



# **TAKING CHARGE – TASKS TO BE DONE**

## **OUR PRIORITY IS BRITAIN**

**Political statement from the Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist,  
20th Congress, London, June 2024.**

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The priority for the British working class is Britain. Our working class must reclaim Britain, our home. Our class, all who live and work here, should focus on our own struggles, against the employing class, here in Britain.

We must use the independence we won in 2016. Brexit was a start of the change of the class's ideology. The class made a proper decision: it told the ruling class, you can't have the strategy that you want. We will not allow you to submerge Britain into a bloc. We will not allow you to enforce the uncontrolled movement of capital and people. This was the first change from social democracy. Brexit stripped away the veils – it's back to class struggle. It has exposed the ruling class's inadequacies. Independence is at root an attitude of mind. All should be involved, to make us as self-sufficient as we can be. The Party's role is to assist the process of continuing this drive for independence, which the class must do through class organisation. Even under capitalism, the class can make progress, but to make further progress, the class must take control.

The state is gearing up for a more intense attack on the working class, tightening its grip on all its means of rule – the judiciary, the police, the BBC, the corporate media. In response we have to defend the relative independence of these bodies. The state is putting ever more curbs on our rights to organise, to strike, to assemble, to vote, and to protest. The ruling class has all the rights it wants; the working class has only the rights it fights to win.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy shows us what happens when the class doesn't take responsibility. A lack of working class control enables capital's misrule. Our class must change the ways it thinks and acts. Workers are active, self-reliant, able to think, speak and act for themselves, able to change the world. Marxism is based on the understanding that only the working class is the active force for progress. Social democracy sees workers as passive, relying on politicians making reforms on their behalf. Social democracy is not imposed on us; it is our class's own creation, its effort to justify its refusal to take responsibility.

The state uses the so-called "culture wars" to criminalise dissent. The class needs the free exchange of thinking to achieve independence of mind. The Party should set a materialist agenda, uphold the scientific method and oppose all attempts to sow division in the class. Our class thrives on secular, evidence-based thinking. We have to bring conversations back to reality, back to Britain.

The class needs to do something different in 2024 and after, not just trudge back to the ballot box, as if voting changes anything. The approach of "voting will provide" is no better than "the market will provide". Leaving things to parliament, or to the market, is a definition of irresponsibility. But just not voting is not enough. The class was minded to vote

Labour to "get the Tories out". But Labour is not the greater evil, or the lesser evil, just the next evil. And then what after that? Vote again? Not vote again? The country needs people's planning, not more market forces. The working class must take responsibility for meeting its own needs, not delegate.

## Defend industry

Workers built our nation, fighting – against the employers' bitter resistance – for education, health, functioning utilities, reliable affordable energy, a working transport system, full employment. But capitalism continues to withdraw from production here, because British workers continually strive to exert control. Capitalism prefers to outsource. It is sabotaging investment projects like HS2, vaccine production and small modular nuclear reactors. Capitalism is stripping Britain of our national assets – industries, infrastructure and services – in a scorched earth policy. Those industries and services that it doesn't wreck at once, it sells to foreign private equity firms which then offshore production, again ensuring destruction. This is the absolute decline of capitalism that the Party has continually warned about. If we do not stop capitalism, it will bring Britain to ruin.

Capitalism pollutes our water and air. The class needs to stop allowing water companies to give away £70 billion in dividends and instead invest this money in cleaning up our rivers. Capitalism abuses our resources, and pollutes our water and air. The more industry that the government drives away from Britain, the closer it gets to its net zero target. But the policies supposed to get us to net zero would deny us warm, comfortable homes, affordable travel by road and air, and many jobs. Britain needs more investment in public transport. To reduce dependence on cars, it needs the much-increased capacity of high-speed rail lines like HS2, more electrification of its railways, and more electric buses. Improving transport links means progress – road, rail, air, and between and within cities. As we see with our steel industry, de-carbonisation means, in practice, unemployment. Proposals to close blast furnaces at Port Talbot and Scunthorpe would end our production of high-quality primary steel products. This would end the manufacture in Scunthorpe of the high-quality steel rails we need for our railways and tramways. High quality steel rails are essential for safety, particularly on high-speed lines.

We know that capitalism harms our environment by putting profit first. Only science and industry can solve problems in our environment, as they solved the problem of Covid-19, but how? Capitalism tells us that industry is the problem and it misapplies net zero to attack workers. Britain needs net energy security with a mix of energy sources – nuclear power (including small modular reactors), our offshore oil and gas, hydroelectric, wind and solar power.

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Capitalism is scuppering our young people's future. They need and want jobs, not conscription into the armed forces. Capitalism now restricts them from higher education and further education. It slashes the quality and quantity of apprenticeships.

Capitalism's alternative to investment and growth is mass immigration and it is a war on the working class. Our class needs to control capital and labour, and end the EU and employers' policy of open borders.

## Unite Britain

2023's wave of trade union struggle across Britain was unity in action, a workers' unity which excluded no one, a unity in which no faction or group imposed its particular outlook on others. Questions of defending the rail industry, for example, were no different in Scotland to England. Our task of defending industry – and our infrastructure and services – is a national task and one which actively builds unity.

In this task our trade unions are indispensable, where we must work and must take positions at all levels, with the guerrilla approach, in protracted struggle. But workers can become victims of their own success, thinking that all anti-union legislation can be dealt with or lived with. Or, worse, they think that all they need do is vote Labour and the problem will be solved. So how to assert the right to strike? Workers will have to fight over the issues on which they have always fought: pay, conditions of employment. In contrast to that united class action, the Labour Party claims that the devastation which capitalism has inflicted on the regions of Britain is due to a failure to promote regional policy. So it promotes regionalism using federalist slogans – claiming that UK decision making is far too centralised in London. This hides the fact that from 1973 to 2020 EU officials took Britain's important decisions and they withdrew economic activity from many regions. The Labour Party's report *A New Britain* says, "We recommend strengthening the powers that deliver self-government in the devolved nations of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland..." In particular, "Our recommendations are intended to strengthen that self-government, by entrenching the permanence, enhancing the status, and widening the powers of the Scottish Parliament." It says, "The House of Lords should be replaced with a new second chamber of Parliament: an Assembly of the Nations and Regions..." Labour also wants to create a Council of the Nations and Regions, and a Council of England, and a Council of the UK. These proposals would entrench separatism. We should oppose such a huge, divisive and reactionary change.

Under a federalist banner Labour to hide its true intent – to break Britain into fragmented competing regions as under previous EU policies.

The country needs unity, not division, not devolution, not regional assemblies. Welsh Labour misgoverns Wales as badly as the SNP misgoverns Scotland. Both foreshadowed what the Labour government is – no better than the last lot. We oppose any partition of Britain, just as we oppose the partition of Ireland. Partitions only ever benefit the ruling class.

## Understand the state and finance capital

What is the state in Britain? What does it do? It is a capitalist state, run by the ruling, capitalist class. The state is still force and fraud, hard power and soft power, the iron fist in the velvet glove. It exists only to ensure that the capitalist class stays in power.

Finance capital has developed since the middle of the nineteenth century to become the malign global force we know today. The liberalised finance sector, increasingly free of national control (and therefore free to defraud and corrupt), took off worldwide in the 1980s. It feeds off the real economy, growing in power across the world, China included. Wall Street, with its deputy the City of London, leads this global capital casino. Globalisation means capital and labour moving wherever the capitalists want.

It is good that countries seek independence and to establish their own currencies. Countries should reject bloc politics, and not get into currency wars between the rival imperial blocs. Using the dollar to trade is like using the euro as a common currency within an economic bloc – a nation state doing so loses its sovereignty.

In 1971, President Nixon made the dollar a fiat currency (no longer in any way backed by gold), to pay for the war against Vietnam. As part of this process it also enabled the British pound – with its legacy of being a reserve currency for the sterling area – to follow suit in 1972. For the USA as principal world reserve currency provider, and to a lesser extent Britain, the change away from gold allowed a vast increase in the quantity of dollars and pounds that could be thrown into world circulation. A change of this magnitude gave the USA, in particular, a line of unbridled credit, so it did not need to produce in order to buy imports, or to fund its wars. This Ponzi scheme was exposed in 2008, a credit crunch masked by Quantitative Easing – printing more money. The flexible dollar lets US firms buy up our manufacturing, services and property on the cheap. The USA uses other countries' trade surpluses to fund its military. Having left the clutches of the EU, Britain now needs to finish the job of gaining financial independence by dissociating itself from the dollar, from the IMF and the World Bank – from US dominance. In doing so we should no longer let our pound be used as a minor reserve currency, thus once and for all removing Britain from the imperialist chain.

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Finance capitalists separate the real physical assets used in production from their underlying value. Corporations are treated as bundles of assets, the more liquid or saleable the better, rather than as productive wealth-creating bodies. Corporate securities become liquid – instantly convertible into cash. This opens the way to new financial instruments – stock futures, options, derivatives, hedge funds and so on. Speculation spawns euphoria with no root in production. Ever-larger financial bubbles cause stagnation, then inevitably burst – as in 1987, 2000 and 2008.

The City of London, the peak of finance capital in Britain, serves no wider public, social or economic purpose. It claims to help the economy by directing investment into production and growth but in reality it takes money out of our economy, away from production, and seizes the wealth created by real work, including our savings and pensions. It is a parasite killing its host. The surplus value we produce should stay here, not be stolen away to private offshore bank accounts.

Finance capital hates democracy. Unelected figures in Wall Street, the City of London and other financial centres wield power, not elected governments, not parliaments. Successive governments have embraced this treachery in the City. Its views and demands outweigh the needs of working people, the vast majority of the population. Hence the stream of abysmal governments and parliaments.

## Keep out of wars

Our class should get Britain out of NATO, an aggressive alliance which with its partner bloc the EU aims to add to US economic and political advantage. But we do not support any rival bloc. Some have said support the EU against US imperialism. Some say support Russia or China, or both, against US imperialism. But no good can come from backing one bloc against another.

The working class's main enemy is at home. Workers face a single ruling class which has a single aim – to stay in power. It seeks to maximise that power to exploit and profit from workers' labour. All its policies, domestic and foreign, are geared to that one aim. Peace, human welfare, our environment, mean nothing to them.

NATO tells us that other countries across the world are our enemy. It blames Iran for inflation here, blames Russia for soaring energy prices here, and blames China for deindustrialisation here. But our difficulties here are home grown, their source the capitalist class. Of course, we have to be on our guard against all threats to Britain, all hostile acts, from whatever quarter.

Sovereign nations have the right to defend themselves. But capitalist governments and other bodies claiming to speak on workers' behalf routinely abuse this right for their own ends, to conduct wars of aggression.

NATO, led by the US and British governments, increasingly intervenes in other peoples' wars. The government, with "loyal" opposition support, drags us into more and more foreign wars, none of which is about the defence of our country. Interference only makes things worse. We should not import foreign conflicts to our streets, our communities and our trade unions. We are for the defence of Britain and to that end we must unite here. Our working class should get on with the job of fighting for wages and conditions. Our trade union movement can strengthen the peace movement in its struggles, but the demand for peace must be wider than that – embracing all of the working class whether currently in dispute or not.

Britain is a major funder of the war in Ukraine, blocking diplomacy and leading every reckless escalation. NATO's aggressive interference encouraged the Ukraine government into launching civil war from 2014. NATO quite deliberately provoked Russia, whose expansionist government was goaded into invading Ukraine. The resultant trench warfare stalemate risks escalations, such as the USA looking to locate nuclear weapons to its base at RAF Lakenheath for the first time since 2008. The USA can only send them here because successive British governments have been so compliant. The British government and the loyal opposition parties are happy to encourage and subsidise the supply of weapons from British arms manufacturers which fuel the continued destruction of Ukraine. Growing calls by British workers for peace and for getting US bases and troops off our soil must logically and surely lead to calls to leave NATO.

However, some unions with members working in the defence industries have supported pro-war resolutions at the TUC and the STUC, in the mistaken belief that supporting the war in Ukraine is supporting those members. The GMB motion passed by the TUC in 2023 called for continued "financial and practical aid from the UK to Ukraine". This was a call to send ever more arms to Ukraine. We need a defence industry for Britain, for defending our independence, not arms for Ukraine.

The British and US governments have regularly opposed ceasefires and opposed the peaceful resolution of conflicts, as when they block the peaceful reunification of Taiwan with China. We oppose US and NATO interference in other people's disputes. We serve no foreign power.

The British and US governments have regularly blocked popular proposals for the two state solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and refused to accept that both peoples have the right to live in peace. Only the peoples of the Middle East can decide what resolution and peace might involve. The peoples of the Middle East want peace, while the US and British governments pour oil on the fire by bombing Yemen and arming Israel.

The Labour Party is as pro-war, pro-NATO, as the Conservatives. Attlee's Labour government played a key role in founding NATO. Britain has always been NATO's deputy leader. Both Labour and

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Conservative crush working class dissent, and their own internal party dissent. The ruling class's foreign policy is – hate Russia, hate China, hate Iran. The head of the British army tells us we are all part of the “pre-war generation” and that our country must be put on a “war footing”. The government is spending more than £50 billion a year on the military, more than ever before, and it says its aim is to spend 2.5 per cent of GDP on the military, up around a quarter on current levels. We cannot mend potholes here, let alone schools and hospitals, yet we let the government spend recklessly to support war. We must demand that our precious resources are spent on what we need at home. Parliament just nods through ever-larger military budgets while cuts are made to Britain's public services. Dissent and diplomacy, or even seeking to debate increased military spending, are demonised as appeasement and/or treason.

The attempted silencing of those who work for peace shows the weakness, not the strength, of the ruling class's drive to war. Our rulers have not forgotten that workers saw through their lies for wars against non-aligned Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. Efforts for peace won huge popular support, and helped to prevent open British intervention in Syria, though covert intervention continues. Why did the class fail to stop those wars? Because it did not go to the root of the problem – the ruling class's imperialism (our NATO membership is just an aspect of imperialism).

Capitalism always tries to extend its power over other countries – their markets, their raw materials, their labour power, and key sea routes and transport corridors. This drive was and is the essence of imperialism. The form of the political shell – formal colonial, informal control – is secondary. Export of capital signals the nature of a country's economy. Does the country use the wealth it produces for the good of its people, as Cuba does, or does it let capitalists export that wealth in order to make profit? China is the world's fourth largest exporter of capital, Russia is the eighth.

We should not talk of “global capitalism”. Capitalism is always divided into rival empires competing to carve up the world – now modern empires are the creatures of finance capital. Outside national control, they start imperialist wars and even threaten another world war. This is the logical development of capitalism, not the product of some global elite conspiracy. Rival blocs divide the world between themselves: EU, Eurasian Economic Union, China's Belt and Road. The world is divided between rival capitalist powers. But shifts are possible, and dangerous, as when NATO encouraged Ukraine's government to seek membership of NATO and the EU.

## Conclusion

Workers must take control of their existing enterprises, workplaces, local economic developments; focus on work, jobs and production, to control the basics of life. But then our class has to go beyond

even that, because it is not enough to control your workplace, even your industry. To make change effective and permanent, our class has to go on to take control of the whole country, make the permanent change to socialism. How does the class run the whole country? Not by using parliament, or devolved powers, or “citizens' assemblies”.

We need to put Britain, and Britain's industry, first. The idea of making finance serve our national interest of employing people in useful work, making what we need, is not radical – but capitalism cannot do that.

Get organised, join your union, build and defend the new Britain, take charge. Join the CPBML, the party of the working class.

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