

Luddite legacy

There has been a tendency to use the term ‘luddite’ as an insult, to describe someone who shuns new technology. This misconception may be corrected by the recent interest in promoting research into the history of the working class and the Labour movement, for instance People’s Histreh, Nottingham’s radical history group.

In the 1940s the local Communist Party saw themselves as part of a proud tradition which they traced back to Robin Hood and the Luddites, stating in a 1949 flyer: “The policy of the Communist Party is the continuation and completion of the fight for all the things the men of Sherwood Forest, the Luddites, the Chartists, the early pioneers of the Labour Movement fought for”. The East Midlands District of the Party held alternative celebrations for Nottingham’s Quincentenary, staging a procession of the “people’s heroes of the past” with comrades dressed as Luddites.

Nottingham’s Sparrows’ Nest Library and Archive has several examples of how the Luddites have inspired anarchists and environmental activists in more recent years. The 1997 issue of *Do or die – voices from the ecological resistance*, uses them as a call to action: “Their rebellion against enslavement should inspire us all to more acts of sabotage. What are you going to trash today?”.



"If men walked abroad in their undies"

PROUD RECORD –

A Message from ARTHUR WEST
Prospective Communist Parliamentary Candidate for North West Nottingham

NOTTINGHAM'S Quincentenary gives you and I, the ordinary working people of the city, an opportunity to look back on the history of our forefathers and to reflect on the glorious contribution they made to the progress of our nation.

Not for us the amorous episode of Henry VIII and his women friends or the many Kings and Queens who visited the city ; but instead, the history of which we can rightly be proud, drawn from the life and struggles of the common folk to achieve a fair share of the wealth they produced.

We are the successors of Robin Hood and his Merry Men who, outcast from society, roamed Sherwood Forest to rob the rich and help the poor. Of the Luddites who, in their rebellion against starvation wages and high food prices concentrated their attention on smashing the knitting frames which produced inferior work and helped price-cutting. Read of the Luddites and of the Chartists who demonstrated their belief that Parliamentary action could change the social order of society, and whose efforts to achieve universal suffrage were met with vigorous suppression and wholesale arrests. The statue of Fergus O'Connor who, in 1847, was elected as Chartist M.P. for Nottingham, stands neglected in the Arboretum to-day, and our City Fathers wish to help keep him there in splendid isolation. It is a false hope, for even as they fought, so do the present generation carry on the fine working-class tradition of struggle.

The mighty National Hunger Marches of the depression years, the building of a strong Trade Union, Co-operative and Labour Movement in the city, and finally the growth of the Communist Party. Yes, we can well be proud of our history, and as we continue to struggle for Peace, a higher standard of living, and Socialism, we do so in the knowledge that just as past history belonged to our forefathers, so does the future belong to us.

Let us make the most of our opportunities, and prove ourselves to be worthy successors of a fine and gallant past.

Published by the East Midlands District, The Communist Party, 4 Fletcher Gate, Nottingham, and printed by Crafon Press Ltd., Leicester.

Nottingham Quincentenary souvenir programme published by the East Midlands District of the Communist Party, 1949. FWC 4/6/5.

SALUTE TO THE PEOPLE'S HEROES OF THE PAST!

PEACE & IMPROVED LIVING STANDARDS FOR THE PRESENT!!

FORWARD TOWARDS SOCIALISM!!!

THIS month the people of Nottingham are proudly celebrating 500 years of struggle and progress. It is with a sense of pride that we salute the great men and women of the past who fought and sacrificed to make Nottingham a better place to live in.

Robin Hood and his Merry Men may be good legend, but the men of Sherwood Forest were real men. They fought for justice. They robbed the rich and gave to the poor. The Luddites fought the tyranny of the machine, whilst Chartists fought for political equality and social justice. The pioneers of modern trade-unionism were imprisoned and transported, the early Socialists victimised, stoned and persecuted.

QUEEN OF THE MIDLANDS
Nottingham claims to be the "Queen of the Midlands." It has new housing estates, modern and spacious factories. A well-organised trade-union and Co-operative movement looks after the immediate interests of the workers. All this is in great measure due to those heroic fighters of the past 500 years.

Nor has the struggle ended. Nottingham still has terrible contrasts between the riches of the few and the needs of the many. Nottingham firms declare annual profits running into hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of pounds, whilst their workers have a desperate struggle to make ends meet. Hundreds of families are crowded together in houses condemned long ago as unfit for habitation.

THE FIGHT GOES ON
To-day, the fight against Cripps' Budget, against wage-freezing and rising prices, for the building of houses, schools and hospitals is a fight to prevent a lowering of the standards of living of the working-class.

Just as urgent is the struggle to prevent a third world war from being launched by the war-mongering American capitalists, Churchill and the right-wing Labour leaders, and for the maintenance of peace—especially by trade with and friendship with Russia, New China and Democratic Europe.

LET US FINISH THE JOB
The logical outcome of this 500 years of struggle and progress is the bringing about of Socialism, and with it the ending of unemployment and poverty, of slumps and wars, of the exploitation of man by man. The policy of the Communist Party is the continuation and completion of the fight for all the things the men of Sherwood Forest, the Luddites, the Chartists, the early pioneers of the Labour movement fought for.

A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING
WORK AND LEISURE
BETTER HOMES AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS
PEACE AND SECURITY

Join The Communist Party
and help to complete the work of 500 years.

Communist Party flyer for a demonstration, 1949. FWC 9/3.

NED LUDD'S NEWS

Nottingham's voice of resistance

August 2002

A NATION OF 'REFUGEES'

Politicians and the media have a lot to say - mostly negative - about "refugees" or "asylum seekers". What they never say is that in reality the people of Britain are made up of successive waves of refugee immigrants and that in the last few centuries millions of people have left Britain as refugees for other countries.

IMMIGRANTS TO BRITAIN

Ever since prehistoric times successive waves of people have migrated from Europe into the British Isles: Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, Normans - as many of our surnames indicate. Nottingham was founded by Saxons and its name is Norman. More recently, in the 17th century hundreds of thousands of French Protestants (Huguenots) fled to England to escape religious persecution. Their energy and initiative made an important contribution to the industrial revolution and their French surnames are still widespread, e.g. Courtauld, the textile firm.

In the 18/1900's millions of Irish people had to flee their homeland because of the political-religious persecution and economic exploitation they suffered at the hands of the English ruling class. Paradoxically, many of them came to England where they made up an important part of the industrial working class required by the growing industrial economy. In the inner areas of Nottingham at least 10% of the population have Irish surnames, which means that a much higher percentage of the population are of at least part Irish descent. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries hundreds of thousand of Jews fleeing persecution in the Russian Empire settled here and made a significant contribution to business and the professions.

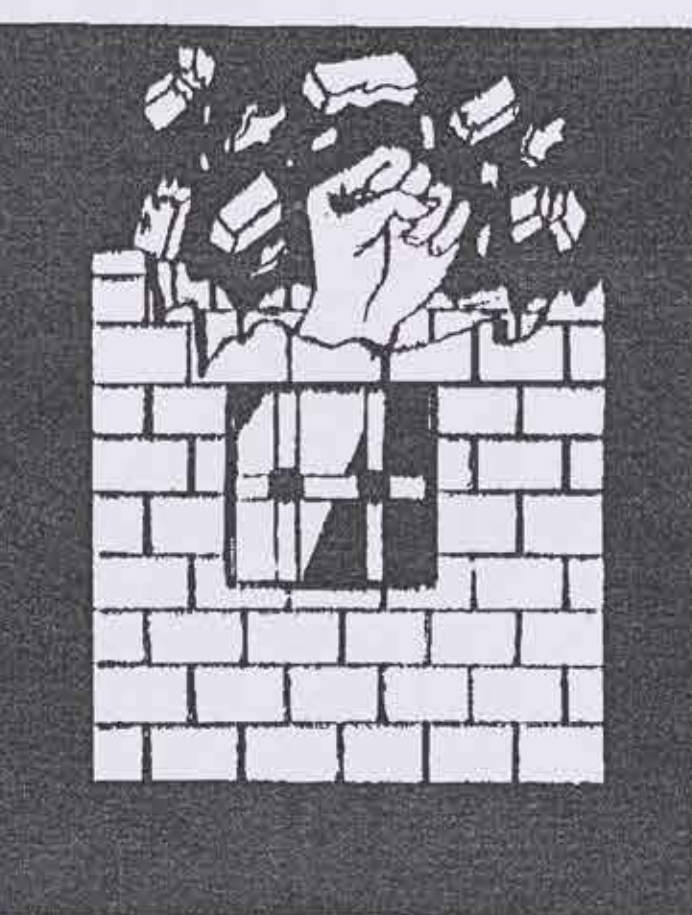
After World War II, tens of thousands of displaced Poles and Ukrainians settled in Britain, especially in the East Midlands. Also large numbers from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent were encouraged by the Government and employers to come to Britain to fill the growing labour shortage, especially in public services.

There was never an original, "authentic" British people. Rather we are made up of

successive waves of immigrants and the knowledge and skills they have brought are among our strengths.

MIGRANTS FROM BRITAIN

Over the centuries millions of people have left Britain because of political, religious and economic pressures. It was from villages in North Nottingham that the religious dissenters who became known as the Pilgrims Fathers set out for America to live free from the religious



persecution they suffered in England. In the 18/1900's hundreds of thousand of Scots had to leave because of the "clearances" by wealthy landlords driving them out of their farms and many Welsh people migrated, e.g. to Patagonia in South America, at least partly because of attempts by the British state to suppress their language.

In England the major factor driving millions to migrate in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was poverty. In Nottingham Castle Art Gallery there is a mid-Victorian painting

showing a family about to migrate abroad taking one last look at their country cottage. Like millions of others, it was rural poverty that drove them to seek new lives in countries such as the USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc... They were encouraged to do so by people such as William Booth, the Nottingham founder of the Salvation Army. Indeed, right here in Nottingham within long memory many orphaned children were forcibly resettled in Australia and New Zealand. For these reasons many of us have kin, both near and distant, in many of these countries. Even today tens of thousands of people leave the UK every year in search of better lives abroad.

Over the years, Britain has received many refugees but let us not forget that many refugees from Britain - political, religious, economic - have been received and accepted in many other countries.

LIVE AND LET LIVE
The descendants of refugees should be sympathetic to the plight of refugees. If people in Britain in the past had not accepted previous "asylum seekers" - our ancestors - then many of us would not be here now! Some politicians try to distinguish "genuine asylum seekers" from "economic migrants". Most of the migrants trying to get into Britain now from places such as the Middle East and parts of Africa are fleeing poverty, but poverty brought about by political and religious strife. It is a false distinction and we should not fall for it. Instead, we should welcome desperate people less fortunate than ourselves. That's what many of our ancestors did and many others of our ancestors were accepted elsewhere. We should do the same.

NOTTS ANTI-FASCIST ALLIANCE, P.O. Box 192, Nottingham, NG1 1F3. 07984 906720

FREE PARTY SCENE

The free party scene is happening, check out www.notts.co.uk for local parties or the Schnevs party & protest site (<http://www.schnevs.co.uk/partyguide.htm>) for national dates. Also worth checking out is <http://nash.gn.apc.org/> a website put together by

Ned Ludd's News: Nottingham's voice of resistance (Nottingham, 2002). Courtesy of Sparrows' Nest, 4265.



ARCHIVAL REMNANTS
OF THE TEXTILE TRADE

MEETING GROUND THEATRE & NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE

PARADISE



A NEW MUSICAL BY STEPHEN LOWE
MUSIC BY DAVID WILSON LYRICS BY STEPHEN LOWE

1812 NOTTINGHAM

THE LOVE OF SPIES

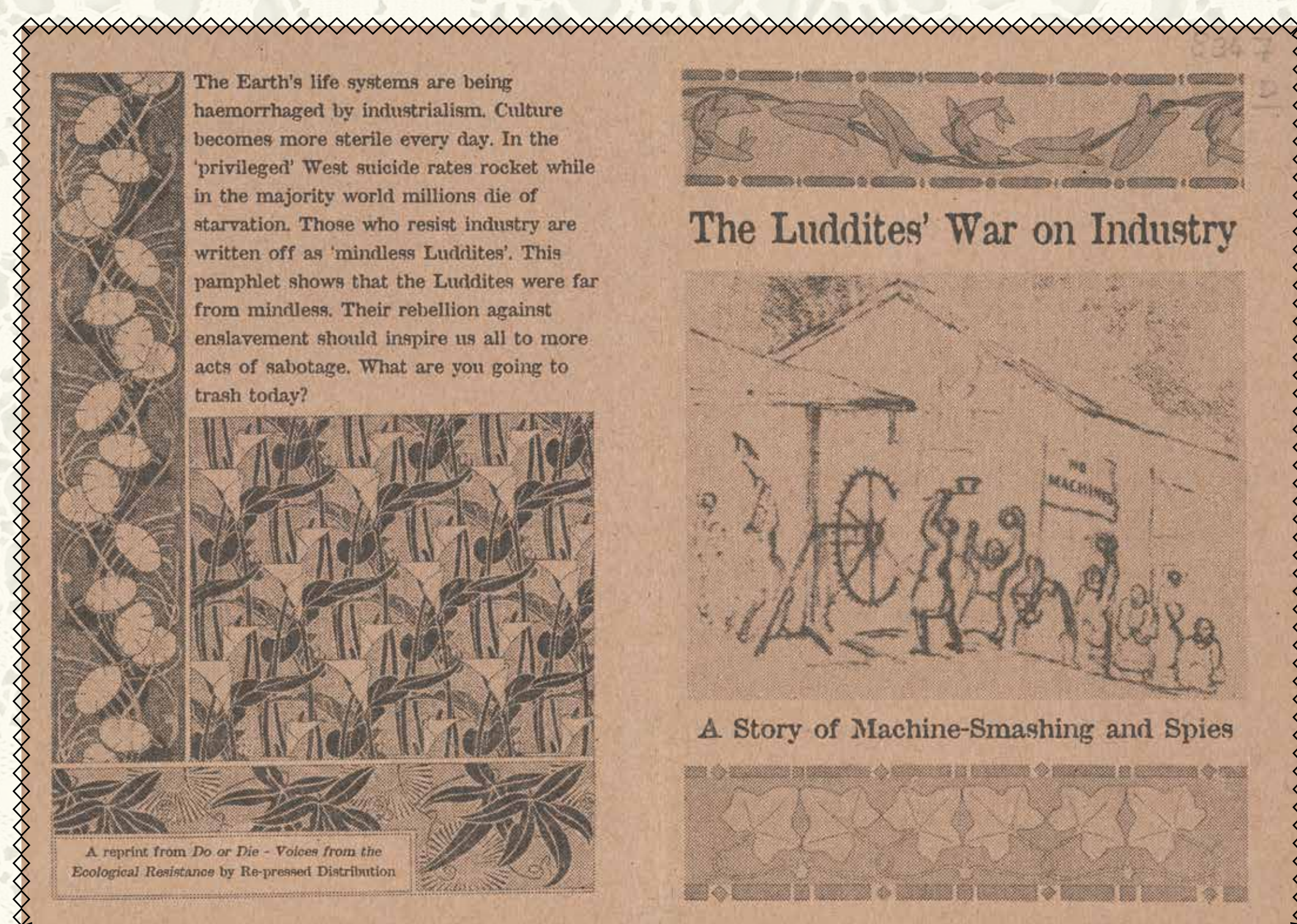
IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTION

FRIDAY 1ST JUNE TO SATURDAY 23RD JUNE

EVENINGS 7.30PM LATE NIGHTS THURSDAYS 7^{PM}, 14^{PM}, 21ST JUNE AT 8.00PM
MATINEES 2.30PM SATURDAY 16TH JUNE AND 1.00PM WEDNESDAY 20TH JUNE
ON TUESDAY 12TH JUNE THERE WILL BE AN AURAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY FOR PATRONS WHO ARE BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED

Nottingham Playhouse
BOX OFFICE 419419

Poster for *Paradise* (Nottingham Playhouse, 1991). SJL ACC 2333.



The Luddites' war on industry, 1997. Courtesy of Sparrows' Nest, 8347D.