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**Communist Party  
of Great Britain  
(Marxist-Leninist)**



# Break the link with Labour!

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With crisis and war besetting capitalist society, it has never been more important for workers to unite as a class. Those public-sector workers who have come out on strike against the government's wage freeze have demonstrated their readiness for a united battle in defence of living standards.

The last TUC conference passed a resolution, raised by the PCS union, urging the executive to lead and organise the fight-back in the public sector. A committee was duly appointed for this purpose – which to date has done precisely nothing.

Despite the willingness of public-sector workers and others to have a go, industrial action across the sector remains limited to a series of random pinpricks – a one-day strike here by one group of workers, a two-day strike there by another group.

What lies at the root of this seeming inability to achieve unity in struggle? The dead hand that lies heavy on the working class is called social democracy.

## Social democracy: the enemy within

When Britain enjoyed a colonial monopoly in the 19th century, crumbs from the table of empire kept a bought-off section of the working class – the labour aristocracy – tied to the apron strings of the exploiting class. By this means, the revolutionary threat posed by the Chartist tradition was seen off.

In the 20th century, the British ruling class lost its empire, but it gained enormously from the export of finance capital to a world bound economically to modern imperialism. A mere fraction of the superprofits thereby derived was enough to provide the bribes that keep the Labour party and trade-union leadership tied to the interests of British imperialism.

In 1924, the first ever Labour government bombed Iraqi villages to persuade the inhabitants to pay their taxes to the colonial overlord. Labour has never looked back since.

To prevent workers from challenging this class-collaborationist policy, it was essential to keep them divided. The most obvious arena in which workers compete against each other is on the labour market, where all seek to sell their labour power to the highest bidder. Marx explained how the anarchy of capitalist production results in the creation of a reserve army of unemployed workers whose existence is used by the capitalists to force down wages and keep those employed docile.

And when, as in Marx's day, many of the lowest-paid workers spoke with an Irish accent, the lackeys of imperialism could kill two birds with one stone, using native workers' resentment of Irish migrant competition in order to make them complicit in the ruling class's colonisation of Ireland. Marx recognised that *"The English working class will never accomplish anything before it has got rid of Ireland."* (Letter, 10 December 1869)

He maintained that the working class should demand freedom for Ireland *"not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading strings of the ruling classes, because it must join with them in a common front against Ireland."* (Letter, 29 November 1869)

## TUC: stooge for imperialism

The liberation of Ireland may finally be nearing completion, but social democracy is more eager than ever to draw workers into complicity with imperialism's new wars of national oppression against Afghanistan and Iraq, and threats of war against Iran, whilst simultaneously whipping up racist hysteria against

migrant workers and asylum seekers coming to Britain.

As ever, the aim is to keep workers divided – workers here from workers abroad, 'British' workers from 'foreign' workers, 'legal' migrant workers from 'illegal' migrant workers, etc. It is the Labour party in office that is conducting the British end of these wars, and social-democratic influence in the organised labour movement that does its damndest to prevent workers in Britain from recognising that they and the Iraqi resistance actually share a common enemy: British imperialism.

Despite formally disapproving of Britain's warmongering, the TUC in practice acts in cahoots with the aggressive propaganda of British imperialism. When imperialism wants to run a hate campaign against Zimbabwe, Brendan Barber is wheeled out to tell the customary lies about ZANU-PF. When imperialism wants to camouflage its sanctions and war threats against sovereign Iran behind some 'human rights' flannel, Barber is ready to hand.

But ask this glorified butler for imperialism to say one word in support of the just war being waged by the Iraqi resistance against imperialist occupation, and you will hear only a deathly silence, while an invitation to lead a national campaign of even impeccably peaceful civil disobedience against Britain's vicious anti-trade union laws will get no less short shrift.

It was social democracy talking when Barber said in his New Year message that *"it is important that we do not talk ourselves into thinking the economic situation is worse than it is. The truth is that instability has not come from events in the real economy where people trade goods and services, but from the world of finance ... The greatest threat would be to confuse the difficulties now being suffered by banks with the economic fundamentals."* Tell that to those who face the prospect of seeing their jobs, pensions and homes going down the pan as the crisis deepens!

Barber denies the gravity of the overproduction crisis. If he did not do so, he would have to explain why the TUC is not leading a tooth and nail resistance against every attempt to make workers pay for the crisis of the capitalist system. After all, defence of wages and conditions is supposed to be what the unions are there for.

## Writing on the wall for imperialism

By its policy of divide and rule, which it conducts with the indispensable assistance of social democracy, the capitalist state hopes and prays that the working class will remain grumbling but ineffective whilst the welfare state is demolished, jobs and pensions are robbed and wars are fomented.

It faces a problem, however. The economic crisis which so urgently requires this barbaric exercise in vandalism on the part of our rulers also undermines their ability to keep on bribing the labour aristocracy. And further, as more and more of the world's peoples refuse to accept dictation from the IMF and World Bank, instead asserting control over their own resources and forming trade and diplomatic links with each other, the scope for the extraction of superprofits is narrowed – further thinning out the gravy on which opportunism feeds.

Grass roots initiatives suggest a growing mood of revulsion against social-democratic influence within the unions, and deserve support. But wherever the breakthrough comes first, it will have blazoned on its banner the words:

**Break the link with Labour!**