in this life? Bill Bailey, the comedian, says the idea of God expresses Mankind's desire to share a

Common Consciousness. When we follow our team together that's what we do, we bond with each other in our many thousands, all together in a Common Consciousness. In the big international football Championships, in the agonising tension of a game, released by the ecstasy of 'your country's' team scoring a Goooooooooooooooooooooooal, that's what you're doing, *sharing a common consciousness with millions,* all together with the same emotion in the same instant! It's one of our ways of putting our hearts into a heartless world. It's heady stuff.

Fans even get something out of their own team being beaten, by criticising the team for not being good enough at achieving things on their behalf, for not living their life for them. Calling the players useless, rubbish, he shouldn't be on the pitch, etc. That, actually, is so crass, that sort of talk. Have you ever played with anyone who has been a professional footballer? I have, with someone who only got as far as the reserve team in the leagues below the Premiership. It's the most impressive experience I've ever had in football, playing in a college team alongside Frank. Get on the same pitch as anyone like him who's been good enough to be paid to play and you'll find they're footballing Gods compared to the fans who call them rubbish.

But..... you've no real relationship with those players and you've no real part in the game being played. The fans make a noise, it makes some difference to the game but it doesn't make a real relationship between fans and players. And not between the fans themselves either. It feels like there's some bond between you but out in the real world it means nothing. You've a shared interest of course, but there's no relationship about anything significant in life, like in the important matters of health, home, income.

I say it's nonsense but can see where it comes from. It's unthought and short of real meaning but I can see how it works. Bigging yourselves up on your locality, your place, Where You're From; bigging yourself up by associating yourself with the achievements of your local professional team. Competition with, fear and hatred of, people who are different - the Other, the Outsider - the Scouser, the Manc, the Southerner, the Yorkshireman. All explainable, so far.

But .... what about '*derby*' *matches* against your closest rivals? How to explain the rivalry with and hatred of neighbouring clubs and their fans, who you are otherwise supposed to be sharing a local, place identity with? Observations on that in *Extra Stuff 9 at Page 230.*

But Where ***Are*** You From?

Look again at this belief that you should support your ' local' team.

What is 'Local'? It's full of nonsense.

Like, for one, everyone seems to think you can support the biggest local Professional club. Why? Just because you live in Liverpool why should you be allowed to cherry-pick and support the most successful clubs, Everton or Liverpool? If you live in, say, South Liverpool, why not support your real local team, say Marine, a good semi-pro club? If you live in Chadderton (a district of Oldham) why aren't you supporting Chadderton Town? Why the bigger team, Oldham Athletic?

The response would be "you can support the biggest team inside your Council boundaries." But what's this obsession with the Council about? Is it that important to football fans, who empties the bins!? I'm sure most fans who'd make that argument haven't a clue who their Councillors are or what the

Council does. Or do they really have fervent feelings of affection, loyalty and support for their Institutions of Local Government? Surely not.

But then people accept that those who don't actually live in but only *near* a town or city, can or even should support the nearest big team, from the town or city. People from all over 'Merseyside', a roughly defined area stretching well outside Liverpool's council boundaries, are allowed to support Everton or Liverpool. But they're *Outsiders*! Shouldn't they be supporting their nearest local team even if they're not in the professional leagues? Many Man City fans who make a big issue of City being (supposedly) based in Manchester are not from Manchester themselves! One I spoke with once was from Hyde but he was giving it the 'City are the only real Manchester team' thing. Why didn't he support Hyde United?

Although, as said, even with teams like Hyde United there's little real local connection. They get players from twenty or thirty miles away.

Basically and originally football support is about Place identities, based on living in or near the town or city the team is based in. But now it isn't just local. People all over the world support teams from all over the world. At Old Trafford on a weekday it's all Malaysian and Japanese tourists. So now for many people, it's not actually local, place identification, but identification with a socially significant organisation wherever it's based.

But everyone is doing the same thing whether local or not - attaching themselves, without any real connection, to the Social Weight of a successful team, say Man United or Real Madrid, and using the reflected glory. It's vicarious (indirect, second-hand) glory, association with power and the significance of that club. Just the same as people associate themselves with a place – a city or region or country. But Football's much more intoxicating than ordinary place identity. There's a contest every few days in which you can immerse your sense of self and fulfilment, risking the despair of defeat; possibly achieving heady collective glory.

But it's only a (beautiful) Game. The attraction of team games like football, the reason people get so fervid, is the excitement of War-gaming, that mimics the excitement of when we lived in small communities – the afore-mentioned tribes? - and fought other groups. But don't take it seriously now, when we are all (supposedly) part of one mutually supportive Society.

It's full of contradictory group affiliations. Like what's happened to the unity of 'the nation' when fans are hating each other over club football? A Glaswegian fellow Trade Unionist and Socialist, and Celtic fan, when asked the question 'How does it work - Rangers and Celtic fans get fervently Scottish together when playing 'the English'. Yet the rest of the time they hate *each other,* viciously?' – said "One, when mixing as Scottish fans, you just don't mention who you support in club football; and two, I've never under-estimated the ability of human's brains to hold completely contradictory positions on things!"

At all levels the actual footballers and the managers don't take it as far as hating each other. There'll possibly be a fierce game on the pitch but they generally shake hands afterwards. There's that wonderful image of Bobby Moore and Pele hugging each other with warm respect after that great game in the 1970 World Cup. Pro footballers often play against former team-mates and have a drink after the match.

When you actually *play* football yourself, you can get a very deep satisfaction out of your own game, the teamwork, the struggle. It's full of incident, good

play, mistakes, success, failure. It's physically very draining. Playing football forces you to do a lot of mixed running, short and sharp, a rest, long and hard, short again, explosive effort, steady, positional running, twisting and turning. It all drains your body in a nice sort of way, leaving you wasted but relaxed. A bit like sex, you know. And the comradeship within the team, that's good. But at the end of games players from opposing sides who've just been war-gaming against each other usually shake hands, thanks for the game, well played, mate, good game, mate, thanks Ref. We're all members of the same society, not blood enemies. Although there can be big bust-ups on the pitch, they're usually resolved, because there's a common need for peaceful relations just to be able to run a League. Teams need each other if they're going to actually have a game.

It's only *the fans* of professional 'clubs' who hold a continuing real, genuine, vicious hatred for each other. Like ambushing others with catapults and Stanley knives, like (some) Everton fans on United's fans while this was being written. Working Class Everton fans, which will be most of them, should be organised and working together with United fans on real issues. But these are Workers attacking other Workers when they should be uniting against the rich, the Business Class Bosses of the Docks and the Car plants and the Call Centres. Instead, they're at each other throats. Literally.

It's Not All Bad

Of course, many of we workers *are Organised*. In the UK there's something like 8 million of us organised as members in Unions, that cuts right across the Where You're From and football divisions. There's maybe a million of us *active*, at a guess? *But there's many more millions fervently antagonistic to each other over football*.

Many are basically alright about it, they get on with other fans away from the game. There's a type of football supporter now who from university or work, where there's now a lot more mixing of people from different places, has mates who support other teams, and they get on OK. But there's still a big, big problem with the whole partisan thing affecting people's mind-sets, how they see themselves, how they see other workers, and how it divides us, at the level of feelings, that plays a part in us not being organised together.

It's a whopping big weakness of the Working Class that *We*, all the many millions of us, are more fervent about 'our team' than we are about our real interests and our class. *We're not organised enough or active enough,* ***as a Class***. That's why the Business Class boss us, are our 'Bosses'.

What's Good About Football and Sport

What's good about football and other sports and one of the reasons it entrances us is that with many other things in life, and certainly Working Class organisation and activity, the Trade Union and industrial struggle, you rarely get a clear cut result. Working in an *Organised* workplace is noticeably much better, more secure and dignified, than working in a non-union one. So you can tell it's worth doing that way. But you don't often get a clear result to any particular Negotiations or Strikes. You just grind on, Organising, Resisting, Defending, Improving. But as Damon Albarn, of the group Blur, said (of supporting Chelsea) the great thing about football is *you get a result once a week* - Win, Lose, or Draw. Hopefully lose, in Chelsea's case. Oops, don't want to upset and fall out with my fellow-workers who support them..... and Damon's alright, a very decent person, politically.

And with football you don't have to make any *real* effort or investment. You are only *watching*. You just have to crank up your fake hopes and fears. With football you don't *really* win or lose. It's not like it's something important, like the Miner's Strike for example. That's one the reasons we do it - *because* it doesn't actually matter. You can experience the primitive - even Spiritual - feelings of Success, Defeat, Danger, Glory, Triumph, all vicariously, with no actual, real struggle. That's all fine if that's where it stays and doesn't lead to you hating and attacking other Workers, just because they are trying to get the same escapist feelings as you from supporting another bunch of footballers. And OK if you also do something in the real struggle, as a worker working with other workers for some real thing, like Safety at work, Jobs, Pensions.

Football is alright as long as it's just done to get a break, an excursion. Even in a Socialist society with all basic needs guaranteed we'd need games like football to mimic the aggressive nature that is part of our biological make-up. It's not good if, as too many do, it means avoiding real issues and doing something about them with fellow-workers; when you hate and fight them instead.

Nothing said here is going to stop you so by all means carry on identifying with a football team. Carry on getting some glory or tragedy in your life, expressed through the Beautiful Game. It's difficult to get rid of. Can't even stop myself . We often say it's something that gets into you and you can't get rid of it. And it's probably not necessary to do so. Done in a civilised and intelligent way, it's OK. Get's you out of your head, away from the sometimes difficult job of finding real significance and satisfaction in your life. But don't *just* get off on footballer's achievements; *do stuff yourself*.

Like - Talk To Each Other about Real Stuff!

We talk a lot about shallow football enthusiasms. People talk so, so passionately, and at such length, about what is only a bloody game, treating it as if it's serious issue, as if all the meaning in our life is based on the team we support, or following the professional game. *Yet to talk about the real serious issues, seriously, is often condemned for being too serious*! It used to be said, don't talk about Politics or Religion in the pub, it leads to too many arguments. How sad - that's us failing to talk decently to each other about the real issues. We should talk to each other more about them.

If, instead, you'd rather talk about football, OK, but treat it just as a game, as the players do.

People sometimes talk in awe of how dedicated somebody is to 'their team', how they've got their room as a proper little shrine. Such enthusiasm is OK, probably shows an energetic aspiration to enjoying life. But really, we should live for our *own* achievements, what we do in our own lives, not those of some footballers. The Rich treat it as just a beautiful hobby, because they are successful in their own lives.

Let's keep a lid on the football fervour. You might be thinking, you're making too much of the rivalry, for most of us except a few who let the side down, it's just a bit of fun. But No, just look at the *faces* of fans during games - the hope, despair, the tears; the standing up and threatening the other fans, *the expressions of vile hatred of other workers* – 'You're gonna get your fucken heads kicked in' and 'You're goin' 'ome in a fuckin ambulance'. All that over-the–top fervour that Murdoch buys and sells back to us – is that all just good fun? Or doesn't it form our minds and displace real struggle? Compare the awareness of footballing and place identities – like many Liverpudlians and

Mancs hating each other – with the absence of such fervour and involvement of many of us in real issues. It seems to be the least organised and successful, the poorest of us Working Class people, who most wear the England shirt and put the flag in their bedroom windows.

It's fine if you can treat it all as just fun, a break from reality. And a fantastic art form, a great, great game, testing skill, strength, character, teamwork. Many fans do treat it as just a great game, with no antagonism to other fans, just a good craic. At the major international tournaments, the European Championship and the World Cup, there's a huge number who mix with opposition fans, swap songs, scarves. Which is nice.

Football Expresses Working Class Collectivism?

It's More About Vicious Division …

Returning to something said earlier – that shallow sociologist's view of football being an expression of working class Community. Yes, perhaps it was. But it's not *much* of an expression of Community, of our Class. Football fans aren't *organised* together. They just individually, but alongside each other, cheer on some gladiators in a fantasy of triumph, to get above the meaninglessness of being an ordinary worker. Supporting your team is just symbolic, escapist, avoiding the need to organise for real and fight the real fights.

But beyond that weak but 'positive' expression of Working Class collectivism, where's the Working Class collectivism in hating those of your fellow-Workers who support other teams?

What about the bellowing of vile hatred at each other, and battering each other? That's no expression of Working Class ***Community****. It's an expression of extreme, horrendous, vicious Working Class* ***Division*****.**

For that reason I'm not too bothered about the Glazers, Capitalist businessmen who know nothing of football, having taken over 'my team', Manchester United. Football has always been an unorganised, vicarious, escapist type of collectivism. An escape from the Boss, the Factory, the Office, from Capitalism. But Capital, or rather, real live Capitalists like the Glazers, are always looking for new activities to exploit. They often turn what started out as our cultural activities into businesses. It's been happening for a long time with Music. Music is really self-expression, a cultural activity; but the 'Music Business' always takes over and makes it about business, industrialising it. And Holidays are now very industrialised.

And now they've taken over, turned into a business, industrialised, our *escape* from industry. We escaped from their control at work into Football outside it. But they've caught up with us. So fight against the likes of them, in football; but it's more important to fight on the real issues, non-football – Jobs, enjoyable Jobs even (nice idea, anyway), Pay, Keeping your Job, manageable Workloads, Pensions, Holidays, Health, an unfucked-up Environment... and so on.

Football can be a socially positive thing. See *Anti-Social Behaviour, or Some Organise, Some Go Under, Some Turn Nasty* in They Are The Business Class, which discusses how with football you can give people, young men particularly, the chance to express their ambitions in a socially-controlled setting with rules and a sporting code, and that can reduce their need to assert themselves anti-socially on the streets. There's a club local to me playing good amateur football, with five teams and a Veterans and an under -21 team, with a club house where they entertain the other teams afterwards. That's good.

But all the vicarious, shallow-but-fervent identifying, the rabid hatred of fellow-workers, all the vicious bloody attacks - that is very bad for us.

There's other ways than footie of getting a glorious high without having to hate anyone or fear defeat. You can get higher for longer at a good gig, being moved by the Music, than you can with supporting a footie team. And in getting uplifted by the music you can all get up and off your heads together, without any belligerence towards each other.

The Family

Families might be one group that's more real than national or local or football identities. Families are supposed to be the most basic way of grouping yourself with other humans for practical and emotional support. They can be, if they work properly.

But many families aren't supportive at all, they are destructive. There's no need to go into it all here but when people talk simply of *having a baby*, that under-states what they're taking on. 'Committing a huge amount of your life and effort and skills and emotions to the development of a child into a decent, happy, socially responsible adult over a difficult 18 year period' - or longer – is more like it. And it's quite a job.

But even those in functioning families want something bigger to belong to, something with more social weight than the family anyway. Many members of strong, supportive families subscribe jointly as a family to many of the place identities like town, football club, region or nation.

A bit of an aside here, but any excuse to have a go at the Tories - they and conservatives in the US always bang on about importance of *'the Family'* - though they often behave terribly towards their own families. Since they're so much for *Individualism,* sod everybody else, why? The reason, why they push the family despite it contradicting individualism, is because it is a *Social Security system*. The more you can get it to function as one, the more it's members bear the cost of each other's unemployment, education and health care, the more the costs are contained within classes. There's less need then for transfers of wealth from the rich to us masses by taxation.

That's why Tories are all for Individualism - but also for the Family. (Or claim to be.)

It's the same reason why, in the 1980's, while claiming to be for individual freedom, they were virulently anti-Gay. It's because Gay people's lifestyles and relationships have much broader social networks than the family, and that challenges the myth of 'the Family' being the core of society. It's nice to note that now, in 2008, the Tories are so unpopular and Gays have been so successful at getting themselves accepted by most people, that the Tories desperation for support has made them quite tolerant to gays. There's progress.

Their anti-Gay stance – outrageously against people's freedom to do what they want with their own bodies – raises again the need to note something very important about what Freedom means to the Conservatives, and to Business Class people world-wide, like Bush and the neo-Conservatives.

For them, freedom and individual rights are only about the freedom to be able to make money and keep it. They only mean freedom for Business and for Individual wealth.

Given those freedoms they won't be bothered about, will even be hostile to, freedoms like *Free Speech, Democracy, Freedom to Organise in Unions, Personal Freedoms like Substance use and Abortion, and Contraceptive rights and freedoms. More often than not they suppress such non-business elements of Freedom*.

Women and Men - Gender Identities?

A TV presenter called Michael Buerk claimed 'Women are taking over the world'. Always assuming they can find it on a map, eh, Michael? Yeah, all them cleaners, dinnerladies, check-out girls and women, all them Filipino maids – organised in women's groups, taking over businesses, radio and TV stations, police, armies – where will it end?

I've met, been friends with, loved, worked with, quite a few great women in my life. My best mate is a woman (aka my wife). A lot of blokes are OK as well but many aren't. Some of them have been absolute bastards as politicians, business owners, managers. Some hate me for supporting a different football team.

So it make no sense to side with 'blokes against women'. When some blokes, and sometimes women, say sexist crap like Buerk the berk, I never take part in it, and challenge it if I can find a suitably pithy response.

Men and women, girls and boys, guys and dolls, chicks, fella's, ladies - *We're all **Humans.** That's the main thing. We're far more the same than we're different*. Genetically, we've got 45 chromosomes all the same. Just *one* other chromosome makes men and women a bit different.

The difference is significant, sure. I'm a big fan of it. But even that difference *unites* men and women. It causes a strong attraction to each other, for a majority of people. So why the sexist hostility? The gender wars?

It's because the need to relate *is* so strong, but we find it difficult to manage. We want a lot from people of the other gender but it's not easy to make and maintain the relationships. Growing up, we get bugger all proper education or guidance about it.

So in response to the problems you get the saying 'Women - can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em'. Some women seem to take the opposite view. But instead of each gender blaming the other, let's all just recognise the need we have for each other and the difficulties by saying "*relationships* with - insert your preferred gender - (oops ….) can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em".

Men v. Women is just another example of people being ever-so-ready to place themselves or somebody else in some facile identity group, easily joined, no requirement for membership except easy prejudice, which if examined, is nonsense. Don't line up with some dodgy people, or against some decent people, just because of that one chromosome difference, or because of the difficulties we have with sex relationships and socially-learned roles.

Religious Identities

The word 'religion' comes from the Latin *re ligio* - the thing that ties, that binds together. Many millions of people all around the world bind themselves together and identify other people as groups by religion. There's Christians, Muslims, Hindus and more. And other people use religion to group people for hostile reasons - the Business Class Press and the racist BNP use it to set some 'whites' against Muslims.

Religious beliefs have more real meaning than shallow local, place-based identities because they 'bind people together' by definite value systems and attitudes to others. Insofar as many Christians, Muslims, and other believers in 'Gods' care about other people, about social support and world poverty, then *Secular* decent people (like me) can work with them politically. Religious blind faith is an obstacle to our social development; but since many 'believers' and much of their beliefs have some commitment to a better world, their approach is better than the brutality of most of the Business Class and their system, Capitalism. And is better than the crass Consumerism and selfishness that many live by.

Having said that, some serious criticism of religion follows here. If any religious readers are offended, well, that can't be helped. Because there's a lot of group identities based on shared belief in 'Gods' and 'Holy' Books that influence a lot of people's public behaviour, that affects me and others. So it has to be covered in this work. This writer was brought up Catholic.

There's quite a few *Christians* who really do see Christianity as being about what Jesus was apparently for - supporting others. So that's a real identity grouping. But for many who claim to be Christians it's not *really* about following Jesus's teachings. For the American Religious Right, it's nothing to do with caring for and supporting other people.

With them, it's compensating for the very uncaring, divisive philosophy of the *American Dream,* of *making it on your own*. That has a liberating element to it, but it's essentially an anti-social approach to life. It endorses uncaring selfishness in Business and working life. That leaves even those who do '*make it*' in money terms, isolated, alone, and insecure. But people, even so-called individualists, need people.

So these selfish Christian evangelists express belief in a God publicly, in those *social organisations*, Churches and get *'saved'* in public view. This way, they get from their version of Christianity *Social Endorsement*, approval, moral support for their actually *anti*-social selves. It's compensation for not getting these things from their individualistic, selfish, daily lives in Business, in Politics, in backing Bush. On top of that social endorsement they get from other people they get (apparently) endorsement from 'God' too. That's authoritative social justification of their actually anti-social selves!

That their beliefs are not to do with decent social values is confirmed by the fact that they don't use the *Christian* tradition - which contains a healthy amount of caring for others - but the *pre-Christian* Old Testament. Their beliefs are really just about themselves and their need for support and justification. Jesus's sayings don't endorse that. So they focus most of what they say and believe on the Old Testament God rather than Jesus.

Moving on - in the UK many people say they believe in '*God*'.

But most are in fact, believers in the god of Consumerism.

That includes many Muslims.

Actual Muslim beliefs are about more than just explaining and justifying their *own* existence. Muslims seem to care about other Muslims – they call them *the Ummah*. And most Muslims seem to be pretty civilised people generally, with great awareness of the obligations of social co-existence, and not just with fellow-Muslims.

Terrorists mis-use the Muslim identity as a unifying, motivational idea for resisting western Businesses' long-running imperialism in the Middle East. Fundamentalists turned to reactionary religious myths to justify the struggle against western imperialists because more rational beliefs were tried but were defeated by western governments working on behalf of the Business Class, particularly the Oil companies.

In the fifties and sixties, in most Arab countries, people resisting imperialism tried *Secular* anti-colonial Arab Nationalism, and Stalinist-influenced 'Socialism from above'. This was with leaders like Nasser in Egypt. But these movements were defeated by 'the West' supporting local business class politicians and governments friendly to western Business like Mubarak in Egypt; and by the West's support for Israel. So now, with those social movements having been defeated, a fundamentalist version of Islamic beliefs has developed as a motivator for fighting back. It's poorly thought-out though. The terrorist element claim to be fighting for fellow-Muslims but how do they justify *killing* many of them? It's only temporary, hopefully – there are plenty of humane Muslims, and also Secularists, in the Middle East.

More on Binding Together by Religion

The big world religions usually consist of - a fixed set of socially useful moral values; some rules controlling the individual's personal life; belief in a mythical authority for these two things, usually called *God*; and a succouring belief that this authority figure has a blissfully safe haven for you to go to when you die if you follow his or her rules.

Some people defend religions because of the social, moral values they promote. Many of those values *are* useful, necessary if we are to be decent and live peacefully together. God and one 'Holy Book' of beliefs have served this socially useful purpose in the past - helped impose a set of *Social Values and Morals* that enabled a degree of peaceful living. If in centuries past you were met and threatened by, say, robbers at night in the countryside or the town or the desert, or by pirates on the High Seas, you had some leverage when you could appeal to shared Christian or Muslim beliefs and morals and the threat of God's punishment if they mis-treated you. To a rational and democratic person these days, the use of imaginary all-powerful authorities doesn't seem like an acceptable way to do it. But that's the way it *was* done, and religion served that useful social purpose.

But it was also an instrument of straightforward repression used by big Landowners to rule Peasants. The values embedded in the religions can be as much full of nasty stuff as they are of good stuff. One prime example is the Catholic belief that babies are born with 'Original Sin', of which they need purging. What a vile proposition! Poor babies! Innocent little things, new to the world. And much of religious belief represses people unnecessarily, for things about *personal* behaviour that are nobody else's business. And there are plain daft beliefs like 'life after death'. That's a contradiction in terms!

But the biggest problem with each religion is that believers have to accept the entire package of beliefs pretty much unchangeable. That's the way religion works - it says here you are, a complete explanation for life, a Way of Living, and a promise of a way out of the problems of life. A tempting offer. So Christians think it's all in the Bible and what Jesus said; Muslims think it's all in the Qur'an and what Mohammed said.

Now that is not right. No one person in history, whether Jesus or Mohammed or anybody else, and no one human or book or collection of rules can contain, for ever, the *complete* wisdom about Life and the Universe. Belief only in what one '*Holy Man*' or '*Holy Book*' from ancient history said, as your entire wisdom, limits your development and our development as a species. We are constantly developing our knowledge of ourselves and the universe and our social values, and there's far more wisdom about, and to be developed, than can be found in any one of the so-called Holy Books. We've all got something useful to say - Socrates, Spinoza, Hume, Hegel, Shankly, Nietsche, Kierkegaard, Dylan, Douglas Adams, me, you. This writer is a Marxist but that doesn't mean taking what Marx said as an ever-lasting gospel. He was just a very smart bloke who worked out a very useful analysis of how human society develops. But it can be questioned and improved.

The notion of a *'God'* that is basic to much religious belief is just a primitive theory of how the universe came about and what purpose there is to our lives. We can see it now as a very unlikely and far-fetched theory. It's early Science, developed at a time when we also believed the Sun went round the Earth. No one can present any evidence to demonstrate the existence of a 'God'. There's only the most remote, extremely unlikely possibility of there being one. It would be unscientific to say it's totally impossible but it's a bit unlikely. Just have faith, they say. No - believe only in what you can see and what can be shown to you.

We are a long way yet from knowing how the universe came into being. But we don't need to know! Our purpose is first of all to survive and, if possible, enjoy it. We Secular, Rational Humanists - there's many millions of us - don't need to say that we *don't know* or are doubtful about *'God'*. We don't need to say we are *agnostic.* That's is to abstain from thinking properly about a big issue. There's no need to be shy of saying God is an extremely unlikely, preposterous theory put forward by our forebears in an attempt to explain their existence and the way the world worked for and against them. Just as we now know a lot of what they believed in science was incorrect, we can say the same about '*God*'. *On the evidence* there is no God.

With it being an unlikely idea, with there being no evidence, with no-one able to demonstrate anything real about it, it's not worth treating seriously as an issue, about what the universe and ourselves are about.

But the fact that so many do believe it *is* a serious issue.

The Humanist Identity

The best thing to be said for religion is what the comedian Bill Bailey said – 'God is an expression of man's desire for a Common Consciousness'. But people are giving up on themselves by believing in the 'religious' value systems. That's handing their thought processes over to some old learnings and wisdom that are true in some respects but not in others. There was a letter in the paper once that purported to defend Christianity because without 'God' to give us moral values we'd not have any. What nonsense! The moral values we have, that are claimed to come from this imaginary entity, *are* Humanly devised!

Ever since the Enlightenment, and David Hume exhorting us to believe only what we can demonstrate to be true, we've been evolving as a species, into developing the capability of understanding the universe and our selves, for ourselves, using *Rational* enquiry and discussion. Many, many millions of us are *Secular Rationalists*. But we need to promote it more clearly. In all the

debate about beliefs, we don't get treated with respect, we're not considered one of the world's great belief systems. That's because we don't, by definition, commit ourselves to any one identifiable set of beliefs.

But we do commit ourselves to *Scientific Method* and there's not a problem in applying that to social values and morals. We can and do work out for ourselves what is good for just and peaceful living. It's what the secular Democratic process that we have won in many countries is about - using democratic discussion and negotiation to decide our social values, not some fixed old book. With secular government, that's what politics is *for*.

Religious beliefs are wrong because of their fixedness, their rejection of open-ended rational discussion and evidence, their complete commitment to what a mythical being, one holy book and a priesthood tells you to think. And their claimed absolute authority is used by fundamentalist believers like Bush, Blair and Al Quaeda to motivate and justify their murderous activities.

So What Do I Believe In? (If you're interested …)

I believe this - we've found out a huge amount about Life, the Universe and Everything. And we keep learning more and more, about the origins of the Solar System, the Universe, the Big Bang, Dark Stars, and all those billions of other stars and planets; we know lots from Geology, Archaeology, Biology, Evolution, all that beautiful and amazing *Life on Earth* stuff that David Attenborough knows. There's Physics, Maths, Psychology, Sociology.

Most of what we've got to know and understood is bloody wonderful, marvellous stuff. Everyone should read Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything* and appreciate the splendours and weirdness of the Universe. Including *Us*. Me, for sure. And you, probably.

But for all the wondrous stuff we know, there's a lot we don't. But as we learn more we get further away all the time from the idea of a god and being able to rely upon just one or two 'holy' books. Nevertheless, this writer has a very brief philosophy of life, a good core approach –

- This is It

- Pay Your Dues

- Enjoy (or try to)

- Be Kind

Is anything left out there ? Covers it all in just twelve words ?

A great Humanist song saying this, saying

'this is it, make the most of it' is John Lennon's 'Imagine' -

Imagine all the People

Living for Today…..

No Hell below us,

Above Us only Sky….

No need for Hunger,

A Brotherhood of Man

(and Women ……)

And if we need the idea of Heaven, of a blissful place -

Ringo's *Octupus's Garden* does it well! Give it another listen.

We don't need religion any more. As a species, we are moving on and evolving, particularly in our understanding of the universe and ourselves. We are capable of providing security for each other in material things. And we know enough about ourselves to work out how to live interesting, useful, supportive, satisfying lives alongside each other, and just Enjoy. The basis would be a Socialist way of relating to each other on meeting our basic needs, like Making a Living, Education, Health and Political power. Then enjoy, in your own way.

So What Identities *Should* We Have ?

National, place-based *Where You're From*, football, gender, family and religious identities have been looked at closely and at length.

Place can be an easy, non-contentious, non-political, non-probing way of getting talking to people. But it stops us from *properly* relating to each other, across the UK, and, with the world becoming more integrated, across Europe, the USA, and Globally too. All that self-identification as Northern, Southern, Yorkshire, White, British - it's all empty, without substance. If you self-identify as *British* you put yourself in a fellowship with Thatcher, Tebbitt, Michael Howard, any other Tory you care to name, the Daily Mail and with nationalist, sexist nasties like Jim Davidson. Identifying your self as *American* puts you with Bush and Cheney and Rumsfeld and their backers. As *Italian*, with Berlusconi. As *French*, with Sarkozy and Le Pen. Now does that make any sense to anyone with any decent humanity in them? No, surely?

People do it because all the meaningless identities - town, city, county, region, nation, football club, gender – are easier to pick up on than the real ones. Let's be honest, to be in many of them all you've got to do is be born! Or buy a scarf or shirt. No real effort, action, skill or real commitment is required. From just that you're allowed to get all proud about the achievements of anybody else 'from' there even though you've no real connection with them. Anything will do - the Welsh are even proud of 'their' mountains! But they're just *there* - the Welsh didn't *make* them! (Slartibartfast maybe did.)

All the 'where you're from' and football identities group us together and encourage people to 'take sides' with little real meaning, and harmfully. We should be more thoughtful, and identify with other people for better reasons than just happening to live in the same town; or 'being born or living on the same patch of the globe where human rules are made by a 'state' - the 'country'.

We could do with dropping all that and recognising only group identities that actually mean something, that are defined by real, active relationships.

Family and religion do have some real meaning. Although family is not a wide enough group for all-of society social organisation and, as said, is over-promoted by the Business Class to deflect us from making demands on them for Social support. Also as said, religion has it's shortcomings.

But do you agree there's nothing in 'where you're from'? Is there something in it? According to stereotype, Scousers are argumentative, and witty. Do you find this one is, in this book? The first of the two, surely?

But I'm not really a Scouser, I'm from Berken'ead.

Seriously - if you're grouping people, do it for the right reasons.

*So what groups **should** we put ourselves and others in?*

False or *Real* group identities ?

There are *real* group identities for us to adopt. Identities like being truly Working Class, working with other Working Class people for real things like Jobs, Pensions.

But to cut through the fog of false identities heavily boosted by the Business class through their 'news' papers and Sky TV trash, to see yourself in the real groups, *you've got to be Doing Something*, to be involved in real community or union activity. It's easier to attach your identity to football where all your passion can be vented on something that makes no real demands on you. If beaten, you can turn away after the match, feel gutted for a bit, but then have a drink, forget it. It's essentially meaningless. There's no real links with the 'club' – often now, a business - or with other fans.

Football fans do organise together a bit. The committed hooligans organise themselves and pre-arrange scraps with rival hooligans. I'd leave them to it – it's originally a war-game so if they want a real one let them go ahead. But more positively, despite the filth and hatred expressed through football rivalries, other fans sympathised with Liverpool fans after the Hillsborough disaster in 1989. And in seeing off Sky's attempt to take over the club, United fans were helped by Manchester City and Liverpool fans. A City fan chaired one of the first meetings of the campaign.

Some of the Manchester United fans organised to oppose the take-over of United by the business man Glazer. And some have successfully set up their own team, FC United of Manchester. There is some interest in the fans being more involved in the clubs, looking at clubs like Barcelona that are owned by the fans, who get to vote for the President.

But for most people supporting the football team or 'bigging themselves up' for *being from* some town or city just means vaguely – although passionately - associating themselves with something big. It doesn't mean they see any meaningful relationship with all those other people they share that identity with. Like in Manchester, if they're robbing you, they don't say - *Oh, I'll not rob you because we're both United fans or Mancs.* Although sometimes if you can identify some shared social contacts like 'knowing' someone the person robbing you knows, it can help.

Meaningful Groups

It's easy to stay with the shallow identities because the real identities make real demands on you. But they are more rewarding.

Without even getting political there's many ways to group yourself with other people with more meaning to them than place and football. Such as shared tastes in *Music*. It's means more to identify yourself as a fan of particular bands and kinds of music, because they or the music express things more relevant to you and your personal life than the raw triumphalism of football. And you can expect to be friendly with other fans, to share feelings for that music based on something substantial, shared values, regardless of where they're *from*. What music, which bands, do you like? Rock, Hip-hop, Rap, Jazz, Grunge, Indie, Dylan, Sinatra, whatever? Aren't there people *all round the world* who share that with you?

It works across national identity. The other people who like the same music, people you can relate to on that, can include a lot of Americans. This writer is a Dead Head, my favourite band by far being the Grateful Dead, who are, amongst other things, 'Americans', being from San Francisco and other parts of the cosmos. But we don't expect to be friendly with *all* Americans. Certainly not Bush's crew. But those who we have something real in common with, yes. Decent Americans, decent people, yes.

I'm a motorcyclist and identify with Bikers all over the world. Because unlike with place identity there's a *genuine* common interest and common experiences to talk about, and things to do together. And there's road transport issues to campaign together about - like European Union rules trying to stop us modifying our bikes. If in France or Germany, say, I expect to be able to be friendly with, have common interests with, bikers from there. To talk about the TT, the Nurburgring, Le Mans.

There's InterNet sites where people with particular bikes chat daily, exchanging technical information, advice. But they are from all around this globe, the UK, Australia, France, USA, Spain. Place identity doesn't figure in it. And that's fine. The common interest is real, based on helping each other with technical problems, arranging get-togethers. It's got nothing to do with boasting or being antagonistic about where somebody is *from.*

Although some bikers get partisan about owning one make of bike rather than another. Sometimes it's any identity but those that matter.

But here's a nice, mildly stunning example of people from all over sharing ***real interests***. Eating in the station café of the Ffestiniog Mountain Railway in Porthmadog, Wales, I could overhear some blokes at the next table who'd met by arrangement, to go on the little old mountain railway together. It sounded like they were swapping details of different types of smokeboxes or something. I don't *fully* get why you'd want to do that ..... One had come from Merseyside. Another had come from... bloody hell! *Reno,* Nevada! All the way from Reno to Porthmadog to meet like-minded smokebox enthusiasts!

But good luck to them. They have a real relationship based on a real shared interest, not a spurious one like *Where You're From*.

What about your other interests? Are you into Hot-air Ballooning? Micro-light aircraft? Scuba Diving? Computers? Computer games? You have a real relationship with other people about that, which you don't have with some of the prats who live nearby in this town or in this country (whichever country you are reading this in.) Take most interests or hobbies - Gardening even (not me, maybe you!) - and you'll find *Where You're From* has nothing to do with the ability to share your interests with people from all over the world.

Can you think of a few *Common Interest Groups* that you are in, not to do with town or country, but to do with real, shared interests or needs?

It Ain't Where You're ***From*** that Matters

But more generally in society, how should we group people?

Should we be grouping people at all?

Some people try to just ***Take People As They Find Them***, judging each person they meet on their own merits. That's fine.

Certainly, place grouping is well overplayed - a weak association based only on geographical proximity between you and a large number of people you don't actually know and have little of real meaning in common with. Shared local knowledge, an accent - that's about it. Pretty meaningless, really, when you think about it. But *so* important to so many. The (fabulous) Stone Roses were caught up in it all by being a 'Manchester' band at the time music from there was big as "Madchester'. Their singer Ian Brown used to play it down, using that wonderful saying –

It Ain't Where You're *From* -

…. It's Where You're *At*

Mohammad Ali said it originally. Great man.

It's Not Where You're From – It's Where You're At

It's Not Where Anyone is From (that matters)

It's Where They're At; or Who They Are

Think about it. It's so true.

It demolishes all those place identities and hatreds and replaces them with more useful questions like -

'What kind of person is he or she or them *as actual people?*'

'What have you or they got going for them?'

'How do they behave?' *Do* they behave (themselves)?

You can apply it to race –

It Ain't What the Colour of Someone's Skin Is - It's Where They Are At.

A common saying is 'There's good and bad in all', in different Races.

Decent Folk

Just for convenience in communicating, we do need to group people together. But it's best to really describe people properly as far as possible, we need to avoid turning the convenience of short-hand into pigeon-holing and stereotyping, and they need to be valid groupings.

This first way of doing it sounds a bit naff. But you can, as in kid's games, group people as *Goodies* - decent people, decent folk, decent types - and as *Baddies,* bastards. These simple ways are sound enough for grouping people. With degrees in-between, and shades of grey, sure.

For the most basic grouping of people ***Decent folk* or *Decent people*** will do. It means those who appreciate and enjoy the fact that they live alongside others and take account of that in how they live and what they do. Wherever they are, whatever town, city, district, region or country they are in. It excludes those, like real Tories and Working Class little Tories, who think life is all about looking after 'number 1'.

When we get past the crudity of place identity don't you find that you, and other people, do group or classify particular people as *Decent*, or not? It's common, isn't it, to ask of someone 'What's she like, she alright?' Or to say 'He's alright'. Or, if he's not, 'He's a bit of a dick'. Or a swine. Or a bastard. And that's fine, to describe or group people like that, because you are judging them by how they behave not by the unalterable, irrelevant, place-based 'where they're from' or by their 'race' or gender.

So for a basic way of grouping people whatever their colour or wherever they are *from*, why not drop all the 'where you're from' stuff? Or just keep it at the level of 'talking about interesting places' and maybe about 'the different local customs they have there' and instead, see ***Decent Folk*** (or not) as your main way of grouping people?

It's important to our political thinking. It's the first step to building the sort of group identity amongst people-as-workers that we need if we are to better ourselves, together.

So whenever you find people grouping and judging themselves or others by place, nationality or race – which you do find, every day – challenge it. Argue for people to put aside whether someone is '*an Aussie', 'a Geordie', a 'Pakistani', a 'German', a ' Nigerian', an 'Argentinian', 'a Pole', Welsh, a 'Japanese', a 'Cockney', a 'Whatever*'. And insist instead on judging them on who they really are, on '*Where They're At*'. Try it, as a conscious decision, as you take part in ordinary discussions or remarks with family, friends, neighbours, workmates. It works, believe me!

Real Validation, Real Social Weight

Here are some real *Social Groups*, groups of people who give and get real support and mutual protection –

- *Family and Friends and people who share your interests or music.*
- *Decent people* living decently alongside each other, good Neighbours, Community activists.
- *Some Religious groups* offer each other support. It's based on myth and wildly unproveable belief systems, unfortunately. But they do help each other get through life.
- *People-as-Workers Organised as Trade Unionists* to help each other.
- *Political Parties* that try to ensure all people have the necessaries of life like Work, Income, Food, Water, Housing, Education, Health Care, and are Safe on the Streets.
- There could be *Socialist Government* with mass Democratic control of the Economy and everything else.

These are or could be the ***real*** Tribes, the social support groups in ***modern*** life. The valid, functional groups who help each other survive and get by.

Supporting these doesn't sound as exciting as, say, the football, rugby or cricket, does it? It can be, though. Because when you really defend yourselves and challenge the Business Class it can be as exciting as you might want, as those people fight hard. Like how they used the Police against the Miners during the 1984/85 Miner's Strike. Sport *seems* more exciting; but it's only safe excitement. Except, I suppose, for how working class fans hate and fight each other. That's exciting. But pointless.

Political Identity Groups

Politics, of course, is the most important thing in life where we should to work with other people on shared interests and needs

But for all the identifying with Britain, Britishness and British sportspeople, fellow-Countrymen and women don't really ***do*** much jointly, together. Voting

in elections is the most important shared act yet ***there's very little debate between ordinary Citizens***. Most debate comes from the Business Class, in their press, on their agenda and their terms, bending our minds, undermining our class thinking. Many ordinary citizens won't even tell another how they vote, treating it as a deeply private matter.

But what about all the talk of We, Us and Ours? Voting isn't simply a *Private* act. It's a *Collective* act. The *debate* with each other about how each of us votes is as necessary to democracy as the vote itself. What each of us does affects each other so we should be up-front with each other about it. Secret voting was only needed initially because in the 1830's and onwards landlords and bosses would kick you out of your house or sack you for not voting for their candidate. Now, between equal citizens who respect each other, it shouldn't be needed. It only encourages us to be isolated from each other in making a very important collective decision.

I suppose we probably *do* need it, 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.*

Our main identity - Working Class

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 your opponents, to some extent. 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, the Bosses. 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 Plenty of You*. 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*, part of They Are The Business Class*,* 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 *Active* member of the Working Class'.

A huge number of us are organised in our Unions. At least seven million ***Members*** according to Government figures. I thought it was more like ten million but the exact figure isn't important here. We are the biggest political organisations there are. Many more of us should at least be ordinary union Members. All of us, actually. Even if we can't get union *Recognition* where we work, you can still get help, advice, backing for a compensation or tribunal claim and *Individual Representation* at work. We should all be in unions and think and readily say that we are. But saying 'I'm in a Union' is too passive. 'I'm a Trade Unionist' is better, it speaks of it being an active thing.

There's a few million, just in the UK, who *are* ***Active*** members, who take an interest, go to meetings. There's up to a million who are ***Officers***, Branch Secretaries and the like, who run the union organisation *outside* the workplace, go to regional meetings, annual conferences.

Then *inside* work there's the ***Union Reps***, the ordinary workers who take on the crucial, central job of ***Representing their Workmates***. They take responsibility for *organising* us as a class; get better conditions for us, challenge sexism, racism and other unfair treatment. The last time I saw some figures, there were around 400,000 Workplace Union Reps. That's quite a lot of seriously active people.

There's not normally a lot good said about ***Unions*** and ***Union activity***. But I'm always struck by the response, when talking to someone new, and they ask the question 'What did you do?' (for a living). When I tell them I spent a lot of my working life teaching on Shop Stewards courses, people have a standardised 'take' on it. A slightly surprised, respectful expression, head-cocked, raised eyebrows, saying 'Oh really? Wow. Hmmm. Interesting. Good'. That feels good for me, of course. But what's of more interest is that despite 'unions' being almost invisible in everyday talk, and the strong anti-the-unions attitudes taken in the Business Class 'news' papers and amongst politicians, *people know about Workplace Union Organisation, about Workplace Union Reps, and have an instant respect for them and what they do*. Interesting and encouraging, that.

I should say that this book and the arguments fiercely made in it are not at all representative of what happens on the courses I taught. For one reason, they are structured around student-centred activities, working from students own experience, finding solutions to their own and their members immediate workplace problems. This writer played a role in establishing these methods against resistance from some lecturers who believed instead in themselves having a powerful role as 'industrial relations experts', interpreting the world for the union reps. No, it's more that the background to my teaching was the unbelievable marginalisation of trade union organisation, even amongst many workers, and the staggering cheek of the anti-union laws, that fuelled my long-

held determination to examine and explain the basics, as this book does. (*Now* I'm interpreting the world for people ….)

Working Class organisation starts at work, in the workplace, with union Membership and Recognition. It doesn't stop there because us organising is a challenge to the most basic structure of society, the dominance of it by the Business Class. It is therefore highly political. But it does start there. And it's nowhere near as strong as it needs to be. Workers are always at least annoyed, or worse, desperately distraught, about what's done to them at work. This writer is retired from working in education and having been a Union Rep in that sector. Everyone still in it has terrible tales of despair about increased teaching loads, at the same time as draconian and pointless inspections, audits, assessments and a huge range of similar imposed new systems, not one of which helps them to do the actual job. It's a health-wrecking nightmare, mental and physical. The response needs to be a high level of sectional – department by department - *Organisation* amongst themselves.

There and in all workplaces every group of Workers in a particular Job or Department should be organised by and Represented by one or more Union Reps / Shop Stewards, and should be prepared to back them, and Workers in other Departments, and ensure that the amount and type of work we do for the 'Boss', and the Wages and Conditions we do it for, are as nearly as possible negotiated with us having Equal Power to them.

Show Your Class

There, above, are some things to 'big yourself up on' if feeling outside the place, national and football identities that have been analysed and criticised her. That's what I do. That's a good identity group to belong to - ***Working Class and Active***. There's plenty of us. It's a better identity group to feel a part of than shallow place and football identities and chauvinism. In this work, I criticise a lot of things about my fellow-workers, particularly those who act like little Tories. But when they act *as workers*, organised workers preferably, they're great. Maybe they're active in a Union at work. Maybe in a Tenants Group. Or in anti-War groups. Or in a Socialist Party. This writer is a member of 'Unite', the Union; of Amnesty International; and of Liberty, the Civil Rights organisation.

When people-as-workers do get themselves organised and act together the divisive *Where You're From* and football identities fall away pretty quickly. All unions have regional and national meetings several times a year, and annual conferences in Blackpool and Bournemouth and wherever, where working class activists work together with people from other places on all the real issues. You still get a little daft banter there about place and football identities but it's not a real problem.

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 and hate each other as Krauts, Jocks, Eyeties, Frogs, Yanks, Japs, etc. etc. and fight each other over bloody football when we should work together.

Over the centuries and now, the Rich classes, the Land-owning and then the Business Classes, are far better at Solidarity than we are.

Although their competitive economic system makes them *business* rivals, they're very good at domestic *political* solidarity; and also at *international* solidarity. Despite their wars, most of which are about them competing brutally for resources and markets, they can also work very closely together with great solidarity to preserve their system.

As far back as the 12th Century they married themselves or their kids off to the rulers of far-off countries to solidify international alliances. Like Henry the Eighth did, repetitively. Just think about how poor travel and international communications were back then compared to today - but they still *Communicated* and *Co-operated*. Then think about how parochial many of the Working Class still are about 'foreigners'.

And earlier, there was a reference to *Extra Stuff 7 at page 226* 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 envy

and 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.

Whatever country they're 'from' or whatever colour they are.

Whatever city they are from, whatever team they support.

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.

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.

But change by talking to each other – we can do that too.

…… and also by reading – if you agree with most of what's said here, recommend it and pass on to another Worker the links -

www.challengingthesystem.org

(for this free download)

www.lulu.com/content/10954201

(for the printed book)

And to a Business Class person, if you think
they're civilised enough to appreciate it;
or if you think it might it might help civilise them.

The Political System – 'Democracy'

How It Developed under the Business System

The Right to Associate.

The Case Against Anti-Union Law

It is commonly said, and it is widely accepted, that we live in a Democracy. But do we really? What does it mean? For example, when those millions of us who opposed the Iraq War told Tony Blair he was wrong, he said "Well, that's your right to say that - that's democracy". Er, excuse me, you arrogant, democratically illiterate war-criminal twerp – *that's* free speech. It's an important pre-condition for democracy. But it's not democracy itself. Democracy means that your views actually *count*, that the majority decide, not just one (mad) man like him.

He decided to take the most serious action possible – ***War*** **-** with all that involves in death, maiming, grief, public spending - and had the cheek, the idiotic brass neck, to claim he had the right to start a war, that involves all of *us*, just on his *own* decision! And he fully intended to. He only allowed even the Members of Parliament a vote on it because of huge protests by millions of Citizens of this country. And that was the first time ever the MP's had a say. Gordon Brown when Prime Minister promised a law that MP's would definitely have a vote in future decisions on war. But in the vote that Blair conceded them on Iraq, many of them voted for war against the views of their constituents.

But in many years of activity as a Trade Unionist, when involved in organising ***Strikes***, for it to be legal I and others had to ballot every member, by post, under rigorous laws *made by MP's in Parliament.* Made by an organisation so un-democratic it allowed Prime Ministers to commit us all to war without even *themselves* having a vote!

Once, this writer could have been sued for many thousands of pounds by his employer because an incompetent judge had made a wrong ruling against his union. This is the sort of nonsense you get caught up in - before a strike, the law requires you to tell your employer who you are balloting - your *Members.* Later, if members vote for a strike, the law requires you to tell your employer which *Employees* you are going to encourage to strike. That can legally be *all* the workforce, not just union members.

This judge mistakenly read these two separate requirements as the same thing, and, following his faulty legal instruction, our union told the employer only our *members* were striking. Many *non-members* wanted to strike too and asked me, a Branch Officer, if they could. I got caught up in the complication of telling them it *should* be legal for me to encourage them to strike: but because of this judge's mistaken ruling, and my Union therefore not telling the

employer we would be doing that, I couldn't be very positive in encouraging them to join in without risking being sued.

But why are we forced to do all this? And by who? We trade unionists have always had far more ***Democracy*** when we go on strike than those pompous, presumptuous Parliamentarians have when they go to war. We, workers organised together, have the most democratic systems you could find. Before they forced postal balloting on us we had a variety of democratic ways of deciding to strike, each far more democratic than theirs for deciding to go to war. Postal balloting is inferior democratic practice to some other ways. Of which more, later.

But…. how about *you* lot, you MP's, you who committed us to a brutal, murderous and illegal *War*, including making us targets for enraged people fighting back against you, how about giving me, and you, reader, a vote - ***any*** kind of vote - on that?

It gets worse. As said, striking is our - far less momentous - equivalent of their going to war. ***In our case, Parliament has even given the other side, the people we're up against, the power to make our action illegal!*** But what business is it of the Employer, how we, ***Independently Organised Workers***, make our decisions? When they decide to close plants and make people redundant, we've not got any right to have their boardroom decisions made illegal, unless their Shareholders are balloted. But they can do it to us.

It's as if, when Blair declared war on Iraq without giving us a vote,

Saddam Hussein could have got Blair's action made illegal.

In 2010, the UK election resulted in no party having an overall majority. The Liberal Democrats made 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 or voted for it. It was profoundly undemocratic, a constitutional outrage. The Lib Dems argued it was the only thing to do. Not at all. All they had to do was to negotiate the terms of their coalition with the Tories and for them both to go straight back to the electorate with that coalition and those policies 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 wealth and power, 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 a ***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* and, most importantly, the unequal rights they have over workers in the *Labour Trade* part of their Business system. They've strongly resisted mass democracy, equality and fairness. They've been quite successful and that's why we haven't yet got those things.

What little democracy we have had to be fought for by workers and other ordinary people. ***It is not Democracy, the final version***. It's nowhere near that. We still have a *society* unfairly dominated by the Business class and their Business system.

Once Upon a Time - *Open* Class Rule

For centuries, the Business class were open about being a class permanently in power over the rest of us. They even codified it by birth – they called themselves *the Gentry*, being *of Gentle Birth*, and us, *Commoners.* And by all sorts of ridiculous pomposity and ritual. ***But now, they try to conceal that they are a separate class.***

They do it with the claim that ***Anyone Can Make It.*** In fact, research shows that a lot of the business class are from the same families as they always were. *But it doesn't matter whether that's so or not. Because the Business Class - or* ***a*** *Business Class - exists, year on year.* If it has different members, as they drop out through business failure, or become new members by 'making it', it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter who they are – a 'toff' from a family wealthy from generations back: or your old schoolmate 'made good'. Even if it were easier for some of us to join it, there still always is a Business Class.

What matters is that there is such a class, dominating the Majority**.**

Some of them are able and enterprising and manage well. But they're also mostly amazingly greedy. Through the unjustified *'Free' Labour Market* mechanism of *They've Got Plenty of You,* 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 anti-union law. 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 *Democratic* 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, Business-class-run Democracy

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 just one little x

And after all that, what do you and me actually ***get****? Just one little pencil cross on a scrap of paper every four or so years*. A pathetic little thing it is. It is used against us – because this one little chance to influence what goes on is presented ***as*** democracy, and we are expected to accept and abide by all the laws made because if we wanted things different on any issue, we could, supposedly, change it with the vote.

But this is nonsense. First - ***many of the Laws in force today were made when it was not at all democratic***. If you want to change any or all of the many laws and thousands of Government decisions that were made, undemocratically, *before* we got the vote, this one occasional little-cross-on-a-piece-of-paper - a maximum of about 15 over your lifetime - doesn't give us the power to change all of ***that***.

Second - if you want to influence what is done ***now***, it only allows each of us a crude, remote say in the choice of one group of lawmakers - one Party, one Government - rather than another. ***Then they do many different things, make new laws, make thousands of decisions. That one Vote gives us little influence over what they do*****.**

It's little wonder that *We* talk of what *They* do.

And that we feel powerless. It's because we are.

Having said that - if you take the long view, all of history, the whole development of the human race - the democracy and freedoms we've established are our greatest achievements. We should value the *Social Organisation, Co-operation Civilisation, and Democracy* that we've developed. Compare the world now with all previous ages - say just three hundred years ago - and we've more Freedom around the world than ever before. But ….. there's a way to go yet.

What Conservatives Want to Conserve

After winning the Civil War and, in 1688, forcing the Monarchy and the Aristocratic landowners to concede power to them in Parliament, the Propertied and Business class spent the years from 1700 viciously using their new political power to destroy ***Feudal*** economic relationships and re-structure society to suit their new ***Business class*** interests. In the 18th Century, the ordinary people knew they were making Class law and they had to have flunkies riding on the outside of their carriages to defend them from people's anger. You know them, the 18th century Rich – be-whigged, perfumed and brocaded, arrogant peacocks with extravagant clothes and manners. Gentle manners with brutal politics. They were disgusting people. You can now go round all those big, sumptuous country houses and mansions and estates they had built for them. They revelled in their status, and, as said, clearly, openly, unashamedly divided people from birth until death into themselves, G*entlemen and Ladies* - ***the Gentry;*** and us, people of *'Common Birth'* - ***Commoners***. They were contemptuous of we, 'the common people'.

Through Parliaments made up only of big landowners, and through judges exclusively from their own class, they established in Law the key relationships, how they can behave towards us and how we can behave towards them, that are still the fundamental relationships in Society. The relationships that suit them and that they fight to *Conserve.* Relationships, ways of relating, that don't suit our interests, those of the Working Class majority. That is to say – *When this wasn't a democracy they established in law their ownership of productive Property and the basic relationships of 'Free' Markets.* You'll know how often they are mentioned in politics and how important they are. We should take a close look at them and how they affect us.

Power and Wealth through ***Owning Land***

Nowadays owning ***Land*** - big farms, estates – and producing agricultural products isn't the main economic activity. It is still a big one, industrialised. But more mainstream Industrial production, including 'Service' industries, now dominates. ***So the big issue now is how we relate to each other in the Industrial production of wealth***. It's the key theme of this whole book. We'll deal with it again shortly.

But what they did with property relationships, particularly land, after getting power in Parliament, transformed our relationship with them. And it set things up for the Industrial economy with a 'Free Market' in labour. So let's look at what they did with *Property*.

We all want our own *personal* property. But what's really important is ***property that is used to produce things***, that we use to *'Make Our Living'*. Feudal society had been authoritarian and un-democratic: but there was

common access to a lot of the land, and it had supportive features. There was the notion of Christian duty to all members of society. The Land-owning and new Merchant Business class demolished this form of somewhat-caring society and replaced it with uncaring, self-aggrandising, private ownership of productive property. In the period 1700 to 1800 the landowners authorised themselves, in their Parliament, to steal most of the Common land from 'the Common People' by enclosures and clearances, to enlarge their estates. That enabled them to get rich as Landlords, extracting Rent from Tenant small farmers, and also farming it 'themselves'.

They relieved themselves of responsibility for their fellow-British. Masses of ordinary country people were driven off the land into dreadful poverty or driven to property crime – poaching, street robbery. The Land-owning and Merchant class brutally enforced their new powers, hanging starving kids who stole bread, deporting people to Virginia and Australia for minor property crimes that had not previously been crimes - like catching game on Common land now privatised. Vicious at home, even more vicious overseas - through being Slave Traders - they made big money – Capital – and re-invested it back in the UK in the new Factories - where they treated us, again, brutally. All this time, our sort of people fought to retain a more collective, supportive society. But we had no political rights, it wasn't a democracy, except for the propertied class. So the Propertied class won.

Much of the still-existing law of Property is from these profoundly un-democratic times. It does not have the moral or political legitimacy of having been decided democratically. We have never agreed to it.

With Industrialisation productive property came to include, as well as Land, Factories, Machines, Offices, Ships, Lorries, Airliners and Lorries. Now, they get wealthy more from Industry and Services than from Land. So the argument about laws favouring them is now less about ***Land ownership*** and more about their '***Free Market***' system.

Power and Wealth through *Free Markets in Products*

In the Feudal system, the Middle Ages, *Free Markets* were not common. Most *Goods* were produced on the land and the aristocratic 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 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.

Power and Wealth Through

Free Markets in People - in You

Free Markets in ***Goods and Services*** have advantages and disadvantages, and they are fiercely debated in politics. At times we've challenged free markets in goods and services by Nationalising some major industries. We've done it, largely successfully, in Health and Education. Although we are being pushed back.

Free markets in **Labour** are not debated and argued about like free markets in Goods and Services are. They are simply accepted by most people.

Yet they disastrous to us, the Majority, who sell ourselves as Workers.

We have to challenge the Free Market in Labour, in particular.

Because it's not just about how goods or services can be bought and sold –

It's about how *YOU c*an 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 Plenty of You.* 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 anti-union laws 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 cover All the Changes We Want !

We get just the one little x that we pencil onto a scrap of paper in the local school every four years. It's not of much use in getting what we want done over the *huge* range of political ***Issues*****.** All that one all-encompassing little 'x' allows is for us to choose between several alternative 'packages of Policies and Promises' – the ***Manifesto's*** - made by the political parties. But it's pathetic. Because most of us agree with one party on some things – some *Issues* - but disagree with them, maybe deeply disagree, on others. This gives us ridiculous choices to make.

For example, in the UK election of 2005 New Labour's leader was a war criminal, Tony Blair. Despite that, lots of us still voted New Labour because they'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*

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.

Union versus Parliamentary Democracy - Going to War and The Miner's Strike

Let's look for the comparison at the great Miner's Strike of 1984/85 against wholesale Pit closures. You'll know something about it, even if you were a kid at the time. And you'll know how Arthur Scargill, president of the Miner's union, un-democratically refused to have a Ballot for the strike. Or so the anti-union myth goes.

It will be shown how there was far more democracy about the Miner's Strike, even without a ballot, than we ever get from Government when they act, including their equivalent to Striking, committing us to War. For a start –

THE 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 bosses 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 it's equivalent to a Strike - War*.

The same applies to pressure from those not-very-democratic people, those nasty pieces of work who own and run Business Class newspapers – most of

the Media - the Murdoch's, the owner's of the Mail and the Telegraph, those types.

You might be thinking ***'But that's ridiculous, you can't expect the Government to have a ballot for War***'. You might think 'It's different'. Yes, it is different. *It's far* ***more*** *serious than striking, and so* ***more*** *in need of a Democratic mandate before they commit us to it.* Sending Working class lads to kill and die, and the illegal slaughter of hundreds of thousands, as in Iraq, is a much bigger issue than calling on people to strike. There is a much *stronger* case for a Ballot of all of us.

Since Prime Ministers can do something as serious as start Wars simply on their own say-so without even a vote of MP's - as, the year before the miner's strike, Thatcher had done over the Falklands - and since the Media and the Business Class supports the Tories being able to act so un-democratically - then those of us who are organised Workers can ignore lectures on democracy from the likes of them. More than that, we – meaning I, you and others - should belligerently challenge them over their double standards.

But we are so naïve about Democracy that nobody made the comparison between what little democracy we get from Parliament when they act, and what they impose on us when we try to act. The onslaught about the national ballot was used by the Business Class's party - the Tories - and the Business Class-owned newspapers, and trailed by the BBC and ITV, to undermine the strike. In fact, there was *plenty* of democracy about the Miner's Strike.

> For one - *the Miner's Annual National Conference had already voted for Strike action* if the Coal Board announced Pit Closures.

And two - the miner's union was a *Federal* body. Members in each regional *Area* had the right to do a lot of things on their own say-so if they chose - like each State 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 was led by a committee of Delegates from each pit. When the South Yorkshire Miners asked for support, each area made their own decision to support them (except for Nottingham.) ***The strike was called Area by Area*** as members discussed what to do about the closure of the two Yorkshire mines. The areas decided to strike in support separately, but together, in accordance with their constitutional powers, by meetings of Delegates from Branches. The National Executive and a special National Conference then *endorsed* the strikes called by each Area.

A national ballot was only needed when the National Executive *called* the strike. It didn't. I was told Scargill was against it but when he saw the membership moving, he went with them. As he should have. He led his Members in fierce defence of their livelihoods and communities. Everybody talks as if he foolishly led them to defeat. But the Tories were determined to close down the industry anyway and eventually did. Resisting didn't cause it - it was just something the miners and Arthur had to do. Many millions of workers in Engineering and other industries also lost their jobs under the Tories, also had their communities ruined, were also defeated. But their union leaders didn't put up the same sort of fight Scargill did. They are more to be criticised than Arthur. He did his job.

Third - *Picketing* is a respected way of asking fellow-Workers to support you. With all areas except Nottingham out, there was clearly a majority taking part

in the strike. They picketed the Nottingham pits to try to persuade Nottingham to join in.

With *all that* democracy there was no need, and it would have been stupid, to go back to work while organising a ballot and allowing Thatcher's Government and the Business Class-owned media to attack and organise against the strike.

There's yet another way of looking at it. It's probably essential to ballot over striking for, say, a Pay rise. Everybody is involved in the same way and some may want to vote that it's not worth the bother, only about a few per cent more on your pay packet.

The Yorkshire miners were faced with something quite different, something fundamental – they were faced with *all* of them being Sacked, their Pits Closed, their Communities destroyed. The Conservatives, laughably coming from them, argued that the miners who worked on through the strike had *the Right to go to Work*. But how can some members have that right - when others are having it taken away?

An old and respected slogan is *All for One and One for All*. The miners whose pits were being closed were entitled to *demand* support, without the need for a vote, to defend people from being kicked out of their industry. You are expected to join in war, without a ballot, when 'the country' is attacked. In the World War Two, when the Nazi's bombed London, Coventry and other cities, could people in rural Herefordshire have refused to take part because *they'd* not been bombed?

War and Parliamentary 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, would have just been able to declare the strike on his own authority alone.

MP's - Labour as well as Tory - and the Business Class newspapers, and the BBC, savaged the miners because they didn't have a national ballot. Yet they accept that procedure where *just one man* – one as deranged as Blair - can start wars that make *all of us* at war. ***If they think that's alright for running the country and going to War, involving us Citizens in such bloody matters with no vote, they're not qualified to make law that dictates differently to we organised Workers*.**

There's no requirement on us to ballot for calling off strikes.

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 go on Strike. Almost always, all of us ordinary union members, have had a vote of one kind or another. Why have we never had one as Citizens for going to *War*?

'We' were the aggressor in the Iraq War, where it is being argued here that we should have had a vote. There'd be an argument that you couldn't ballot when it's 'us' being attacked – that we'd need decisive leaders able to act on our behalf. We'd have to allow the Prime Minister authority to take us into war instantly, in self-defence. Even though they can, like Brown, become PM without even being elected. Maybe so. So then -why couldn't Arthur Scargill do that ?

How did they get away with savaging the miners without being loudly laughed at by all of us? On these biggest of Issues, *Declaring War* and our equivalent, *Going on Strike*, we in our unions don't allow the centralised power that they do. We have far more Democracy. It's outrageous that they get away with damning us and dividing us over this when they operate to far lower democratic standards themselves. The barbaric mass bloody horrors of the two World Wars were each started without any national Ballot. They should have acknowledged that Scargill and the Miner's were operating to a far higher Democratic standard than theirs and just shut up.

There is an answer to this question of how MP's, Parliament, feel themselves fit to make laws that obstruct us when we try to organise action, requiring us to be a lot more rigorously democratic than they are: even giving *the other side* the power to get our actions made illegal. ***It is that the Business Class dominate ideas and politicians, even 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 politically activity is running newspapers. Most of 'the Press' is owned by Business class people who operate independently to the Tory party, but as allies of it. They set the agenda and terms of debate of

politics. And, crucially - they own most of the country's most important activity - the production of goods and services, which is where *money* is made, and in which the majority of us get jobs and earn our living.

The Labour Party's big problem is always –

How much of what you are elected to do for the worker Majority can you do,

when the people who own and run the Economy won't wear it?

Because Business people run the economy they get most of what they want. Particularly anti-union laws, that are simply class law made by and for the Business Class to deny Working Class people the right to Organise independently of them.

What Their Wars Are For

Wars are the biggest Issue, so it's worth looking at what they are ***about.***

They always present their wars as being for *Freedom*. *Our* freedom, even! But if you just look at the history, it's crystal clear that the freedom and the Democracy we have were won by fighting *them, inside* the UK. The only time a British Army has protected or promoted *our* freedom was in the Civil War, *inside the UK*. That liberated us from Absolute Monarchy. Since then, it's difficult to identify any wars or anything else the army has been used for, that were for our freedom. If they were really defending us, you'd see them helping out on the Picket lines.

But they've allowed themselves to be used *against* our freedom several times, at Peterloo, at Newport in 1831, and in 1919. And what were they doing in Ireland from 1969 to 2007? Not even the Second World War, the one most often claimed to have been about freedom, was really about that for the Business Class. There's more about that and their wars generally in *Extra Stuff 1 and 2 at Pages 219 and 222.*

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, for ever, 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 miner's 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?

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.

Union versus Parliamentary Democracy –
Associating & The Right To Associate

But aside from our reluctance to actually *act*, our democracy is fantastic compared to what governments use to authorise all that they do. That's been demonstrated on the biggest issue - wars and strikes.

Now let us compare them on another basic issue :

- the *Right* or *Compulsion* to be a *Citizen*
- the *Right* or *Compulsion* to be a *Union Member*

This involves ***Associating*** with others. It's the fundamental feature of human society, of politics, of human rights. All types of associating stand to be examined in the same terms. There's nothing special about *the country*, *the nation*, and *patriotism*, compared to other ways of identifying and associating. 'The country' is the same as any other association. Except for the significant fact that it's enforced – literally, they have the monopoly on the use of force in society - by Parliament, Judges, the Police, the Military. At times they have even tortured people for not supporting it, and they executed conscripted soldiers who mutinied against the awful, undemocratically-decided slaughter of the First World War. But their monopoly of the use of physical force is another reason to closely examine and question their authority. In this social structure, 'the country', we are *compelled* to associate with some whilst being *denied* the right to associate with others.

1. Compelled to Associate as ' the country '

You, me and everybody born here have to accept being a *member* of *'the country'*. But when did we decide to associate together, freely, as fellow-Citizens? And on what terms? We didn't, did we? We were just born and grew up here, with no choice ever offered about being in this association and being bound by how 'the country' works. Yet we are expected to abide by the Laws and the decisions of the Governments. Even when they are unelected, as the Tory and Liberal-Democrat coalition of 2010 is. Even when one mad egotist, Blair, involved us all in illegal slaughter, with no vote. Sometimes we are all even expected to kill and die for this 'country'. Some of my relatives did.

If we had proper democracy and the right to equality with business people. If we had the adult, respectful, democratic status of *citizens*, not *subjects* of a family of pompous buffoons, it might be Ok. But as things are, it's not. We should accept what rights we've won, to which people should be entitled anyway as a matter of course. But that's different to the wholesale loyal adherence to the self-harming unity with the Business class that 'the country' and 'the nation' means.

This no doubt sounds like a radical view. But, as said, we should examine all forms of associating on the same terms. 'The country' is just one of many ways of associating. There are others. And one of them - associating as workmates - is much more legitimate and important than national identity.

Looking at 'the country's' historical development, as earlier in this book, it is clear that 'the country' means the rich people's system. Originally, it was aristocrats who owned all the country's land and us too; then, it was business people with democracy limited to them only; and now, it's business people dominating a wider but weak democracy. As someone once said "The business of America is business."

The casual daily assumption of the national, patriotic 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 and under their system. That means -

We are in a compulsory association with the Business class. On their terms.

2. The Business Class are Allowed to Associate, Protected by the State

That compulsory association, the country, codifies in law that *Business people can associate together*. That's what *Companies* are - legally recognised associations of people. And the country even endorses them trading not actually as themselves but *as 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, in order to encourage business enterprise. Maybe so. But we could do with protection too.

3. 'Free' Labour Markets – Workers are Denied the Right to Associate

To balance the excessive power Business people have over each individual worker, to respond to They've Got Plenty of You, we workers also need the right to Associate - the right to Organise together in our Unions, to bargain ***Collectively*** *and be able to act together, to strike. But in practice we are denied or obstructed by law in these rights.*

The political parties who support the Business class – all the big parties - claim we do have the right to join a union. What liars! *You* can join, solo, even if there's no union presence at your work, even if nobody else is a member or operating collectively. And it's worth it for *advice* and *representation* in using the limited *Individual* employment rights you have. You'd be unwise to tell your boss you are member, though, unless essential.

And we can all join, in the same workplace. But employers don't have to ***Recognise*** you and the union members as a *group*, for stronger *collective* bargaining. They don't have to meet people who represent you all, to *Negotiate* with them. That denies the main reason why we associate. With no support for the right to associate as workmates and bargain as equals with your boss, you've no real right to union membership. Although if we are strong enough, convinced enough, if there's enough of us, we can force it on them ourselves. And there is a *limited* legal procedure, that we'll come to. But what we really need is for the case for unions to be clearly put and widely adopted amongst workers.

Some large employers accept us associating. They can relate to 'the workforce' in a more orderly way if we're unionised. But generally, as a class, Business people hate us associating and acting together and through their political party, the Tories, they've given themselves legal powers to make it difficult for us. You'd think it's plain and obvious that they do it so they can drive us hard at work, to better exploit us. But their media, their politicians and their 'intellectuals' put forward an argument about *Individual Freedom*, that, incredibly, carries weight with people and wins the anti-union political argument. It needs demolishing .....

4. 'Free' Labour Markets – Free Markets in You

As said earlier, 'free markets' where 'Individuals' – which includes *companies*! - make deals with others without anyone else interfering are a key feature of the business system. Individuals are free to Exchange and Trade with each other, to make *Contracts,* each of them making their own decision about whether the deal is good for them. Such 'freely-made' deals are endorsed and enforced as Contract law. For them, this freedom to trade is the essence of individual freedom. So their key argument against we workers associating together, to bargain together, is that we are restraining each other from 'freely' making individual Employment Contracts with Bosses, that we are denying each other's *individual freedom* and are *In Restraint of Trade.*

They present free trade in general as if absolutely virtuous, a human right. Maybe so, where we trade as equals. Or maybe not, when you look at the chaos and economic collapse they create with it. *But it's certainly plain and obvious nonsense in the Labour Market.*

First, we don't often make our contract with another *individual*. We make it with *Businesses, Companies, Corporations, with Councils and Government Departments*. Our employers are usually a *team,* with partners, Boards, shareholders, Councillors and MPs, with many managers, in thorough organisational structures.

*More importantly, the deal 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.* The full analysis of this supremely important process is the first section of this work.

So the notion that you are a *Free Individual* dealing with your Boss just another, equal one, is laughable nonsense. Funny thing is, you'd think we'd all know that. We do, in a felt way. But obviously not in a thought-out way, or else the case for organising, the case for unions, would be more widely and clearly declared. Instead, in the political debate about 'unions' in the 60's and 70's, in justifying the anti-union laws the Tories made in the 1980's, in the public debate about the Miner's Strike, they put up that argument and won! And nothing much has changed yet. It's amazing!

5. Challenging 'Free' Labour Markets – Striking In Restraint of Trade

In non-union, 'free labour market' jobs, bosses can pressure you to do what they want because some other workers 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, in the immediate event. You are under no compulsion to take any *particular* job. But 'the economy' is dominated by mass production. Capitalism develops Industrialism. We can't ever have that mythical alternative 'If we shared out all the wealth tomorrow'. We have, *inevitably*, a smallish 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 *they've got plenty of You*. So the notion of workers *being* free in, 'free markets' is nonsense.

Free markets in some goods and services have some plus points. **But in 'the labour market', where we Sell** *Ourselves*, **they are disastrous to the majority.** They leave 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 – Work. It is unacceptable.

Were we can, we organise and 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 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.

The Business class are ***so*** Cheeky

The Business class are *amazingly* cheeky. *As if siding with people,* they argue in their newspapers and through their party, that as workers, people must have the *right* to make a contract with an employer 'free' from restraint by each other. But that simply creates the relationship everyone is familiar with – bosses able to bully and intimidate people frightened of not having or losing their job. It simply means each of us has to bargain with them on our own, weak and under pressure to undercut each other. What cheeky, shameless, lying, self-serving brutes they are! Arguing for our 'freedom' to do that! Yet they did, successfully. In 1982, the business class, through their party, the Tories, led by Thatcher and their media, passed a law against us compelling union membership, arguing that it was against a worker's freedom to negotiate individually. Weakly. With *them!* And they got away with it! Nowhere, even in the civilised press like the Guardian, was this ludicrous argument challenged. It is still commonly accepted. It's amazing. It just shows how the basics need examining and exposing.

6. 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 bosses, their class. They, like the Labour Government of the late 70's, will operate with very small majorities, of just one or two MPs. As a matter of practical politics, maybe that's Ok. But then they have no authority to make we organised workers operate to far more rigorous standards than they do themselves.

What happens is, Business class MPs and their 'news' papers assault us with ultra-democratic criticism. But they are simply finding arguments to obstruct us from being independent from them, as a class. And we haven't the nouse to see what they are doing. The way MPs obstruct us from organising to protect ourselves against the power of the Business class is absurd. We need to point it out, show how they don't apply the same arguments and procedures to their own practices, or to the business class, and have confidence in what we do. It should be as straightforward as this -

Those workers who want to associate at work and be recognised by 'the boss' as a group for bargaining should simply have the right to. Like Business people can as Companies and Government, central and local, can.

Even without legal support and even with legal obstructions, it ***is*** possible to be organised and force them to recognise us. But there's nowhere near enough of us who are. A lot of the problem is simply down to us. We need the arguments for organising to be widely spread :

Yes, when we unionise, we are in restraint of trade. 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.

7. The Closed Shop - 'the country' that Compels us to Associate with the Business Class Obstructs *us* from Compelling Association

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 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 bosses eventually get enough of the workforce onto them that they don't lose much production by sacking those remaining on union conditions, unless they transfer to non-union. Amongst many others, it's been done to eighty thousand college lecturers, including this writer. And his wife.

There's Nothing Wrong with Our Closed Shop

*Our closed shop is about preventing that. It's about preventing an **Employer's** Closed Shop, one that is closed to people on decent, union-negotiated conditions*. Organised workers should unashamedly claim the right not only to voluntarily associate, get recognition and negotiate union pay and conditions, but also to refuse to work with workers who would undercut us. We are entitled to insist on them joining us in the Union and on Union Conditions. The union closed shop isn't about stopping a *Worker's* freedom, it's about stopping an *Employer's* freedom to bully us individually and drive down our conditions.

After all, it's normal for people to expect you to acknowledge membership of a group. The national identity is the strongest, most binding example, easily shown to be an absurd one. So in taking a job - everyone knows that you don't just join the employer, *you join your fellow-Workers too.* You get new *Workmates.* And so do they – they get you. Joining your workmates in a union, and being expected to, is only like some other socially-expected 'getting together' practices. There used to be unpleasant apprenticeship 'initiation' rituals to mark it. Workmates often put well-meaning social pressure on others

to go to works 'Do's' or to give to collections for people's birthdays or for people leaving.

It's more worthy of social pressure, far more worthy, to expect each other to commit to supporting each other as workmates in the face of the boss's power, to join the Union, than to go to the works Xmas party or to somebody's 'leaving do'. To join your workmates *properly, formally, officially,* recognising your shared, equal position, supporting them by joining together with them. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with saying that when you get a job, just as you accept you've joined the boss,

You also accept, and have to accept, that you join your Workmates? Properly?

Management themselves recognise that we share a common role, different to them, the *boss,* the *employer.* They call us *the Staff, the Workforce. They talk of somebody being 'one of the Workers', or 'one of our Employees'.* In Northern factories, managers talk of *the lads and lasses on the shop floor*.

But some workers say 'I took this job agreeing to work for this company. I don't see why it means I have to join a union'. The answer is, you also joined your workmates. Or they say 'Nobody tells me what to do'. That means being expected to take part in strikes or sanctions like overtime bans that anti-union law calls 'actions short of strike action'. But … *nobody tells them what to do?* - what nonsense that is! The boss *constantly* tells them, tells all of us, what to do! *Not having somebody tell you what to do is exactly the point, the first and best reason, for joining a union*.

Sure, your workmates, organised as the Union, as an authority like others in society, will *sometimes* 'tell you what to do.' But it will be with far more democracy than you'll get anywhere else, far more than you get from the Government and the Council. They make big decisions binding on us every day, with us having only the most remote democratic control over them. If there's a Union instruction to do something, you've got rights to influence the terms of that instruction, and the decision to issue it. It won't be a ***them*** 'telling you what to do'. It will be all of ***us,*** *including you,* acting together as equals and taking a democratic, collective, majority decision. Sometimes it might go against what you want. But equally it gives you the right to get support from others when you need it, and to get action for whatever you do want.

I've also had workers say (as an argument against taking part in union action) 'the union doesn't pay my wages, the boss does'. That's another argument that appears sensible but is actually silly. If you're not unionised, *They've Got Plenty of You* means you are so weak that your boss gets away with paying you far less than the value of the work you do. They sell what you produce for a price and pay you far less than that. So the saying should be 'I earn my wages and the boss robs a lot of it. The Union gets me (closer to) what I'm rightfully due'.

Yet all the political parties, the entire political establishment, the Business class-owned 'newspapers' and even the liberal papers, talk of the union closed shop as if it's an outrageous infringement of freedom. That *they* can make this argument without us laughing at them shows how backward we, the Working Class are, at arguing our case.

Union versus Parliamentary Democracy – What We Expect of Each Other

We as Workers can't make each other 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, Bosses 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 Plenty of You* - you are weak on your own in your dealings with your boss because while they've got plenty of you, and me, they can push each and all of us hard, if all any one of us can do is leave the job, leaving them with the others still working. To correct that, what's wrong with at least *expecting* of each other; and maybe *demanding*, that we all join the union? Why don't we treat it as a matter of course that we join the Union? Why don't we naturally accept the Closed Shop, that simply means allowing your Workmates some power over you, just as your Boss does? When you take a job you're not only making a deal with your 'boss'. You also enter into an important relationship with your Workmates. You should recognise it, and formally join together with them in a union. Why don't we automatically ask each other, socially, when one of us gets a new job 'Have you joined the union then?' And if they haven't or there isn't one, why don't we say "What? Why ever not?"

The Labour Market is crucially important to how we live in society because *it's in it that people get their entire income,* usually. And Employers get great, unfair power over the majority in this crucial activity, *without us ever having made any conscious social, political decision for it to be so*. It's just an unintended historical development, an outcome of the development of industrialism. We should see it as such, evaluate it *and change it*. It's simply a fair, human, humane, civilised necessity not to have an individualised market in Labour, not to allow employers the excess of power of *They've Got Plenty of You*. 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, and be far more ready, to organise ourselves 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.

Union versus Parliamentary Democracy – What Leaders Do

Later, this work will examine having a say on ***Issues***. It will compare how in national government we don't get a democratic say on things Issue by Issue, with how we ***do*** in our unions. Getting a real say, a Vote, on any issue, great or small. With Electoral democracy – which is non-participatory – we don't get any such right. *We get just the one tiny little x, to choose one Party. Everything is then up to them -* ***and particularly their Party Leader, who gets to be Prime Minister*****.** So how that person gets to that position, and how they behave when they are there, and how we can influence them, is a big issue. The biggest. Bigger than any of the actual issues around the War, NHS, the Economy, Work, etc.

There's a self-demeaning habit amongst MPs, 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*.

Union versus Parliamentary Democracy in Choosing Leaders

So with us deferring to them and their position, allowing them such abuse of power, ***how our Leader is selected***, either the Prime Minister of the Country or the General Secretary of a Union, is a big issue of democracy. Let's compare how the Prime Minister is *Selected* with how we *Elect* our union leaders.

Just as we saw when comparing how they and we decide on war or striking, they make it illegal for us to do things in certain ways, that we do or did for good reasons. *Yet they use worse ways themselves*. They force us to do things one way because they claim it's more democratic but they don't do it themselves!

Here's the different ways or processes, and strengths and weaknesses, of ***the various ways of choosing Leaders***. In any organisation, it's open to debate about which democratic procedures to use. The main problem is that a less democratic body – Parliament – selectively enforces certain methods on the

most democratic bodies – Unions – on behalf of the over-powerful, anti-democratic Business Class.

You might think it's a boring subject. Maybe it is. It's just that when we all fume at what 'They' are doing or not doing, it's worth us asking "*How* did they get the *authority* to do *that*?" Such as, for example, involving us in War and Terrorism.

Choosing Leaders - What We Used to Do - What They Forced Us to Do

Since 1984 laws made by MP's in Parliament, with a Thatcherite Conservative majority, force we union members to choose our General Secretaries by Postal Ballot of all Members. Note that says choose, not elect. Because there are other ways than direct election.

What's wrong with postal balloting with ***direct Election***, then? Many unions used to choose their General Secretary that way anyway. But before being forced to use ballot of all members, many unions used an ***indirect*** way. *And that is how Parliament itself operates*. There's some variation but most unions are organised something like this - local Branches send elected Delegates to meetings for each Region or Trade Group. In many unions, those delegates then elect further delegates to go and represent the region or trade group on a National Executive. In many unions, though not all, that *indirectly elected* National Executive used to ***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 all the other officials but was supervised, as an employee, by the indirectly-elected Executive of ordinary members.

Members in the unions that used this method had developed it in their own way over a century or two, as free, self-organising groups. It has advantages. The people best qualified to apply for the paid job of General Secretary were the leading elected activists, in the regions, or on the National Executive. These delegates on the executive, when appointing the day-to-day leader - the General Secretary – knew the candidates well, and their track records, having worked with them as fellow-activists on that executive committee, and others, over the years. They were in a good position to decide who was most suitable for the job.

Going back down the union, the Executive members had themselves got onto *that* body by being elected as delegates from their Region or Trade group where their *own* record over the years, the positions they took on issues, their voting history, was known to the people there. Those people in turn had got onto the region or trade group by being elected as delegates to it by the Ordinary Members in the Branches. They in turn knew *them*, and could judge them on *their* record. So although the method was *indirect* - meaning ordinary members didn't get a direct vote for the General Secretary - it had advantages and was thoroughly democratic.

But Thatcher and her Business-Class party and the Business Class-owned media argued that delegates from regions choosing the executive and them choosing the National Secretary meant that ordinary members of unions (for whom the Tories felt the deepest sympathy, of course) were 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. How they square it up inside their heads I don't know.) All of them only got there by being accepted by members at their branches, and were accountable by the obligation to report-back to Branches. Far from being an unrepresentative cabal, most of the activist delegates worked hard to encourage members to be more involved in the union.

The Tory government claimed that members were manipulated by the activists, and followed them like sheep. Well to some degree that happens. Rather than think too deeply for themselves, many members respect what the more involved members - the activists, the delegates, and the leadership - recommend and go along with it, through trust and loyalty and deference to their judgement and to 'the Union'. I'd rather they didn't, rather they made up their own minds.

But where members in unions defer to the judgement of their delegates and to who their delegates would choose as General Secretary, *they are only doing what they're used to **having** to do with MP's*. Because ordinary Citizens having no power over MPs and Ministers and who gets to be PM is *exactly* how Parliament works, with deference to the decisions of Parliament and Prime Ministers and no say of your own. And deference in the case of trusting delegates from your branch, people you know and work with, is far more informed, intelligent and accountable than it is with us leaving it to MP's.

Choosing the National Secretary by postal ballot to all members is Ok in some ways. It's weakness is that many ordinary members don't bother going to Branch meetings and so don't hear reports from the delegates who go to Region. They don't learn from their own delegates about what's going on, and who is who in the union. The Conservatives were consciously separating members from activists, so their vote could be influenced instead only by their *own* activists - the Editors and political Columnists of the Business Class-owned Press – Murdoch's Sun, People and News of the World; the Mail, the Express, the Mirror.

With the postal ballot you just get a single written *Election Statement from the Candidates* sent to you at home, making all sorts of promises. You've little idea who the candidates are, how they've been voting over many issues in whatever roles they've had, as Regional Delegates or Executive members. If they get in to office for four or five years, you'll have little idea what they do as National Executive members or General Secretary, unless you go to local meetings and get some feed-back from the activists. Although some unions have rules that Officials, including the General Secretary, have to write regular reports on the main activities they've been up to, such as negotiating with employers, meetings they've been to, conferences they've attended, and present them to the executive for questions and publish them in the Union magazine.

As it happened, even using the postal ballot of all members that Thatcher's crew forced on us, designed to by-pass the evil militant leftie activists and 'give the union back to ordinary members', there's been a very noticeable swing to the Left in elections for General Secretaries in the 1990's and onwards, as members facing attacks from employers wanted a stronger union leadership.

What 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 Parliamentary Executive – *the Cabinet*.

It's not that long ago, only a few decades, when the Conservatives used to change their leader, and thereby when they were in Government, the PRIME MINISTER, without even their MP's having a vote! A few unnamed 'men in grey suits', meaning the richest and most powerful of them, unelected even by the Conservatives, gathered in 'Gentlemen's Clubs' in London and in their big country houses, and chose who it was to be! Yet they passed judgement and passed laws on the much more democratic way we Trade Unionists chose our leaders! And they got away with it. They 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 anti-union laws 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 Worker's ability to Organise themselves and enable Business to bully us. (Have I said that before?)

Union versus Parliamentary Democracy - Controlling Leaders

As said, Prime Ministers like Blair, and sometimes our Union General Secretaries, behave like Dictators when, if truly democratic, they should be our *Servants*. What can you do then? How about this for ultimate Democratic control of the Leadership? My own current union contains the old Engineering union, the AEU. Before right-wingers got control of it a few decades back (with a great deal of propagandist interference from the Business Class Press) and re-wrote the rule book to give the Officials a far more central controlling role, it had the most amazing democratic Rule Book.

Take that important situation where you don't agree with what the leader does between Conferences and Elections. How can you challenge any defiance by them of Conference policy or Manifesto commitments, any betrayals, sell-outs, shenanigans, or dictatorship such as Blair practised?

In all unions, you can, from your little Branch, ask members to support a resolution challenging the General Secretary, the national leader; get it taken to a Region or District meeting of delegates from other Branches; and your delegates argue that those other Delegates at Region should back it and take it forward to the National Executive.

So far, so good, and something you can't instruct your MP to do with rogue Prime Ministers. But perhaps your delegates who raise it at Region, or the ones who take it on from Region to the Executive, wouldn't be able to persuade the other delegates, because those others have to be responsible to their own Branches and Regions, who might not know of the behaviour you are complaining about, or might not have heard the arguments?

Well that wonderful old AEU rule book gave you *the right to go to any Branch of the Union and speak there.* (But you could only *vote* at your own Branch.) So members who wanted to rally support for challenging a rogue General Secretary could do a tour of branches, asking for support in calling them to order. *When you got a certain number of Branches supporting, you could*

demand ***a special National Conference or even – an Extra-ordinary re-Election for General Secretary***.

That's Democracy! Imagine if we'd had that power over Blair when he started the criminal war in Iraq in our name, and got us on the target list of terrorists. We really could have stopped him and maybe stopped all that slaughter in Iraq. We could at least have left Bush and his crew isolated. It's another case where 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 was full, with people also sat on the window ledges. They were listening to delegates sent in support by Australian and San Francisco Dockers. Call me a romantic, because I am, but I get goose pimples when I see our lot meeting like that and taking on the rich and powerful.

(What was I doing in there? I had to walk through this serious worker's meeting to quietly ask the platform 'Can you ask whose is the car blocking ours in, outside?' And got the answer 'Hell, mate, I can't interrupt the meeting for that'. I said, 'Well, unless we get it out, our kids will come out of primary school 40 miles away soon and find nobody there to collect them, or let them in to the house'. The guy next to him whispered 'That's Frank's car, there he is over there'. Frank came out and moved his car.)

They lost, I'm afraid. But, sometimes you have to fight. What started the strike was them defending the right to be able to finish work at the expected

finishing time and not be instructed to work late, regardless of what they had going on in their life outside work. That issue again!

Here's another insight into that strike, from the other side. Someone I know runs a black cab on Merseyside. Around that time he told me, not in connection with a discussion of the strike, how he'd been contracted to take the wife of one of the Dock Owners down to Wolverhampton 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.

Union versus Parliamentary Democracy

All Those *Issues* - What Do *You* Think About Them ?

MP's *select our leader* without us having any say. They also *make new Law* that we are supposed to abide by, and will get punished for not abiding by, on all the many different ***Issues*.**

All of it is made indirectly by the MP's, not by us, and without us having any right to a vote on any of the issues. The nearest we get to it is the very rare referendum on Europe. After making our humble little x on the voting paper, *we* get no further say. You can write to your MP about issues. But other Constituents could be writing to her/him with opposing views, and s/he has to take notice of neither. On the other hand, in our Unions, it's comprehensively built into the rules that you, me, and any ordinary member, can have their say on *any and all* of the Issues. It's Mass Democracy.

If we all had more say issue by issue the fact that Parliament is a Dictatorship of a minority of the electorate would be less of a problem. We'd delegate or at least strongly influence our MP's *Issue by issue*, and the one-party domination of all decision making would be weakened. In our unions, we've not divided up into parties because we can all vote on all the issues. People's views vary issue by issue and it's neither likely nor necessary to form permanent alliances, the Parties, one of which takes all the decisions, and have to whip each other to maintain discipline. That's just perverted, isn't it?

Bottom-up, Issue-by-Issue democracy (if you'll excuse the expression) in our Unions is so thorough, compared to Parliament. You've got the right to a say on everything. Including the Rules and the Constitution.

We build policy and Action from the bottom up. It's not visible until you get involved. Our mass democracy isn't trumpeted on the front pages of the Business Class's 'News' papers. But all across the UK there's many hundreds of thousands of *activists* meeting together every day or evening or weekend, to organise putting up a fight against what employers throw at us. With about ten million union Members, with all the Workplace Reps and other elected Officers and Committees and Branch and Regional meetings, *Unions are easily the biggest and most democratic organisations in the country.* And in the World.

Inside the workplace, the last time I saw some figures there were ***400,000 Workplace Representatives***, all ordinary workers elected by their organised Workmates in the workplaces. Members are usually grouped together by Department or Job or Grade, and each group has a ***Rep*** (once, and in many workplaces still, called Shop Stewards, from the factory workshops where they

were first used.) They are elected by members in each Department or Job Group to represent them in talks with Management.

Look at the Democracy. A Member can get hold of the Rep every day. Or the Rep can go and see Members. And can hold Meetings of members. Members can easily replace the Rep if they don't do the job right. Often no-one else wants the responsibility anyway; but they can be replaced by someone keener. Members from across the whole Workplace can go to regular Branch meetings, typically monthly. All members can speak there and can put up proposals for action, or alterations to what somebody else is proposing. Members can call special Branch meetings where they think the branch Officers should do or not do something. The Branch can decide on things to be done locally, across the Workplace, like tackling management over work problems and conditions.

Above and beyond your own workplace, typically every three months, branch delegates go to Regional meetings. That's a chance for you to influence ongoing *national action*, by deciding on proposals yours and other branches make to influence the National Executive and General Secretary.

Branches also send proposals to the annual *National Conference*. That's where solid, binding national Policy is decided. In my old college union our Conference Delegates where elected from Region. Before annual conferences, Branches submitting proposals to national conference (for the whole Union to adopt), have to submit them by a specified date so they can be sent to all other branches, so they can discuss them and decide to support them, amend them, or oppose them, and instruct their conference delegates on them.

And What do *Delegates* Do?

As said, democratic practice in unions can be very thorough. Here's an example. Sorry if you find this is going into too much detail, but it's about having your views taken notice of.

Unions 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 (that fine palindromic place, featured in the Python's Dead Parrot sketch) 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 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'. We've no control over MP's at all after electing them except to vote them out next time. Unlike with our union branches, *we Citizen Voters have no right to meet together as the MP's Constituents, in between elections, to debate and decide a Constituency position on any Issue. Far less do we get the right to instruct the MP to take it to Parliament for us*.

No Mandating, and also no Reporting Back duty, for *them*, on how they vote in Parliament. We could have such rights. We could easily devise procedures where a reasonable number of citizens could demand Meetings and Votes on particular Issues and then *mandate* (instruct) our MP, as a delegate.

And another thing –

Why Vote in Constituencies defined by *place*

Why not in *real* Interest Groups ?

What group of people is an MP supposed to *Represent,* as vaguely as they do? This work has argued strongly against the importance people give to Place identity – saying *It Ain't Where You're* ***From*** *That Matters – It's Where You're* ***At***. In the Constituencies that we vote in, there's hardly any real, functional, politically significant links between each of us, and plenty of differences. So in the limited democracy we have ***Why 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 then, it was only Landowners had the Vote. And they *did* bond together locally, and nationally, as a Common Interest Group, *a class.* - the Gentry. They even shared very tightly specified dress codes, manners, married only within their class, all that sort of thing. So voting was by Class back then, because only the Propertied class had the vote.

And when we won the vote from them in the 19th and 20th centuries, and 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 this argument is endorsed by the fact that, although voting *is* by place *we do vote as non-geographical Common Interest Groups; by* ***Class***. Even though, because of a weakening of class consciousness and class politics amongst workers, and because New Labour, because of *that*, decided to become another Business party, voting patterns are blurring. But before this blurring, and still underlying it, *Labour* is still, if you exclude the Blair/Brown careerists, a party supposed to represent the Working Class. *The Conservatives* are trying to look nice, but are clearly, irredeemably, still the party of the Business Class and the Rich. *The Lib Dems* are Small Business, Professionals and middle Management, muddying the waters by flapping about trying to decide which direction to go in to get votes from each of the two main Classes.

For all of the 20th Century and still, how we vote in the constituencies *does* generally reflects the different interests we have in our roles in the Economy and Politics. People don't, on the whole, vote for the *Candidate*; they vote for the *Party*. Most people have, actually, voted according to real, Class-based Interest groups, the big votes being for class-based Labour and class-based Conservatives. But it all gets blurred and confused by *place*-based voting, which doesn't correspond to class interests.

So why not organise our voting not by place, but to correspond with our *Common Interest Groups*? Obviously we can be in many of these. But - What's the most important thing you do in Life? The answer has to be - *Making Your Living, Getting the means to Survive*. Without that, nothing else is possible. Who shares with you that most important role, who have you the strongest common interest with? – your Workmates. Your Class.

It works out in the real world. Who do you talk to most about politics - about 'what's in the news' - people in your constituency, *as* fellow-Constituents; or people at Work and in your Industry? Which is more useful, for grouping yourself with other people for political decision-making - being lumped together with people simply on the basis of geographical proximity, who you have little or no functional relationship with; or organising with other people by your Economic Role, by how you Make Your Living? The answer is obvious.

If we organised for the vote by our Job and our Trade, we'd be pretty much organising on class lines. The Constituency group you'd be in for voting for

Delegates to go to Government – MP's – would be your Workmates, local or distant, according to your Trade. Not the 60,000 people you mainly don't know and have different interests to, who just happen to live locally, in your geographical constituency.

It would work like this - say you work in Education. Teachers would vote as a group, Admin workers in Education maybe a separate group. Or if you work in Retail, you could be in Tesco Stores group or a Tesco Warehouse group. Or if you work in smaller shops, in a Hairdressers group. If in Transport, you'd be in a Bus Drivers group or a Bus Mechanics group; or an Airline Cabin Staff Group or a Baggage Handler's group or a Pilots Group or a Ground Crew group. And so on. How would we be grouped in your Trade or Industry? We're far from being in the same interest group as our Bosses, so we would put the Business Owners and the Company Directors in their own job and trade-defined constituencies. Then we'd see how few they are and how easily we outnumber them. We'd see our Class politics far more clearly and argue and organise for them more clearly.

People find this a bit radical as an idea. But you know *this is actually how it really works anyway*! Political decisions are far more commonly made according to how they affect *functional interest groups* than to suit the people loosely lumped together, with no real, functional links, in constituencies.

Before Government makes new laws - Acts and Regulations - they consult the *Organisations* they affect - business and other organisations - Councils, charities maybe. Although they take more notice of the Business class's views, the relevant Unions also get copies of proposed laws - called 'Green Papers' because they're printed on green paper - and are invited to comment.

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 anti-union laws 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 Dictatorship 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.

Union versus Parliamentary Democracy - *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. It's because 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 credentials for criticising that. They could start even a nuclear War that would melt us all down without *any* kind of vote.

But with outrageous cheek they and their press did attack our mass meetings by building a myth of workers being intimidated at them into voting for strikes. It's unlikely any such intimidation happened anywhere – no evidence was presented. But look at *reality – workers are far more threatened and intimidated by the Boss than they are by their fellow-workers*. Far from generating intimidation, mass meetings give us a sense of how strong we are, and quite right too. It *overcomes* intimidation, and gives us confidence in our strength, when all gathered together outside an empty workplace we can see how Management, looking forlornly out of their office windows, are few and helpless if we all stick together. *That's* what the Business Class and their political representatives don't like about mass meetings.

So, as the Tory party, Business people gave themselves powers to get court injunctions that are intended to stop us striking, and giving Employers a right to sue unions for damages, unless we balloted, secretly, by post, individually, at our home address, with all sorts of requirements for minute accuracy, that often make it impossible. (But if we've got the nerve, we often do it anyway and sod them, faced with enough of us out and determined, they back off from using their law against us.)

There's no real *need* for secret balloting, in our unions anyway. Secret balloting was introduced for electing MP's in 1832 because the Candidates were usually Landlords and Bosses, or were their men (and they *were* men), and those few workers and tenants who had a vote faced being sacked or evicted if they didn't vote for the Boss's or Landlord's Candidate.

But between people such as us, fellow-workers, equals, who have no such power over each other, we should, in our unions, be making what is *a joint decision*, a joint commitment to each other, *openly.* There's no evidence that we need feel intimidated by each other.

In the Parliamentary elections, it's talked of as *your* vote, *you* voting for what *you* want. And yes, of course, it is that. But as said, we affect each other in how we vote. We should discuss how each of us intends to vote, to be able to inform and educate each other about the issue, and the consequences for

others of how you vote. It's a joint decision, we should be able to call each other to account, in a civil manner. That's what we do in meetings - debate and make a joint decision, voting openly. You don't get married by making an x on a piece of paper in separate cubicles, do you?

The important thing about Meeting is that people can hear the arguments, indeed *can make the arguments themselves*, for or against the action or for some other kind of action. I've never heard of any intimidation. Although back in the day, many unions had a rule, when meetings are held in pubs, of 'No ale in the room.' To keep the debate civilised. Only in the heat of the Miner's strike was there any violence between union members. But it was nothing like the scale of the intimidation and violence the Miner's received from the Police.

Meetings, for Debate, are so important, that secret balloting

would be Ok if we only got our voting paper after attending

a Meeting to discuss the Issue or Action.

(With procedures in place for those who can't make it to the meeting.)

You're Wasting Your Time Saying All This

You may think 'All this talk of *Union Organisation and Mass Political Democracy* may be all very well. But what about ***People*?**' They're not interested in all this. Well, that's true of many people, and some turn right off from politics.

But aren't there also a huge number annoyed with how they're treated at work by arrogant bosses? And frustrated with how little say they get in politics? And with how, for one big example, Blair got away with the awful crime of starting an illegal War but was able to carry on as Prime Minister long after it was clear that he'd started it on a lie and everybody hated and despised him? And if we don't get more aware and organised we'll carry on getting as badly treated as you know we are.

Whoever You Vote for

the Government Always Gets In

But yes, a lot of people can't be bothered. Some say 'I don't bother with any of them '*They're all the same'*. But that's just a cop-out from doing any thinking. I've taken part in loads of union elections at all levels and only very rarely is it really hard to decide between two Candidates. It's easy to find enough of a difference to be able to decide on one rather than the other. It's easier still with the political Parties. There's so many Issues they all have Policies on, they don't really match up very closely over the whole range, if you just actually think about the issues and the policies for a minute.

When people say 'They're all the same' what they really mean is 'They're all a big disappointment'. But to think that, you must believe the claim each party makes, that they are trying to do right by *everybody*. That's not true.

The Conservatives can't ever be *a disappointment* to any Worker. Why ever expect anything of them but Business-class bias against we people-as-workers? I've mentioned often enough their hostility and hatred of us being able to organise, in Unions. More commonly known is their hostility to Public Services. The Conservatives and Business Class people are wealthy enough, and cocky enough in their ability to survive in their dog-eat-dog world, not to need Public Services. (Except for the Police and the Military, to defend their property, and to control other countries for Business purposes.) Apart from those, they've a

visceral hatred of other public services, of doing anything with or for us, and don't want to be Taxed to pay for publicly-provided things they, being rich, don't need.

They've only taken an interest in Public Services (from 2005 onwards) because we've forced them to notice that most of us *do* want them and they've realised they won't get into Government without concealing their true attitudes.

The Labour Party was set up to be the party of the Majority, Us-as-workers. But the political careerists (Blair and his like) noticed this - that during 18 years of Conservative government, 1979 to 1997, many of us allowed or even assisted the Conservatives to win elections on a pro-Business, anti-Working Class, anti-Union and anti-Public Services programme. We weren't as class–conscious as we should be. A lot of us were taken in by Business Class propaganda.

So in order to win Elections, the Blairites decided to become, as New Labour, another pro-Business party. And hoped to still be able to do a bit to improve things. *As a Party*, bad as New Labour is, they are simply not as bad as the Conservatives. Unlike them, they're not enthusiastically, viciously against Public Services and against ordinary working people. But from a lack of conviction *that is only a reflection of the whole class*, they allow Blair and now Brown (in 2009) to cower to the Business Class, partly to win the votes of the better-off, Tory-minded workers; and because they have been allowed, by the Labour Party, to become genuine Tories.

The **Lib Dems** are a party of Small Business people, Managers, and Professionals. They also are pro-Business and have no intention of doing anything for us as Workers. They just claim the whole show can be run more efficiently. That's because of their class – being Middle-Management and Small Business.

The reason all the main Parties seem to be the same is that they all defer to the Business Class. The Business Class own most of the economy. You could say, and they do, that through their enterprising business activity, they *are* 'the Economy.' They are very determined people, full of confidence and with a strong sense of their own self-importance. They want a lot of things their way. They can and do make sure that Governments, of whatever party supposedly 'In Power', give them most of what they demand. Our job is to put up our own case so strongly that Governments have to take notice of us, too.

Conceding everything they want to the Business Class isn't a problem for the Conservatives, as they *are* the Business and Propertied Class, organised into a political party to represent them ***as*** a class.

For *Labour* it is a problem. They have to either challenge them or work with them. How Labour governments handle the Business Class, to try to get them to behave themselves, to behave more sociably, is the biggest issue they face. *New* Labour, of course, has given up on the job.

So the parties are not, as some people unthinkingly say, 'all the same' - the Conservatives are the Business Class: Labour tries to do better for the masses but is afraid of the Business Class's power, and unwilling to challenge the Business-Class 'news' paper's influence on how people think and vote. The Lib Dems are Management class.

Whenever I talk to people about politics, the Government and the political parties, I declare early on that I am Working Class. So why, despite New Labour being a big *let-down* as a party for workers and progressives, would I or them vote instead for *anti*-Working Class parties? The problem of Labour's betrayals, and allowing a mad war criminal to be Prime Minister, isn't solved by turning to worse parties, who are *enthusiastically* anti-Worker. The thing to do with Labour, after voting them in as the least bad option, the nearest to being a party for workers, is to have more control over them. And defending ourselves and improving our conditions with independent Strike Action, like French workers do. In the 1970's we had some General Strikes against Government anti-worker laws. And won.

We Are To Blame. It's Our Own Fault

When Blair was Prime Minister we had a lot to say about him being a traitor, really a Tory, privatising our public services more than even Thatcher did. *But it's no good just blaming him*. There's a sense in which he was entitled to get as much influence as he did, and to do what he did. Because he didn't inherit political influence. He got it by putting some effort into politics, by arguing for what he believed in. (Nonsense though it was.)

Any of us can do that, get some influence, if we can be bothered. Blair and careerist Business-influenced politicians like him wouldn't be a problem if so many of us didn't sit back, if we all put *just a bit* into Politics. Just voting them in is not enough. We need to match the Business Class in putting pressure on the likes of Blair and Brown. The fact is, we don't, not enough. We should be far more confident about organising ourselves *as* Workers and fighting to defend and promote our interests, organised in our unions, and it's time to say, a real workers party to replace Labour.

And there's not much point in ***blaming the Media*** for bending our minds. Let's be hard-headed about it - *what else are they going to do* but that, to look after their own Business-Class interests? They take the trouble to bend the minds of so many of us, to suit their Class purpose. It's up to us, as a class, to look after ours by talking to each other more about *Our Class Interests* and exposing *Theirs*. For starters, we need to develop ways of discussing their choice of 'newspaper' with the millions of workers who read their mind-bending shite.

They are vile, disgusting people. The Mail, the Sun, particularly. They scapegoat people and create Bogeymen like Immigrants, Foreigners, 'the Undeserving Poor', and so on, to scare some of us with. They do it to distract us from looking at their class and their disgusting wealth and anti-social behaviour.

You might still say - 'All of that is all very well but **People ... Can't .... Be ... Bothered'**.

This writer is very well aware of *that*, that's why he's taken the trouble to write all this, to try to change it! One argument to put to people is to say 'If you *don't* bother, you definitely get no say. If you *do* bother, you get no guarantee of getting what you want; but you must get *some* progress.

And you'll feel better about yourself. Having a go feels better, more adult, than all that powerless, inactive whingeing we do about what's wrong with the way we are treated.

Who's Against More Democracy ?

It's been argued, and shown, that we don't have very much democracy and should have a lot more. So why don't we? *Do you know anyone who's **against** more democracy?* I don't know many people who wouldn't like more of a say, like I've been arguing for. You do get the odd self-demeaning cretin who is happy to say 'Leave it to them'. But apart from them, wouldn't you agree that it's a no-brainer – of course we'd all like more of a say? So why haven't we got it, why haven't we got a Democracy that allows us to exercise real power over things? Why do most of us feel very frustrated and angry about politics, or like some, give up? Who is against it us having more Democracy?

But there has to be a very important rider, a reservation, to the argument for Democracy. Majorities decide on all usual Issues. *But there's a limit*. There are some things that people are entitled to fight, even against a majority decision. If there were majorities for Sexist or Racist action, or for oppressing people for their Religious beliefs, and making laws about such things, then that's beyond the limit and can and will be resisted without it being a defiance of democracy.

And this applies most of all to ***our Rights as Workers to Organise and Defend ourselves***, while there is a Business Class using against us the unfair power they get through *They've Got Plenty of You*. Workers rights to Organise and Act are untouchable. Even if we moved on to a Socialist society.

Somebody is against us having more democracy. It's not clear who. Few people talk against it. Although there is that idiot who wrote to the Guardian endorsing Burke's outrageously anti-democratic statement from his tirade against the French Revolution, that an MP who represents his Constituents view rather than his own, betrays them!

Although you don't see the argument expressed anywhere else, it must be the rich, the Business Class, who are against more democracy? They have the economic system and laws that suit *them* and not the majority, and more democracy would surely lead to us dismantling them. The MPs appear to be the people in a position to widen Democracy, but in doing so would put themselves under much more influence from us; which, most of them being egotistical careerists, of course they'd rather not have. Even some who start out Ok, once they've joined the political elite, forget their origins and get sucked into the pomposity and presumptuous rituals of Parliament. There's maybe up to fifty of them out of 630 (is it?) who remain Ok.

That leaves us, the People, to fight for more Democracy and we're not exactly loudly demanding it, in our many millions, are we? We're deferential to the system as it is. That includes those who are angry but turn away and off rather than fight it. I get that, too. It sure is a struggle.

Whether we do much about all of this or don't,

we can and should at least talk to each other

about it all and make some basic changes in attitude.

Oppose all the deference to the Rich, the Business Class,

their Media, and Politicians; and the self-demeaning

worship of 'celebrities'.

Let's think and talk of ourselves as Citizens, not Subjects.

As the French revolutionary Desmoulins,

and the Trade Unionist, Socialist and Irish anti-colonialist

James Connolly said –

The Great Only Appear Great

Because We Are on Our Knees.

Let Us Rise.

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.

In Conclusion –

You might not immediately agree with all that's said

in this work Some probably. Probably not all.

So I'll leave you with what I've learned from debating issues

like Politics, Philosophy, and Religion over a drink.

In the heat of a drink-fuelled debate we don't

often change our mind there and then.

We don't say 'Oh, yeah, I'm wrong, you're right'.

That's too much to expect of a drink-enhanced ego.

But later, you find you *can* actually agree with some

points you'd bitterly disputed at the time.

And so can the other person.

And you think of devastating points you could have made.

Just save them up for the next time you're debating that subject with someone.

So I'll just say –

Think about the arguments made here. Next time you're doing something or observing something political, or discussing these matters, maybe some of them will make sense.

And if you can think of anybody else decent who'd read this,

please pass on the Website link / give them a copy.

Optimism

A lot of *Challenging The System* is angry stuff.

Well, let's calm down and say that if these thoughts and attitudes were more commonly held, life in this Global society would be a lot *less* angry, a lot less frustrating.

Not perfect; but more Civilised, nicer, as it should be.

For all of us, including even the Rich Business Class.

They can't really be all that happy,

being such self-absorbed prats.

Checklist of Challenging The System's main points

How much do you agree with them?

Which are most worth discussing with fellow-Workers?

- 'They've Got Plenty of You' explains boss's power over you
- They can sack you easily in Contract Law because of 'Plenty of …'
- The case for Our Right to Organise and Strike
- Striking and the bottle Issue - the comparison with War
- The definition of **the Working Class**
- The definition of **the Business Class**
- Exploitation means Paying Less than is Charged for your Work
- The view of the notion of National Identity
- The view of Local identity and Football identities
- The argument for Real Interest Groups
- The case for **Working Class identity and Organisation**
- The explanation of UK society developed from the Land-Owner's Dictatorship to the Business Class dominating a weak Democracy
- The inadequacy of 'the Vote' – just One Little X
- The comparison between Union Democracy when Striking, and Parliament's lack of any Democracy over War.
- Obligations, Rights and Deterrents to Associating with others
  - Forced to Associate as 'the Country'
  - Business's right to Associate as 'Companies'
  - Workers denied Rights to Associate in 'Free markets in Labour'
  - Our Right to Organise and Act
- Comparing Democracy in Choosing Leaders – Union v Parliament
- The argument for Having Your Say on Issues – Union v Parliament
- Interest-Group Constituencies

An explanation of the tone of this book
It's Angry! And Caring

Some have said there's a lot of anger in this work. But if so, why not? There's nothing wrong with getting angry, for the right reasons. Many harsh things are done to most of us, by other people. Some are done to me and mine; some to you and yours. I try not to do any myself. There's unnecessary harshness in the wealthy 'West'; and much more in Africa, Asia and South America, where billions live desperately poor lives, or die, in a world of fabulous wealth. The poverty and wealth are connected by the attitudes, actions and politics of all of us, and it's enough to make you angry, at least angry enough to write strongly about the reasons.

Mark Steel, the comic, in his book 'It's Not a Runner Bean' - "the tragedy of most people who are unable to get angry about social issues is that without anger there can be little passion…Without vitriol there can be little warmth and humanity. For how can you respect the girl at the supermarket checkout or the lad who has to sleep in the production company office without having contempt for the wealthy people who employ them and treat them so abominably?"

So if this book is angry, it's just passion, human warmth. Just caring about what's done to people. The forthright style is generated by the harshness of the way we are treated, by how much bad stuff goes on, when there's no need for it and we could all be living sweeter lives. And it's really just writing like we talk, in the discussions and arguments we all have about the politics of work and business, and politics generally, addressing all those 'But what about this?' and 'What about that?' points we make. The book has been developed from experience of many such discussions. It tries to deal with most of the major arguments and put together a complete, coherent view on behalf of the majority of people, meaning Working Class people (by a wide and thoroughly-argued definition).

Although written mainly about how people relate to each other in UK, the issues are global. Most of the analysis is understandable in and applicable to other countries.

The book is a relentless read because it is taking on, with a feeling of necessary urgency, many fundamental, commonly-held but - in the writer's view - wrong views on how we in this society relate to each other, and what's right and what's not. You need to take a breather now and then. Maybe read a section at a time? But everything you read should relate clearly to something political, relevant to you, that you will come across almost every minute of every day.

Once sub-titled *a rant to and for my fellow-Workers,* it's almost a rant *at* my fellow-Workers at times. You might even feel you are being/have been shouted at. It's point after point, argument after argument. Bang - this point; wallop - another; and another. And so on. And key terms like *Making Your Living* and *Selling Yourself* are first-letter Capitalised; key arguments *Italicised* and ***Underlined* or in Bold type.**

The shoutiness was overdone; maybe there's still too much. It's being reduced, print by print. But it's unavoidable, really - so much rubbish is shouted at us, so effectively muddling our thinking about how we relate to each other, and to Bosses, with such bad effects, that it feels necessary to shout out the truth.

But 'Challenging The System' is as much dedicated to and written for my fellow-Workers as ranting at them. Dedicated to those many Workmates - like Dave, Ken, Floody; Albert, Pat R, Tony - the writer has associated with, in various ways - people who talk straight, debunk inflated ego's, take the piss, resent 'the Boss'. People with a sense of Fairness. People who know that most of us aren't high-flyers and maybe don't want to be; but are still Humans living human lives, full of life, and worthy of respectful treatment. That's most of us - **The Working Class.**

It's mostly about how we *Think*; but also about what we *Do.* But for all the ranting, the writer owns up to not doing a lot himself, these days, due to age and other things. He's done his bit in his time and still does what he can.

There is a lot of Italics and Bolding, and Capitals at the start of some words. It's to emphasise important relationships that are disastrously under-discussed, that we urgently need to think and talk about more clearly.

It was over-done and is slowly being reduced. Most readers say it's not a problem. Where it's still too much for you – reflect on what is emphasised – can you agree on the need to raise awareness of it?

Title Changes Note

Formerly titled - 'You Are Many'. 'You Are Working Class'.

And 'You Are *The* Working Class'.

How To Get This Book

As a free download, 300 pages in A4 size

at ***www.challengingthesystem.org***

or

As a 400-page printed book for the £7 GBP cost price

or the equivalent in other countries, plus post & packing,

at ***www.lulu.com/content/10954201***

Check **Lulu** out at ***http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lulu***

Extra Stuff -

Material about issues that need covering but that jump too far aside from the main arguments in the main text of the book.

Extra Stuff 1 – Fighting Fascism or a rival Business Class?

Was that really why the Second World War was fought, to combat Fascism? Was that really why people fought in it? When it was left up to you to decide to fight, only a wonderful 1500 UK people, the International Brigade, went to Spain to fight for Democracy against Fascism. Everybody else only did it several years later, persuaded by the anti-Fascist argument to a degree, but mainly by 'for King and Country' moonshine from the vicious people who'd brought them the industrial urban misery of the 1700's and 1800's and the mass unemployment of the 1920's and 1930's.

That's not to belittle the bravery and suffering of people close to me who fought in the Second World War, including an uncle I'm named after but never knew who fought in North Africa only to get blown up clearing mines at the end of the war. Far from it. If this work is angry (which has been said) the thing to be most angry about in all of UK politics is the unnecessary bloody slaughter of hundreds of millions of decent ordinary people in the two World Wars. I lost a Grandad too.

It *was* right to fight the Nazi's though. But not *the Germans* - many of them, especially 'German' union-organised Workers and Socialists and Communists, were the first victims of the Nazi's. But British Workers should have refused to fight under the orders of the class that, with mass unemployment and great poverty, was so brutal to them in the 1930's. They should have fought in their *own* armies, like the International Brigade, and as the Free French and the Polish fighter pilots did. Under Allied strategic command you'd suppose, but independent of the bosses military command. Free from being ordered about by those most odious of smug smooth plummy-voiced Business Class brutes, the British military officer class.

That probably sounds fanciful to you, that we could do it like that. Probably, unfortunately so. But only because we haven't got the Class awareness and independence to do it. And it answers that question 'What about fighting Fascism?'

And although the Second World War was rightly fought against Fascism, that wasn't really why it was fought. Not for the British Business Class anyway. It was a follow-on, a stage 2, to the First World War. And that was a standard-issue, same-as-usual war of Competition between the Business Classes of the German, Russian, French and British Empires. Not a war for our Freedom and Democracy.

Before the First World War each Business Class in each of those countries and Empires involved treated the Working Class and Peasant majorities brutally, keeping them in terrible poverty; and un-Democratically, with as little say as possible. The War made things even worse for the Working Class in each of these countries, along with the awful carnage of the War itself. So when the *Russian* Soldiers, Workers and Peasants refused to fight any more in the awful bloody carnage, kicked out the Tsar and the Business Class from political power, and made a Revolution, Workers all over Europe were trying to do much the same. The British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, wrote to his French equivalent, Clemenceau, in 1919 'The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of Revolution ..... the whole existing order in its political, social and economic

aspects is questioned by the mass of the population from one end of Europe to the other'. In *Germany* between 1919 and 1923, there was a real possibility of revolution, with Workers and Soldiers taking over control of major cities; in *Hungary*, a Soviet regime was set up; revolutionaries led unemployed Workers in an attempt to storm the *Austrian* Parliament; there were mutinies and massive strikes in *Britain* and *France*, including even the Police; likewise in *Spain* and the USA. And in *Italy*, 'the two Red years' included massive factory occupations.

In each country, the Business Classes won these struggles, but not permanently. They kept attacking and we kept defending - as with the General Strike of 1926. Then in 1929, the Business Class's Free Market and Capitalist system collapsed, causing huge unemployment and meeting resistance to such unnecessary madness.

Between the two wars, all national Business Classes were alarmed, with good reason, by Worker's resistance. They called it 'the Bolshevik menace'. So by far the main concern of the British Business Class between the Wars was defending their Business System, their rule, that allowed them their wealth and power, against 'the Red Menace', 'Bolshevism'.

In Italy and Germany the Italian and the German Business Class's turned to Mussolini's Fascists and Hitler's Nazi's to defeat Working Class struggle. Many of the British Business Class approved of that as a way of dealing with organised Workers resisting the devastation of the Business Class's failing system. Churchill praised Mussolini; the Daily Mail carried a headline 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts', the British would-be Nazis; a section of the Business Class attempted to install Fascism in the UK.

So rather than see Hitler and the Nazi's as an enemy, many of the British Business Class saw them as a potential anti-Bolshevik ally against Russia, seen (incorrectly) as the source of the main problem, Working Class Bolshevism. They weren't bothered about what Hitler, Mussolini and Franco did to German, Italian and Spanish Democracy and to Workers and their Unions. They did nothing to help the Spanish Democracy, when Franco's Fascists brought down the Republic with the help of the German Nazi's.

Britain only got into a Second World War against Nazi Germany because it was expanding and becoming, again, a dangerous rival Empire. Churchill, a very right-wing man, saw Nazi Germany as a threat not because of it's Nazism but because of it's expansionism. He and other British Imperialists won a difficult argument within the UK Business Class, that instead of allying with the Nazi's against Bolshevism, they should oppose them because of their expansionism.

They sold the war to millions of ordinary British people as a fight for Freedom and Democracy. With the Nazi's being the mass-murdering barbarians that they were, it *did* need fighting for that reason. But it's not why the UK Business Class did.

Look at UK history at any time you like and see if you can find examples of the British Rich, the Business Class and their Parties, Tories and the one-time Liberals, really fighting for freedom, other than their freedom to control bigger Markets get raw materials cheaply. Like, recently, Iraqi Oil.

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Extra Stuff 2 – What Their Wars Are Really For

The main function of the British state and it's Military has always been to protect the interests of the Property-owning Business Class. 'The State', in this case the British one, isn't a separate thing-in-itself. It's always live people, protecting or promoting the Interests of certain real, live People.

It goes like this - all through the period they've been in power in the UK, since 'Elizabethan' times, the British Business Class has traded all over the world. To protect these Trading interests, the British State, openly and exclusively controlled by the Business Class for most of that time, has fought many Wars; against native peoples in Ireland, India, Canada, Africa; against other Business Class's - Dutch, French, German - to take over countries and protect British Business people's trade in Materials - iron ore, copper, oil; and to get control of Markets for their manufactured Goods. What happened over the centuries was the French, Dutch, Spanish and German and other Business Class's competing with 'Ours' for control of raw Materials and Markets.

Fighting them, over that, isn't defending our Freedom; it's defending the Business Class's interests. That's what the British State goes to war for, not for our Freedom and Democracy. The struggle for them has always been fought *agains*t the British State. The people controlling it have used the Military *domestically, against* Freedom and Democracy. Most famously at Peterloo, Manchester, in 1819. Also at Newport in the 1830's.

How could it have been necessary to fight wars all over the world, *and to take possession of one third of it*, and of the Peoples living there, to defend our Freedom and Democracy? Were the native American Indians; the people of India; the Aborigines in Australia, the Eskimos in Canada, or the peoples of Africa, threatening, from those distant lands, to come over here and attack our Freedoms and Democratic rights? I don't think so.

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Extra Stuff 3 -

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

Some bastards, different ones on each occasion, robbed my kids and their mates on the streets, taking Cash, Mobile phones, Bank cards, Credit Cards, coats, bikes, even trainers. Over the years, there's been about twelve robberies on my kids, and plenty more on their mates. It has just been rife - horrible, cocky, psychopathic young thugs, many of them White, some Black and Asian, robbing us, *their fellow-British*.

It's not just the actual robberies and attacks – there's the fear you then get, permanently, as a Parent, every day and every evening, that your kids might be attacked again at any time. Once I said Oh, I worry too much, there's been nothing for a bit. That very same night my youngest lad was thumped at 2 o'clock in the morning and his mobile stolen.

The term *Us,* meaning *the British*, includes those people. And it includes Everton fans who'd slash me with a Stanley knife for supporting Man United. Or fellow-United fans who might attack me for being a Scouser (it would seem to them.) Or a bunch of 'fellow-Manc' Skinheads who once tried to knock me off my motor-bike - for being a Biker.

We bought a static Caravan in Wales for £10,000 from *White, fellow-British* people. They said they weren't like some sites that throw you off after a certain number of years, they did that mainly if it was in bad condition so if we looked after it we'd be alright. Over the years, we found people in neighbouring vans being told to go, and it turned out they *do* throw you off after a definite number of years, regardless of condition. The other people had been told the same as us - they tell everyone the same, to make a Sale. But eventually they make you scrap a perfectly good van, to force you to buy a newer one. You can't take your existing van anywhere else because all the sites only allow vans they sell onto their site. Ours was as good as when bought, still worth £10,000 in use value; but they gave us our notice and we had to leave it for them to scrap.

One time, over a couple of years, I completely stripped and rebuilt my motorbike. Chromed parts, special paintwork, re-built the engine, re-painted the frame, modified and even machined parts myself. Only a couple of months after putting it back on the road, some bastards stole it. It was sickening. Almost certainly, the bastards who did it were English.

A few miles away, that very same night, some other bastards, also, almost certainly, White and English, vandalised my wife's parked-up car, writing it off. And our white one-time next door neighbour burgled us twice. A foreman, white, English, once sacked me on the spot from a building site job, for nothing, just saying 'You - get your cards'. I've not forgotten.

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Extra Stuff 4 - Progressive National Boasting

This stuff is a bit daft ..... but if we must have nationalist boasting and competitiveness ..... and it makes a few points worth making.

English people could brag to French people,

'*We kicked out the Kings and had a Democratic Revolution in the 1640's – that's waay before you did – one hundred and fifty years before*'.

'The French' could respond "But then you let the King's back in. We didn't". '*Well OK. But.... you let it backslide too, Napoleon got in, as a Dictator, right*?'

The French could reply

"Yeah - but that was because *your* lot attacked the Revolution. We needed Napoleon's military leadership, and from there, he just took over...."

We 'British' Workers could say '*We've got more people in Unions than you*'. The French could say, "Yeah, but we take more *action* than you do".

German Workers could say "Neither of you have had a *real* go for Socialism like we did in the early 1920's. They had to get the Nazi's in to put *us* down. All you did in Britain was some poxy Unemployed marches".

We 'British' would say "*Well you're wrong there, mate, you wanna check your facts, because we had the General Strike you know*".

The Italians - British ex-Servicemen often scorn Italian soldiers for being poor fighters in the Second World War. But I wonder - I've got this little theory - Italian workers had a real good go at Socialist revolution in the 1920's, and that

was why the Business Class backed Mussolini, to put them down. So maybe during the War loads of the Italian soldiers were Class-conscious Working Class lads taking the attitude "*I'm not fighting for Mussolini and the Class enemy*".

So Italian Workers could say "*You've all let your Rich get you to fight their Wars for them. Mussolini couldn't get **us** to do that*".

Russian Workers, of course, could trump everyone by saying

"*Has anyone else here actually had a real Socialist Revolution? Eh*?"

To which others could reply

'Yeah - but you let it backslide into Stalinism pretty quickly.'

They'd say "*That was because you **British** and **French** let **your** Business Classes send armies to help the Russian one and we had to go Militaristic and Centralised and say 'bugger Democracy for now' while fighting them in the Civil War .and **that's** how Stalin got in! Because of **you***!"

And so on -

"You let the rich have 80 % of the wealth.

We only let ours have 60% per cent".

Then send somebody to get another round in.

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Extra Stuff 5 - Business Class Papers Provoking Racism

A Daily Express front-page monster headline in February 2007 bellowed 'Muslims Tell Us How to Run Our Schools'. Compared to the headline, the story was utterly pathetic. All that had happened was that one small Muslim group at some obscure educational conference had presented a paper or arguments for some pro-Muslim education that were, it is true, well out of order.

But so is also is the Compulsory act of Christian worship in schools that the Tories and the Church of England forced on my kids.

Presumably the Muslims who made the proposals vote and pay their Taxes and are entitled to make religious proposals, just as much as the 'British' Christians who dictate to us 'British' Secularists. And, buried deep in the report, it turned out that several other, larger Muslim groups denounced the proposals. So a small and unrepresentative group of Muslims proposed things that were unacceptable; a larger number opposed them.

But the power of the headline was in 'Tell *Us*' and '*Our*' Schools. Many of us don't include ourselves in an *Us* and *Ours* with the people who own and write the Daily Express, who are devoted enemies of Workers, Workers Rights, and decent Public Services like Education.

Checking their website in April 2008, the headline for the story is different to the one I saw in the newsagents – now it's "Muslims: Ban Non-Islamic Schools." A contributor to their readers responses forum says 'nobody called to ban anything' and points out that the Press Complaints Commission agreed the story was misleading.

A story in the Daily Mail – the Prison Service was closing a buying facility in Corby because the lease for the premises was expired. The Home Office said they were re-opening it in Leicester because it was *closer to prisons*, had *better Transport links*, they'd be better *able to recruit Qualified staff*, and be *better able to recruit Diverse staff*. The Mail presented the story very strongly as 'Giving White People's Jobs to *Them'*. That was the sense of the headline – "The Town branded "too White and too British", and the main story. It put in quotes "too white and too British" as if the Government spokesperson had said that – but it didn't say that later on, in the proper quote. Very low down, near the end of the article, all four reasons eventually appeared, including the three the Prison Service had cited *before* Racial diversity; but only at the end, after headlining and mainlining the Racist view. It drew dozens of racist comments along the lines of 'They get everything done for them at our (white) expense' to their website.

You could look at that issue and say, 'Hmm, you'd imagine the Prison Service might be overwhelmingly staffed by White people: you hear Black people get jailed in far greater proportions than White people, even for the same offences: maybe they'd better not have Staff quotas; but when an opportunity to be able to diversify the prison workforce arises, like a lease running out and a move being necessary anyway, use the opportunity'. And, diversity was only the last of four reasons the Home Office had for a move that was occasioned simply by a lease expiring.

The Mail posed as a protector of 'Jobs for Whites'. But the Mail has no record of supporting 'the Right to Work'. They don't attack Businesses that re-locate to other countries and British white Business people who invest in other Countries, abandoning British White and other colour workers. But, posing, ludicrously, as Protectors of White People's Jobs, they attack job loss when it can be blamed on Racial minorities or things allegedly done for them. They inflate trivial stories like this to point their readers at Outsiders as the source of their lack of Jobs, instead of at the Class the Mail speaks for. They stoke up Racism.

How do they get away with it? Sneakiness is one reason. In both stories, they used the headline and the main part of the article to promote racial or religious division and resentment and hate; but they took care to include some balance and accurate reporting, buried low down the report and at the end, to be able to put up a defence against the charge of racism. But just between ourselves, from one of us to another, we should spot it more readily and condemn it, and the anti-Working Class lies that such 'reporting' embodies.

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Extra Stuff 6 - The Business Class and a 'Coup' – Taking over the State

Maybe if we were to get as strong again, such a coup wouldn't be considered now? Isn't it a more open, egalitarian society, socially if not in the sharing out of wealth? Is the modern Business Class now more ready to accept that we too are entitled to make demands on the system and it's not just theirs as of inherited status? I don't know, I don't mix with them much. Looking at how much wealth they unashamedly extract from the system, I can't see much humility in them, any more than there was amongst them back in the 70's.

But are Richard Branson and his like not so amazingly arrogant as the old guard Business Class? (such as you still see in the Countryside Alliance.) And there's plenty of people who were originally Working Class, our kind, who now mix with the Business Class Rich, but who haven't lost all sense of their roots. People whose ability and success proves that we're not where we are, and the Rich aren't where they are, because they are somehow innately superior to us - like Paul McCartney, who sent his kids to the local Secondary school; like Noel Gallagher, Alex Ferguson; and all those artists who show their humanity in their support for Live Aid. Saint Bob of course. Maybe there's a semi-political role for these people of Working Class origins, who've penetrated the Business Class's social circles, where the Rich fawn on them because of their fame and success. If we get round to sticking up for ourselves again like we did in the 70's, would they put the human case to the Rich, do they perhaps, already, educate them not to be so selfish and greedy and vicious? Get them to understand that we, the masses, are entitled to fight for a fairer share of what's good in life without them getting outraged and turning to military or fascist coups?

Macca and Bob and the rest do this sort of stuff already, in fighting World Poverty. No reason why they couldn't extend it to badgering the Rich that they now mix with, to behave themselves all round. You couldn't convince all of them because most of them are very hard and self-centred people, very convinced of their rights and the rightness of their view of the world. But it's always useful if we can get some of them to behave decently, and isolate the worst of them.

That's just speculating on the attitudes they might have these days, compared to the 1970's. But it would be a mistake to believe in anything other than our own strength and organisation for dealing with the rich Business Class.

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Extra Stuff 7 - Vive la Revolution! French and English!

In England in the 1640's, the Land-owners and the emerging Merchant and Business Class and *Ordinary* people fought together, against the Monarchy, for Democracy *for all*. But after we helped them oust the King (or, properly called, the Dictator), the Property-owners betrayed us. *Cromwell's Class told us that you couldn't have a say in running the Country – a Vote - if you didn't* ***own*** *any of it.* What an argument! So 'the Country' *is* just the hills and rivers and streams, not 'We the People'!

The Land-owning Class and the new Merchant and Business Class got Democracy for themselves in Parliament, and then made their peace with the Monarchy - a new anti-democratic alliance to rule us, denying us the Vote, viciously repressing attempts to get any more, real, Democracy.

Later, around 1790, the French Business Class, Peasant, Farming and Working Class started the same process. They kicked out the French King / unelected Dictator and set up a wide Democracy.

Everyone should read Mark Steel's book 'Vive la Revolution'.

It's inspiring and funny.

So we in Britain had tried for Democracy in the 1640's and got betrayed by the Propertied Class, but still wanted it. So when this British Ruling Class, the Propertied Class, supported the French King's Dictatorship by waging war to put down the democratic French Revolution, which side do you think the People of Britain supported? *The Revolution, of course*. Huge numbers of Radical British people welcomed it, including Tom Paine, Mary Wollstencroft, and Wordsworth. Wordsworth wrote 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive' to see at last such a great upsurge in Freedom and Democracy. 'Fantastic! Great! Inspiring! Let's have Liberty here too' was the view of most British people. There were marches, demonstrations, all the usual stuff, in favour of the Revolution and for something similar here.

(Ten years earlier, they'd supported the American Revolution, the American War of Independence, for the same reasons. Some of the Americans remained subservient to the Kings and hadn't been for Independence. A larger proportion of *British* people supported American Independence than *Americans* did.)

Let's remind ourselves of how vile the viciously anti-Democratic British Rich of that time were. They openly saw themselves as a permanent Ruling Class, with a name, 'the Gentry' They, the 18th Century British class of Property-owners, newly in power having put the Kings in the back seat, stole the Common land from us, thus denying us the ability to support ourselves independently from them, and impoverished us. For using what had for centuries been our Common resources, like the streams and woods, they sent people like us to penal exile in Australia, without our families. They hung little kiddies who, starving, stole a loaf of bread. Remember the brutality of their armed forces – the Press-gang, Mutiny on the Bounty, Billy Budd. They were Slave Traders. These were those appallingly arrogant people with the big wigs and perfume and brocade and the fancy coaches with footmen, those with the pompous manners. *These, the British land-owning Ruling Class of the 18th century, were amongst the vilest examples of humanity ever.*

In response to our support for the French Revolution, they brought in laws against 'Sedition', repressing our Free Speech, the freedom to even *argue* for Democracy. They put on trial for execution those brave people – the Radicals - who published newspapers and pamphlets critical of the rich and powerful. Tom Paine, that great fighter for Democracy in England, America and France, had to flee to Dover and France to escape a death penalty - just for arguing for Democracy.

And they attacked our fellow-Democrats, the Revolutionaries in France. The British Monarchy and their Land-owning allies were determined to stop us following the French example. So in solidarity with the ousted French King (Dictator) Louis the Whatever-number-he-was, they started the long wars against democratic Revolutionary France, aiming to re-instate Dictatorship.

Now by the time of Trafalgar, 1805, the democracy of the French Revolution had gone backwards a bit. A Dictator was in power by then, Napoleon, so not that much worth supporting.

But ... here's something interesting .... *What mainly caused the great Revolutionary Democratic upsurge to degenerate first into the guillotining of 'the Terror', and then into Napoleon's Dictatorship, was those British and other anti-Democratic Monarchist Foreign armies*. *They* caused the Terror – because they clearly stated they would execute the Revolutionaries and all Paris. So put yourself in the uncertain Insurrectionary position of the Revolutionaries - not

sitting securely in power, either internally or externally - You are invaded by half the rest of Europe's armies trying to re-instate a Hereditary Dictatorship and promising to slaughter you all; you are threatened internally by some self-demeaning or frightened people who would concede to the foreign armies and accept the King/Dictator returning; and threatened with uprisings by actual Royalist groups who plotted to get him back in and were in contact with the King's armies. Napoleon came to prominence putting down a Royalist uprising.

The beleaguered fighters for Democracy were in a desperate position and there was deadly disagreement over whether to allow the King to return with some slightly or greatly reduced role. The Revolutionaries guillotined those who were for weakening the Revolution, or would have the King back, as such things opened them all up to execution *themselves*, as promised by the Monarchist armies, that included the British.

On top of this weakening and deadly in-fighting caused by the threat of having the King/Dictator forced back on them, the fledgling Democracy was subverted into Napoleon's Dictatorship by the Property-owners, the new French Business Class, who were, like Cromwell in England, for Democracy only for themselves. *Just as had happened in England*, Business Class Revolutionaries were satisfied with having ousting the Feudal powers (the Kings) and having got vital Business Freedoms. Like Cromwell, they wanted to exclude the poorer classes from Democratic power. The last executions in the Revolution were these people executing the most democratic Revolutionaries. They invited Napoleon to take power, as a strong man who could quell their more Democratic Revolutionary rivals; and also prevent the British Business Class and the Prussian and Austrian ones from re-instating the French monarchy.

So, interestingly, it was very much like what happened in the English Civil War, where the Poor fought alongside the propertied, Business Class for Democracy for *All* ; then the Propertied Classes, having got rid of the King, denied the Poor the vote and made it just a Business Class democracy. Which is what we've still got, although we get an occasional little vote.

Napoleon's Dictatorship was a sad outcome; but it happened largely because the Revolutionaries became divided and weakened by the threat of a British-backed return of the Monarchy, guillotining each other over the issue, and the Business faction was able to get power and hand it to Napoleon.

Taking all that into account, on the anniversary of Trafalgar, how could you celebrate on the side of 'Our' brutal British masters of the time? That is betraying the actual British people of the time, who were also defeated, inside Britain, by Nelson's class of brutes. And how could you side with Britain's rulers of the time by today's accepted standards of Democracy?

Although you could say it was the dictator Napoleon who they defeated at Trafalgar, Britain's ruling Class were still fighting the war they'd started against the *Democratic* French Revolution – they'd been doing that since long before it's degeneration into Napoleon's own Dictatorship. *'Our' masters weren't fighting Napoleon because he was a Dictator. They were fighting – and in 1815 succeeded - to restore the* ***original****, inherited Dictatorship of the French Kings.* At least Napoleon had been asked to take charge, by some elected politicians.

At home, 'Our' masters fought the same anti-Democratic war, charging us with Sedition, threatening hanging and deportation.

So they beat Napoleon in 1805 at Trafalgar; in 1815 at Waterloo beat him again, and the French Revolution, and replaced a 'Revolutionary' Dictator, Napoleon, with a hereditary one, Louis the Whatever.

And in 1819 they beat us too; at Peterloo, Manchester.

People demonstrating for the Vote were killed.

So to sum up - why should any Democrat, then and now, support the British Ruling Class of the time in their war against those French people who were fighting for Democracy, when they waged the same war on us?

The wonder of it is that in today's supposedly Democratic times – listen to how Blair talked about Democracy and Freedom, when he tried to justify his invasion of Iraq – the very idea of celebrating Trafalgar isn't viewed with shock, with everyone speaking as I have just done about it, with much criticism of the British government of the time – Pitt and others – fighting their dreadful anti-Democratic war against Liberty, here in Britain and abroad.

On Question Time, this was overwhelmed by the notion of 'Your Country'.

In the discussion about the 200th anniversary *celebrations* of Trafalgar, none of what I've just recorded was discussed. The unthinking Nationalist 'Us and Them' mindset against 'Foreigners' led to the daft position where Otis Ferry could win the argument against Tony Benn's humanistic but vague anti-War sentiments by saying

'But Tony, if it wasn't for Trafalgar we'd be speaking French".

Vous quoi, Ferry? Comment? Vous plaisentez, sans doute?

Simple, unthinking acceptance of the battered-into-your-mind-every-day notion of 'the Country', the Nationalist view of '*Us* against *the French*', put us on the wrong side of the struggle for Democracy at that time, *in Britain as well as in France*. That's wrong.

Same Again, in Russia ....

It's the same story again with the Russian Revolution, another example of International Solidarity by the Rich and Business Classes, far greater than any we've yet attempted. When the Russian Workers and Peasants took Democratic control in 1917, ten European countries including Britain sent armies to help the Czarist Dictatorship fight against Democracy. The Revolutionaries, in having to fight this Civil War, had to abandon much of their democracy for Military discipline over the whole society. Many of the Revolutionaries died fighting and although they 'won' the Civil War, the Democracy of the Revolution had degenerated towards Stalinist Dictatorship.

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Extra Stuff 8 - Football Fan's Hatred For Each other

One big change was that fans started singing together. I was watching Liverpool from the Kop when it all started, singing along to pop records that were being played over the PA - 'There She Was Just a Walkin' Down the Street, Singin' Dooh Ah Diddy, Diddy Dum Diddy Dooh, Snapping Her Fingers and a'Shufflin' Her Feet, Singing Dooh Ah Diddy Diddy Dum Diddy Dooh'. That was a blast, singing that and other pop songs along with 20,000 other

people! (Have I got those Doohs and Diddies right, you oldies?) Spurs fans will claim they started it in their European Cup Winners Cup campaign of 1963, with Glory, Glory Tottenham Hotspurs.

On the Kop, inventive people started not just singing along but changing the words to suit their team. Football had just started being shown on TV, and fans could be heard singing on Match of the Day. So, listen! That's us on the Telly! The TV Commentators bulled it all up. They'd say 'And now you can hear the Kop Choir singing their famous anthem 'You'll Never Walk Alone'; or 'There's the Stretford End singing' or 'Now listen to the Boothen End singing 'We All Live At The Top Of Boothen End' (in Stoke's old ground.) They gave *National Recognition* on TV to our newly-found Group Identities!

Then Fans were able to travel to each other's grounds more, with cheap excursion trains and the new Motorways. With the *Group Identity* each set of Fans developed from all standing together and singing - the Kop, the Stretford End, the Holte End (Villa), they'd sing songs *directed at each other*. Then the Singing confrontation developed into a battle for *Territory.* The Home fans had their 'End' and the Away fans would try to 'take' it. The singing and the terrace battle with the Opposition Fans became as important as the game on the pitch. I recall being in the Stretford End one floodlit game in 1966, when Everton fans tried to take it. It was a bit crowded, and a bit heavy. But, to remember it's supposed to be about great Football, Law scored what was, for me, his most memorable goal.

It all developed into the now well-established Group Hatred many Fans have for each other. I've been in the middle of these scenes many times and it sickens me, to see and hear such vile hatred being directed by huge groups of Workers at other huge groups of *Fellow Workers*. When they started killing each other in numbers, at the Heysel Stadium in 1985, I thought about why, and the thinking explained here developed from then.

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Extra Stuff 9 - Derby Games – Hating *Your fellow-Locals!*

Manchester United fans are proud of being *Mancs* (those who are, which is plenty of them). So they sing 'Oh Manchester is wonderful' when they play, say, Liverpool. But *they hate and despise their Manc brethren - Manchester City fans*. I've read some entertaining letters in the Fanzines trying to make sense of this for themselves. The best attempt was 'Manchester is great; but everything's got its bad side. As far as Manchester is concerned, it's City!'

Such deep Philosophy in Football, eh?

Manchester City fans themselves are sillier than most in trying to find significance in Place. They claim city is the only real Manchester team because their stadium is inside Manchester Council's city limits; while United's is just over the border in neighbouring Trafford. City fans become experts in Local Government boundaries but I bet most of them don't know a lot about what the Council does and couldn't name the Leader of Manchester Council or any of the Chairs of the Council Committees. And the City players only play in Manchester, for an hour and a half, on maybe 25 occasions a year. Every other day, they are based at their training ground in *Trafford.* Right next door to United's.

And same as most clubs, few of City's players grew up in Manchester or live in Manchester, and never have done. In one game not so long ago, none of the City players were even UK born! Their players, and their Manager, and their Directors, all come in from and go back to the rich areas well outside Manchester - Alderley Edge, Bowdon, Hale Barns. The last Owner would go back to Thailand if he was going home only I don't think he's allowed to or maybe he is but he'd be arrested. Something like that. I've no problem with any of this as a Footballing thing - but City's Local Identity claim is based on nothing. And so is everybody else's.

You find this intense Local rivalry, as well as that against Outsiders, all over the world. Being 'a Northerner' I was surprised to find out, about twenty years ago, that Tottenham and Arsenal fans hate each other. I'd seen them both as far-away London teams, equally from darn Sarf (down South), all Cockneys together (not within Bow Bells, I know), so why would they hate each other? And football fans in Madrid, of Real and Athletico, hate each other; and Milan and Inter; Roma and Lazio; Benfica and Sporting Lisbon; Boca Juniors and River Plate.

In amongst Place identity mania, it's contradictory Group-Identity madness; but I do know how it happens. When I've played in and managed Football Teams, it does feel special when you play the closest other Team. When I managed a Youth team, we felt it playing the team in our league closest to us. It's because they challenge your 'Where You're From' place identity, your feeling of significance from you being 'the Locals.' So are they. But in our games against a neighbouring team, lads on each Team knew each other from School, played together in the School Team in mid-week. And their Manager turned out to be an old team mate of mine from years back, from when we played together in a factory team.

But it seems essential to *find* a local enemy, as well as the distant Outsiders, even when there *isn't* really one. Oldham and Blackburn fans have found themselves local enemies in each other, even though they're twenty-five miles apart with no easy geographical connection. I'm giving up at this point! Can't be bothered trying to explain that. Maybe it increases the excitement of the War-game that is what the whole football thing is about.

But it's only a (beautiful) Game. The Group identification is totally over the top. I was around Old Trafford once, in the afternoon before a game against AC Milan. As an Internationalist, I quite dug seeing and hearing the Milan fans. I like to talk to my Foreign fellow-Workers and was looking for an opening to have a chat with some. I passed a pub near the ground, and heard the stirring sound of them singing some proud and belligerent Rossoneri ditty. I thought, hell, you're just living off the achievements of the guys on the pitch.

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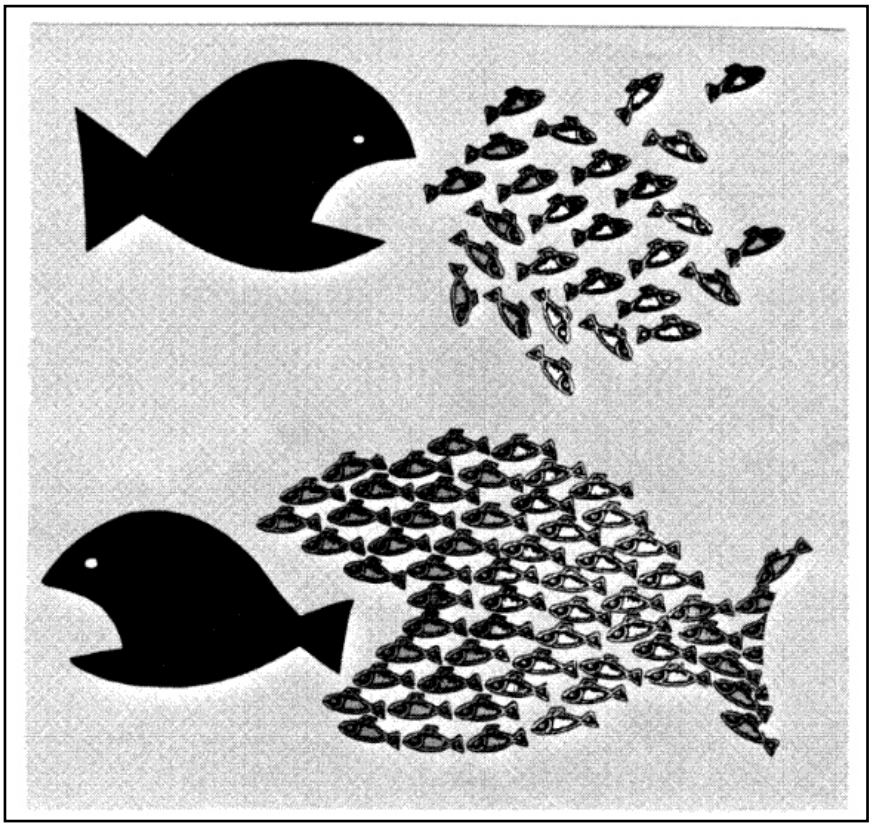

Challenging The System's
companion follow-on work

They Are
The Business Class

This was mostly written up to about 2005 and the writer hasn't yet been able to finish it off as he'd like. Blair is spoken of as Prime Minister of the UK, for example. And the lay-out isn't perfect. But it all makes sense and is worth making available to you for the basically sound analyses and arguments. So here it is, as it is.

234 The Rich
or
Are They Worth the Expense?
They 'Take care of Business'. More than some of Us do.
But how much wealth should they get?

245 Competition
or
Dragging Each Other Down
Competition forces Improvements in Production.
But it means we're after each other's jobs.
Is that what we want?

257 Save the Planet
or
Don't Put Your Money to Work
Expecting your Savings (and their Capital) to 'Earn Interest'
is what drives the madness of Planet-destroying 'Growth'

260 Racism
or
'Our Own Side' is the Problem
It's the White, British Business Class Rich who mess up
our Culture and our Lives. And so do some of *Us*

268 Anti-Social Behaviour
or
Some Organise,
Some Go Under,
Some Turn Nasty
Repressed by the Business Class, some workers become
brutalised little Conservatives
and 'Turn on Their Own'. It's our problem to sort out.

The Rich
or
Are They Worth the Expense?

(All written before the bankers showed how socially irresponsible the Business Class are, in September 2008).

When you hear ordinary people and the media talking about the state of things, about political problems, about 'the economy', anybody or any thing seems to be up for the blame - except the Rich, the Business Class. The behaviour of the people who sit on Boards of Directors and the big shareholders is pretty much under-examined. From around the time I started this piece, here's some everyday examples of people blaming or attacking somebody for our problems, but not the people who actually own and run the show -

Somebody I work with grumbled about all the manufacturing jobs going overseas. She says it's the union's fault, for wanting too much pay (and probably good hours, holidays, and safety.) So for her it's the workers fault the jobs are going. And not, it seems, the fault of the Company Directors who actually made the decision, for the benefit of themselves and their Shareholders - *even though both of them have much higher incomes than the workers who are being blamed for being too expensive*.

Another example - we got talking to a fellow-walker coming down off Snowdon. He's an immigrant from Latvia, nice enough bloke, glad to be able to work here. But goes on about 'those who don't want to work.' They're the problem, it seems.

And another - at the Labour Party conference of 2003, Tony Blair, faced by strong opposition to his activities as a war criminal and a privatiser, makes a big thing about how 'resolute' he is under pressure. About how tough he is at standing up to those of us who disagree with him. So it's OK for him to be tough, then. But not OK for workers who are resolute in defending their conditions, who resist privatisation, by striking for example. That's bad toughness, it seems. But for all Blair's boastful tough guy talk, look how timid he is with the Business Class! No toughness there. He gives them all they want. Won't tax them even as much as Thatcher did. And look how timid he is with Bush .....

But where are the rich and powerful, the Business Class, in these sorts of everyday political discussions? They're hardly mentioned. Economic problems like Jobs, Growth, and Competitiveness are blamed on Unions, greedy or lazy Workers, or on 'Scroungers'; or on Teachers and the Education system; or on Public Spending and the Taxes raised to pay for it. Politicians are blamed - some say they're all useless or bent. Asylum seekers, lone parents, black people, immigrants, Asians. All are blamed regularly for whatever is wrong. But how often are the people who own and control businesses, small and large, blamed? The merchant bankers, the directors and shareholders of, for example, Centrica, British Aerospace, Arriva, Stagecoach, etc etc. Make your own list here - how many big companies can you name?

How often are their actions and worth and decisions held up to public scrutiny? And examined for social accountability? Very rarely.

When they close a factory, it does become an issue in the news. But really, their decisions are accepted. Unions and government plead, but there's little

basic challenge to them, little real criticism of them – nothing like trade unions get. And in the general political debate, week by week, and at election times - the behaviour of the Rich section of the Business Class is not really a central issue.

Wouldn't you think their wealth, decisions, investment, research and development spending, training, and export of investment, would be much higher up the discussion agenda than they are? After all, these are the wealth creators, according to themselves and Blair. They actually own and control the economy, jobs, and wages. They way they talk, they *create* the economy by being so enterprising; they *are* the Economy.

And they could be right, to a degree. One of the most original things I want to say, for a work like this, that I think isn't often acknowledged when Socialists criticise the Business Class, is that they do seem to 'take care of business' in many ways. Probably more so than the rest of us. And that does create 'the economy'. Many of them are OK, just sharp, confident, capable people. *Their system* is anti-human, and so are many or most of them personally and politically. But people running small and big businesses take on a lot of responsibility for making things happen. Let's acknowledge that. For that they probably deserve rewarding. The question is though - How Much?

But having said they are 'the Economy', would the rest of us really just lie down and die without them? I don't think so. We've never done so in all other forms of economic organisation, primitive farming, feudal farming, early home-industrial manufacturing. We've got on with organising our survival. It's just now, the way capitalism 'works', that they are in that position and we are in ours. Of course, they do it for private greed and we laugh at their claim that they 'create jobs'. They only do that as a by-product of making money for themselves, and they make as few jobs as possible, don't they? So challenge them when they make out that they do it for the greater good of us all.

Given their position, wouldn't you think social and political scrutiny of their actions would be nearer the top of the agenda than, say, asylum seekers. All right, you do get some references to Fat Cats, but really, given their importance - they hardly get a mention. At election time - where's the discussion about what this so-important crew do, and what to do with them? A bit about taxing them more, maybe. But not much else. Why is this?

They get an easy ride. Blair claims to be tough with everybody, but he sure as hell isn't, with the rich, the Business Class. Where we Workers want employment rights, he says no, a flexible Labour market is what we need. But 'Flexible Labour market' simply means weak rights for workers. And for him, Employers can have that, have us at a big disadvantage, to misuse and exploit us. Since when we get organised in our unions, we overcome the flexible Labour market, Blair and now Brown says to them Yeah, you can have anti-union laws. Yet 'flexible Labour markets' are presented not as being for the employer's benefit exactly – they're presented as a good thing for 'the economy'. And Privatisation, to allow public services to be run for profit-making? Again, it's presented as being a good thing in itself, for all of us. So they can have it.

In general the rich and powerful Business Class hardly get a mention in political discussion of who should do what, and who should get what. They just quietly get given most of what they want.

What Are They Worth?

What do these people contribute, who are they, and how much should they get? How much should we restrict what they get ? If we didn't give them so much, would they stop doing what they're doing, running the economy? Would they take their capital and business nouse out of the country, as they often threaten to do? Would we be worse off without them? These are some very big political questions, and they are normally left unasked. You have to assume that Blair - and millions of us - are simply accepting that these people are essential, they have to be allowed to do what they want and they have to be given whatever they want. Blair does fairly openly assume that - the wealth creators are vital to the economy and its growth, so he lets them get on with it. We all need their enterprise, their entrepreneurial skills, the hard work of the business person small as well as large. When he talks of 'the market economy', to a large degree that's just code for letting the rich and powerful enterprising types get on with it. All the rest will get, is what can be spared from what these super-people want.

They seem to want an awful lot. There are estate agents in the UK who specialise just in selling second-homes. There's about a million of these in the UK. And then there's those in France, Spain, Barbados, Mustique, Italy, wherever. I'm writing with a lot of UK experience here. But it's all easily translatable to the US; and to South America where the super-rich live behind high-walled fences with private security. Look at Brazil, with the biggest gaps in wealth distribution in the world - shanty-town favelas alongside walled super-wealth. These people have yachts costing hundreds of thousands of pounds, BMW cars, Ferraris, planes, SUV's. In MCN, my weekly bike paper, you get articles about people with motorbike collections worth half-a-million. Why blame workers for not accepting worse conditions, when jobs are exported because labour costs are lower in Taiwan, Singapore, and Indonesia, when there's all this wealth about? In North Wales, I see the yachts, the expensive cars, the second homes. Do they deserve them?

I've written elsewhere, in 'Challenging The System' about what it is that determines how much the rich get and how much people-as-workers don't. It's the mechanism, the single most important mechanism in our lives - that any business person buying labour from many different suppliers, can pay each one far less than the value of what they earn for the business because any one can be disposed of if they don't like it, as long as the rest of the supply is maintained. '**They've Got Plenty of You**'. Allowing that the rich may deserve more for being so socially useful with their aggressive selfish enterprise (isn't that clever of them, how aggressive selfishness produces social good?), the central reason they are able to get so much, is that single mechanism - *They've Got Plenty of You. There is nothing fair about it. What they get has nothing to do with what they deserve.*

In considering this big question of how much the rich and powerful should get, I'm conceding, from my experience of working life, that some people do work harder than others and deserve more. And some don't. There's no doubt about it. I worked in a wide range of jobs, some where everybody was supposedly committed to the work and not just doing it for the wages. And some of us *don't* 'take care of business'. There were a number of people, in different jobs I did and at different times, who didn't pull their weight. *Many – but by no means all – of the people who set up and run businesses, do 'take care of business'.*

Maybe these able, enterprising, initiative taking, wealth creating people do a job for the rest of society, and we have to put up with it? That, surely, is the reason they're behaviour is so little criticised by all the main political parties, and why they look elsewhere, at our Unions and at Education, when they're looking for things to blame for what's wrong?

But if you first look at how Business Classes develop, at *history,* they've not got quite such a worthy record. Take the development of industrial production (which is why we have so much material wealth.) *We were, most of us,* originally, working in self-reliant small businesses, taking care of business. We were mostly small farmers and independent craftsmen. The classic example in the UK was the weavers, who ran their own business from the family home, and sold their cloth independently. They were put out of business, and turned into wage workers, by those who got enough money – capital – to invest in expensive new machinery and factory production. This money in most cases came not from the rare talents or hard work of the factory owners, but from money made in the shocking, murderous brutality of the slave trade.

Here's an example, from looking round Penrhyn Castle near Bangor in North Wales. The Pennant family who 'built' it were slave-traders in the West Indies. They invested the profits in the Welsh slate quarries, and got very wealthy.

The quarrymen didn't. They went up cliff faces in all weathers at all times of the year, some fell off, or got shards of slate in their eyes. I've visited the hospital and seen the records of their injuries, and of the dreadfully meagre diet they existed on. Mainly lots of tea for the caffeine drug boost, and bread.

The castle is something else. There's a banqueting hall with minstrel gallery, a smoking lounge with billiards table as big as your whole house. It's a really obscene thing. One of the staff asked me what I thought of it and I said, disgusting, because of the exploitation. But, she said, don't you think the workers who built it would be pleased with it as a monument to their skills? No, I said, I'm pretty sure they'd have rather their kids hadn't had malnutrition diseases and had decent schools and hospitals instead.

But still, let's grant that in many cases, the business person's wealth came and still comes from being more willing than some of us to take care of business and work hard at getting things done, meeting customers needs, and so on. Like any of us could, they say. (Even while saying that, a lot of research shows the same families continuing in power, over generations, and that despite the examples of the Alan Sugars, the self-made men and women of this world, there's not as much social mobility as the Business Class claim with their 'anyone-can-make-it-if-they-work-hard-enough' propaganda.)

Some can be decent - say, Cadbury's, Lever Bros, the philanthropic capitalists. I know personally some decent people who run their own business. But in general, they're a pretty unpleasant bunch. They may apply greater effort and skills, but the other thing they do is behave ruthlessly. Not at all socially worthy. Very, very selfishly, greedily. They are very good with language - they call anti-social selfishness and greed 'individualism', and make it into a virtue! Most business people are pretty hard-nosed, selfish bastards, and proud of it - the standard right-wing conservative philosophy is that this is human nature, that we are all selfish and any attempt to look after each other is contrary to our nature. Thatcher famously said it on their behalf - "There is no such thing as society."

No, not with you bastards around.

Of course, when they come waving the Union Jack, expecting us to fight their imperialist wars for them, they expect us to forget all that.

Before the Iraq invasion I wouldn't have felt able to say 'imperialist'. But Iraq enables me to as it demonstrates how obviously they are imperialist, trying to control the oil.

So although they may 'take more care of business', and in the process take care of economic activity, the reasons they get so much wealth are as much immoral and impossible to justify by social values, as they are virtuous. And although in political debate they present what they do as being for the benefit of 'the economy' and for the benefit of all of us, that's not at all, not remotely, why the average business person does it. They do it for their own benefit. Giving us work, providing jobs, paying us wages – to them these are all unwanted side-effects, to be minimised as far as possible.

How Much Should They Get?

But admitting yet again, as I argue we have to, that some people do work harder than others - how much should they get, these oh-so-enterprising self-starters who own and run the economy, upon which the rest of us do actually depend for a living?

At present, in the UK, *they get a stupendous amount more than us, the Working Class majority.* There's various ways of putting it - one recent bit of research showed the average Chief Executive in the UK getting *113 times* the income of the average worker. The wealth gap is wider than it's been for a hundred years, bloody wide. Now a lot of us workers are not slackers. Plenty of us work bloody hard. Also from my experience of work, I can recall admin workers who would do anything, last-minute, work after finishing time, if asked. Many of us are bloody conscientious, far more than the employers deserve. People brought up Catholic or Protestant often have a strong work ethic, a sense of duty, that means they work just as hard as the worthily entrepreneurial business types.

Another thing, many workers are highly inventive and skilled. Most improvements in manufacturing or efficiency aren't the work of the individualistic business owner. It is done by the research and technical staff, paid by the owners according to the formula "look how many of you I've got, do I need you?" The owner makes a lot of their money from *other people's* effort and skills - your effort and skills - not their own.

Most of what the rich get is not from their superior efforts or skills. It's from Exploitation. That means they make their Profits from our work. When we say Profit, it isn't about balancing the books. That's OK, I suppose. It's about Business Owners *using their power to pay you, a Worker, less than the value of the work you do, less than they sell it on for. Your Boss keeps the difference for themselves. That's what Exploitation means and that's where Profits come from*.

This is how it works, simply put. I was arguing this line to my window cleaner, when Thatcher was in full barbarian mode. My window-cleaner couldn't or wouldn't get it, taking a typical self-employed or small business point of view. He ran his business, he was entitled to the profits and couldn't see it as Exploitation.

So I said –

"OK, how much do you charge for cleaning the windows on a house?"

His answer – three Quid (GB Pounds)

"If you took somebody else on, how much would you pay them?"

Answer – well, I'm not sure.

"Wouldn't it be as little as you could get away with, as little as they'd accept?"

Yes.

" Maybe only two Quid per house?"

Yeeah, possibly.

" How much would you charge for the houses they did?"

Answer, the usual price, three Quid.

"Why not two Quid, or pay him or her the full three Quid? What you're doing is charging full price for his/her work but keeping a Pound unfairly, for yourself. That's Exploitation.

Allow you to keep some of the pound for buying the ladders, advertising, doing the books, running the business and so on. You would be stealing the rest from the other worker."

In practice, he wouldn't pay the worker £2 for each house, he'd pay them by the hour. That separates the two transactions, one the buying of the other guy's labour, and two, the selling of it. It hides the Exploitation.

Having enough work for themselves, and then some for you, Business People exploit their position as middle man. It's unfair and it's a scam and it's the key reason why they are Rich and the masses are Poor, all over the world.

The amount the rich get now – not through any socially-justified mechanism - is just plain wrong. It's a joke. It denies people at the bottom their basic needs, better education, better health, better jobs, it creates poverty. It creates crime, because some people at the bottom are just as ruthlessly selfish as the rich, and refuse to accept the little they can get legally. So they get it illegally. And that ruins everybody else's lives, with the fear and actuality of being robbed, burgled, having your car broken into, and many more kinds of misery.

All unnecessary, if we weren't allowing the rich their floodlit lawns, their second homes, their yachts, Rolls Royces, Ferraris..... you finish the list.....Armani...Rolex...Gucci. Have you ever watched one of those TV programmes where they are allowed to film the inside of the houses, the consumption, of the very rich? It's disgusting, depraved excess. Also it's boring and meaningless. You look at it and think – what on earth are they doing? What a crass way to live.

They argue that it's fair because any of us can get rich, by running our own business. That's not the point, for us to have Equal Opportunities to unfairly exploit each other. It's impossible anyway - modern society is now based on the mass production methods of industrialism, even in service industries, with their call-centres. If we all ran small businesses, it wouldn't work. And why should running your own business be the only way to get a fair crack? Aren't Business people able to treat their labour suppliers fairly? Their fellow-human, fellow-countrymen and women?

So, do they really deserve what they get? Are they that good, is their enterprise that necessary? Revolutionary socialists argue that we don't need them at all, that we, the masses, could run the economy without them. That's a position worth arguing. But here we're just looking at things as they are. The way their constantly growing economies are ruining our climate, it's time to say we've got *too much* enterprise. No more growth needed. Let's stand easy on what we've got, enjoy life a bit and heal the planet.

How Should We Regulate Their Wealth?

Taxing the Rich is the easiest way of correcting the unjustifiable inequality, and is the most obvious and usual method. But we need to be much clearer in saying why it is fair and justified to tax them. Because the Tories and the Republicans and Business Class people around the world have a powerful argument against taxation that they successfully use to get even many workers on their side. *They argue that people should be able to keep the money they earn,* to spend as they choose. I've found a fair few workers who really buy that line.

It seems a reasonable argument, one of those that are sometimes difficult to respond to. But there *is* a response and it is this - with the unequal power they have over us through ***They've Got Plenty of You***, most of the rich don't get 'their' money fairly. They get it through Exploitation enabled by the unequal and unfair bargain you make with them as a Worker. Look around the supermarket next time you go. Look at all the young girls and women at the checkout, the lads doing shelf-filling. Tesco's £2 billion profit is actually theirs, not the Tesco shareholders.

If we tax the rich, it's not their money we're taking off them. That money is rightfully yours, mine and millions of other workers'. So we'll have it back through taxation and spend it on Hospitals and Schools instead of yachts and Rolexes.

Some people do earn their money just from their own work - the Self-employed, musicians and footballers who are exceptionally talented and popular. But most of the rich get it from *our* work.

Another way of tackling their excess wealth would be to say, OK, how much is their management work actually worth? Having done a job of some responsibility, and seen others not take responsibilities seriously, I concede some work harder than others and deserve something for it. For some unknown reason many people think socialism means everybody would get the same. I think that's never going to work. It's unfair, as much as the system where the rich get so much. There'll always be a case for differentials. In union bargaining, you'll not get support from members for a deal struck with management, unless it includes fair rewards for more work or more responsibility. As a very simple example, overtime pay for those who work it, and not for those who don't.

What Socialism actually means is that we'd all get an *equal say* - in running the economy. But, in all having our say, we'd probably decide, collectively, by majority decisions, to pay brain surgeons (cliché alert!) more than the poor old dustmen. And so forth across all jobs – we'd have to allow for differing effort. We'd provide so many more basic needs for free, regardless of what income you got, that in effect, for key needs, we *would* all get the same. Just as we're all supposedly getting the same Health treatment and Education right now. But for pay, we'd have wage scales rewarding recognised effort and skills.

Working out fair pay scales is routine in industry and public services. On Union Reps courses an important part of the learning is for the Reps to get to know and be able to use the handbooks of National and Local Agreements negotiated by the unions with Employers organisations and individual Employers. There's loads of them. They're much broken up by the attacks of Blatcherism, but are still widely applied. The National Engineering Agreement made with the Engineering Employer's Federation; the Local Government National Joint Council (or JNC?) for manual staffs, the 'Green Book'. The one for Admin and Technical, the 'Purple Book'. Both now merged into one for all grades, there's a range of salary points, twenty or thirty perhaps. A job's place on the scales is determined by Job Evaluation, where a job's skills and responsibility are assessed nationally and locally and placed on the scale.

I've a friend who sits on a local NHS panel right now, going through jobs in a local Hospital. It's a way of assessing what someone should get based not on the crude and unfair power relationships of the labour market, the sole-customer-who's got-plenty-of-you law, but on socially and collectively acceptable criteria. A simple example from the Local Government National Joint Council book - someone working for the Council's Parks and gardens gets more for being a plant propagator, who can raise plants in the greenhouse then plant them in the park or on the roundabout where you'll enjoy them, than the person who does grass-cutting, a less skilled job. (If they get privatised, that sort of fair, well-negotiated pay structure is the first thing to be attacked, cutting costs and wages. Many a reptilian middle-manager has got a BMW or yacht from pushing it through.)

So fair rewards can be worked out, and it is widely done. Why not apply it to the senior managers in industry? It's only a broad political point I'm making here, not looking into how to implement it, which is another thing again. But we could do it. It's done for the senior Civil Servants who run the country, just below Minister level. The argument is the 'captains of industry' deserve so much because of the responsibility. Yes, there is a bit of a case for a differential to allow for that. But how much do you think they should get? *The top 1 per cent get 70 times the amount the bottom 10 per cent get. The average chief executive gets 113 times the £22,000 annual pay of the average worker.* That much? What do you think?

Why isn't it headline news, repeatedly, as a scandal, like the relentless attacks on people on benefits and asylum seekers? Because these people own the papers, that's why!

You can get competent people to do responsible jobs without paying them that much. I worked with a Principal of a Further Education College who got £70,000 compared to the £30,000 I got as a Senior Lecturer. She got over twice as much as me. But that's not huge looking at the figures I've just given in the economy generally. She was definitely competent and hard-working. Being in charge of a College with 10,000 students, where you're not just producing things but altering 10,000 people's heads and measuring the change (that's what education is about) – that's quite a responsible job. (She's actually one of a class of careerist managers who collaborate with the Tories and New Labour in their attacks on education as a scapegoat for the failings of the employer's economy, but that's another story.) Yet you can get capable people to do that, for only two or three times what a lecturer gets. Mind you - I was at the top of a pay scale she managed to destroy, and one of her 'achievements' was to put new people on far less than me, so she was probably on four times what a lecturer got.

But who is worth ***113 times more?*** When GEC loaded more work on me I disputed it. The management response was "there's only so many hours in the day, so how could I say I had to work harder?" OK then – there's only the same number of hours in a Director's day so nor can *they* work that much harder than anybody else. And therefore can't possibly deserve all that extra cash.

People might say, but look at the stress they get, with all that responsibility. But you can get Stress in any job, and most readily when you don't control what you have to do, and these well-paid Bosses force you to do it in ways that make you ill. Thanks to pressure from people paid much more than me, I got really, really badly Stressed in my job, and had to retire early. These mega-rich Directors, they can control what they do better than any of us, so they shouldn't get stressed.

Business people, small and large, claim their high rewards are justified, socially and politically acceptable, for things like the financial risks they take in running businesses. Well, they are not quite such great risk-takers as they make out.

You'd have to be pretty dumb to make as much as a lot of them do and not put some of it safely by, in a paid-for house, in savings, in other property. And one of their key 'Business freedoms', the limited company, is a scam, a device openly designed to enable Business Owners to walk away from their debts if their Business fails. A couple of years ago I sat through a presentation by some civil servants on how the Government was making it easier for people to go Bankrupt, to avoid debts, and still be able to return to business, after only one year instead of three. This was done 'to encourage enterprise', for the good of 'the economy' or of us all. But that means that although business people may lose their own money, so can a lot of other people, their creditors. Business people aren't risking personal debt. They can dump that, their responsibility for other people's money.

I'm not particularly criticising this device here. Maybe it's a good idea, to encourage Business. But it shows how the image of the risk-taking entrepreneur is a bit of a myth.

Most of them only take real risks with their spare riches. Isn't that what they call 'venture capital'? And they expose all of us to risk too, with their business system. It is theirs, not ours. Loss of job and health. And increasingly ominously, loss of the whole sodding planet.

Sure, a small number of people in small businesses do put all their savings into it, re-mortgage their house, and lose everything in their business. But that only means they go bankrupt, and their creditors suffer more than they do. The failed business owners then just re-join the rest of us, Workers selling their labour to the remaining business people. You might have known people who've done this. Historically, this is how the Working Class was created - lots of small, independent farmers, weavers, businesses being forced out of the trade by bigger, industrialised firms making things in greater numbers and cheaper, and having to then work for them as wage-workers. It continues to work like that - it's a repetitive cycle in capitalism. As a new industry develops, it eventually ends up with just one or a few big companies, with all the small business people who were once active in the industry doing something else, many of them now as workers.

What about ***Shareholders****?* What about fairness in how much they get, for what they do? There's a lot of wealth goes to the rich that way. Almost always, the Directors get plenty not just from their mega-salaries, but also from giving

themselves shares, from which they get dividends and can also sell them. People criticise footballer's earnings, but at least that's them getting their full value as rare talents from the work they themselves do. But when Martin Edwards owned Manchester United, as well as paying himself something like £1 million a year for being Chief Executive, and paying himself dividends, also sold out the club to the Stock Exchange and made £80 million. (And that left the club open to being taken over by a rapacious billionaire with no interest in football or United, only in milking the club for income.) OK, Edwards ran the club reasonably well, but that £80 million is a huge amount more than Ferguson gets for managing the actual football team, and a huge amount more than the players get for actually playing.

So how much do Shareholders deserve? The traditional argument is - they put their money at risk, and that justifies them getting large dividends when the business is successful. I lost a few thousand myself by not being mistrustful enough of the glib financial saleswoman who advised me what to do with my savings so I can't argue that there's no risk of losing it all. But Shareholders get too much. ***They are the main beneficiaries of the exploitation of They've Got Plenty of You.***

Maybe through strong trade unionism, we could reduce the exploitation and leave less for the shareholders. We'd have to be strong across the global economy, otherwise they just move their money to wherever they can best exploit workers and get big dividends there. 'Every fund an Ethical Fund' – how's that for a slogan?

Maybe restrict them to only being able to invest in mixed, pooled funds where they don't face as much risk, so don't have to be given so much wealth to compensate for their risk-taking. Happens already of course, they do it themselves for the same reason. We'd just have to tinker with it. Underwrite their original capital, place limits on dividends to limit their greed and power, balanced by state under-pinning so they don't lose their investment. The banks are big investors of course. We'd need controls on them. And there's National Savings as a risk-free way of investing, where you lend money, securely, to the Government. There was a well-advanced plan for a National Investment Bank, to direct investment into useful stuff like technology instead of property speculation, when Tony Benn was in charge of what is now the Department of Trade and Industry. He was moved out, the Labour Government caving in to the rich, as usual.

With 70 times the income of the poorest, where is the sense of social responsibility that these people direct at workers who want more, who they accuse of wrecking 'the economy'? Never was this more daftly argued (and still is) than when in 1979 the local government workers, amongst the poorest in the economy, were accused of bringing down the Labour government by their greedy demands! How's about a bit of social responsibility from the rich?

Will They Accept It?

Their threat is that *if we don't allow them so much money, they'll stop being so enterprising and we'll all suffer*. Or else they'll leave the country, taking their capital and their enterprising personalities somewhere else. 'Holding the Country to Ransom', as they accuse Trade Unionists of doing. Is that what would happen if we instructed a government to rein them in, either using the simple taxation method, or more complex things I've touched on, so the wealth they end up with is socially acceptable and we use the rest for everybody's benefit? *That's a very big question*. It underlies a lot of what is

done and not done, politically, in the UK and in most other countries too. Blair, Brown and the Tories say, yes, they'll become lazy or move abroad, we'll all suffer. They say we can't allow that; we must allow the movers and shakers the stupendous rewards they get. *It seems we must throw money at the problem*.

They don't actually put it like that, do they? No, that expression is reserved for arguing against better spending on schools, hospitals, and the housing. Funny thing, that - throwing money at us and our problems is said not to work, but it's exactly the right thing to do for the problem of the Rich.

Is there an answer to this question, will they start slacking without the huge wealth they get? Well, they themselves do say 'Yes, we will slack unless we get what we want.' So, the likes of Thatcher, Blair and Brown 'give them incentives' and 'reward enterprise,' with low taxes and lax regulation of their activities. But they are familiar, in business, with hard negotiations and are capable of accepting a thoroughly-negotiated deal, with suppliers and customers, even if it's not as good as they started out expecting. Is there any reason why they can't do that with their fellow-countrymen and women, as Citizens and Workers? I think it's the biggest political question we should be asking. You, me, everybody.

I'm actually arguing a bit naively here. The evidence from history – Italy 1922, Britain 1926, Germany 1933, Spain 1936 – is that, faced with a Working Class that sticks up for itself, Business Classes are not prepared to negotiate and compromise. As an economic and political Class they work themselves into quite a frenzy, to the extent of opting for Fascist dictatorships at times, to protect their ability to unfairly exploit us. But individually, in Business, they are prepared to settle deals according to the balance of forces. It's up to us, locally and world-wide, to put them in a position where they have to make a civilised deal with us all. Or if they won't wear it, to move on to Socialism.

The least we should be doing, and I urge you to do it, is to raise the discussion up the political agenda, and subject these almost invisible people - I sometimes start to make a list of them, like Martin Edwards as was at Manchester United. It's not that difficult to do if you trawl the financial pages. Does 'Who's Who' cover it? People like the Tower group at MG-Rover, as I write in April 2005. They are a definite class of person, maybe several million of them in the UK.

Let's identify them in daily political discourse, and give them the sort of scrutiny of what they do and what they get, and what they should do and get, that they dish out to workers, asylum seekers, unions, people on benefit, through the media that they own - The Daily Mail, the Times, the Sun, the Daily Telegraph. Murdoch, Fox News etc. ***Using the term 'Business Class' makes a big improvement in our ability to talk about them and what they do .***

And if it's true they need the huge wealth they get, to get them to do what is apparently important to all of us; and we have to allow them it; then let's be fully aware and much more open about it. Make it an open bargaining process, central in political debate; have a clear settlement with them over how much they are to get. Then, assuming they insist on continuing to be brutal, disgusting, greedily selfish, treat them socially with the contempt they deserve. Point at them in the street and shout insults? Except they don't share the same streets with us.

Spit in front of their Rolls Royces. Tell jokes about them – did you here about the Rich bastard, the CEO, the MD, who ..... That really needs doing,

there's so many jokes about people for being black, gay, women or whatever. Hardly any about the boss, Business Class.

Oh, and all this isn't *the politics of Envy*. It's *the politics of Decency*. We don't *want* to be like them. *It's not envy. It's disgust.* Disgust and contempt for such greedy, smug, arrogant anti-social twerps.

It'd be better if we could do without them. But that'd mean we'd have to take over and run the show ourselves, collectively, Democratically – Socialism. But frankly I, and most of you, don't appear to be ready to do that at present.

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Competition

or

Dragging Each other Down

The Business Class and its political parties - the Tories in the UK, in the USA both major parties (but more the Republicans), constantly argue the benefits of Competition. They talk as if it benefits all of us. That's how they promote their attacks on public services, arguing that Privatisation is good for all of us. I'm going to examine that argument. But first, there's a couple of things about their position that don't tally up (as is common with their politics.) A couple of perhaps obscure observations here -

They say they're for Competition. But most of them wouldn't mind being totally dominant in their trade, with their competitors squeezed out. They try hard to get into just such a position, a monopoly. So why do they support competition politically? Maybe it's because in places where there is some democracy, just a few giant companies who would really want things run just for themselves simply couldn't form a political party. There'd not be enough of them, and there'd not be enough votes. Their policy *has* to be some sort of free competition, to allow for a big enough business-friendly class to form a party and win votes. I can well imagine there've been times at Tory conferences where the big corporate types found they had to compromise with the small-business types 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. Which the Business Class wouldn't like.

So they support Competition, to a degree, for these reasons. From everything else they do, you'd have to imagine they've thought it through. They take care of business.
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A bit of speculation there, trying to see what they are up to. Because they are good at getting things set up to suit themselves, and arguing quite different things from time to time, contradicting themselves like mad. For instance these ruggedly independent business people who favour 'small government,' are not slow 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 they are not always in favour of competition - they expect 'us' to support them against that nasty kind of competition, 'foreign' competition. We're supposed to get all concerned for them then, and help these so able, freedom loving entrepreneurial types with government aid of one kind or another. They'll say it's to protect yours and mine 'British' jobs. What bullshit that is, as 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. I've never been able to work out why it's bad to lose your job to those nasty 'foreign' competitors but you are supposed to tolerate losing it because of competition within 'your' country.

But, moving on to the argument over Competition, *let's admit - there's some benefits to Competition; but there's also a whopping big problem - it has us all in fear of our jobs, in fear of each other*. Is that how you want to live? *Is that right, when we call ourselves 'a society', and expect all sorts of loyalties and good behaviour from each other, to compete with each other and put each other out of work*? For the Business Class person, generally a person confident in their own abilities and ruthlessness, they will say yes, they don't mind that. They see themselves as likely to succeed or if they fail, they'll start again.

Well, they can suit themselves. I'm talking to the majority, and asking if you really want to live in such a society, based on threatening each other's livelihoods? These people's preference for supposedly taking risks 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, why do we put up with the law of the jungle, dog-eat-dog system that these sharks prefer?

They argue, of course, and a lot of you accept, that it's simply human nature. Survival of the fittest. Well it hasn't actually been so for most of human existence, wasn't for many thousands of years, when primitive humans existed in supportive communities. And in the Middle Ages, for all that it was a ruthless political system under a class of land-owning dictators, it at least contained the notion that all of humanity was co-existent. The feudal 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.

Arguments *for* Competition

Arguments for competition - *it forces improvements in quality, price, quantity*, that wouldn't happen without it. OK, let's acknowledge it does this. Marx said Competition between Capitalists, each forced constantly to invest in better methods of production and the economics of mass production, to keep up with each other, was a dynamic system, constantly revolutionising productivity. But it also makes us work and live at an increasingly frantic pace, *for no good reason and not by our choosing to do so*.

And it does it through making us fear each other, fear losing business to competitors. 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.

"Yessir, the US of A, greatest country in the world. The way it works, see, everyone's scared of losing their job to their fellow-Citizens; and if that leaves some unemployed, sick, or starving, the others don't give a shit. Greatest country in the world." No it's not.

But yes, competition improves quantity, and drives down cost. Quality? – often but not always. How often have you bought something that appears to be the same as a competing brand, but what they've done is made it tackily? You have to do a lot of research sometimes, not to get gulled by shoddy gear. It's the origin of the saying 'You get what you pay for.' Generally, though – competition does bring constant improvements in products and services, too bloody fast for me sometimes. I've got innovation fatigue. Computer programmes and mobile phones and games machines and TV, Video/DVD, Satellite gear. It's astonishing, really. Look inside a Floppy disc drive with associated circuitry, and or a DVD player that costs just £30, and marvel at how much there is to the thing. And yet so cheap. Since I was a kid in the 1950's the availability of consumer goods and services has exploded. Let's not forget that the most of the people producing all this gear for us in the West to consume are working in dreadful conditions in Asian sweat-shops. Of which more, shortly.

Arguments *against* Competition

Do we really need all this huge production of affordable stuff, all this cheap travel, a result of the pressures of competition? As well as putting you in fear of losing your job to your employer's competitors, it's costing us the planet. And 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 bosses have to be. It's just that some company somewhere gets better, and your company *has* to push you harder in many ways – 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 Telford or Taiwan, makes no difference.

Then there's this common question -

***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 retire early, and now there is a big discussion about the opposite – working until we are 67 or 68*?**

The first bit of the answer is – Competition. We don't link things together. Like, we'd like to work less. But we'll buy the cheapest goods and services. The owners of spare Capital are always looking to 'get a return' on it, which they usually do by investing in some business activity, making existing products or services more efficiently and therefore more cheaply. We'll buy them, and so force all Employers, including our own, either out of business or desperately becoming as efficient. Which means getting more output from us, with longer hours, increased workloads, less pay, no pensions, and so on.

To use increased productive power from Computers and other efficiency gains to Work less, we'd have to all decide we have enough Goods and Services (of acceptable quality), and share out the work of providing the same amount, so

we all Work less. But the owners of big Capital (UK and 'Foreigners' alike), and many with small savings, insist on being able to 'earn a return on their Money' as a *Right*. These big Investors – the people Bush represents - insist on access to Global Markets for their cheaper and better goods and services; made wherever, intra-nationally or globally, workers can be made to work cheaper and longer. We, acting as Consumers, buy them.

This means that Businesses and 'countries' (like us in the UK) who wish 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.

To achieve the ***Rational Societies*** necessary to use increased productivity to work less, requires that enough people Get Organised, Globally, to exert the political power necessary to stop people competing with each other to each other's detriment.

How to Regulate Competition

It's perfectly possible to do without this. We are quite capable of limiting how much we work against each other. Normally we are told it's all just human nature, nothing to be done about it. But in wartime, when we're all expected to pull together, fair treatment and planned economies suddenly become humanly possible.

As Workers, we can, and do, limit how much we work against each other. The Business Class like to have us all competing against each other, even *inside* the firm or public service, undercutting each other, under-bidding each other on wages, on working longer hours, on doing whatever the boss wants 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 that inside the workplace. We also take action to get industry-wide agreements setting standard conditions, as far as possible, in all companies across the Trade. That is why we are called *Trade* Unions, and why company unionism, though better than no organisation, isn't enough.

Business intellectuals and their politicians - Thatcher, Bush - hate us doing that. Their political, intellectual argument is that Unions are 'in restraint of Trade' by stopping us competing with each other. They think saying we are 'in restraint of Trade' is a killer argument, that it challenges our very right to organise in Unions, and justifies anti-Union laws. They claim that Free Trade and Free Markets, in labour as in everything else, are somehow always virtuous. They say these things as if Free Trade and Free Markets are like Laws of Nature. But that'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 Unionise, we are *in restraint of Trade*. And proudly so. Because we understand that *competing against each other when We Each have just One Customer who has Plenty of You* is madness.

And wider than that, we recognise that Competition between our Employers sets us all at each other's throats. It forces us to compete downwards on all our conditions. While, as Consumers, that enables some of us to have cheaper goods and services, our jobs 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 all under-cutting each other, and allows the strongest, best-organised Workers to drag up the conditions of the worst-off. But Thatcher and her thugs - Tebbitt and others - legislated against us limiting Industry-wide and Trade-wide Competition between Us-as-Workers with their 1982 Act of Parliament that gives firms the right to sue people like me for 'Secondary Action' and in particular 'Secondary Picketing.' That's when we might go and picket a workplace to either help or persuade 'their' Workers to join a Strike that is trying to improve standards in their Trade, or to help them to organise, and to stop them under-cutting conditions.

The Tories Business Class argument sounded reasonable - why should a firm be Picketed, when it's not involved in a dispute? ***Well, here's why - because of your precious Markets***. You argue that we are all individuals, separated from each other. *But because of markets, you know we are not*. We are Competing with each other. And from that, *we* recognise that fighting for decent conditions just with our own Employer doesn't really work, long-term. It doesn't mean it's not worth doing. But in the long run, a non-organised Competitor will undercut us and force us out of our jobs. Back in 1842, one of the first and biggest ever strikes, in engineering in the North West of England, covered many small firms, and the objective was to limit competition between workers operating in the same market, by establishing common Pay and Conditions – Union Rates.

We may be stuck in the Business Class's competitive world, but by organising in Our Unions and taking what they call 'Secondary Action' 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 that constant investment in new methods, your marvellous skills, your decision making brilliance. By setting common labour conditions across the industry we're not getting involved in that, as far as we can help it.

Industry-wide working conditions in the UK have been reduced since 1980 by the Business Class acting through Thatcher. But there were, and still are, agreements made by us through our Unions with Employer's Federations across whole industries. Like Shipbuilding and Engineering; across the Paper and Fibre Board industries; across 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 are familiar with the idea, and the fact, of things like pay, holidays, and other basics, being decided across the trade. We can and do organise to get rid of or 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. They 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.

But, in making my argument for limiting Competition, you might have spotted a large, a very large problem. It is this - Competition is increasingly Global. I'm in the UK. Jobs from here, and the US, and other 'old' industrialised countries, are increasingly being lost to competition from companies away across the world, mainly in Asia, but also South America. Wherever labour is cheaper and more easily bullied.

It's worth emphasising that jobs are often lost by the action of 'your' Employer in the UK or USA re-locating, exporting it's production, and by UK Capitalists

investing in factories abroad that will compete with domestic producers, as by competition from 'Foreigners.'

Of course, workers in those other countries need Jobs as well 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.

Because even within one country, the UK for example, many of us aren't even Unionised on our own site; if we are, people at our employer's other workplaces might not be. When Business Class people decide to make us redundant, close our site and move our work to somewhere else, we workers rarely have links with those other workplaces where their jobs might be re-located to. Where we do have links, even when union organisation was stronger (and will be again), even then there is a failure to link Workplaces, with a few exceptions where 'Combine Committees' have operated. And then when Business Owners and their managers close workplaces, the workers where they move the 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.

So translate that into a global scene, then of course we have a lot of work to do. It's getting easier – we travel to and from these countries now so much, as part of our job as much as for holidays, so we're increasingly 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. Not just the classic immigrant groups – Aussies, Malayans, Greeks, Poles, Brasilians.

Look at the Business Class and their Managers, and how much global organisation they have between them, and compare it with the small amount between workers. They've got conference calls; Reports and plans exchanged globally; E-mails. Transatlantic flights to meetings and to conferences. Remember the red-eye advert? Flights to Milan, to Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney. Meetings all over the world. 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 all individual flair and enterprise - it's organisation.

We can do it too. Travel, E-Mail, the Internet - it's just a question of catching up. Oh, and learning a bit of other languages too. Trabalahores - Portugese for worker. See - easy. The Liverpool dockers had good support internationally - I recall hearing a Breton docker visiting them and expressing support in poor English but good international workers language.

Have We Really Got to be in Fear of Our Jobs Before We'll Work?

So we are talking globally about Competition. But now, back to the argument the Business Class uses for competition. It really means they're saying fear is the necessary, indispensable motivator for us all otherwise we'd all just sit on our arses and do nothing. Well, I acknowledge, yes, fear, pressure, can be useful. I've worked in a number of trades - building, engineering, education - and come across a few slackers. You have to note, though, that quite a few of the Business Class are also a waste of space. They're not all hard-working, enterprising types. In fact, that shows up a flaw in their world view of people and human nature and individualism. They claim it's justifiable, to disown those of us who are slackers or not very able, and they say just let 'the fittest' survive. Unfortunately they find they can't live totally without human closeness, like having a family. And often have to face the unfortunate truth that many of their offspring are useless! Which 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, to get people to work hard or harder; to accept working longer hours, accept pay cuts, intensified workloads - which is often the way greater competitiveness is achieved. I've seen it in jobs I've been in; it's worked on me. But, how much of this 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, indeed the only way, of organising society. Really? *Is that the best we can do, live by threatening each other*? *Can we not work as a civilised society, with some trust, mutual respect*? Or does it have to work on the assumption that we only work through fear?

But people do work hard, it's in our nature. We do all sorts of things, hobbies outside work, 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 - our conscious creativity - it's something we like doing.

Co-operation – the Human Way

Fear isn't the only way to motivate people. We're told it's human nature to slack, that we need Competition to keep us on our toes. But, do we want to be kept on our toes? What happened to all those 1960's projections of a relaxed future with short working days, weeks and years? Competition, that's what happened to it. The only way you can have that is by most producers agreeing basic conditions, so we can all relax a bit, without being immediately undercut by some Business working their Staff harder. It seems Competition's got as much to do with keeping us on our knees as on our toes.

Competition has a role, probably - it's been a factor in so much of our history. In my analysis, football is popular because it gives us a little competitive war-game to take part in, that has the excitement of winning - and the fear of losing. But, *look at the entire course of human history*. It's as much about Co-operation as it is about Competition. We've been able to eliminate rival creatures, and been able to turn the others to our needs. We've advanced far beyond our uncertain existence as animals and become (up 'til now) in control of our environment. We've become able to produce so many goods and

services 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*, which is nothing less than 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". Co-operation. Communication by Speech, Writing, Education. Even Trade. *It's all Co-operation*.

Co-operation works better than Competition and is even more basic to human nature. Even the war-mongering Business Class value Peace, 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, it's overall effect is complete waste. (Except that the Business Class's economic and financial systems are so prone to irrational collapse, they sometimes need a war to get going again.)

Co-operation is what makes us more highly developed than other animals. That'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..... What we need to do is develop Co-operation to include Work and Political Relationships.

The Business Class's 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. It's why there is a United Nations, limited though it is by competitive sectional interests, particularly from the biggest bully on the block. You know who. 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 Washington seeks to erode state's rights in the US. I'm not recommending any of these in particular - just saying there's pressure for the co-ordination that comes with co-operation. It makes things more effective.

So is Fear and Competition so necessary as a motivator, at the personal level? 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 of these people 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. I wonder if people's attitude to work owes far more to upbringing, social values, and notions of social duty, than it does to fear of job loss. Discuss..... the Catholic and Protestant traditions and the work ethos have been more effective motivators than fear of job loss.

Having been brought up Catholic and having had to break free of the Roman Catholic Church's black mind-controlling grip, I'm far from recommending these traditions. It's to make the point that there are other motivators than fear of job loss. There again, I suppose you could say the Protestant/Catholic

work ethic is also based on fear - fear of hell and damnation! But you can raise kids to be socially responsible, reasonably hard working adults, without any sort of fear. I know, I've done it, and 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 once 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.

But so many people do a huge amount of work voluntarily, my wife and I included, we each work 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 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. What a bleak view that is of us!

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. Then we can fairly say to people 'Pull your weight.' And it applies only to those few slackers - it doesn't follow that all of us have to be put in fear of our jobs, all the time.

And it applies to the Managers and Bosses and Rich and 'Royalty' too. We have to organise ourselves so much better, so that we too can say to *them* - YOU shape up or ship out.

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? What happened to that rosy picture of ever-shorter working time and relaxed living that was predicted in the 60's? I know what happened to it - under free-market capitalism, whenever we attempt to improve our lives and take more leisure, we are constantly dragged down by the competition. It's happening right now, in 2005. It is what shallow, trite people like Blair mean when they condemn the French and German 'Social Models' and say "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.

More Ways of Getting People to Work Without Relying on Fear

The Business Class themselves have pulled of some amazing stunts, in getting people to do more than just work hard, using other methods than fear of the sack. Even while treating them contemptuously and brutally they've convinced whole populations to have great loyalty and belief in the society - the country - that treats them like dirt. They've got people to believe stuff quite contrary to their interests.

Look at the whole of the period from 1750 to 1939, say, in the UK. Starting around 1750, they enclosed common land, driving people off it with no means of living; then 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 do a runner to Dover and France to escape a death sentence, just for criticising the rich, royal and aristocratic thugs who had all the power here 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 those fancy great houses with gardens by Capability Brown, that we can now tour round courtesy of the National Trust. We're supposed to admire them but I generally write something scathing in the visitors book, about the disgusting wealth it shows, made out of great poverty. There's been many periods of mass unemployment, and for the loyal subjects, only the workhouse or great deprivation and no Health Care.

Just 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, the disgusting slum housing.

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 be proud of such a cruel and uncaring society!

They've convinced millions to recognise as Heads of State, apparently 'above' us, that idiotic and arrogant bunch, the Windsor family. I'm deeply offended, and so should you be, at the very existence of the Windsors as a so-called Royal family. It demeans us all that such a bunch of space-wasters should be presented to us as our leaders and that we should be called their 'Subjects' and not Citizens. Yet when Charlie Windsor's marriage to some cricketer (think about it) was announced, I heard on TV and radio a number of people from 'public life', very successful and capable and self-regarding people, 'the great and the good', being interviewed and talking deferentially about the doings of this idiot, as if he matters. Have some self-respect, please.

Through all this head-fixing, they've got millions of Working Class men and women to go and fight, get maimed, and die for them. Not to be too abstract about this - members of my family and yours. I'm named after an uncle who died 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. They suffered like that for the Class that treated them like dirt – because most wars have been about the Business Class's disputing control of territory and the resources and markets there with other Business Class's. You might say that doesn't apply to the Second World War? Well, I'll come to that. It certainly clearly applies to the current one, where the US invaded Iraq to get control of a key resource that it may not so much need itself, but China does.

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 benefit from the Business Class's exploitation of workers in other countries, we often have to fight our bosses to get it.

The First World War was 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 national loyalty bullshit, and in the UK, to lying anti-German propaganda. Just like a lot of people did with Blair's Iraq war. To their credit, the German Working Class came closer to rejecting the First World War than the UK's, on the grounds that it was a Bosses war setting worker against worker. Let's take 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.

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.

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 appealing 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 the likes of those in the Unemployed Worker's Movement who did fight against them, 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.

As for the Second War, it's always quoted as a case where the fight had to be had not for nationalistic reasons but for Democracy and against Fascism. OK, yes. 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 2nd World War grew out of the mass devastation caused by Capitalism's crazy workings, the Wall Street Crash and early 30's Unemployment. That's how the Nazis got power, out of the political turmoil of that 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.

But yes, there was a case for fighting the Nazis. (Note though, that 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

Brits did it voluntarily, to fight for Democracy. That is the size of the International Brigade, who went to fight Fascism in Spain, at a time when 'our' Business Class was unsure whether to support Fascism and join with the Nazi's to attack the Bolshevik menace; or whether to fight them as a competitors.) But where there is a decent case for war - say, if the American Imperialists attack left-leaning Venezuela or Bolivia or Cuba, and 'our' Business Class want us to fight for them against America – hah hah, 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.

I'm not sure how brave I'd be if it came to war. But if I was brave enough, I'd not fight under the control of that most disgusting bunch of people, the Sandhurst-trained British military officer class. They're awful - so smug, arrogant, and brutally decisive about dishing out violence and death. I'd maybe do it in a worker's army, under strategic command of their generals, fighting *alongside* them. But not *for* them.

Of course, you'll find that 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 in 1918, 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 - *they 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 them*.

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. The Windsors, for a start.

Using peer pressure, collective working, in decent, union-approved conditions, with union representation - most people will work OK.

We don't need to base our society on living in fear of each other.

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Saving the Planet
or
Don't Put Your Money to Work

We're wrecking the climate, wrecking our home - Planet Earth. We might well wipe ourselves out. It's not certain, but with such a whopping great danger, you don't have to be certain for it to make sense not to risk it. All the time we Humans have been around, we've had to work hard to produce enough just to survive. Now, we're so good at producing things, and daft enough to consume way beyond what we need, we *threaten* our survival.

Now it is possible that, even within the existing system of production – Capitalism - we could *Regulate* what people do so they don't wreck our shared environment. That's the solution our Business-friendly governments place their hopes in. Though they're feeble indeed at doing it. For regulation, we need global agreement and enforcement, or those businesses or national economies that make goods and services cheaply by being careless of the environment will put those who take care out of business. In the European Union we have Health and Safety regulations in every country, so businesses compete by being better, not by being more careless of people's health and lives. Such World-wide ***Regulation*** of industry and transport, enforcing cleaner methods, might rescue our environment. But there's still the problem of ***Growth*** – of us simply doing more and more, environmentally-regulated though it may be.

Growth is Not Good

Growth is not essential. Not if we, were to make an intelligent, *collective* choice about how much we actually need. But the Business Class and their politicians see growth as some sort of absolutely necessary, essential good.

It is forced by the Competition that is a key feature of their system, of their 'Free Markets'. If you are making Goods or providing Services, competing with others, whether as a single company or a 'national economy', Competition forces you to constantly invest in making and selling ever-greater quantities. The economies of scale make your product cheaper to make and sell. If you don't do that, others will, and you will lose business to them and stand a good chance of going out of business altogether.

So even if Business people's production methods are better *Regulated* to reduce environmental damage, there's still competitive pressure for ever-greater *Quantities* of their goods and services to be produced and sold. That's more and more production, transport, and pollution.

Putting Your Money To Work

But there's another powerful mechanism. All of us want our Money, our Savings, our *Capital*, to earn *more* money. Whichever Building Society, Bank or Life Insurance or Pension sum that we have, we all like it to generate Interest or Increased Value. When I retired, I got £30,000, money I'd earned as Wages. And some Life Insurance policies 'matured' - became cashable. I had the financial advisers round, in their loose-cut business suits, offering me ways of 'putting my money to work'. Like anybody else, if one investment promised me 8%, that seemed better than 3%. Who wouldn't want another 5%?

But - I earned the original money from *my* work. That's fine. And I didn't want to lose it – shares can also be a way of losing money. I did lose some, in fact.

And I got thinking about this business (sic) of wanting a return on my Capital. *Do I really want, need or deserve the money that I'd earned from my work, to then make more money*? Most of us say, Yes, of course you do. Well, perhaps. *But it's what drives the Growth that's wrecking the Planet.* Because that extra per cent is made is by investing it in new or more intensive economic activity. More factories, more transport, more consumer goods that we don't need. More cheap airline flights. Cultural activities like football clubs turned into businesses, making and selling shirts on top of actually playing the game.

In the West and Japan, we consume so much more stuff than we did 30 or 40 years ago. But in discussing this, most commentators assume the problem is our greed. But it's not. We don't really go around feeling our lives are lacking unless we have an iPod or a wide-screen Telly or a Mobile phone with photo capability, until some bright sparks use investment capital to invent one, and then they bombard us with Advertising. Of course, when things are invented, produced and Marketed, thrown at us, then we want them. We do have a problem, an insatiable greed for new experiences, new things, more things. *But it's not us driving this frantic Consumerism*. It's the commercial activity of the people who own or look after Capital, looking constantly for new activities, new products, new services, to invest in, to advertise to us, to sell to us, *all done in order to make that percentage return on investment. And that's what forces environment-wrecking Growth*.

In the Capitalist economies we live in, Politicians and Business people speak fervently of the importance of Growth. But is it so important to us all? Why, exactly? Many people in the poor parts of the world, yes, they need drinking water and other basics. But we in 'the West' and many other parts of the globe are in a mad lifestyle where *to Live, you expect to Consume*. It's how a lot of us judge our happiness. Buying things *is* nice – Shopping Therapy, yes? But if it costs us the planet .....? We can choose not to be a Consumerist, surely? We can choose to Live by Being, not by Having. But advertising mesmerises us to go along with it. *And the main reason for it all is so those with spare money – including even us with our savings - can get a return, interest, a percentage*.

Another reason for seeing growth as essential, from the politicians viewpoint, including those with progressive intentions, is to be able to concede us jobs and improved living standards – so-called – without having to take anything away from the rich. Well if it's costing us our habitat to not face up to doing that, what a useless species we are.

Don't Demand That Your Money Should Make Money

For myself, when the financial advisers attempted to seduce me with their percentages, I decided I didn't need to make the sort of % return that means I take part in the relentless Growth that is ruining the planet. I earned the original money from my work, as Wages, so that's OK. I can pass on the % growth in it. Though I wouldn't mind it keeping it's value against inflation. I could just lend it to the government, through National Savings, for them to spend on schools, hospitals. More staff in schools, hospitals and care homes doesn't have to mean growth. It's used for current spending, not for Investment in new, ever-more productive methods, production that means environment-damaging Growth. And I can have it back from them when I want to spend it. They replace it from taxation.

Ethical funds should be less environmentally damaging. But that's just the Regulation method of limiting the damage. Ethical funds still force Growth.

Now I've said it's *your* Savings that causes the problem of Growth. But the amount of Investment Capital that belongs to the ordinary person, how much is that, as a proportion? Most of us get most of our Income through Wages from Work, not from Investment Income.

Pensions, where some of us do have significant amounts invested, shouldn't be based on the unreliability of the Stock Exchange anyway, but should be managed by paying it to the State, with the security of it being still there when needed. And better, should be paid for from Taxation of the current Working Population, re-paying to the earlier working population, now retired, the value of what they left for them, the Schools, Hospitals, Motorways.

How much more is the capital belonging **the Rich**? And the Banks? There's some figures back on page 50. The Rich *'Earn'* most of their money from *Investments*, not from *Wages*. Presented with the idea that they shouldn't look for ***a return on Capital***, they and the Banks would squeal a lot harder than the rest of us. They'd do more than squeal, they'd probably think of organising a coup against any Government that proposed to limit their 'right' to Invest.

Can we persuade them they can't live off Income from Investments? They'd say it's the End of the World as they know it. But that's exactly what their ferocious desire to re-invest and force Growth is doing – wrecking the Planet through ever-increasing economic activity, pollution and use of resources.

Of course, you have to wonder if Capitalism/Capitalists could operate at all, without returns on investment. It's a crucial part of their system. They always say that their Free-market, Capitalist Economics is the only way to run the world, like as if it's a law of Physics. We have to say 'That is plain Nonsense.' We can make Political decisions, Collective, socially responsible decisions, that they can no longer have it that way. Nor can any of us - Putting your Money to Work is ruining the Planet. You've got to stop. Live on your Wages, earned by your own Work, not Unearned Income. With less frenetic increases in the production of unnecessary Goods and Services, there'll be less Work to go round, which is fine, we can share it out and achieve what we once expected to – work less and enjoy a life free of having to work. And by restraining Growth, we'd save the Planet too.

Racism

or

It's Your Own Side That's the Problem

As argued in 'Challenging The System', when you identify with 'your country' and 'the nation'; when you say 'Us' and 'We' meaning 'the British'; or when 'French' people or Americans and many others do likewise, you-as-a-Worker demean yourself by identifying with the rich and powerful. You identify with, feel a bond with, people who are at best careless of your well-being; who are at worst, the people most dangerous to you on the planet. Your biggest enemies. Tebbitt, Thatcher, Bush; the thug attacking you on the street.

You are proud of *simply happening to have been born in the same territory, on a piece of land with a common law-making system (government), as them*. You are buying into an unthought sharing of common identity with others, rich, poor, middle, many of whom will do you in, on the street, at work, and have no concern at all with your health and the kind of treatment you'll get if ill. You identify with them simply because, with there being so many of them, you feel like you're part of something bigger than yourself. And since some of them will be good at whatever they do, you're encouraged to get some self-esteem from what they do - make cars or bikes, run faster over 100 metres than somebody else.

But you've rarely any idea if any of these people are decent people or not. I recall watching Terry Butcher captain the England football team, and later read that he is a Tory. Well, that means he hates me, despises me, and couldn't give a toss about my welfare. Or yours. Tories don't - that's their core belief. Look after themselves, sod you and everybody else. So it's all nonsense, the 'I'm English and proud of it ' stuff.

And then what follows from belief in 'our country' and 'us' is contempt for, or fear and hatred of, foreigners. Outsiders. Immigrants. Black people. Asian people. Asylum seekers. The French, the Germans the Spanish; Italians, East Europeans. They're all up for being demonised by the Business Class, the Daily Mail, the Tories - they come here, and take our jobs and our benefits (at the same time!) And, introducing the issue covered in this section of 'They Are The Business Class' - **They undermine 'our way of life'.**

Or - do they? Do They really?

And aren't their some of 'Our Own' who more of that?

Try this new way of looking at Racism and the issues around 'Foreigners' and Immigrants - Anti-Racist writing and resource material states, quite correctly, lots of good myth-busting stuff about immigrants. Like usually, there's as many or more British people go off to be immigrants themselves in Spain, France, the US, Australia and Canada, as come in. So the overcrowding argument is nonsense.

There's much more of this stuff. But it still means the discussion of racism centres around the 'Outsiders' themselves, and their supposed failings, or, alternatively, what an asset they are, like staffing the NHS for instance.

Being White Doesn't Make Anyone Your Mate

There is another side to this discussion. It's that fact that the **'we'** that the foreigners and immigrants are supposedly threatening, *contains many bastards who are a bigger problem to me and to you than any coloured or uncoloured immigrant.* Your fellow-Brits do many bad things to you but most people don't draw the obvious conclusion – there's bugger all loyalty and duty to each other in being fellow-countrymen.

Here's an opinion-forming example from my life. I once spent two years thoroughly re-building my beloved BSA 650 motor-bike but after only a few months use some bastard stole it from outside the bike show at Belle Vue, Manchester. That really gutted me, and still does. I still get that sick feeling about it, like when John Lennon was shot, things that sicken life for you. Who stole it? Some fellow Brits, surely, bike thieves. That same evening, somebody wrecked my wife's car – bricked the windows, the roof and bonnet – made it a write-off, while parked up a few miles away. That same evening.

Who did these things to us? Probably somebody British, probably white. Who sacked me on the spot from a job on a building site, for nothing? A white, Anglo-Saxon Brit. Not, of course, totally - check anyone's ancestry and they – you – will have a bit of 'foreign' in you.

Gobshites drive around, and park up near my house, with monstrous, monotonous bass booming from their car audio. It goes right into my brain, it dominates my consciousness so much I can't function.

Many white British people do an amazingly disgusting, anti-social thing - they shit in public. On the pavements, on the grass where I play football with my kids. I mean dog owners. Alright, since a lot of complaints by me and others to Councillors, most of them now clean up their droppings. But for years, and still a bit, I'd have their – maybe your – (dog's) shit on my shoes. Then it gets onto my floor. I have to clear the sink and wash my shoes, my floor, the tyres on my kids bikes. From the park, I'd get it on my car carpet, stinking the thing out; on footballs after the kids soccer school I used to help run. And racists have so often said immigrants were dirty! What about your fellow-white dog-owners? How come racists never noticed what a hefty number of their fellow-Whites were doing?

My kids and their mates have been robbed on the street so many times, of their bikes, mobiles, trainers, coats, money; and once, hit over the head with a metal bar. And who are these people? White, 'English thugs, in many cases. Some black and Asian too. There's Bad as well as Good in every Race.

I got a back injury that meant playing my Sunday league football career – thirteen years of it - limping about with sciatic pain in my leg. Who did that to me? The white employers I worked for, who instructed me to do a lifting job that they shouldn't have. Meanwhile, they're swanning about posh Bowdon in their BMW's and Land Rovers', cocky about how they got their wealth by their superior ability and hard work. Bollocks.

More recently, I had to retire from work early from ill-health, after six years of genuine hell, due to people - the Tories and careerist managers - enforcing brutal increase in workloads.

And so on..... I bet you can think of a few abuses of yourself and others, done by fellow-white Brits?

Not all white British people, of course. Obviously. It's definitely a minority. But there's enough of them, bad people, to make a nonsense of the idea of a 'We' made up of people who happen to be born in and occupy a piece of territory, whether that is England, Britain, the UK, the US, Germany, Italy - wherever. That's all 'a Country' is - a piece of land where there's been political struggles over the centuries and some class or groups of people have established control; or there is an established power system for making the rules – a kind of government. Now that is a significant thing, and certainly it means a lot of things apply to all of us together. There might even be some issues on which decent Workers, and the Business Class, and the street-attack thugs, have a common interest, one separate from those people who don't live 'here'. Although I can't think of any right now.

But the big issue is this - that **the Business Class promote the myth of 'your country' yet *at the same time*, insist on the anti-Social philosophy that "You're on your own, it's a dog-eat-dog world, that's human nature."**

Their position is summed up as 'I'm not paying taxes for public services because I'm rich enough not to need them. I don't care about your health, education, job security. I should be able to sack you whenever I please. If you're struggling to survive, don't look to me. Your needs are nothing to do with me.'

This 'couldn't care less about you' stuff shows loyalty to country, belief in 'the country', to be a shallow myth. They actually promote this as a positive thing – Individual Freedom. (But they only do that as far as Wealth is concerned). There should be individual freedom but in the case of wealth, most of what they claim the right to keep is not 'their' money; they made it from Us. (see 'They've Got Plenty of You', the first section of 'Challenging The System).

National identity assumes that rich fellow-Brits are all OK guys. They support the same cricket team as us after all. But them **Immigrants – they are accused of undermining 'our way of life', 'our culture.'**

But How?

Do we have 'a way of life' common to 'us' all, for them to undermine?

We Have No Shared 'Way of Life'

We don't. **There's very little really of a common 'way of life' shared by UK born people.** Let's look at some possible features of 'our way of life'.

Take **Football**. Yes, very popular and a key feature of some people's culture. Mine, certainly. But loads of people aren't interested, if you care to notice. My wife, for one. I recall a bloke I worked with, a welder, who used to say 'I wouldn't watch it if they (Man United) played in my back garden.'

Take **Religion** – 'they' have different religious beliefs to 'us'. What? Few of 'us' 'British' are Christian these days. I'm certainly not. And there are many like me, UK-born, secular, non-religious people. I strongly resent the influence Christians have in this society. The Tories when in Government in the 1980's outrageously enforced acts of Christian worship in schools, when all my kids were going through. That infuriated me. The cheeky, dictatorial bastards. They enforced on me a bit of 'a way of life' that they arrogantly and presumptuously decided I had to share with them. I exercised the right to keep my kids out of the school assemblies with these ridiculous, compulsory, Christian 'acts of

worship'. Acts of worship? I worship no one, and certainly not a fictional being. But it left my kids out on a limb, so I let it go in the end.

A funny thought ..... there might have been more Christians amongst West Indian immigrants than amongst UK-born people?

Most importantly in this argument about 'our way of life' is the question 'How much do you mix with the rich, the 10% who share 50% of the Wealth amongst themselves, leaving 90% of us to share the other 50%?' **How much do you share a culture and way of life with the Rich? Don't they have a different culture**, that doesn't match your way of life? I've always felt a great gulf between them and me. Starting even with local Small Business people and active Tories - you won't find me at the golf club, the rugby club, the cricket club. There are some ordinary Working Class people at some of these social gatherings, there may be some more social mobility than there was. But for sure, I do not share my way of life with the really rich. I'm not at gymkhanas, Ascot, Henley. In expensive hotels. In London's 'gentlemen's' clubs?

The so-called 'We' are greatly separated by Wealth. The wealth gap in the UK is bigger than it's been in a hundred years. The rich, and the better-off, spend more on a meal in a restaurant than someone on benefit, or even someone on Minimum Wage, gets in a week. Or a month. The cars, the designer clothes, the Rolexes, the second homes. They are way beyond our reach. It's a different culture. I've spent a lot of time in North Wales. The yachts, left idle a lot of the time - they cost a lot. I call them Hospital wards. Or classrooms. That's what they could be if we Taxed them and spent it on these useful things, useful to all.

The rich and the smugly 'successful' are such disgusting self-centred people, most of them, that I wouldn't want to share their culture, their way of life, and their company. We are separated by too many serious antagonisms and attitudes and assumptions. You do get decent ones, of course, and I've known some. You can't *pre-judge* individuals by their class. Well-known, you get decent folk like David Gower. And, like Hitler, many of them can be perfectly charming and nice to individual workers, socially, whilst being, in Business activity, selfish brutes.

But by the extremely – extremist? - self-centred world view they have, by the luxurious lifestyles they have, you can say that many of us cannot share a 'way of life' with them. Look at the things their political party does to me and you. Look at and listen to the 'people' at a Tory Conference. **I've encountered the rich in person now and again. I feel like a racist must feel when surrounded by black and Asian people**. (The difference is that I'm judging the rich by what they do, not by the colour of their skin.)

Of course, through history and around the world now, it's the same in other countries. We should include the disgusting rich of India and Brazil in the type of people who do not share a ' way of life' with our kind.

One common remark from the rich in response to these sort of views is to say we are just jealous of their success and wealth. They say it is '**the politics of envy**'. No, it's not *envy*. Not at all. No decent person wants to *be* like them. **It's not envy. It's contempt for such anti-Social attitudes and behaviour.**

Who *really* undermines – even attacks – 'our' 'way of life' ?

Not only do the rich not *share* a culture, a way of life, with the mass of ordinary people; but **they actually *attack* it**, damaging it far more than immigrants may

have. They've attacked *Beer.* And *Pubs.* And *Football*. They are some pretty basic parts of what 'our' culture is claimed to consist of.

It gets worse - *they've even attacked the Bacon Butty*.

Beer – the current state of 'Britain's beer' is a bit confused, as there's been a turn over to lager, and a lot of continental beers. That, too, instigated by the breweries. But certainly back in the 70's they attacked our Beer by producing dreadful keg brews - Watney's Red Barrel was famously dire - that were easier to keep, with less waste; but horrible to drink. It took a big campaign, by the Campaign for Real Ale or CAMRA, to set them back. Have the breweries won, with lager promotion? Not sure. What is sure, though, is that the breweries were amongst Thatcher's Tories biggest backers, and are or were owned by Union Jack waving, British, Business Lass people. *And they adulterated the beer.* Attacking 'our culture'? Guilty as hell. But do racists have a go at them for threatening 'our way of life'? No.

Then they attacked **the Pubs**. How many traditional English pubs have been ripped out and re-opened as soul-less cash-cow chrome and glass horrors?

Take another traditional feature of 'our way of life' - **the Corner Shop.** You'd know the staff, meet your neighbours. Centre of the community. Destroyed by the big-business Supermarkets. A repeat of what happened in factory production in earlier history - the Rich, by investing capital in economies of scale, drove the small producers out of business. That in itself isn't so bad in some ways - economies of scale can be useful, everything available in one place, and the workers in the trade pooled together by capital, not atomised in small businesses, which helps us to get organised in unions. But look who it was who destroyed that pretty significant piece of 'our culture', the Corner Shop - it was British rich people, not immigrants.

And who brought the Corner Shop back? You know who – those immigrants, those Asian and West Indian and other shop keepers!

So the Business Class, mostly White and 'British', have had a go at 'our' beer, the pubs and the corner shop. But worse still – they've ruined our **bacon butty!** Bacon is now so pumped full of water that when you try to grill it, to get it nice and crisp, you're actually boiling it. The bacon butty, for chrissakes! Is nothing sacred?

Football, meaning the game, played by millions, not just the professional sport, is a key feature of British – or rather, Working Class culture. Sunday leagues were the backbone of the game as that was the one day off from work that most people had. It's now quite difficult to get enough people together regularly and reliably, to run the full 11-a-side game. On my local fields, where there's a dozen or two pitches that used to be mostly in use, Sunday morning and afternoon, there's just the odd one or two games going on now, and sometimes none. I don't know the figures, ask the local FA, but it seems to have been decimated. And what caused it? 24/7 working. Started with the dropping of the legal restrictions on Sunday shop-opening, steam-rollered in by Thatcher's Tories. All in the Business interests of the ever-so-British rich.

So there's a much stronger case against the Rich for attacking 'our culture' than the case so often and casually made against ethnic minorities. And you can put on the plus side, for the ethnic minorities, all that good scoff you can get in their restaurants.

Then there are the **attacks on our Communities**. Thatcher's economic policies quite consciously caused the collapse and closure of huge industries. Liverpool lost Tate and Lyle, Dunlop, the docks, and more. The steel industry went. Manufacturing industry in the West and East Midlands, Scotland, Wales, the North East.

Now this massive cycle of closures and run-down of Industry just *might* have been justified, in terms of economics. Probably not, but it might have been. Here, we're dealing with what it did to 'our culture'. Liverpool became a wasteland, and lost about a third of it's population. That is a hundred thousand people who had to leave, leave friends, family, football clubs, pubs, all the social connections that make up a community. That means many young couples have brought their kids up hundreds of miles away from the rest of the family, grandparents and so on; which loses them the support and experience of the family. Many make a poor job of it on their own, so then we get anti-social behaviour from kids raised outside of the security and discipline of communities. And people find themselves isolated in no job or an insecure one; and, without being good at organising a political opposition to this, develop a 'me or me and my family against the world mentality', which means being aggressive, possibly offensive, or robbing your neighbours and anyone you encounter on the street. Street crime – *that* is a major and massive attack on 'Our Culture' and our 'Way of Life'. Caused by the Business Class, not by Immigrants or Outsiders or various Ethnic Minorities.

The **pit closures** of the mid-80's and the early 90's were carried out by rich and powerful white people, that is, the Tories. On behalf of white, British, rich and less-rich business members and voters. They destroyed whole communities, ruined lives, promoted heroin addiction, crime and anti-social behaviour. It's all documented, journalists go to these places and estates and articles appear in the press and on TV.

Back to **Football**. In May 2005, a billionaire with no link to football has bought Manchester United – 'my' team. That doesn't bother me too much, as I realised 30 years ago that the Edwards family, who then owned it, had nothing in common with me, they had all the decision making power, and I had none. It became obvious then that it wasn't a club at all, but a business. And then the Heysel Stadium disaster in 1985, when fighting caused the deaths of 35 fans, focussed my thinking on how fans hate, maim and kill each other over football rivalries. Since then, I've seen it as an empty, somewhat pathetic way of getting off second-hand on somebody else's' achievements on a football pitch. It's just a game anyway.

It has often been seen as **an expression of Working Class community and aspirations**; a defiance of the alienation and powerlessness of being a worker. Well if so, it was always based on avoidance of real struggle, and therefore nothing much to be proud of. And now it's developed into mass hatred of other fans - look at the expressions on the faces of those fans who sing and shout abuse at the opposition fans. It's vile, disgusting. And not workers expressing themselves in a positive way at all, but *turning their aspirations against fellow-workers* from the same city or the city down the road or from another region. It's the same in Spain, Italy, wherever, as in the UK, of course.

But now, even that escape from real struggle about real issues, into football passions, is played out. Because *the business class capitalists you are running from at work have caught up with you* and are taking that club, that you thought meant something more than just commercial relationships, into just that. There's what Abramovitch has done at Chelsea, where you've got

workers getting off on the achievements of money ripped off from Russian oil workers.

Add it to the list of things the rich do, that destroy 'our culture'. Not Asians, not black people, not East European immigrants, not asylum seekers. The Rich. The game on the pitch is still great. But the Fan's affiliations and passion are based on nothing.

How the Rich Get Away with Ruining Our Culture

People with racist views have been blinded by the vision of Britishness they are given to believe in, and attack 'Outsiders'. Because of 'Britishness', they don't see the Rich and all that they do, and refuse to do. By definition, nationalism groups rich people, the Business Class, Workers and Unemployed Workers, all together. The basic view, 'us', we 'British', has us and the Business Class on the same side, against various kinds of 'Outsiders'. Often not consciously so - a lot of racist arguments are really made by working class people arguing for Working Class demands. Like jobs.

But racists don't make those demands on the Business Class, they make them by picking on the outsider. So for example on that big issue of **Jobs**, racist workers take a nationalist view against 'them' coming here and taking 'our' jobs. But it's stupid to talk nationalistically of 'our jobs.' When a racist says this, he's claiming a right for native-born people to have jobs.

But the (white) Business Class fiercely oppose the idea of their Working Class fellow-Brits being entitled to jobs. We've not established such a right.

The Business Class believes Working Class Brits should only get jobs when they can make enough money out of us, often only if we'll work in crap conditions for crap wages. *Workers who are racist and talk of 'our jobs' should be told that the only way you'll get the Business Class to agree to anyone having the 'Right to Work' is by a united Working Class forcing it on them.*

*It has no sense as a **nationalist** demand. It's a **class** demand.*

Encouraged by the Business Class 'newspapers', racist workers notice foreign workers who 'come here and take our jobs.' But they don't notice, or make anything like as much protest and express as much anger and hatred, at ***their fellow-white Business Class Brits, exporting their jobs.*** The very same people who preach Britishness at them in the Red Top papers. Any of us could name a few factories recently closed, and call-centres now, where British business people have moved their operation to a poor Asian or South American country. They make more money there. Do they then bring it back and spend it to the benefit of their loyal racist poor Working Class Brits? Can't say I've noticed.

This is all very unpatriotic of the Business Class and very disloyal to their 'fellow-Brits.' The very first thing Thatcher did when getting into government in 1979 was to remove the restriction on export of capital. That was so *her and her class* could invest their money where they could make the most profit; not where it would most benefit their fellow-countrymen and women. They get away with this without receiving any of the attention and hatred that powerless immigrant workers receive.

When you hear workers blaming the outsider, ask them if they're not being very lazy to base their political thinking on identity and colour. It's plain stupid to see outsiders and immigrants as a major problem and to put the issue at the

forefront of politics. If there are problems about these issues, they're small problems compared to the big political issues - jobs, the economy, how to run the health service, how to tax people and raise public money for services, how to get decent pensions, what to do about transport, education, climate change, energy, the wealth gap. It takes some real thought and some decision making to deal with each of these issue – ever tried really looking into Pensions? Racists have little or nothing to say on these real issues, as it's much easier to just blame an outsider for everything. But that's lazy and stupid when there's so much to be done about these big issues. Beside them, making a big issue of people's colour and basing your politics on it is just ridiculous.

And it's cowardly, because to tackle those other issues and leave race out of it, they'd have to have some guts and take on the rich Business Class. They're a mean and ruthless bunch, Thatcher and her class, people like Bush. So you can understand people being scared of taking them on. Everyone recalls the defeat suffered by the Miners, and many draw the lesson that you can't beat the Business Class. But if people are going to be defeatist, scared of the rich, they should just leave it there and not turn on those poor ordinary folk who are a different colour or whose family haven't been here for quite the same number of generations as theirs.

And when getting agitated about 'them' coming 'here' they should think also of 'us' going 'there' - millions of British-born people move to Spain, the Algarve, France, and before that Australia and Canada. Everyone knows someone who's done that – don't you?

Racists should drop the hatred they have for coloured and black people and make their demands on the Business Class. We might have to put up with these people, make deals with them, make political and economic settlements with them. But let's be clear what a disgusting, greedy, harmful bunch they are, as a class (though not all individually), and tell them that whenever we get the opportunity. Many of us trade union activists have told many a boss that they are ruthless brutes. That by itself doesn't stop them, they're a thick-skinned self-obsessed lot. But at least it directs the bile where it belongs. We should do that far more widely.

To conclude - it's not about British versus Outsiders –

whether they be German, French, or Pakistani.

It's about Goodies v. Baddies. Decent people versus Bastards.

Alright, allowing for some shades in between.

Say it again , Muhammad Ali -

It ain't where you're from (that matters.)

It's where you're at.

Judge People – everyone – not by 'Where They're From' –

including those in the same Ethnic or National grouping as you.

Judge them by Where They're At. And by What They Do.

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Anti-Social Behaviour

or

Some Organise.
Some Go Under.
Some Turn Nasty.

On the morning I started to write this there was a programme on the telly about Young Offenders - YO's. It was from a Young Offenders Institute, looking at how to civilise young men and women who've turned bad on the rest of us. The TV presenter was Andrew Neil, who was a Thatcherite thug during the 80's. Yes, you caused them, mate. You look at how to fix them.

The media is full of the issue of Anti-Social Behaviour and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders or ASBO's. Following his re-election in 2004 Blair said that restoring respect on the streets was a priority. A shopping precinct banning hoodies was widely commented on. Some talked about 'feral' kids, as if they've **all** gone wild, condemning all young people. Many 'liberals' then condemned the ban on hoodies as an authoritarian over-reaction, a demonising of all youth. Both sides were careless of the reality - that the mass of decent young people are the people most attacked by the feral minority. Young people are the victims. Some minimise the problem by recalling that there's always been youth problems - teddy-boys, mods, rockers, skinheads, punks. So what - a problem is a problem, even if it's occurred before. Not that some of the earlier rebellions were about the same things as YO's now.

We've all got our experience of ASB, and views of the causes. I'm going to relate some of my experiences, look at some of the popular explanations, and give mine. I'll state my view of what makes the thugs. And that leads to what we do about them. I'll be concluding that the cause is a rebellious, anti-social and often brutal response by many poor Working Class people and their kids to the lack of respect shown to them by the Rich. A brutalised response to the brutality of Tory-inspired society. To insecure and unsatisfying work, intermittent low incomes, lack of social standing and status, and powerlessness within the accepted, legal activities of society.

The response of most poorer, low-skilled, mainly manual workers to the insecurities forced on them by the Business Class is to be **'hard'** in one way or another. Just staying chirpy, cheerful, undefeated is enough for many of us. You have to show you're still on your feet. And many fight back against the rich. But many don't – instead, they just become self-centredly hard, individualist and aggressive to the people around them. Little Tories, basically. From the 'hard' culture some are so de-socialised they get self-respect and status by being hard, vicious even, to the people nearest to them - their neighbours, or strangers on the street. They often, maybe usually, attack people who've done no harm to them. They'll usually be Working Class too. **They are attacking their own. I**t's a problem within the Working Class.

Street Crime Can Really Mess Up Your Life

Yobs, street robbery, and thugs weren't much of an issue for me and then suddenly became the biggest threat in our lives when my oldest lad started at secondary school. You might be more street-hardened than me, but when two thugs (not from his school) robbed him of his dinner money on the way to

school, I was furious. The amount of money wasn't really the issue, but the sheer intrusion of it, the insult, that people could impose themselves that much on you. It's humiliating. It was demeaning. It made my kid a helpless victim and me powerless. You can get over an isolated example but worse was the daily fear of something like it happening again. And it did, maybe fifteen times over a dozen years. It became pretty much a regular thing, and so, so stressful. For me more than them, actually. As a parent, it puts you on the spot – how do you protect your kids, if you're not a violent person and you can't go everywhere with them as a protector?

Fortunately, my kids have been OK. Street robbery has been so rife that it became clear me and my kids are not just isolated, helpless victims. It happened to all their mates too. So because it happened to loads of them, my kids had support, just in the telling of what'd happened, and listening to their mates when it happened to them. And then, after years of this sort of crap, the media and the government finally cottoned on to it with even cabinet ministers and senior judges being robbed on their own doorsteps and it became a recognised problem, at last.

But all the same, it really affects your life. Even knowing how they're created by social conditions, even having seen them develop from harmless toddlers into damaged victims of Toryism, you can still hate and despise the thugs. They're the most offensive people around. I mean, the rich are actually much worse, with their smug greed and selfishness, the way they corner all the wealth and beat down on the poor so some of them turn out like this. I hate the rich's presumption about their own worth and power, their brutality in pursuit of their interests - starting bloody wars, attacking us at work, attacking our ability to organise in our unions against them.

But they are able to do all this without attacking me and you as a person on the street. The laws of free-market employment mean they rob and bully us in what appears to be a civilised way. Managers make us redundant, sack us, bully us, and we oppose them, but it all happens in a fairly civilised negotiation, without the personal physical threat you get with street crime. Yet it's just as brutal in it's effects, more so really - losing your job is worse than having your mobile phone robbed. So **while hating young thugs and wanting something done about them, let's not forget the real culprits, the Business Class.**

And there's plenty of yobbish behaviour and thuggery amongst the better-off Working Class and the Business Class - parking their bloody car in dangerous places, on pavements, on double yellow lines where the turn a two-lane road into a single one. Aggression in crowded places like car parks. There's other examples of thuggery by the 'respectable' classes. Imperialist wars, for one serious example.

But scallies, yobs, thugs - they attack and rob you and yours in the street, something that really imposes on you and your self-respect, really challenges you. With three lads going through their teens, we've had that much of it I've feared for their safety every night, every time they've gone out. And rightly so. Several times, I've said, well, there's been nothing for six months, I worry too much; and then, another attack. One of those times I said that, that same night my youngest kid was punched in the teeth and robbed of his mobile at two in the morning by two crack-heads.

The whole scene is so damaging to your life - your kid arriving breathless at the front door, going out to confront the three thugs (Asian on this occasion) who've chased him half a-mile across our district, dashing across main roads

and risking being run down; the weak knees and adrenaline tightness in your voice as you confront them, hurling abuse at them; the cocky, socio-pathic, curiously plausible self-justifying responses. They clear off, then the breathless, shaken wait for the cops to arrive. Then hours with the police, giving details, making statements.

The first real robbery, my son's bike was robbed off him a hundred yards from the house. A very hot August afternoon in 1995. I was dirty and sweaty, in a grubby old T-shirt, dirty old cut-off shorts, no socks, and old sandals, working on my motor bike in the shed. "Dad, Dad, some townies robbed mah bike down the road!" The red-mist chase, diving into the car and screaming it dangerously around the block, looking for the thugs. Black YO's, these. Cornered one, but left him to chase the one with the bike, but lost him, and the other one. Then hours and hours down at the police station with the copper, giving statements, very wound up, dry-mouthed, sweaty, my hands still grubby, and still dressed in the dirty old shorts and T-shirt.

Another - being phoned from the city centre police station where they had another of my sons, aged twelve. Him and his mates had been robbed of their trainers, money, mobiles. White YO's, this time. They come in all colours. Sometimes it seems there's a lot of it amongst black kids and racists play this up. That argument has fallen because there's obviously huge numbers of white yobs and thugs. We've had it from white kids. You don't have to spend much time around Working Class areas and estates to find plenty there. Salford and Wythenshawe can feel more threatening than Moss Side. But maybe that's just because I've spent more time there and feel less of an outsider. But, race doesn't come into this. YO's and thugs come in all colours.

My eldest son arrived back home many times, often late at night or in the early hours, breathless from running back home being pursued by thugs who've stopped him and tried to rob. He was robbed several times; another son was robbed of cash and coats on the top deck of the bus, with other friends one of whom was punched in the face.

One son was stopped several times for fags and money by a local teenage thug who eventually walked up behind him and hit him over the head with a metal bar. Not badly injured, thankfully. He rang us and I went over to collect him. On the way back, he saw the thug and another one coming in our direction on bikes, but not noticing us. I let them get close then ran and jumped right on top of him, bike and all, and clattered him to the ground wrapped up in the bike. We scuffled a bit, I screamed at him for attacking my lad; he gave that amazing sociopath response that they have, aggrieved innocence, as if *I'm* the one out of order. I let them go but immediately called the cops. They knew him and eventually put him away for other things.

You feel outraged, you'd like to kill them. People do say just that - 'Couldn't you just kill them?' But you couldn't. You couldn't do that, it's not in you. You could 'take them up a back alley.' If you could identify and catch them, which in most cases you've no chance of doing. And anyway most of us aren't up to doing *that*. And you'd need friends who'd help you to do it. Amongst your friends, have you got any who'd do that for you? Do a bit of vigilante work? I and two other parents did once track down some thugs who'd held our kids up with an airgun in the bushes in the park. We photographed them and gave them a good talking to, and made them hand in the air-gun at the police station. It seemed to have an effect. They said they'd thought it was just a laugh, not serious. But the effect on our kids had been to make them, and me,

fearful of them playing in the park. That's a hell of a thing to do to a kid, take the park away from them of a summer evening.

You could take some of them on - some of them aren't so hard - they usually attack smaller kids, and being confronted by adults can work. But many are very nasty pieces of work. To deal with them yourself, you could be getting into prolonged gang warfare. These socio-paths are often up to that. Might attack you, your house, your car. At night, anonymously. Do you want to get into that? A teacher not far from here got imprisoned for firing an airgun at the ground in a confrontation with thugs outside her house who'd attacked her and her sons over a period of years. And I read today, she's been sacked for it too. Wonderful, eh?

So, if most of us are not up to vigilante work and gang warfare, **what do we do? You call out the cops**. But they're not on sharp enough stand-by to be able to do anything useful. It's all over by the time they get here. So you just add to the inconvenience of the actual attack hours and hours at the police station giving statements, when they and you know there's not a lot of chance of them catching them. Although it can be useful, as the thugs are usually attacking other people so the cops can build up a pattern and identify many of them. Then they could just sit on them, tail them all day, like they do for 'drugs'. But they don't bother doing that for street attacks on us do they? They waste two thirds of their time attacking people for the victimless crime of putting substances inside themselves at no direct harm to anyone else. And far less on attacks actually carried out on innocent people.

Usually after a robbery the best thing to do, the only sensible thing to do, is to wind down with thoughts like "The cost in property lost isn't worth that much anger and rage. I'd pay higher taxes to provide youth facilities to stop them being like this, so it works out the same as if I'd done that; the usual amount lost in mobile phone/cash/bike isn't worth the hours spent in the police station or with the cops coming round for hours getting statements."

But it's not always so simple – with my lads bike, claiming insurance didn't solve it. It's not just the value, it's the work done on it. He was right into mountain-biking, had added various special bits, we'd spent hours adjusting the gears just right. If we get another bike, what's the point improving it if it's gonna get robbed again? So the pleasure of mountain-biking as a hobby was taken away. He didn't bother after that.

The whole thing, about a dozen attacks on my kids, the chases, the confrontations, the breathless reporting to the cops - it had me wound up for ten years. **It's not on.** You'll never get rid of all thugs, but you should generally be able to walk the streets in safety otherwise what kind of society (or country) is it? You can adjust to it to a degree, and have to, but I don't like doing that. I'm not accepting it.

What Causes It?

So what's it all about? You get the argument 'there's no excuse' for thuggery. Tony Blair said it recently, admitting that there are social causes like lack of facilities but still saying "There's no excuse". That's fine, *I and you* can agree with that. But we're talking from within a civilised set of values and applying them to people who don't share them. To a degree they *might* have some decency, they are reachable. But as it stands it looks like their values are purely selfish and socio-pathic. So saying 'there's no excuse' is useless. It's appealing to values they haven't got. They think there ***is*** an excuse. So they'll carry on

being thugs until you enable them to fulfil their needs and to express their drive for significance in a civilised way. If you don't, they'll carry on acting outside and against civilised values regardless of anyone thinking there's no excuse.

All you can do then is hope to repress them with loads of police patrols and lots of heavy sentencing. But people who say 'Lock them all up' are just not thinking. There's no point placing your faith in locking them up *because you simply can't catch them all*. And those you *do* catch and punish, it's only *after* they've already damaged people's lives.

There's things that create these people and to try to just rely on repressing them, while worth doing, is laughably inadequate. It's plain daft to struggle to catch and punish a few when there's a production line producing more and more of them. You do have to tackle the causes of crime, with a belief that people aren't inevitably bad.

Causes of Anti-Social Behaviour

This is how I see the general picture. When people are poor, unsuccessful and unable to succeed in the accepted, lawful ways of getting by and getting on, there's three main responses.

One, the civilised way, is **to organise**. Recognising that their problem is caused by the way their society works, many of us get political in tenants and community organisations, in religious bodies, in unions at work, in socialist parties. The trouble with this is that the Business Class and their representatives the Tories and Republicans make it difficult. They attack our ability to organise, particularly attacking our rights to organise and act together at work. And they bombard us with individualist messages and pressures, which we too readily go along with. We're slumped in front of the telly, passively being 'entertained.' We're busy doing up our houses or cars. So we haven't the social links to organise as we should, as much as we should.

Another response is **to collapse** into depression, substance abuse - which is not the same thing as substance use - social isolation and homelessness, and suicide.

The third response is to turn hard and nasty. I'm going to look at some of the explanations other people have for the nastiness. **I'm dismissing** straightaway those ludicrous, unexplained statements you get from some people such as **'they're just evil.'** What is evil anyway? It sounds like they think evil Is a *thing*, that exists of itself and can be caught, and these kids have 'got it'. Nonsense. Or, similarly, some talk of a criminal gene. There are proponents of these analyses, usually American, and there's whole courses, qualifications and careers built on the notion of 'the criminal mind'.

But street criminals behaviour is easily understood. It's just them putting their needs first in defiance of others interests. It's just what animals do. They do what they need to do to survive - you can't just say 'it's evil'. A lion mother killing a zebra to feed her cubs isn't evil. The zebra might think she is. We've got some country-cousin relatives who say foxes are evil because they eat chickens. Well, well, how selfish of them - we want to eat them instead. At least the foxes don't raise chickens in the hell-holes that are battery farms. **Vicious behaviour is usually quite understandable, from the viewpoint of the individual**.

We quite rightly discuss it from an assumption of civilisation, that we'd prefer behaviour that took care of the needs of others. But if we're to get people to behave we'll not make much progress if we don't see where the thuggish behaviour is coming from. Instead of calling it evil, the proper term is 'pathological'. In their terms, street criminals, Young Offenders, thugs, are looking out for themselves and believe that's the way the world works. The very thug who attacked my lad with a metal bar was overheard on the bus once, swapping life philosophies with a mate of his, coming out with the old, old, unorganised worker give-in-to-the-Tories view of life - "you just gotta look out for yourself, man, that's all everybody else does. It's look after number 1."

Their thuggery is rational and can be understood. For them it fits with their view of society and their place in it. It fulfils their needs, probably inadequately, but as well as they can manage. They are not evil or mindless. What they are is very nasty socio-paths - selfish individuals, looking out only for themselves, and quite careless of others. They justify their attacks by seeing it as normal, the way the world is. They often claim to be threatened and robbed themselves by other thugs, and it's probably true.

Just to be clear, what I'm talking about here is the youth stuff, because that's where most of the street attacks come from. When they're older they tend to get into more sophisticated crime. Or if there's enough jobs around, they get into work, which is better. The street stuff is mostly teenage lads attacking other teenage lads, usually younger ones. Though if there's enough of them, they'll often attack one or two older youths. There's some sort of honour code or pride where they don't attack girls, not for property crime anyway. But they don't seem to be ashamed of mostly attacking lads younger than themselves. Of course it's not all lads, some girls are thuggish too. And although my experience is of the attacks on teenage lads, there's plenty of robberies of frail old people too. It doesn't affect my argument about the causes.

They want respect, recognition, status, social significance. There's other causes, that I'm going to look at. But the demand for respect and status and recognition has been clearly, centrally important to oppressed black guys for a long time. It's the common form of acclamation - "Respect, man." It's clearly what the white and Asian and whatever colour thugs are after too. With a lot of street attacks, it's not the actual stuff robbed, really. Maybe to a degree it is, and to get money for substances. But a lot of robbing is done to show how big they are. **They want respect, and a reputation. Using violence and having power over others is very, very powerful stuff**. Like pulling wings off flies, as kids sometimes do. Doing it to people is a very big thing to do. To rob with violence, impose yourself on others, control them, physically, make people afraid - it's well outside the rules of society. To do that daily, repeatedly, and let your peers know that you do, do it in front of your peers, your mates – that's impressive stuff.

Some other causes – there's **teenage rebellion**. Young lads are growing up from being children to being independent adults. We all know there's a process of breaking free of parental and school authority in this. Now think on this - although part of the problem is not enough parental influence towards decent behaviour, also part of the problem is *too much* parental influence.

Many parents over-do the authoritarian role, sometimes brutally. So do schools. You know, the common attitude that parents and schools take, that they are mini-Gods in relation to their kids. Control freaks. A friend tells me, if she tried to discuss something with her mother, she'd get "Don't contradict." Or "Don't talk back." If you asked 'Why do I have to do this?' you'd get

"Because I said so." Or just "Because." This unreasonable, dictatorial parenting goes over the top, beyond what's needed to guide them and stop them harming themselves and others. It creates a level of rebellion in teenage kids against the whole parent/adult/authority system and **along with it all social values and behaviour**. Their rebellion against authoritarian parenting takes the form of dropping all decent values, by deliberate flouting of all the rules. Just a little example this, but I've seen it a few times and it shows something - I've been walking along behind a group of teenagers, and one will quite deliberately place their empty Coke can on the garden wall they're going past. A clear statement to their mates of what a rebel they are, not being so 'goodie' as to carry the thing to a bin and put it in. Wow. Big man.

But there should be **no need for rebellion that drops all social responsibilities.** It is caused by **parents over-doing their role**. It's so common that it even leads to the idea that kids *have* to rebel. One of our grown-up kids has gone a similar leftie radical route as us. A friend of ours joked "What's wrong with him, he should be rebelling!" The old one, the idea that kids with radical parents have to rebel by being conservative. My response? "If they have to rebel against you, you've been crap parents." If they need to rebel, there's plenty of better things to rebel against. The idea that parents should be one of them just shows up some awful attitudes to parenting. You've been exercising unexplained, unreasonable authority. We've always treated our kids like people, never imposing things just "Because I said so". Always explained.

There's no need, and no right, for parents to adopt as much of an authority role as they do. In the UK, you get stories in the news about schools or doctors giving under-age young women contraceptive advice or abortions, and the parent often makes a vehemently-argued case to be able to assert their 'rights' over their child. In UK law, they don't have any. There are no parental rights - just responsibilities. And that's right.

I'm arguing that the main cause of yobbishness and thuggery is poorer Working Class people reacting against not having enough respect, enough standing, enough money and the confidence and power that comes with it. A lot of yobs are young Working Class kids and teenage rebellion is for sure a big part of why they do it. But **we can't explain their anti-social behaviour <u>just</u> by teenage rebellion**. Teenagers of all classes rebel against parental control as parents of all classes provoke it. But kids from better-off Working Class families and from the Business class don't go bullying, threatening, robbing and assaulting people on the streets.

Teenage rebellion is fine in many respects. It's just growing up independently, deciding on their own tastes, music, activities. No problem. But amongst poorer Working Class kids it combines with the 'hard' attitude of so many Working Class people and the rebellion is indiscriminate. They reject all social rules and become right bloody thugs and bastards.

Kids also rebel against **school**. And again, in rebelling some reject along with it all decent social values and responsibilities. They rebel against school because they see it as an authoritarian, repressive institution. I certainly did. Yet school should be there for the benefit of the kid. It seems many kids don't get that. Why not? One reason is that compulsory state education is not clearly explained to them as being for that purpose. You start at five, it's somewhere you have to go. Because **'they'** say so. It's the law. Despite the honourable and successful efforts of so many teachers who spend their entire working lives educating the kids for the kids own sake, to many kids school is an oppressive

institution to be rejected and rebelled against. And there's a strong sense in which they're quite right. It's not there for them.

If you look at education, in the UK anyway, it's obvious some of the main reasons for it political and economic, to benefit the Business Class, not the kids. Compulsory state education in the UK was brought in after Working Class struggle won the vote (for men) in 1882. The rich then said to each other, they are the masters now. We must educate 'our masters' to think and behave the way we want them to. So 'education' on the supposed greatness of Britain and it's Empire, on its Monarchy and the flummery around it, Empire days at school, were central to the education that was delivered - compulsorily. Later educational developments were made after the British Business Class discovered that the kids they sent to die for them in their wars weren't educated well enough to kill their fellow-workers with enough efficiency.

Working Class pressure for better education so our kids could 'get on' was also a reason for improvements in education, and I'm a post-Second World War product of it. But the last twenty years in UK education demonstrates my point. **All the changes** - National Curriculum, SATS, privatisation, **have been done for 'the British economy'**. To enable 'us' to compete effectively with 'our' competitor nations, in Blair-speak. Not done for the kids themselves, not to give them whatever they need to develop as a person who can get satisfaction out of life without having to impose themselves on others. Sure, a decent education to be able to get a decent job, and to help our society work better, is no bad thing. But look at what's done, why it's done, and how it's done and you'll see it's done for the Business Class's economy, not the kid.

You could argue, and I'm sure Blair's air-head advisers would, that what's good for the economy is good for the kid in the long run. So make that case to the kids then. Convince the kids who disrupt other kid's lessons, and the kids who go and hang about the streets and precincts instead of being at school. Or even – shocking thought – negotiate their schooling with them and their parents. Even if it was better presented to kids as being for their own good, which is how I've presented it to my kids, and not something to rebel against - it's also a very oppressive, authoritarian set up. The simple matter of compulsory attendance is enough. Then there's these awful schools where they insist on neckties being done in a certain way, blazers being worn on sweltering hot days. What's that the Tories often accuse the Left of - Social Engineering? **Small wonder large numbers of teenagers rebel against school and express their rebellion by rejecting all social values and socially-responsible behaviour.**

You can see why they take an antagonistic attitude to teachers and school. But they are also aggressive to other teenage kids. It's usually called '**bullying,**' but it's far more than that. What's done to other kids are heavy criminal offences – 'threatening behaviour' or 'robbery with violence.' One explanation for this is the child-development analysis that says infants are naturally selfish and lacking awareness of others needs, that they are to be gradually educated out of it and learn to work co-operatively. Some don't get civilised at primary school and carry on into teenage years at best as selfish people, at worst as thugs.

Probably a bigger reason for bullying is, in the teenage years, the whopping great need to **impress others.** To become an assured lad, be attractive to girls and girls to boys. This is a short paragraph but really it's a very big point – teenage Working Class lads, no longer kids, want to be cocky, to be somebody. And no reason why they shouldn't – it's pretty much what growing up is

about, becoming respected for yourself as an independent, substantive, significant person, an adult. I see teenage lads walking about obviously conscious of the impression they're making, and obviously **keen to be respected** for their strength, independence, their power even, and I feel sympathetic to them in that.

And they want excitement. It's very exciting to defy the power structures, the police, the teachers, the parents, and to defy the rules of decent social behaviour. **For kids who can't do it any other way, they impress and get excitement by being bad,** using physical power over other teenagers.

These kids are influenced by **gangsters**. Most of us might defy the law occasionally and feel like the law *must* find us out. Rebellious, anti-social lads and young men respect G's for how they defy the law, as a matter of course, day in and day out, and systematically use violence. Young lads respect their physical power. Respect for gangster's daring outlaw behaviour chimes with youth rebellion against parents, school and adults. Even when socially responsible people like ourselves talk of 'knowing' gangsters, or of meeting people who 'know' certain gangs we do it with a kind of respect, a bit of awe. It's a bit like celebrity worship. We're impressed by their sheer bravado, how they quite steadily and openly live outside and against the law. Young people who are developing a taste for rebellion against authority are definitely influenced by these people and what they do. You hear kids name-dropping, claiming to be associated with one or other of the gangs, or claiming to be able to get the such and such a gang onto you if you cross them. Kids on the street often tell tales about gangsters, what bad things one of the gangs has done, who 'knows' who.

And the cause of this, what gives gangsters their opportunity, is the utterly stupid **drug laws.** That presumptuous intrusion by some very cheeky people into our freedom to consume substances into our own bodies. By prohibiting people's individual rights, they hand over to the gangs a way of making a living illegally from something they couldn't monopolise if it was legal. The supply of substances is in the hands of some very heavy criminals. Because (obviously) they operate quite outside the law, and partly because they have to be, they become very nasty people. That encourages emulation by sections of wannabe assertive kids who can't make it in the GCSE/University /respectable job stakes.

Then there are **users of addictive substances**, like heroin and crack, who have to rob to be able to buy their gear, which if it wasn't illegal, would be very cheap. A lot of street crime and car theft and burglary – two thirds? - isn't just from yobbishness, it's done to get money for substances that are only expensive because of Prohibition. Prohibition (of booze) didn't work in the US in the 20's and 30's. It just gave the Mob a start in life. And that's what it is doing here.

More factors in thuggery - there's evidence that kids **who miss out in very early years**, pre-school even, never get involved in their own education and so stay uninvolved and reject it from then on. The UK 'New Labour' Government as I write in 2005, is spending on pre-school for that reason. In jargon-speak, it's called 'Early Intervention.' There is almost certainly something in this, and it can't be a bad idea anyway. But I think there's more to it.

Broken homes are another explanation for all the yobbishness, street robbery, threatening behaviour and the rest. You do see evidence repeatedly that the great majority of convicted YO's are from homes where the parents have had a

lot of severe problems, often involving separation, or even abandonment of the kids. Some YO's have had childhood experiences that make you wince. Maybe it's worse for many poorer Working Class kids, but **plenty of 'Middle Class' kids**, (children of the better off Working Class) are **also from broken homes, yet don't behave thuggishly on the streets.**

The 'Middle Class' and Business Class can certainly be thuggish, but not on the streets – they do it in business and politically. Like Thatcher, her friend Pinochet (Chilean dictator), and Bush, are thugs. But 'Middle Class' or 'better off Working Class' kids, even from broken homes, don't usually do spontaneous attacks on the person in the street. Although thuggishness sometimes spreads beyond kids that you could understand it from, to some of even these kids.

'The Parents' are often blamed for kids turning out to be thugs. You also have to allow for kids being affected by their 'peer group' – the friends they grow up with - from early on. But there's a lot in the parenting. Any of us can point to kids from families who seem to have it as bad as any but manage to bring their kids up decent when others don't. Many parents with plenty of pressure on them know how to bring their kids up decent. And that's used by the right, the Business Class, to attack the argument that it's deprivation that causes it. But just because humanity shines through even in desperate circumstances, doesn't answer the charge that **if you treat people brutally, some will be brutalised**.

Some parents are organised, have the politics, and maintain civilised values. *Some crack under the pressure*, have their own problems, and neglect their kids. Working long and unsocial hours hinders them from forming loving relationships with their kids. Kid will behave decently outside the home if it pleases mums and dads they've got a warm supportive relationship with. If, because their parents are absent like being at work after school, they've not, then just being asked or told to won't work. *Some parents turn nasty* and raise nasty kids. That's a big flaw in the argument 'it's the parent's fault' - it assumes the parents are themselves civilised when often they're not, and you have to look at why they're not. And my argument is that it's usually people drawing the conclusion Thatcher and the Tories wanted them to draw – that you're on your own. That **you'd better be tough because nobody cares.**

I see a lot of **ruinous parenting** on the streets. The kind where some poor-looking mum screams at a toddler for acting like a toddler. Something like wanting sweets deliberately and luridly displayed at toddler-eye level on the shop shelves. The parent screams at her toddler as if it's outrageous and 'naughty' of them. But look, love, what do the hell do you expect of a kid? I'm not saying you get them the sweets. Just accept they're not out of order to want them. Talk to them reasonably, firmly if you want, but fairly. Treat their needs as you would an adult - they are totally understandable, from the kids point of you. If not from yours, then deal with that, but not by screaming 'you little bastard' and not with threats or actual violence, for expressing minor childhood wants. There's a lot of evidence that such brutal treatment is learned by those kids - why wouldn't it be? - so they grow up treating other people like that.

But it's not just poor scally mums and dads who treat their kids like bloody nuisances. **Almost all parents, even the most loving and caring, treat and talk of kids as a problem**. Parents love to moan to each other about kid's and their terrible ways. Even caring, educated, knowledgeable parents join in all-parent whinge-fests to condemn kids. Maybe it's because it elevates them above kids, just like men at the bottom of the heap have often subjugated women, to be

able to not be at the bottom themselves. And like the most brutal people in prison, who've done terrible crimes, feel better by denouncing 'nonces' - Sex offenders, paedophiles, rapists. I suppose. Having a moan to another adult makes them feel better - it's a way of off-loading the strain of being a parent for a minute.

But **you could just as easily moan about what many adults do as about what kids do** - noise, parking on pavements, blocking half the road when they park on double yellow lines where they get in the way; dog-shit. But they're not so identifiable as an outsider group as kids are. Take the longstanding debate about whether smacking naughty kids is right. Well, sure - you might need to smack kids sometimes. But you never hear the people who most want to smack kids offering to smack those adults in the street who are just as much in need of a smacking. Aah, because they're not smaller than you, are they?

You know the way parents talk about kids - bloody nuisances, beyond understanding, to be despaired of, sighed about, can't wait to get rid of them, get them out of the house. I've had this even from two of the most loving, educated parents you could get; not just educated, but educators, both lecturers, one a head of department. In a conversation about our respective kids, to me, **'bet you can't wait until they move out.' Well, no.** Our kids are our mates. If they move out because of the way their life develops, well, good, if it's good for them. But we'd miss them. If not, they're welcome to stay here as long as they want. If they've got nothing, they'll always get roof, room, food, telly, from us. And maybe a fiver a week, if we can manage it. They'll always be welcome. **They didn't ask to be born. We brought them into the world**. They are our responsibility. And a pleasure. Sure, we encourage them to pay their way, and they do and will. But even an educated, caring parent assumed we'd be glad to get them out of the house.

The other parent said this once - 'Kids, you can't know what's going on in their heads, they've got their funny secrets'. This sort of thing is said as if kids are a different species, not open to understanding. What nonsense. **We've all been kids ourselves, it's not a condition we've no experience of**. They are humans, just like us. They're little ones, that's all. Their needs and behaviour are perfectly understandable. You might not know quite what their thoughts or problems are at any point, but I guarantee if you did know, they wouldn't be difficult to understand, if you know anything about life, being a person. Their needs may be unwelcome at times, but should always be understandable if you're prepared to see it from the kids point of view. That's not to say you give in to everything they want. But at least allow the kid a right to a view, a preference. You brought them into the world, you have to take responsibility for doing what it takes to help a person develop, without treating them like an unwanted alien.

Of course, having a kid isn't always a positive decision, it often happens unwanted. But even then, that kid isn't to blame for being here and needing help and support in growing up, and needing not to be treated as a bloody nuisance by adults. You hear people talking about 'having a baby'. As if that's it, you 'have a baby'. What about after that then? What you actually have, is sixteen or more years in which you've got to 'grow a person'. To help a person to grow. That's a hell of a project. People should be more prepared to see it as the major job of work it is, not blame their kids for being – kids! - and see it through. Or choose not to do it in the first place.

I've been looking there at **some <u>contributing</u> causes of ASB**. Now I'm taking a thorough look at **the <u>underlying</u> cause**. Basically - **poor Working Class people**

refuse to be nobodies. They refuse to tolerate being at the bottom of the heap. But they take it out on their own kind instead of the rich.

All through Industrialisation, since the 1800's onwards, a common attitude amongst Working Class people has been to be '**tough**' or '**ard.' (hard)**. That's why we call the poorest districts 'rough areas' or 'tough parts of town.' Living in cold slums, doing hard cold manual casual work, unemployment, poverty, ignorance of birth control – you had to be hard in some way to keep you going, to get through. Maybe that's where black humour comes from – making a joke out of hardship. People sometimes say about back then – 19th Century UK or the 30's - that **'times were hard.'**

No they weren't. Times did nothing. It was the brutal, selfish, anti-social Business Class that made things hard. They didn't have to be.

Most poorer Working Class people were hard but behaved decently to each other. Disciplined and succoured (suckered, says this ex-Catholic kid) by the Protestant and Catholic churches, or by Methodist temperancy, they lived responsibly even though under great pressure from poverty and insecurity. They stayed decent to each other through shared hardship. There's truth in the legends of those famously strong, neighbourly communities. The traditional boast is that they never needed to lock their front doors. But surely that was because they *had* to leave the doors unlocked, for the constant traffic in and out of people borrowing cups of sugar?

Plenty were 'ard but **directed their hardness in exactly the right way** – they organised at work and politically and fought the employers and the rich for a better deal. Through unions and the Labour Party (as was). But we've never yet been widely organised enough to reach and support and civilise *everyone* of our class. We got quite close in the period 1945 to 1980. But **some people's hardness consisted of being anti-social bastards**, to their families and their neighbours, and anti-social in their community, through resentment and anger at the life they were experiencing.

You could easily get pissed off living your life as an industrial worker over most of that period. I grew up in a dock-side area where many of the blokes were into that hard-drinking culture where they'd go straight from work to the pub and not stagger home until late in the evening, demand food or refuse it and fall asleep on the settee. With the casual working on the docks or the shipyards, the hard, cold work, the desperate housing conditions, outside toilets and water on a pipe up the alley, you'd have a job feeling good about life. After a few bevvies in the cosy, smoky fug of the alehouse, then you might. It was rough on their wives and kids. But as an escape from conditions at work or on the dole and at home that must have been utterly depressing unless you had support, it was understandable. For some, the ale wasn't enough and they felt so frustrated with their place they got respect by being ever-ready to fight over the slightest thing. All that scrapping for no good reason – it was people snapping. Near where I grew up, the Dock Hotel was better known as 'The Blood Tub.'

These are explanations for Anti-Social Behaviour, by the way, not excuses. You don't have to sympathise too much with thuggery, even if you know the reasons. But it's simply a fact that without social support **some people - too many - react to insecurity and poverty by turning against everybody with anti-social hardness**. Today's ASB is a continuation of this self-assertive aggressive reaction against crap lives.

How many were like that back then, and how many today? Hard to say. Not huge numbers, really. Most Working Class people are alright. But it doesn't take many, 1 in 10 say, to mess up a lot of other people's heads with anti-social behaviour. That's good really – there's actually not that many real problem people.

How do people get like this? Well look, this is how it works, isn't it? The Business Class and their Tory party **quite openly and deliberately** push us all into surviving on our own. **They isolate us from each other**. It's contrary to most previous periods of human history, where there were usually quite a few people around you – the tribe, the clan, the extended family. The in-laws used to be a real part of the support structure, you'd probably work with them, on the land or domestically. The mediaeval lord owed you some duties as well as you owing him some. The village. I'm very much against the enforced membership of the Christian religion, as used to be the case, because it involves irrational beliefs and support for anti-democratic elites. But one thing it did, was impose a social system where we were all part of one society, with the right to make demands on each other, such as assistance if you were homeless and starving.

But since Industrialisation, **they've forced us into a chilling on-your-own insecurity that *forces* us to be hard**. The Tories are the AntiSocial Party. It's their belief and practice that individuals have to look out for themselves and should expect little from each other or from them (but they expect our support for them, against 'foreigners'….) The Tories argue that operating as isolated individuals is the only way the world works. It's got one or two advantages in terms of being liberated from the cloying effects of family and tribe. But it must de-socialise you.

They don't say that dealing with us as individuals is how they get us cheaply when employing us in their 'companies.' Note *that* collective term. We have to be individuals but they don't – they have 'companies.' It's like they've got a team but when we play them, we can't have one.

Their anti-union, free labour market laws force us to sell ourselves as weak individuals. They use the **'we've got-plenty-of-you'** relationship to force us to compete downwards on conditions. When we unionise to resist them overpowering us one by one, they put us down by shackling our unions. The result is we can all be treated badly. But **the least educated, least skilled and least organised get it worst - insecure jobs, poverty wages and conditions or benefits.**

The Business Class and the Tories say well, that's free-market economics. They say it like it's a law of physics when all it is, is one way of us relating to each other. Or not doing so, if you like. They say it's simply up to us to sell ourselves as best we can. Get yourself some more saleable skills. Work harder and longer and for less.

But many millions of we workers try that and get kicked in the teeth. Conscientious workers – including people I've known - get little thanks. Employers are quite ready to accept your best efforts without giving you decent conditions or security in your job. You usually have to fight for them. And when we've done nothing but work steadily and reasonably they and their economic system forces redundancies on us. Then they abandon you and make off with whatever wealth is left in the company. Or re-locate the business for their own benefit. Despite their system being supposed to be the

only way of running things, they throw us into the irrational, unnecessary catastrophe of mass unemployment through no fault of ours.

They will say, well, if you don't like what you get from us or being unemployed, start your own business. Be enterprising.

How thick they are. Ever since Industrialisation the economy runs on mass production. That means most people are going to have to work in big organisations. Factories, chain stores, call centres. Public Services. And why should we all be expected to have the money, confidence and skills to start little businesses of our own as the only alternative to being treated like crap? What's wrong with working for them, working reasonably hard as most of us do, and them treating us reasonably? But no, the Business Class fights and largely succeeds in atomising us so they can use the unfair balance of power they have over us to give many of us only shit jobs, poverty wages, split shifts, temporary contracts and all the rest of it. And unemployment when their system doesn't work. And massively unequal wealth.

The Business Class and their parties will say, this is the only way of running the world. If you can't hack it as a worker in their system. Or if you can't run a business yourself - don't complain. It's the only way to organise society. If you can't match up to it, if you don't like what you get from it, if you're a failure, you'll just have to accept your lowly position. Put up with it. **Behave yourself. Obey the law. Be a poor, humble, deferential nobody.**

But most of us won't do that. And quite right too – aren't we supposed to be living in an advanced, civilised society? Why should any of us accept being treated as badly as so many of us are? So some of us might not have the education and skills to get a decent deal from working for the rich and might not be confident and enterprising enough to work for themselves either. But they're not cringing, defeated. They're not going to go under. They've got self-belief, pride. They refuse to be a nobody, and quite right too. Nobody should accept that. **But – and this is where Anti-Social Behaviour comes in –** many of us **can't or won't handle it decently**.

They could organise and fight, at work and politically. Many do just that. But some under-educated, under-skilled workers have a narrow, uninformed, near-sighted view of the world. Some don't see the Business Class at all. They're not that visible, they don't walk about the estates in their pompous well-scrubbed business-suited manner. You have to have an understanding of society as a whole to even know they exist. And some of our lowest achievers do see the rich but believe their macho propaganda about 'having made it' and deserving their wealth and position, and just admire and envy them. They don't see the Business Class as the cause of them being in the poor, insecure position they're in. They've got little or no analysis of the workings of the Business Class's economic system, capitalism.

They're living in relative poverty. A lot of the time, they're isolated behind their curtains watching TV and DVD's, as we all are. We don't have communities any more. So, there they are, isolated, without social standing and support and controls. And they're isolated from other workers when they look for work and money. As we all are - 'You don't get me, I'm part of the union' should be an automatic attitude and a right, but it's not. They're isolated from other workers and barely aware of the Rich's role. They see only their own experience and what is immediately around them – their neighbourhood, their family, their friends.

Many, many workers living this sort of narrow life stay decent. Like the Royle Family (on TV in the UK.) It's recognised by many workers as an authentic take on certain members of our class. It's wonderful how it shows beauty and human warmth in a Working Class family living a narrow, couch-potato life centred around just family and neighbours. And the TV. As for feral, anti-social youth, Antony's alright. He's a poor Working Class teenager but a decent lad. Not sure about his mate Darren, though.

The dangerous thing about telling people to accept their place at the bottom of the Business Class's system is that such people, poor people with low skills, don't become less human. This is another thing that shows the shallow inhuman stupidity of the Business Class's politics. **They expect people who fail in society run as it is brutally under their rules, to meekly accept their losing role, to disappear into obscurity.**

But they won't. The Business Class and the Tories aren't the only people with drive. Many poor Working Class people, despite being low-skilled, have just as much self-belief, greed, and ruthlessness, just as much drive and power within themselves, as the rich. They won't accept being a failure, being in poverty and without social significance through the recognised, legal routes. You can repress people to a degree, but we're extraordinarily powerful creatures – look at how far psychopaths go when they don't get their human needs fulfilled. Each of us has a lot of stuff going on inside, a lot of needs, feelings and self-assertive drive.

Many of those who go under in the Business Class's viciously uncaring free-labour-market system bob up somewhere else, in nasty form. **They feel the on-your-own-insecurity that we all feel, but worse**. **Like, what does constant desperation about money do to your peace of mind and your ability to do things like keep a marriage going, deal with raising kids, or live peacefully with neighbours?** I'm one of those who argues that Thatcher put people in desperate conditions by taking away job security and a few other key supports and telling people they had to look after themselves and not expect support from anybody else. So look - **how much do we know - or care - about each other's money worries?** What exactly do you know of your neighbours income and how they manage the bills? Or even your friends? Do you know what they're on? Do they know what you're on? Probably not, I'd say.

We don't feel each others experience with money. When I was earning £30,000 a year I was in the top ten per cent of wage earners. From talking to people about buying this or that, or reading about the cost of this or that, I realised I was more casual about spending than some less well off people. You judge spending and the costs of things from your own income. You have to make a real effort to feel what it must be like for people on less.

So what do you know of what poor people in your district go through? Whether they suffer constant uncertainty and insecurity about work? Being made redundant, repeatedly? In and out of temporary work? Hours being cut? Working hours disastrous to family life? All the strain of that, and not having much money. Paying the bills, seeing to the kids. Look at your neighbours when you see them on the precinct - do you actually know how much money they've got coming in? Do you know what they go through, sitting inside their own home, looking at how much is coming in and how much is going out? If you do know because you're in such a situation yourself - what do you know of other people's situation?

We don't know much, if anything, about each other's experience of that, do we? None of us do. **We all take that strain within our own four walls - nobody else knows how each of us feels the pressure. Yet it's so central to how we feel about life** and survival. People who have suffered because of the attacks launched on us all by the Business Class must feel very isolated, abandoned, and worried. Some get nastily individualistic. You can see and hear them on the precinct, coarse and abusive and angry. With their kids, or some neighbour they've got a problem with - it seems they're just angry and aggressive and individualist as their general response to everything.

Without a view of the responsibility the rich have for their life to be unsatisfying, and not organised in fighting back, they respond by being hard to the people around them, often including their family. You can see **the hard, aggressive, stressed-up attitude, 'us-against-the-world' in those under the most pressure**. It's learned by their kids and that's why **their kids behave unnecessarily assertively on the street.** Unnecessarily because they direct their self-assertion at the nearest people to them, at other kids on the street or in the playground, who in the main haven't actually done anything to them to deserve it.

They adopt the defeatist Tory-inspired attitude **'It's all about looking after No. 1. That's what everybody else does.'** They carry themselves with pride on the street. You have to. Show you're not defeated, you've got a life. For a lot of young lads and young men, a swaggering cockiness applied on the street, in the pub, is as far as it goes. That sort of cockiness can be a bit annoying, mystifying – why is he carrying himself and talking like that, there's nothing immediately going on that needs that attitude? There's a few varying shades of the being 'ard response to being at the bottom – being chippy, abrasive, cocky, belligerent. Just to show you've not given in to the position you're in.

A hell of a lot of self-assertion takes place around football. You can't help noticing the importance some of us give to football - talking endlessly and fervidly about players, teams, league positions, as if it's of such great importance, when actually, it's not. Not just with watching the professional game, but playing it on the amateur pitches. There, there's a lot of Working Class lads and men and some women getting very hard and determined and physical, as a way, in my view, of making up for lack of status in the world of work and money. If it's no worse than that, not too much of a problem.

But it all grades into worse behaviour for some. They react harshly to any slight. In fact, they go looking for trouble, going out of their way to find a slight in some inter-action on the street, and respond aggressively. They bristle and become aggressive over problems with neighbours. Take entertainment in annoying neighbours, some of it well-documented, prolonged and appalling. They become antagonistic to neighbours for simply being different. Become proud of their hardness and independence, defy decent social behaviour, keep dangerous dogs, make noise and get belligerent if a neighbour asks them not to. Become proud of their reputation for being 'hard.'

Isn't it different to the smoothly relaxed confidence of those with the income to have a big house, SUV, yacht, restaurant meals?

Some of us in desperate situations feel they've got it worst and resent everybody else, seeing them as better off. It's how poor racists see ethnic minorities – they always think they're getting better treatment than themselves. And the hard attitude isn't always expressed in resentment of other people's money - there's lots of ways of envying other people, being

spiteful and gossipy. Or feeling better by pretending to occupy some higher moral ground than their neighbours on some issue.

Despite being losers in terms of wealth and social standing and status, **they still have self-belief. And the Business Class encourages them to**. On the one hand, as far as work and income goes, the Business Class want them to peacefully accept being failures, and accept crap jobs or poverty benefit levels. But **on the other hand they want them, as consumers, to aspire to be somebody, to be significant.** So they can sell them clothes, music, cars, furniture, make up, holidays, films, stuff. The tabloids dazzle them with celebrity consumerist lifestyles, celebrity worship, celebrity-watching magazines. TV shows like 'Pimp my Ride' and 'MTV Crib' glorify gross consumerism. The Business Class's marketing industry bombards them with the message **be somebody through possessions and consumption.**

Bob Dylan -

"Advertising signs they con

You into thinking you're the one

That can do what's never been done

That can win what's never been won."

Dylan, 'It's Alright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding.'

And they do, they want to *be* somebody. And why not? But how can they do it from the position they're in? They've got this narrow view of the world. They see only their immediate experience, and what's fed them by the Business Class's tabloid and TV trivia. Without a political criticism of the system, without the abilities and skills to be a success within the rules of the Business Class's system, their way to be a success is to **get Respect from the people immediately around them.** Their neighbours, other people on the street. To get it through the small-world prestige of having a reputation for belligerence, hardness. Through the status of being feared. Maybe from being organised – being a member of a gang.

It's all passed on to their kids, of course. Of coarse. **This is how we get the feral kids.** People growing from being kids, to teenagers, have enormous desires and drives to *be somebody,* to impress others. They're growing in strength, and energy. People talk about their hormones. They are ambitious, developing outwardly, needing social significance, wanting to become respected as an adult.

For poor Working Class kids brought up with the 'Look after Number 1' attitude, brought up hard, they do it by hitting on other kids and adults around them, getting in their faces. Dressing to look hard, bullying at school and on the way home, robbing kids of their dinner-money, vandalising bus-stops, keying cars, playing their sounds with massive levels of ponderous bass, annoying their neighbours, harassing them, victimising them, being a nuisance, robbing, burgling - it's how they impress themselves and others. **They get Respect and Self-Respect by exercising physical power over others**.

That's why violent films and computer games are so popular with a lot of these kids, and influence them in their attitude on the street. I heard a neighbour's kid once telling another one excitedly about some stuff about cutting somebody's head of with a chainsaw. I said to the lad, would it seem so good if

you just imagine you're not watching it or the one doing it, but that you're the one having his head cut off?

In terms of normal status, like wealth, the feral kids are at the bottom. But by imposing themselves on others, humiliating other kids, they **put others below them.** It's a common thing, for people at the bottom to get feelings of worth and status by manufacturing for themselves a superior position above some other, even worse group. Criminals in prison for the most brutal murders adopt a position of moral superiority over sex offenders or 'nonces'. The tabloids – who use sex so much to sell – whip up disgust at paedophiles to give their readers the satisfaction of a morally superior position. Black guys, who in the American South were at one time slaves and then were treated as sub-human, found some comfort in dominating women. Plenty of white guys have done that too.

Even the better-behaved kids, like the successful ones who get to University, enjoy a bit of mild 'breaking the rules.' Defying the rules of society gives a feeling of rebellion, freedom, independence. It's exciting. Rebelling against the rules impresses your mates, gets you social status, admiration for your daring. So as well as getting self- respect by hitting on the weaker around them and by putting them below themselves, yobs get respect from others and from themselves **by defying those above them – parents, authority**. And let's not under-estimate how extreme it is, what the worst yobs are doing. Most of us wouldn't dream of regularly being violent and robbing. Breaking these core rules of behaviour, breaking the law; defying not only parents and adults, but also 'the authorities,' the police, the law, everybody else - it's big medicine, if you want to impress yourself on other people.

There's other, less violent ways of not accepting being a nobody, even without getting organised and fighting back against the rich. Working Class youth have done it repeatedly through the power of expression of making rock music – rock and roll, punk, Madchester, Indie, hip hop, rap. But there's always been a sizeable number of Working Class people in Tiger Bay, the Gorbals, the East End, Liverpool, Salford, and many other industrial towns, who **don't have the nouse to get organised and fight the class enemy** but **fight their own class instead**. They never went away but were probably less of a problem during the 50's, 60's and 70's as increased wealth softened things for us all and made it easier to live life with some enjoyment so you didn't need to be in a frustrated rage about your life.

All that was reversed with the brutal assault of Thatcher's crew. The old hardness re-emerged, developed into a more modern, American influenced, consumer-greedy style. But it's pretty much the same thing – a determination to be somebody. If you can't do it inside the rules of the system, do it outside them. **Being a hard bastard is the easiest way to be somebody**, if you feel it strongly enough and you've no care for anybody else. You don't have to have any skills, go to work in a suit, demean yourself by working in the shit conditions that are normal in most unskilled jobs. You just have to find vulnerable people on the street and harass or rob them.

The Business Class and Tories answer to the problem is to repress people. They expect people to put up with being put in this position of poverty and insignificance by them, and to behave. If they won't, they say 'Lock 'em up.' Law and Order.

But it won't work. You can't catch them all without huge policing. Prison doesn't work – they just see it as part of their life. The Tories hide behind their

CCTV and security-gated walls but their kids still get done in the streets, in the student districts for example. The only thing that will work is treating people decently – it's not doing things for them, it's doing things for all our own good. Tony Blair's demand is that people respect each other on the street. But he and his obscenely rich business friends won't give it to people at the bottom. **You'll not get them to respect others while you don't treat them with respect.**

We can blame Thatcher, Blair and the Business Class, and we do. We can demand action from the government. It's their job, they sponsor the causes in allowing the Business Class's system to disrespect people so much that they destroy civilised relationships between people.

But we can blame too these members of our class who turn on their own. They're behaviour is a problem for our class within our class and needs to be more recognised by us and tackled by us, amongst our class. So let's be clear - it's out of order. No excuses. They're traitors, attacking their own. Whatever the business people do to us, workers should at least be decent to each other. Attacking each other, often brutally, while not fighting the rich and powerful, properly, organised at work and politically, is chickenshit.

I don't think we recognise it clearly, amongst ourselves. I've been raised poor Working Class, worked many years as a manual worker, worked with manual workers for all my working life, lived in rough and not so rough districts. But I've never heard Working Class adults notice, comment on or criticise the 'hard' look and the hard attitudes that are so common amongst Working Class men and some women, and specially amongst poorer Working Class youth. I've wondered why. Then I realised, from how some parents talk about 'lads', that lads and blokes are *expected t*o be chippy, assertive, and a bit loutish. To dress to look hard and aggressive. Lads dressing to look hard aren't seen as looking or behaving particularly oddly. It's **what many poorer Working Class people *expect* of young lads**. That's just 'lads.' (And some girls too).

But they don't have to be. Properly-raised kids aren't like that. Kids brought up with interests, activities that they're good at, friends who share interests, get status and satisfaction from them. Look at those Working Class kids, including those of the better-off educated Working Class, who have enough satisfaction about themselves and their lives that they don't need to hit on other people. Like the skateboarder kids, known in Manchester as gribleys. The baggy T-shirts and cut-off shorts and long hair seem to show they've got a relaxed attitude, not a hard, bristling one like the disgruntled, shaven-headed hard lads. The gribs enthusiasm for skateboarding and punk and nu-metal and Hip Hop, going to gigs and festivals, means they go about the place with self-respect and satisfaction from those interests.

But for many poor Working Class people and youngsters, looking 'ard is the universal culture. For many, it has to be done to fit in, to not be preyed on as a wimp, a hippy. But what they're fitting in with is a base attitude of 'Hardness,' being in peoples faces, that becomes real, thuggish aggression in those who want Respect from others and Self Respect and get it by imposing themselves, by intimidating, by making people scared of them, by being thuggish, by robbing with violence.

Look at these kids. You can spot them easily enough on the street. It's not stereotyping. They look a certain way deliberately. **They are *trying* to look hard**. Their appearance and body language are meant to show it. I'm not arguing for arrests on appearance, just to identify what's going on. The most

common thing is the shaven head, which makes people look harder. Then there's the permanent frown or scowl, the knitted brow, that says I'm hard, angry, ready to snap, on the edge of violence. It must be tough for some of them, you can hardly enjoy life if you're trying to look angry all the time. That's the main story in 'The Sopranos' on TV – how do you enjoy life, get sweet and mellow, whilst at the same time being an angry thug?

There's the **clothes**. I'm arguing that thuggishness is a part of the defiance of the powerlessness and insignificance, the lack of status, that these kids and their parents experience. So look at the Tracksuits and Trainers, the Baseball caps, that are almost a uniform amongst poorer Working Class people, despite the importance they give to their identities as Scousers or Mancs or whatever. Across the whole country, practically every kid you see on the estates is dressed the same. And **the reason for wearing athletic gear** is that athletes are up for the challenge, they're competitors. They're contenders at least. Maybe winners. Sport is the classic way of succeeding if you're an uneducated poor boy who can't make it in the world of respected jobs. **Wearing training gear gives you the appearance of a player, a contender.** Not a loser. Not out of it. Not a 'no-mark.' You're 'up for it.' Same with hoodies – originally from boxing. And they allow you to look menacing and conceal your identity.

Having a shaven head , scowling and wearing track suits isn't a crime. I'm just pointing out that they show people attempting to get social significance, status, by looking 'hard' and up for the challenge. And **many of them also behave 'ard** for the same reason, and attack innocent people.

There's **body language**. I've not seen it so much recently, but 'bowling' was common a couple of years ago. Legs and arms are thrown out as they walk, chest out, head back, rolling down the street as if twice as wide as they really are, looking all around them as they roll, looking at cars, houses, people, looking for a challenge - 'What you looking at, cunt?' As one of them said to me just the other day. It's well-described in the book 'Bonfire of the Vanities', called in the Bronx 'the pimp roll'. In Manchester, it's called 'walking with a swagger.' It shows the attitude - I'm here, I'm big, I'm in your face.

Another bit of body language is to stand with feet widespread, to look planted, strong, in place, substantive. Maybe bouncing a bit on the balls of your feet, from one leg to another. Like a boxer ready for a fight.

Many kids copy these looks. Decent kids have to look like that too to avoid being picked on or insulted or attacked and called Middle Class or a soft hippie. You can't live on the estates and not feel the need to look at least a bit hard. Some kids from decent families get drawn into being really bad. But although not everybody who dresses like this - track suit, trainers, hoodie, shaven head - is a thug - it is the thug dress code. For most users it says the same thing – I'm hard, athletic. Saying "I'm somebody, me. I'm not a no-mark, not a loser. I'm an achiever. Or at least a contender."

Of course, these styles then spread as just styles and get used by people outside the original type of kid. But the analysis still works - the origin is in kids not succeeding within the rules - not doing well at school, not getting GCSE's, not going to 6th Form College - nevertheless **deciding they are going to 'be somebody.' And to do something exciting.** If looking 'ard isn't enough, find a way of imposing yourself in some way on the rest of us – smash a bus shelter maybe. Be a bastard, be 'ard, be violent. Go around in a group, stopping younger kids for fags, then money, then mobile phones. Everyone is entitled to the opportunity to assert themselves socially but **it's out of order to attack**

your fellow-workers for no reason, to destroy our facilities and rob us and our kids.

The hard, shaven head look is nearly as common amongst grown-up workers as it is amongst teenagers. All these building workers, builders merchants, white van driving 'blokes'. Not skinheads so much, but so many close-cropped, it's almost a uniform. It's all about seeming hard, which means looking aggressive. Looking as if you can handle yourself.

Not all poorer Working Class people turn nasty. Many, probably most, are all right. And are the victims of the yobs. And many are amongst the most caring, civilised people around, better than many of the filthy rich who are much bigger thugs, even though they wear suits and ties. **But there is a large tendency amongst poorer Working Class people,** clearly visible in your streets right now, that is **a self-asserting response to what they get or don't get from this society, and it's the base attitude for a lot of bullying, street and neighbourhood attacks, vandalism, and various kinds of ASB.** It messes up other worker's lives, it's not new, it's been around ever since Industrialisation.

What's wrong isn't so much what they want, it's more about who they direct their resentment at. It's not directed at the people who really deserve it - the rich and powerful, the Business Class. But these kids can't see that far and haven't got the gumption to challenge those people. Instead, they attack their own, the people nearest to them, their fellow Working Class youth and neighbours. **They are causing big problems for the rest of the Working Class, and ruining the lives of some.**

They've taken up the Thatcherite approach of sod everybody else but yourself. They've taken on Tory, right wing, conservative individualist values. They're little Tories. But they're not very good at it. They've got nothing to conserve, for one thing. Many end up in and out of prison, living crap lives as adults.

So street thugs, robbers, scallies, feral youth, are mainly **poorer Working Class.** Better off workers (who you might call Middle Class*) - their kids generally don't go around the streets and parks looking 'ard, looking to upset somebody, or indiscriminately attacking people*, even though they might also have rebelled against school or had broken homes. They've usually been helped to grow up getting satisfaction, self-esteem, and status from their interests and skills and **from their education**. Look around you at the contrast between those kids who with help from parents have succeeded in 'the system', in education, and those who haven't. I've driven all of my three lads to University, and picked them up, several times a year each. I'm always struck by the scene at the halls of residence. Nice buildings, better than in Further Education (FE) where I worked and where the poorer Working Class go. And it's like an officially approved holiday camp at Uni – in the hall of residence with a load of bright people the same age, all the encouragement to booze and live it up. And I notice the kids - affable, breezy, confident (or trying to be, I know some have problems). Nothing at all against those kids - they've worked and got the A levels, good luck to them.

How different poorer Working Class kids look, those who haven't succeeded by the rules of the system. Here in Manchester UK, and everywhere you go, all over the country, Wales, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Bristol - there's Working Class young people hanging about the streets with nothing to do but assert themselves. There's nothing wrong with that, we all need to do that in some way. How do you do it on the street? Look full of yourself, walk cockily, swagger. The shaven heads to look hard. The fixed 'Stephen Gerrard' frown,

with furrowed brow, the permanent scowls, look like you're somebody to take account of not by skills or contribution, but be menacing. And they're on every estate, all over - despite all the stuff about identifying themselves as Mancs, Scousers, Northerners, Welsh, **it's striking how alike they all look.**

You saw these young thugs as innocent babies, as toddlers, and the influences on them that make them what they are now. I knew one toddler, not yet talking, aged around two, who spent a lot of his day with his face in the television screen, bombarded by light and colour from the adverts. He was entranced, excited, bewitched. It reminded me of the hypnotic light shows used in 2001 – A Space Odyssey to stimulate our ape ancestors brains to reach another level. The hyped-up world of TV and the buy-this, have-that advertising, is intended to stimulate our drive to have things and **to be somebody. It does that. It works.**

It works on poorer Working Class kids to develop that drive. Since they've not got the support or opportunity to achieve civilly - school and interests and GCSE's no, Nike clothes, going for a McDonalds, yes – they do it uncivilly. Blame the Business Class because they wind up the consumer and me-me appetites of these kids from when they're little. But that's what the Business Class do. We shouldn't abandon pressurising them and government to rein in the mad individualist greed of consumerism that they force feed our kids with – but at the same time, if it's result is a blight on the Working Class by a big section of Working Class, **it's up to us to put our class in order ourselves. To try to influence each other not to be fobbed off with the second-hand glamour of what celebrities have and do, but to make our own lives more fulfilling. To argue against consumer individualism and organise social ways of achieving.**

It happens, all over the world, when the Business Class attacks us.

Three responses. One - some of us see what is happening, who is doing it, how it's not necessary. We join with others to fight back, by organising with each other at work, and by acting politically, **fighting on a few fronts for a more civilised society. Loads and loads of working people do this**. Not enough, but many do.

Two - others go under. Maybe through depression or alcohol abuse, or crack, or heroin; and/or they become homeless, with no social contacts, quite alone in the world. Or take their own lives - *some* poorer Working Class kids are a real problem with attacks on others, but Working Class kids are also more likely to kill themselves too.

Third response – some go hard and individualist and nasty. They know they're not succeeding in work, housing, income, through the legal means allowed. So they fight back crudely, unthinkingly. You can see it in the body language, the spoken language, the dress, the political views, the 'Look after number One' attitude, of many poorer Working Class people - crude self-assertion. They will say, very often, that '**It's look after number one, that's all anybody else does**.' And to a degree they're right - the Business Class tells them exactly that, through their papers, and other propaganda. They're Thatcher's children. They accept the Tory values - in their behaviour to other workers, they're acting as little Tories.

Some Working Class people succeed as little Tories, set up small businesses – the self-employed, the builders, the plumbers, in their white vans.

Gangsters are interesting. Listening to some of them in rare TV appearances, they clearly see themselves as Working Class and fighters against the system.

But they don't build organised Working Class resistance. They fight on their own, and with relatives and people they know and trust. They have no wider Working Class solidarity. It's understandable - as a class, we've not been good enough at supporting each other, on the whole. Gangsters have the Working Class 'hardness', a readiness to be violent to anyone who crosses them, and many who haven't. They apply that to business. They play by the Tory values of hard individualism but without the peaceful restraints the Business Class has agreed amongst themselves. They accept the system but refuse to play by its rules. You can rip each other off but you're supposed to respect property rights and contracts, and not to use violence. Gangster's origins in angrily oppressed Working Class ghettos means they reject all that and play the Business Class's game in it's raw state, outside the rules.

Poorer Working Class thugs see themselves as Working Class. But that only means they feel aggrieved at not being well off. It doesn't mean they feel they have anything in common with, or might do something with, those other millions, those equally less well off. They don't organise. They can't see how the rich are responsible, or intuitively feel that they can't do anything to them. They don't organise with other workers against the rich, what they do is adopt an Attitude. Look hard, talk rough, walk cockily, take no shit, give some out. They do it to people they can do it to, to those nearest to them, the weakest of those around them, not to the rich and powerful. **They betray their class by robbing and burgling their fellow workers**. There's a bit of crude consciousness of class in the way they will justify some of their robbing when they do it to 'Middle Class' kids. But it's not a good class attitude to take off the better-off Working Class as well as the poorer. Many of the better-off Working Class, those they call Middle Class, are more on their side than any other section of society. But the real culprits, the rich, are invisible and inaccessible to the thugs.

Large sections of the poorer Working Class have the aggressive attitude because they've not succeeded, or can't, or won't even try to succeed in the legitimate routes of education, work, and income. So they defend their position by valuing their attitude above these things. **Don't be a swot, a geek. Talk rough**. How people talk is part of it. It's deliberate. In my life, some would say I've repeatedly crossed classes. More accurately I've moved backwards and forwards between poorer/manual working sections of the Working Class, and well-educated and well-qualified sections. And I've observed how many/most poorer Working Class people restrict their language.

I grew up poor manual Working Class but got sent to the grammar school with the posh kids. But I did manual holiday jobs, on a fairground, an ice-cream factory. Then off to University, with the better-educated posh kids again; but still with manual holiday jobs, like labouring on building sites. After Uni, although a graduate, worked twelve years as an unskilled and semi-skilled manual worker, a Manchester industrial worker in building and engineering; and as a low-paid, low-skilled office worker in engineering. Within that period I spent a year or two back in the qualified Working Class set, as a secondary school teacher. Then I did twenty years as a college tutor. So I was backwards and forwards between poorer, worse-educated working class people and those who are better-off, better-educated What most people would call going from Working Class to Middle Class and back again.

Mixing with well-educated people, I noticed I'd talk with clearer pronunciation, more complex words and so on. As a lecturer, I'd be talking to other lecturers, and managers. And then talking in the class room with mostly manual and

ordinary workers. I noticed I'd use a simpler vocabulary, and slur my pronunciation a bit, when talking with people who also have restricted language. Had to, really, as I felt pretentious and pompous talking hard professional speak. Then I'd go straight into a meeting with, say, senior college management, Principals and the like - yes, mixing with such low-life. I'd switch into more educated mode. I only did and do this slightly. I'm not one to put on a posh 'Middle Class 'accent. I'm quite proud of being the same person to everybody, and not deferring to people's apparent status, or to 'middle-class' speech, values, styles or dress codes.

So I noticed the restricted language used by many Working Class people, and I figure it's *not* just because they never learned to express themselves more eloquently. No, **it's deliberate restriction**. It's part of the Attitude. It's saying 'I'm not part of the successful world of the professional, successful business, suit wearing, hand-shaking, classes, and I'm not deferring to their manners, I'm not talking like them.' I've heard it from inside our house, hearing kids in our street playing out in the summer. Deliberate slurring of words. In Manchester, leaving out the 't' in words - Sa'urday. A downbeat tone. People have said to me, 'Oh yes, it's all in the studies of language, they do it to fit in with their peers.' Aah, but then **why do their peers do it**? - because they know **they're not part of the successful classes so they reject their polite and well-spoken manners**.

Anybody who doesn't reject education has the piss taken out of them for being pretentious, or a swot, a geek. If this is part of stopping people getting above themselves and being middle-class individualist gobshites, maybe OK. It's assertive in a way, rejecting the Business Class's ways. But it's also part of the attitude - be coarse, self-demeaning, and make a virtue of it. It restricts our language and ideas and how we think and communicate. It's a self-denial of our possibilities. It's dragging each other back into the hole.

There's another very well-established version of this – the piss-taking banter that's common amongst shop-floor workers. Successful people and the rich expect respect and give it to each other. Those of us at the bottom, in the jobs where you wear overalls, constantly bring each other down with piss-taking. It's a recognition that none of us have any status. Nobody is allowed to get above themselves, you're constantly reminded by piss-taking that you're one of the no-marks. There's a certain value in that, we don't want to get as pompous as the upwardly-aspirant. But really, it's each of us recognising our own low status and by piss-taking, confirming each other as in the same position. **We should show each other more respect**. Again, it's interesting how that expression, that demand, that acclamation – 'Respect' – is used in young black culture, for exactly that reason and to counter-act the feeling of low status you otherwise get from 'the system.'

Behaving with coarse self-assertion, **'being 'ard,'** is often talked about affectionately. Respectfully. It's like a badge of honour to have grown up in or to 'be from' a 'tough' area. Like Govan or the Gorbals in Glasgow. Liverpool (going way back) - Scottie Road, Kirkby, the Dingle. The East End of London. Tiger Bay in Cardiff. I saw Alex Ferguson talking about Nicky Butt when he was at United "Aye, he's from a tough area, Gorton - they take the pavements in at night!" With a smile. So brutalised Working Class people in these 'tough' districts behave like bastards to each other? Why speak of it respectfully? **Its not something to respect. *It's fucken terrible.***

I managed a football team as the lads went through 14, 15 and 16 years old. A large number of the lads we played were nasty pieces of work. Shaven

headed, verbally aggressive, threatening. Teams from the famously 'toughest' areas of Manchester threatened our lads with broken arms and legs after the game; a bottle was thrown into our changing room, smashing on the wall above our heads. I've played Sunday League football and I know it can be rough. I know football is a war game and can encourage aggression. But the thuggishness of these poorer Working Class teenage lads wasn't provoked by the game. It was their normal way of asserting themselves, and they brought it onto the pitch.

It is argued by Tories that **'the poor' have far more** in basic needs, and in Playstations, DVD players, and all the other consumer toys, **than earlier generations**, so they've nothing to be aggrieved about. What these coarse thinkers miss is that *there are things we need that are much more important than material things that you can buy (and that they can sell to us to make more and more money.)* **Respect. Recognition. Status. Standing. You can't buy them. They are all social things that you get from inter-acting with other people**. No money or sale involved. The yobs and thugs could get these things without harming anyone if the rest of us, particularly the rich and powerful, were prepared to organise support, activities, a civilised society instead of a consumerised one. But as it is, these kids have accepted the Thatcherite message. They are Thatcher's children.

They get these kids thinking you can get status from having stuff. But if you're at the bottom, even if you've got loads of stuff, you'll still probably have less than everybody else better off than you, so what good is that?

Yobbishness and thuggery is at its worst amongst teenage lads because, as well as being from the poorer Working Class culture of being 'ard and aggressive, they're also trying to establish themselves as independent adults, and trying to assert themselves. Rebelling against school and any other authority, failing at education, not finding satisfaction and status from achievement - they assert themselves by being imposing themselves on others. Vandalism, annoying people, 'happy-slapping'. And with teenagers, you can't over-estimate the power and energy and outward-looking ambition we all have at that age.

Being 'ard was rife in Birkenhead when I was a lad in the '50's and 60's; you could observe it getting worse and worse, through the 80's and 90's, as Thatcher and Tebbitt and the rest of that crew, savaged the 'steady job' society that is essential to peoples' sense of security and status. I spent fifteen years teaching the kids on the governments unemployed scheme, the YTS. Saw it happening. Most of those kids were alright, of course. But it doesn't take many thugs to mess things up.

The hard, over-assertive attitude of so many poorer Working Class kids is generally learned from parents. It's not just a teenage thing - it's how adults see it too. When running the football team for my son and his teenage mates, I'd go to monthly League meetings of all the managers and secretaries. A big meeting room full of attitude! All the blokes with closely-cropped hair, wearing athletic clothing, crew-neck jumpers, tracksuits, trainers. Pugnacious, edgy people! Tense bodies, eyes looking about the room. Expecting aggression or at least assertion and prepared to respond. Alert like wild animals when predators are about. Nice enough civilised people, really, but engaged in a competitive activity. There was a lot of self-assertion going on, directed at each other when it should be directed at the rich and powerful. These people, all Working Class, should be brothers and sisters, relaxed with each other, not bristling. **If people are going to be assertive they should do it to the rich**

through the union, the tenants association, the anti-war movement, a socialist party.

To sum up, repetitively, I know - **many of the poorer Working Class, not capable of or allowed to stick up for themselves in an organised, civilised way, develop narrow, individualistic, indiscriminate, sociopathic aggression to each other**. It's there - you've noticed it. The popular reaction to their worst doings, the 'couldn't you just kill them' sometime seems like a reasonable response. From what they've done to my kids, their mates, and even to me, I feel that. I spoke to a councillor who represents one of the so-called 'tough' districts of Manchester. "yeah", he said "I know all about the sociological explanations, but these yobs are making people's lives a misery right now, and we've got to deal with it." I can understand that. Some of those I've met, yeah, you can see how they've been made by general tendencies in society, but sometimes you have to say they could choose to be less vile.

But…. What To Do About it All…?

If I'm right that these are the causes of yobbishness and thuggery and street crime, what is the point in simply using punishment? There's not a lot of point tackling something so widespread while letting the causes just continue to produce more of it. For one thing, it's an expensive way of working, and includes the stress and unhappiness caused to victims before the thugs are caught. Even if repression worked well – and it does have it's place – you can't catch them all anyway. People say 'Lock them up.' But you'll not catch them all without a huge amount of street policing, one on every street almost. And you can see with a lot of these lads, being caught and going in prison is just part of their life, something they talk to their mates about, it's just life. And inside they learn how to do it better. Far better to attack the causes. If so much can be spent and so much force applied to sorting Iraq out, why not the UK?

It'd make this a whole lot nicer society to live in.

Currently in the UK it's the Blair government that we expect to deal with the problem. As you'd expect from the way they fawn to the rich, they are speaking and doing the law and order bit with ASBO's, whilst dragging their feet in doing anything - or spending any money on - the sort of youth facilities that could do a lot to sort it.

There are a few things they are doing that could be useful. Making offenders explain themselves to the victims and to local panels of neighbours is good - confront them with ordinary people who have suffered. Because they often see themselves as rebel hero's defying 'the feds', the law, the police, the system, and have no thought for their victims. They should be confronted by neighbours, people they know, who can point out to them that they're attacking real people, people who know people they know. You might say that'll not stop some of them; but it is noticeable, when they stop you in the street, and often suss you out by talking to you for a bit before robbing you, that if you know someone they know, they'll sometimes back off - "oh d'you know so and so? Yeah my sister goes out with him." If they feel you are part of their circle, they feel a bit of social conscience or commonality. (Not always of course - some prey on neighbours they know very well, and in the school playground, they know the people they are bullying.) But **building a sense of community, of respecting people because they are not just some jerk you've met on the street, but someone who is part of your society, is part of the answer.**

Blair's crew are trying to tackle educational failure. They see as one of the reasons for kids developing into thugs, from being outside the success stream to decent jobs, money and status. Social inclusion, they call it. They're also using 'mentors' in schools, people who've maybe been to prison and can get across to these kids about where being a bad-ass leads, that a life as a thug isn't really a lot of fun, leading to prison and early death. After school-age, they're using intensive supervision of offenders, trying to sort them out rather than just uselessly bang them up, where they just learn better how to live outside the law.

Where we can't expect much from Blair is in tackling poverty, one of the main causes of the desperate, aggressive self-assertion attitude. They are doing a bit, with quite impressive transfers of wealth to the poorest, through Tax Credits, the Minimum Wage and other such things. But they are doing nothing, and believe in doing nothing, about **comparative wealth**, and the incredible size of the gap between the poor and the rich.

And they don't believe in doing anything about the bombardment of kids with the idea that success is through getting more and more consumer items, - DVD's, flash cars, designer clothes. Some survey the other day asked poor kids who they admired most, and after footballers and athletes, it was the mega-rich, those 'celebrity' toss-pots whose wealth is thrown in kids faces as being what you should want yourself.

This government won't ever stop the coarse consumerism that affects these lads because they are completely entranced by the needs of the Business Class's system to sell us more and more and more gear, and to have constant 'growth.' They see Growth as an absolute, unquestionable necessity. Why, exactly? We get stuff, and the idea that we need stuff, thrown at us. It's amazing when you think about it how many people are employed to sell us stuff - market researchers in the street and on the phone; call-centres full of people ringing others all day and night. **They promote consumption, consumerism, acquisitiveness, hedonism, excess, with the promise that it'll bring you status and satisfaction**. The consequences are selfish, hard, acquisitive individuals. And a wrecked environment. We need to learn to live by being, not by having. We did it before consumerism, we can do it again.

Thuggish kids are not just after goods, though. They're after status. And if you live your life ignoring politics and what the rich are doing and wanting status outside the job/education mainstream, you can get it for being bad. Being thuggish is it's own reward. You can feel satisfied in imposing yourself on other people, on the street. It's like being a good boxer or athlete or footballer. Power. **Power over people**. And other kids respect you for it. What do you want? "To be feared", some of them say.

With his pro-business approval of the wealth gap, Blair doesn't realise that although you can successfully oppress people - like the anti-union laws have done - and then you can exploit most people more, get more profits and growth made from their work; and others will go under; but others will refuse to accept their low position in his world. They pop up somewhere like corks, robbing, mugging, burgling, being bastards to their neighbours. Or to their own family, in many cases.

When we argue for more facilities for these kids, you get the argument that you can't fix things by '**throwing money at the problem**'. Funny, that. It seems to work with the rich. They want stupendous wealth and low taxes before they'll play their part as the thrusting entrepreneurs essential for all our well-

being. Throw money at them so they can have fabulous homes, second homes, 4 by 4 SUV's, Ferraris, Porsches, expensive holidays, clothes etc. Apparently throwing money at *them* works. How are the poor so different, that throwing money at them wouldn't work?

You get the argument that doing things for the worst off doesn't change them. Well, **most of them are actually alright anyway.** But leaving that aside, there's the 'problem families' ..... Since the 60's with better housing through slum clearance and new estates, some people remained bad lots, and it's said "it's a waste of time giving them somewhere decent to live, they'll just wreck it." Well, people's behaviour is caused by a lot of things, not just housing. And things persist over generations. Parents learn stuff from their parents, and it's passed on to their kids. Bad stuff, anti-social stuff, some of it. Or they learn from their neighbours and friends. We all know how any of us can be personally damaged in some way by the way we're brought up, and how difficult it can be to change. None of us changes overnight at the flick of a switch even when we want to. Even after the causative conditions are removed, *some* people will stay bad. You can't flick a social engineering switch and change everybody just like that. It's a long haul. But the snags are no excuse. **Treat people decently, and most will respond decently.**

If you look at what can be done if the effort is put in, it's easy. When they can manage, by waving a flag often enough, to get people to support anybody in any sport, just because they are co-habitants of a geographical area governed by a homogenous political system ('Your Country'); to persuade millions of people to go and kill people just like themselves for no good reason; when they can get people to idolise a bunch of pompous upper-class worthless prat parasites, call them a monarchy, and give them millions to ponce about uselessly; then getting people to behave in a civilised manner is surely easy. If enough people want it to happen and are prepared to argue and fight for it.

Another thing **Blair won't** do, is **allow working people to organise in their own defence against the brutality of business**. It's partly our own fault though - have you noticed how so many people whinge on about things at work, suffer low wages, awful hours, horrific workloads, yet appear blind to the obvious solution, which is to get organised and stick up for ourselves? We shouldn't excuse ourselves from our responsibility to organise together and look out for ourselves and each other just because the opposition makes it difficult – what else do you expect them to do? But as we rightly expect the government to do something about the social problem of anti-social behaviour, I'm blaming Blair because he is so anti-union, so keen to allow business people the freedom to bully you and me. He calls it 'liberal labour markets' or not having 'restrictive regulation' of labour markets.

Strong **trade union organisation**, at the workplace and campaigning outside it, **is the best way to establish dignity, status, civilised self-assertion**. **People learn that other people are around to support them**. It's a civilising effect. Many of you reading this will have no experience of this feeling because you've only worked where the boss has a free hand, thanks to Blatcherism. Thatcher and Blair's laws law allow businesses to refuse to recognise us when we want to negotiate as a group, as a collective, as a union. We should have the freedom for any of us, any group of workers, to associate as a group and for the employer to have to recognise that and bargain with us. As it is, **it's like playing a game of football, where they can have a team**, a management team, 'the company' – **but we have to play them each on our own**.

You might have experienced situations where the union didn't do enough, so you've no faith in them. That's not an argument against unions, it's an argument for you, your mates, your family, everyone you know, working in the union to make it stronger. **You can't blame unions - all they are is us, organised and sticking up for each other**. If there's not enough of that, then we need more, and it's nobody's job but yours to do something about it. It's not a service you buy - it's a deal you make with your workmates to stand by each other. The reason the Business Class have so much power over us, is because they take care of their business. We need to take better care of ours.

I'm not here planning to do the whole bit on what to do about Anti-social behaviour, vandalism, robbery, street attacks, twocking - it's been more about identifying why some of our Working Class people respond to lack of respect from the Business Class not by turning to civilised self-defence but to being bastards. **Organisation and action, in work and the community, is the key**. But there's the (possible) socialising effects of sport that I want to mention.....

While running the teenage football team and the thuggery we had to cope with and to a degree had to return in kind, I had cause to think - does the football war-game really have a civilising effect? Classically it's been thought so. Many a football man in the 30's, 40's , 50's and 60's in Glasgow, Belfast, Newcastle, Liverpool and the East End has run football teams (or boxing clubs) as a way of getting potential thugs off the streets. It's done to give them a chance to get status and a sense of achievement, to express themselves, in a socially-controlled setting, within rules. It has been and still is done, and seen the development of some wonderful footballers. But also provided a game, a place for expressing themselves, building comradeship and respect for others, for all of them.

But while running our games I doubted all this. Weren't we just taking the thugs with their thuggish attitudes, and giving those attitudes a boost, a platform, and encouragement in a game that involves conflict between groups? That was certainly one actual effect in our league. Not much civilising took place that I could see. Within each team, I suppose - development of mutual respect, team play, and allowing kids to get a sense of status and respect from being good, or even just from being committed to the teams cause. But between the teams - seemed more like an encouragement of hatred and thuggishness and opportunity for it's expression, at times. And not helped by the attitude of many parents, for the widely-reported amount of bawling, referee-baiting, partisan behaviour on the sidelines.

I've come down on the side of 'the game as a civiliser' view. But only if there was more clear social determination to use at as civiliser. The government should pour money in to youth and adult football, and other sports, with the condition that managers, referees, parents attend courses and meetings where ways of **using it to develop wider appreciation of other people** are worked out. Like our local club where some of my old team now play as adults - a clubhouse where they mix with the other team after the game, and suchlike. You can see it working out in adult Working Class teams, in the kind of Sunday leagues that I played in and still watch. Despite some quite nasty scenes emerging in a game - it is a game of physical conflict, after all - after the match, you generally get handshakes, well played mate. So all credit to the guys who run kids leagues for the civilising reason, and the giving of opportunity to kids to express themselves in socially acceptable way.

Does this little story show the **possible brutalising effect of football, but also the civilising effect**? I don't know, see what you think, but it amused me. I

caught the last 10 minutes of a good-quality game on the local pitches. It's good to watch, better than the professional game because it's more real. It's just ordinary blokes, but good players. Teams with players with the right abilities in the right positions. By the end of the season, when teams at the top of their leagues are going for the title, they're good to watch, working well, the team sorted and effective. Training twice a week, they're generally so fit that fully clothed you'd think they were slim. But they're not as fit as the professionals and on the pitch some look a bit thick-waisted. Particularly the goalkeepers. A bit stout, some of them. They don't have to run around.

As I walked over to watch the game, the goalkeeper was shouting up the pitch to an opposing forward. The ball had gone up to the other end of the pitch, the forward was on his way back to the half-way line after an attack at this end. The 'keeper shouted "You and me, mate, right? One on one, next season, eh?" Meaning, I'll have you next time. The forward was a black lad and I thought, uh-oh, is it racism? Or what? The forward, a good fast skilful player, did come at the keeper again, on the break, and slotted it into goal as the keeper came to the edge of the box. As the game finished, I went over to the keeper and asked him what was that all about, fearing the worst. The keeper said "Oh, he called me fat. That's not on, is it?", laughing. No, it's not, I said, laughing too. He was a bit fat.

Sport can be a vehicle for developing self-respect, status, and respect for others, your opponents. At the most basic level, you need the other team, just to have a game. They are your friends. They don't have to be there, but since they do, both sets of players can have a game, within a set of rules that keeps the lid on the war-game side of it. You have to treat your opponents with respect.

I said this to our League secretary, refusing to play again the worst team we encountered, where we'd lost to them in a brutal game. I offered my team that we would refuse to play them next time. We'd no need to turn out, give them a game, to put up with that threatening thuggery. But the lads said, we'll play them. My lads were great. Jonny volunteered to man-mark the most threatening one, a lanky skinhead, and marked him out of the game. Annoyed him so much he took a wild lunge and got booked. We won 2-0. One of the most satisfying games I've ever been involved in. We beat them again 4-3 in one of my last games as manager.

To conclude - on street thuggery, yobbery, ASB.

The almost universal poorer Working Class attitude of being tough, 'ard, is the base cause of some workers, particularly rebellious young lads, messing up other workers lives, attacking their own class. It's aggravated by the gangster culture and the robberies by addict's that are caused by the utter stupidity of Prohibition, of the drug laws. Not everyone with a shaven head, tracksuit, trainers, hoodie, baseball cap, is a bastard. But they are trying to look hard, and to be perceived as hard - the scowl, the frown. **The worst behaviour is just a development of the usual toughness.** Because being hard and aggressive is so common, the **school bullies, the yobs who attack neighbours and younger kids on the street, who rob mobiles, the drunken scrappers, the twockers, the vandals** just feel part of what is normal amongst a lot of poorer workers.

Whatever rich-people's governments do or don't do about this, whether they just do things or we make them do things, **there is a job to be done within the Working Class. By all of us. You as well as me. Me as well as you. Let's sort our side out.** You don't have to start running youth clubs or football teams, though that would be useful. But **think about these arguments**, **look for opportunities** to raise them **with fellow workers.** In your family, at work, in the pub, wherever. **Challenge the 'being 'ard' with each other culture.** Let's do what is necessary to control our kids and develop some civilised behaviour between ourselves. **If anyone wants to be 'ard, they can fight the rich and powerful, the Business Class, not their own**.

Workers of the World Unite and Fight. ***But not with each other.***

Note on Changes/ Improvements by Version Number

There are always improvements worth making: in the rigour and clarity with which various analyses and arguments are made: and in further reducing the loudness of the text. But the changes are usually minor – the main text and arguments are pretty much unchanged and (mostly) in the same place in any print .

Here is a record of improvements.

Print 8 from prints 6 & 7 –'Why Your Boss Is Stronger Than You And How To Get Even' added to cover of the printed book, and to title page; and put in the Section 1 heading. Introduction text improved. Diagram page 14 simplified. Print 9 – Lulu Wikipedia ref. corrected. Minor changes first paragraph and merged with second, page 5. Print 10 – First half page of Page 5 – before sub-heading – re-arranged for clarity. Slight changes last paragraphs p. 2, first p. 3. Print 11 - layout of the explanation of emphasis, page 4. First section title reversed, and updated in section listing as well as section itself. Print 12 – Lower paragraphs on pages 3 and 4 transposed. Text on page 5 and 11 slightly improved, and bolded parts on pages 16 and 31. Print 12 – boss 100 times stronger added. first proper page. Prints 13 and 14 – first couple of paragraphs improved and 1000 times added. Print 15 – 'Capitalism' added at page 46, subsequent page numbering + 1. Print 16 – page numbering locating 'The Case for Unions' added at front. Print 17 – improvements to page 2 and top of page 3. No Print 18. Print 19 – box round 'Case for Unions' improved. Print 20 – page 8 improved. 21 – Gender improved. December 2010 - Print 24 – TEXT CHANGED from **this** ugly Times New Roman – to **this** cleaner and easier to read Calibri. Also some text improvements and de-emphasising done throughout book. Print 25 – TYPE SIZE REDUCED SO PAGES DOWN TO 220. and a run through most of the book clarifying things. Print 26 – improved wording on Title page. And on Families/Tories Print 27 – Introduction radically changed to 'There is Business Class' start. That adds a page or two throughout. 'Only One Side Allowed to Play as a Team' moved forward from before 'Can They Do That' to inside section 'Selling Yourself as a Worker.' 'Being a Worker, Being Working Class' moved from before Selling Yourself as a Worker to 'Class the Relationship Not the Person', Section 2. 'Exploitation' moved from before Law/Beckham/Ferdinand to before Can They Do That. Print 27a minor improvements to Business Class start Checklist and Tone moved before Extra Stuff.27b – page 2 and 3 improvements – they are organised. Only One Side Can Play as a Team improved page 9. 27c and 27d – Improvements to pages 2 to 5. 28 – *Job Cuts, Public Service Cuts, hard conditions at work, War, Benefit cuts, Racism, and so on added page 2.* Some other small changes and pages 123 to 136 improved. Section 4 Title changed. 29 – ***basic social relationships*** page 2 and Section 1 Title changed 30_1 – name change to 'You Are THE Working Class'. 30_2 Opening lines reduced. 30_3 – Opening section titled 'More About Why Everyone Should Read This Book.' Detail improvements to opening pages. 30_4 "To convince fellow-workers" etc added to title page 30_5 Inserting 'uncaring' and a missing 'them' on page 4. Some italics removed.

30_6 'About Our Basic relationships …' added to title page. 'Political Power' instead of 'Politics' on page 2 and section 4 headings. 30_7 Links to Lulu and .org on page 6 updated to 'THE' 30_8 Re-ordering title page and page 2 headings. Text improvements page 2. 30_9 Pages up from 220 to 222 to allow cleaner pages 1 and 2. De-bolding, de-italicising and reducing font of sub-headings. Some chapter and section heading improvements. 2010 UK election observation added early S 4. Page 141 -142 Closed Shop re-arranged. 30_10 Aims on page 2 – convince people. 30_11 'Unions can copy and edit this' added on page 8. Reviews added to title page. 'Save the Planet' improved, adding ref. to politicians wanting growth to concede improved living standards without challenging the Rich. Only One Side can Play as a team improved. 30_12 www.thecaseforunions.org added at page 7. 30_13 Union disclaimer page 7 added. 30_14 Title changed to 'Challenging The System'. 'Earning Your Living changed to 'Making Your Living'. Pen name Jeff Thompson dropped. 30_15 Grateful Dead added and pages 120-122 improved.. 30_16b – layout changes at front. Political Power changed to Political System. 30_17 Just referring readers of Book copies to these Website copies for this improvements record. 30_18 and 30_19 Separate 'You Are The Working Class' copy retired, now features in the Alternate Title. 30_20 Changing links – 'The Case For Unions' now available. Challenging replaces You Are Working Class. De-shouting. Some heading re-wording. 30_21 Section titles of *They Are The Business Class* added to Contents page CTS 22 Version numbering slight change. Line spacing increased from 12 to 14 pt. for readability. It increased pages from 222 to 260. Associating pp 137 to 142 (now pages 158 – 165) much improved. Print /Version 23 New starter section Link Between The Political System and Class organisation. Theirs and Ours 24 Thorough improvement of The Link section 25 Further improvements to The Link section. 25a Further minor improvements to The Link. 26 - The Practicalities of Standing Up To Your Boss added at page 49. Blank space between paragraphs added for better readability, also column width reduced. Resulted in page total going from 268 to 300. **Version 27** Re-arrangement of first few pages and opening sections. Lay out only. Some bits moved to 'The Tone of The Book, page 218. **28** Revised 'It examines the key relationships' on page 2. **29** Adding How It's a Class Society to title page and to second introductory section. Other small changes to opening pages and notes on LAYOUT. **30** Just changing Intro Sections to be called 'Setting The Scene.' It's a Philosophy of Right For the Worker Majority' removed page 2. Alt title moved page 2. **30b** Re-write of first page of 'Setting The Scene 1', page 3. No 30c. **30d** 'Making Your Living' changed to 'How You Make Your Living'. **30e** Improved layout page 2. **30f** Sub title amended. Top half page two slightly amended. Note on first published 2008 added. **30g** – changes to subtitle, page 2, and Contents page. Other minor changes early Nov 2012.