

# WORKERS

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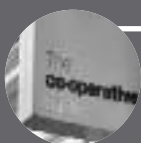
## EXPOSED: THE EU CONTROL OVER BRITAIN'S TRANSPORT

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



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IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

# WORKERS

## “Jilted by the European Commission

THE TUC and trade union love affair with the European Union began in the dark days of Thatcher, when then-President of the European Commission Jacques Delors addressed Congress and said Europe would save them from Thatcherism. It was always a false boast. Now even the boasting has stopped.

Under the REFIT (“Regulatory Fitness and Performance”) proposals the Commission will review EU legislation on workers’ rights. In language familiar to British ears it talks of “easing the burden” on business and of making EU law “lighter and simpler”.

It’s doing this by “streamlining” directives on information and consultation rights in collective redundancies and business transfers (in particular, the transfer directive known as

TUPE), despite a recent review concluding they were “fit for purpose”. Nothing that could even slightly get in the way of capital is to remain.

Plans to extend these rights to smaller companies and the public sector have been shelved, permanently. Nor will the Commission be going ahead with legislation on illness or injuries associated with screen displays, tobacco smoke or carcinogens. And there will be no legislation on health and safety in hairdressing which had been agreed between unions and employers.

The European Trade Union Confederation says it only accepted the internal market on the proviso that there would be strong “social” rules. More fool it, and more fool anyone who believes in the EU. ■

## Sharks will be sharks

EVERYONE knows the big six energy companies are profiting at the expense of their customers. But that is what they are supposed to do. Indeed, it is what they are legally obliged to do.

The higher the CEOs of the big six raise energy prices, the higher the companies’ profits. The higher their profits, the higher the CEOs’ performance-related bonuses. So running an energy company is basically a licence to print

your own bonuses.

But what can we expect? When we allow the privatised energy companies to serve their CEOs’ greed first, at our expense, then we shouldn’t be surprised that we are being ripped off.

We don’t want energy companies to profit at the expense of their customers. We don’t want a profit system. We want a different, planned economic system, which doesn’t put profit first. ■

Cover image Andrew Wiard/www.wiard.co.uk

WORKERS is published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)



78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB.  
ISSN 0266-8580

www.workers.org.uk

Issue 175, December 2013



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# Probation officers strike

THE NATIONAL Association of Probation Officers, NAPO, struck on 5/6 November against government proposals to privatise probation and rehabilitation of offenders. Probation is seen as a business worth £820 million per year, with over 233,000 people on probation or parole. Electronic tagging of offenders is a £1 billion market despite G4S and Serco being embroiled in allegations of tagging the dead or overcharging.

Britain has 14 privately run prisons. It was in fact the first country in Europe to open a privatised prison, now followed by all EU states. More privatised prisons are to follow as 19th-century jails are closed and vast super-prisons are built, most of which will be run by the private sector – G4S, Serco, Sodexo. G4S operates in 125 countries, employing over 657,000 “security staff”. In Britain its sites range from prisons and immigration centres to secure training units. Elsewhere in the world it provides bodyguards and mercenaries.

The model is the USA prison system. The United States has 5 per cent of the world’s population but 25 per cent of the world’s prisoners. The US prison system costs the country \$39 billion a year, the equivalent of two-thirds of the US state education budget. Around half of US prisoners are incarcerated for victimless crimes, with the three strikes rule ensuring there is no rehabilitation in many states.

The standard US state contract with the privatised prison system is that if the prison has an empty bunk, the US state faces a financial penalty. So the pressure on the individual US states is to maximise the prison population. It’s a spiral of madness guaranteeing an ever-expanding prison building programme, an ever-growing prison population and guaranteed profits for the companies. In terms of the proportion of prisoners to the population as a whole, the USA tops the prison population league, followed by Britain, South Korea, France, Germany, and Japan .

Two British police forces are seeking to privatise police services, crime investigation, public safety and so on. West Midlands and Surrey are looking at a £1.5 billion seven-year privatisation deal. The only police back-room services privatisation to date, Lincolnshire, was for a mere £200 million.

Criminality is to be a revenue stream worth billions as the dividing line between crime and legality disappears. No longer is it about tackling the causes of crime, which would be far too difficult for the pompously entitled Ministry of Justice and all the agencies which hang off it – courts, police, probation, and so on, as that would mean tackling the class divide. The causes of crime, the effects of crime, the victims of crime and those unfortunates to be caught are to be nothing more than building blocks in protecting business interests and profits, effectively “legalising” criminality. ■

## GREECE General strike

ON 6 NOVEMBER Greek unions held a general strike against a new property tax and further expected attacks on jobs and pay. Already the jobs of 25,000 public sector workers are threatened. Their pay will be cut by a quarter, and they will be sacked if they cannot be redeployed within eight months. Flights and other transport were disrupted as well as schools and hospitals. Ferries and suburban rail stations were at a standstill and thousands marched in Athens and Thessaloniki.

There have been more than 30 such stoppages in the past three years. After massive public sector cuts, tax rises and the slashing of pensions the unemployment rate is now 27 per cent. Greeks have been warned to expect worse. Unions warn the country cannot take any more, saying that Greece is being destroyed in an endless nightmare.

Riot police also used tear gas to clear the headquarters of ERT, the former state broadcaster. They arrested workers who had occupied the building and had been broadcasting over the Internet since June, when the government sacked its 2,600 staff and refused to reopen it without a complete restructuring. ■

## TRADE Deficit rises

IN SEPTEMBER, Britain had a £9.82 billion trade deficit in goods, up from £9.56 billion in August. There was a 24 per cent fall in exports of ships, aircraft and materials. The deficit for July–September was up by £3.8 billion on the previous quarter, reaching £29.1 billion. ■

**If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or email [rebuilding@workers.org.uk](mailto:rebuilding@workers.org.uk)**

## EUROBRIEFS

## The latest from Brussels

**Megalomaniac Merkel**

GERMAN CHANCELLOR Angela Merkel wants the EU to have more powers over eurozone members' national budgets. Merkel wants legally enforceable contracts between the European Commission and individual states. These would set out obligations to maintain budgetary discipline and improve competitiveness; in other words, to reduce public spending and lower wages.

**Waiting for assurances...**

BRITISH, FRENCH and Spanish intelligence services have been regularly sharing data with the US National Security Agency, which is said to have monitored Angela Merkel's phone and those of 34 other heads of government. On 23 October MEPs voted to suspend the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme with the US because the NSA has been spying on EU citizens' bank data. The resolution is non-binding. EU Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said the US had given explanations and assurances and that there were no indications that the agreement has been violated. She is "still waiting for additional written assurances".

**Rules? What rules?**

BARCLAYS BANK believes it can avoid EU rules capping bankers' bonuses by splitting pay into three elements including a new monthly sum based on an employee's responsibilities.

**The Mafia Union**

ITALIAN MEP Sonia Alfano, who chairs the European Parliament's Special Committee on Organised Crime, said in an interview with EURONEWS, "Sadly, the mafia is already in the control room when it comes to Europe. [They] have advance knowledge of what is happening, where it's happening and who is taking the decisions. They have relations with people within all EU institutions."

**San Marino still not in**

A REFERENDUM in San Marino to join the EU failed; only 20 per cent of its people took part, so the minimum threshold of 32 per cent was not met. The tiny state has voluntarily adopted the euro, but does not fit EU rules. This is the third attempt since 2010 to force it into the EU, but the first time there has been a vote. ■



**14 November: the Construction Safety Campaign organised a wreath laying and a minute's silence for Richard Laco, the worker killed last week on the Laing O'Rourke building site behind the British Library at King's Cross, where the Francis Crick Institute is being built.**

Photo: Andrew Wiard/www.wiard.co.uk

**HEALTH AND SAFETY****Half of sites breaking the law**

MORE THAN half of over 1,000 unannounced spot checks carried out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on construction sites in September discovered material breaches of the law. Yet the HSE will have had its budget cut by more than a third by the end of this parliament. Unite points out that at the moment the HSE can

only inspect a tiny proportion of building sites and needs more resources not fewer.

Elsewhere Network Rail is to cut 750 management jobs, some 15 per cent of the total, many of them responsible for safety – while the Commons Transport Select Committee is looking at level crossing safety. In the past 18 months three people have died on level crossings, with a number of serious injuries, for which Network Rail has been fined a total of £195 million. ■

# Action hits higher education

ON 31 OCTOBER academic, administrative and technical staff across the whole of Higher Education in Britain took successful strike action in their dispute over pay. UCU, Unison, Unite and the EIS in Scotland are all taking action. A further strike day is planned for 3 December unless progress is achieved by that date.

Classes were cancelled all over the country and regional rallies were held with speakers from all unions. One of the largest rallies, in Conway Hall in London, showed members in the mood to fight. Many speakers angrily described how their institutions had accrued surpluses in recent years with the rise in student fees, while suppressing staff wages to give those surpluses the extra boost. Speakers also emphasised the need for resolve and discipline on the part of the unions, pointing out that the employers had clearly been communicating with each other and organising their strategy of keeping wage rates low, continuing the use of hourly paid academic staff on zero hours contracts and using the constant threat of outsourcing areas of university services.

Since the 31 October all academic staff have been working to contract. This entails: staff not working more than their contracted hours where those hours are expressly stated or are stipulated in a workload agreement; not performing any additional voluntary duties, such as out of hours cover or covering for colleagues; and not attending meetings where such attendance is voluntary on the part of the member.

One effect of the work to contract has been staff realising just how much unpaid overtime they had been working. At St Andrew's University the academic staff have taken the interesting step of writing individually to human resources asking for any documentation in relation to their contract and this has, in itself, been an effective education campaign.

A big boost to the campaign has been the huge local and national support from the National Union of Students and local student bodies. The National Union of Students has contacted ministers calling for "a speedy resolution to the ongoing pay dispute, and in such a way that provides a fair and sustainable settlement to higher education staff".

As WORKERS went to press, the unions were awaiting ministers' response to their call for a return to the negotiating table ahead of the planned strike day on 3 December. ■

**US****War on the world**

INDIVIDUAL ASSASSINATION, abuse of human rights, rendition of alleged political opponents, drone bombing and suchlike is a US war on the world not a war on terror.

Evidence presented to US government hearings, arising from the revelations about the US National Security Agency worldwide spying activities, indicates that US Special Forces are operating in over 120 countries. This represents a doubling of deployment under President Barack

Obama, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, compared with the George Bush junior presidency.

The Special Forces, an "executive assassination bureau", are deployed by the Joint Special Operations Command, which unlike the CIA reports solely to the President's National Security Council. Much of the work of the Command is delegated to private companies such as Blackwater, supposedly officially banned from Iraq for civilian massacres.

US ground forces are now directly deployed in over 35 African countries training local forces, establishing transit stations, policing the continent. ■

## GP opening hours diversion

THE NHS is in crisis. Primary care is failing, Accident and Emergency units are over-extended, access to GP services continues to worsen. Add to this the chaos generated by the Health and Social Care Act and the abolition of health planning. So the government has been running a diversion about extending GP surgery opening hours, implying that a move to seven-day opening, 8.00am to 8.00pm, will happen in the near future. This is light-years away from reality. Most GP surgeries do not open after 6.30pm. Less than 1 per cent of surgeries open for limited hours at the weekend.

The Royal College of GPs estimates that the NHS needs an extra 10,000 GPs to eradicate the difficulties of getting a GP appointment and also to take pressure off A&E services. That's too much to be provided even by stealing GPs from elsewhere in the world, extending working hours, deskilling staff or shuffling provision among existing GP services.

It would take a massive GP training programme, similar to what Cuba established in 1959 after most of its doctors migrated. It is not a question of just putting more money into GPs' hands but of creating more GPs. Likewise, the training and creation of more consultants and specialists resolves hospital waiting lists and helps strengthen primary care to tackle the causes of ill health, with provision for those who then need hospital support.

The NHS faces a crisis caused by a government that wants to break it up and replace it with private health and private insurance. Health workers and patients should now demand more radical solutions: seven-day, 24-hour health provision, with adequate skilled staff numbers. Really make the NHS the service it needs to be.

It is not a question of cost but deployment of resources. Are we to fund health or fund those who seek a profit from health? Do away with the conflict of interest of small business men and women providing GP provision, do away with private practice by consultants. The Cuban health service has shown that there is an alternative providing the highest quality of health care provision in its country and in over 30 other nations worldwide. ■

**EDUCATION****Free school fabrications**

EDUCATION SECRETARY Michael Gove has set the cat among the pigeons with his recent defence of the right of "free schools" to employ unqualified teachers and his call for the right to waive qualifications to be extended to all schools.

"How about unqualified brain surgeons/ airline pilots etc..." was typical of the furious reaction he engendered.

Apparently, his cavalier approach to qualifications extends to accountants and those who look after the books and ensure that schools are run efficiently and lawfully for the benefit of pupils.

The much-vaunted Kings Science Academy in Bradford, a flagship free school for Gove and Cameron, is in the headlines again, not for the quality of educational provision (damned in the latest Ofsted inspection) but for the alleged misuse of funds.

Fabrication of invoices, employment of various family members of the headteacher, school funding spent on clothing, the list goes on. The DFE knew about this for months before being forced to release details.

As WORKERS went to press, three men had been interviewed by West Yorkshire Police in connection with "fraud at a free school". One man has got away with it. For now. ■

**WHAT'S ON****Coming soon****MARCH**

Tuesday 4 March, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. "Class in the 21st century"

CPBML public meeting. Some people say class is dead. Or that there too many to count. Really? The CPBML says there are only two classes in Britain – workers and capitalists – and that an understanding of class is central to any analysis of modern Britain. Come and discuss. Everybody welcome.

**ENERGY****Ignoring shale evidence**

SHALE BEDS now account for more than a quarter of US natural gas production, up from 1 per cent in 2000. Its unconventional oil and gas production is worth \$238 billion, creating 1.7 million jobs.

The consequent lower energy prices reduce US industry's costs, giving it a competitive advantage. Four years ago, Europe's gas prices were about the same as the USA's. Now industry and consumers in EU member states pay twice as much for electricity and three times as much for gas.

Research from Public Health England found that fracking poses no serious medical risk. A study by the water industry confirmed fracking will not contaminate the water supply. But the environmental lobby ignores the evidence and is doing its worst to stop us developing our shale resources. ■

**TRAFFICKING****50 per cent rise**

DETECTED CASES of people trafficking during the last 12 months in Britain rose by 50 per cent on the previous year. These included 371 children being used as domestic slaves or being sexually abused and, in one horrific example, a Somalian child brought specifically to harvest her organs; the child was intercepted by police. The traffic in women increased by 12 per cent, men by 33 per cent.

The Anti-Slavery Society, a Victorian museum piece, has seen its membership rejuvenated. 2013 has seen two prosecutions under anti-slavery legislation in 21st-century Britain. Workers must stand firm against those who promote such a trade irrespective of what façade they hide behind – culture, clan, tribe, caste, gang, family etc. ■

The Action for Rail campaign is targeting a European Union measure v the failed fragmentation and privatisation that has plagued Britain – a

## Rail unions resist the EU's plans to hand co



9 November. RMT, TSSA & ASLEF back the European Transport Workers and Action for Rail day of action against EU rail, protesting outside Europa House, the European Commission Office in London.

Photo: Andrew Wiarid/www.wiarid.co.uk

ONE OF the labour movement's big successes has been Action for Rail, the TUC's campaign to fight for a nationally integrated railway under public ownership. Supported by the rail trade unions RMT, ASLEF and TSSA, along with Unite, the campaign helped more and more people see the benefits of reuniting and renationalising Britain's privatised railways, and stopping the publicly owned East Coast franchise from being re-privatised.

"Privatisation" is perhaps the wrong term. Encouraged by the EU, European publicly owned railway corporations have already established a massive presence in Britain's rail industry, making profits that are being repatriated to pay for improvements to the transport services and infrastructure in Germany, France and

the Netherlands in particular. It is no surprise that these foreign players are lining up to take over East Coast. Instead of making large contributions to the British Treasury, the profits would be siphoned off to benefit the taxpayers of other European countries!

Action for Rail has now recognised the threat posed by the European Union to its aims, and is targeting the EU's Fourth Rail Package. This measure, if introduced, would not only force the rest of Europe to adopt much of the failed fragmentation and privatisation that has been such a disaster in Britain but would also stop a future British government from reuniting and renationalising the railways.

The TUC and the rail unions lobbied the European Commission on 9 October, recognising that the EU's proposals to

create a Single European Rail Market will entrench privatisation in Britain and will encourage a widespread attack on the jobs and conditions of rail workers and the use of "social dumping" to encourage a race to the bottom for rail workers' conditions.

But transport trade unions are seemingly oblivious to the dead hand of the EU also within the fierce debates about the building of a new high-speed railway in Britain, dubbed "HS2", and issues associated with that project. And there is an immediate threat posed by the Fourth Rail Package, an obscure document published by the EU in October which should be equally worrying for the future.

What about HS2? There is no doubt that massive investment is necessary to

which, if introduced, would force the rest of Europe to adopt much of and also stop a future government from renationalising rail...

## Control over to private companies

improve and expand Britain's railway network, with its infrastructure largely built in the 19th century to 19th century standards when steam trains rarely ran faster than 70 miles an hour. Despite rather than because of privatisation, these railways, severely pruned by Beeching in the 1960s, are now carrying more passengers than the much larger network that existed in the 1920s and 1930s when the railways had their last "golden age".

Not surprisingly, the rail unions support the building of HS2 in principle though there are clearly doubts about the detail. Professor Henry Overman of the London School of Economics and a member of an HS2 analytical challenge panel, set up to provide independent expert scrutiny, said available evidence suggested the scheme was "not particularly good value for money" compared with other transport projects.

"It may well even be poor value for money compared to other alternatives that address exactly the same set of problems," he said. "The case for improvements on the existing lines is actually pretty good in terms of the benefit-cost ratio, which is the way some of us like to look at these things."

### Control

The key question for Britain's workers is who is to control this new infrastructure, in whose interests will it be run, and who is really making the decisions about what enhancements are made to the country's rail network.

The debate is currently around how HS2 could connect London with the Midlands, the north of England and Scotland, and the economic benefits that may flow from that. But the EU – with British government connivance – is making plans that would bring HS2, along with other key rail routes, motorways, ports and airports, increasingly under direct EU control.

Indeed, it may be the case that should Britain decide not to build HS2, the EU may nevertheless force us to do so. This is a takeover of the control of British transport by the EU on behalf of the state-

run German, French and Dutch transport operations like DB that want to run it. (See article in WORKERS, February 2012.)

As the EU document puts it, "The new EU infrastructure policy will put in place a powerful European transport network across 28 member states to promote growth and competitiveness. It will connect East with West and replace today's transport patchwork with a network that is genuinely European." This is Euro-speak for the true aim – to have an EU controlled transport network that will facilitate a free market economy run in the interests of capitalists, not workers. The EU is less concerned about having Britain's cities connected and more interested in how they can promote the

free movement of goods and labour which, like the Fourth Rail Package, will mean social dumping and attacks on the pay and conditions of workers.

Britain needs investment in rail and other infrastructure in order to meet the needs of its people by improving mobility, and allowing the country's industries to modernise and develop. We cannot allow the EU to prevent Britain's rail network from being returned to public ownership, or to dictate that enormous sums of British workers' money are spent on new transport infrastructure designed solely to benefit the EU and the capitalists it exists to serve. And we certainly cannot allow the EU to control Britain's transport network. ■

## Brussels' grab for our transport

THE EU'S latest strategy on transport was announced in October and agreed to by British ministers – to little fanfare.

The EU has designated nine "core network corridors" that are seen as the transport network of the single market. Much of Britain's long-distance transport network will fall into one of these corridors, the "North Sea-Mediterranean" corridor, which stretches from Ireland and Glasgow through Britain and down to the French ports of Marseille and Montpellier.

The North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor includes the whole of the West Coast main line and the high speed rail line between London and the Channel Tunnel (HS1). It's not just rail; key motorways are included, and the English Channel is now designated as a "Motorway of the Sea". An EU tender document notes, "In the northern part of the corridor the main missing link is the cross-border rail connection between Dublin and Belfast which needs upgrading and the new high speed line 2 through Great Britain to improve travelling times between London and the North." For more detail, see <http://tinyurl.com/hs2-ten>.

All nine core corridors are overseen by so-called "European Coordinators" appointed by Brussels. Since HS2 would be part of the North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor, it would fall squarely into the governance of the coordinator responsible for it – currently Karla Peijs, a former Dutch minister whose party, Christian Democratic Appeal, lost half its seats in the country's 2010 general election. You get a flavour of the party's politics from how it was formed in 1977: from a merger of three parties, including the Anti-Revolutionary Party. ■



Photo: Workers

Kilometre signs on the M25 mark the extent of EU control on our infrastructure.

The European Union loves it. Employers love it. No wonder. The working class achievements...

**They call it free movement of labour. They**



Photo: shutterstock.com/Direk Ercken



# free movement of labour threatens to undermine all our mean the enslavement of labour

OUR PARTY believes that the British working class comprises all who live here permanently and sell or want to sell their labour power, wherever they are from and whatever their colour or creed. And we recognise that migration is not a benefit for workers: it is a key way for employers to mobilise and exploit cheap labour. The employers generally back both EU membership and mass migration: both help them keep wages down and profits up.

When population rises, wages and conditions fall because when the supply of a good rises, its price falls. As Karl Marx said to the First International back in 1867, “in order to oppose their workers, the employers either bring in workers from abroad or else transfer manufacture to countries where there is a cheap labour force.” Or both, we should add.

More than 20 per cent of our under-25s are out of work, nearly a million young people. Britain doesn't need migrant labour: employers and governments want it. So governments talk of restricting immigration but actually encourage it.

One popular claim is that we need migrants to save our welfare state – which is absurd. Are migrants supermen who don't get ill, don't need education or transport or housing, and don't get old? They actually add to the pressures on our overcrowded hospitals, schools, transport systems and houses.

The government has admitted to the European Commission that it doesn't have any figures on how many EU nationals claim benefits here, so how could the TUC possibly claim that “migrant workers contribute more in taxes than they receive in benefits”?

Immigration is asset-stripping – taking from poorer countries their younger, more educated and skilled people. Migration undermines the home countries' development, and increases their dependency. The EU's 2001 Code of Practice for the Active Recruitment of

Healthcare Professionals is voluntary for the private sector, allowing poaching. Since this Code was issued, there has been a surge in medical migration. Many African and Caribbean countries have more of their home-trained doctors working in the OECD countries than at home. Some 90 per cent of Jamaica's nurses and 90 per cent of Haiti's nurses work in OECD countries. This brain drain widens world health inequality.

Just as Zionists claim that anti-Zionism is really anti-semitism, the ultra-left claim that opposition to border controls is racism. One could indeed be against the EU, or against immigration, for racist reasons. But we are against them because we know that EU membership, and mass immigration, are bad for the British working class.

## Smear

Reactionaries use this smear of racism to cover their support for the neoliberal policy of free movement of labour, which is the twin of the free movement of capital. Free movement of labour is part of the process of capital accumulation.

Supposed internationalists back the free movement of labour on the grounds that migrants grow our national economy. But if they do, they can't be growing their home countries' national economies. Their productive labour benefits employers in Britain, at the expense of their home countries.

British Jobs for British Workers is a call for full employment, for the right to work. You could only call it racist if you assume that all British workers are white Anglo-Saxons – which would mean that you had the racist notion of pure-bred Britons. So the ultra-left who decry British Jobs for British Workers as racist are the ones guilty of racism.

The GMB's Paul Kenny said British Jobs for British Workers “could play into the hands of racists and bigots”. Would the slogan Polish jobs for Polish workers cause the same alarm? Are we supposed to demand Polish jobs for British workers? Or British jobs for Polish workers? In the Universities and Colleges Union, we hear some people call for places in London colleges for London's young people, but

then decry British Jobs for British Workers! Not very consistent, not very logical.

Currently, government and vice-chancellors prioritise recruiting rich foreign students. If our colleges don't prioritise educating Britain's young people, who will? Chinese colleges? I don't think so.

Yes, employers use migrant workers to cut costs. Yes, recruiting migrant workers prevents the development of more high-skill, high-technology production. Yes, we have all too little labour-market regulation, no proper skills training, and hardly any apprenticeships. Investment in skills training, and better wages and conditions, would cut the demand for migrant workers.

A particularly destructive and insidious approach to creating cheap labour is the use of “posted workers”, sent by their employers from one EU country to another for temporary work. Foreign subcontractors, temp agencies and hiring companies employ millions of them on subprime wages and conditions across the EU – including ten to fifteen per cent of the building workers in Britain. The wage floors applied to posted and migrant workers are well below the going rates in national industries. The European Court of Justice restricted posted workers' rights to a minimum and then outlawed all attempts to improve them. So it is hard for our trade unions to organise these workers. So much for the EU social model!

What is the real EU social model? The 1957 Treaty of Rome, the EEC's founding treaty, laid down “the abolition, as between Member States, of obstacles to freedom of movement of persons, services and capital”. The aim was and is to create a more flexible labour market. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam laid down that only the EU had competences in the areas of migration and asylum.

Who runs the EU? The European Roundtable of Industrialists, composed of the CEOs of the biggest corporations, is the real power in the EU. It drives all for the employers, all against the working class. The IMF, the World Bank, the CBI, all back the EU's three freedoms.

**This article is an edited version of a speech delivered by a comrade at a CPBML meeting at Conway Hall in London on 12 November.**

*Continued on page 11*



Photo: Richard Whitcombe/shutterstock.com

Borocay, Philippines, 9 November 2013: the devastation wrought by Super Typhoon Haiyan.

## Case study: the movement of nursing labour

WATCHING THE recent footage of the injured survivors of Typhoon Haiyan, it is impossible not to think about the many thousands of Filipino nurses working in NHS and US hospitals who are needed so desperately in their own country. The Nursing and Midwifery Council reported in February 2013 that just over 16,000 of the 670,000 nurses on the UK nursing register are from the Philippines. In California, 20 per cent of all registered nurses are Filipino.

Currently the Philippines are crying out for public health staff who understand infection control and who can work with other agencies to secure clean water and nutrition. It also needs those nursing staff to immunise against disease, dress wounds, deal with broken bones and the widespread psychological trauma. Unlike socialist Cuba which looks after its own population's health first and where average life expectancy is 80 years, life expectancy in the Philippines (before this current disaster!) was less than 70 years.

So we have the absurd position of the British public sending money to the disaster fund and paying for one or two British medical teams to fly out, while simultaneously recruiting essential staff there to work in Britain. And don't forget that for each nurse recruited from the Philippines there will be a recruiting agency company pocketing thousands in a "recruitment fee".

So the next time you hear a politician say we need immigration because the British do not like to get their hands dirty remember the following simple facts:

- Young and more mature British people want to work in nursing. There are more applicants than places available on nursing courses across the country. And yes – nursing does involve "getting your hands dirty".

- Despite fierce opposition from trade unions and professional bodies, and the anticipated rise in population, especially those who are elderly, the number of places on nursing courses at

universities in Britain has been reduced by 2,500 between 2010 and 2013.

- NHS trusts have axed nursing posts in an attempt to find £15 billion "efficiency savings", leading to redundancies and freezing of posts which has made it difficult for some newly qualified nurses to get a job.

- A Freedom of Information request by NURSING TIMES magazine in October 2013 established that 105 NHS trusts have actively recruited nurses from overseas in the last 12 months, while 41 said they now planned to do so.

In short we are poaching workers from abroad because it saves on the cost of growing our own. This appalling practice is now extending to other areas of the health service such as the recruitment of paramedics – again where there is no shortage of applications from would-be paramedics here. This is a national and international disgrace as there is a worldwide shortage of health workers and all that poaching does is widen health inequalities globally. ■

*Continued from page 9*

The European Commission always pushes for the free movement of labour: in 1997 it produced its Action Plan for Free Movement of Workers; in 2002, an Action Plan for Skills and Mobility; in 2006 a “Year of Workers’ Mobility”; and for 2007-10, a Job Mobility Action Plan.

All the EU’s Free Trade Agreements include Mode 4, installing the free movement of labour, and not just within the EU. In the EU/India Free Trade Agreement, talks, for example, India’s sole demand is for worker entry access. It would let any Indian firm supply temporary workers to any British industry. Employers will get the gain (investment opportunities in India) and British workers will get the pain (lost jobs).

What is the effect of EU policy here? By January, 2.3 million European nationals were living in Britain: 551,000 were unemployed or economically inactive and 146,000 had never worked. The number of the economically inactive has risen by 23 per cent since 2008 and that of those who had never worked is 30 per cent higher. Existing EU free movement rules gave them access to benefits and the social assistance system, the right to live here and automatic permanent residence after five years.

In 2004 the Labour government gave immediate labour market access to the nationals of the eight new central and eastern European EU members, supposedly to expand “selective migration”. Orthodox economists chorused that this would grow the economy. The Home Office said 13,000 at most would come. In fact, we had the biggest wave of immigration in our history: 494,000 that year. 2.3 million people arrived here during the Labour governments, plus an estimated one million illegal migrants.

New EU members are having their populations stripped. By 2009, five million had left the eight countries that joined in 2004. Some 10 per cent of the population of the Baltic States have left just since the economic collapse of 2008.

Belarus, by contrast, rejected capitalism, rejected the IMF and rejected the EU, so it enjoys full employment, free healthcare, free education and its decent

Soviet-era pensions continue to be paid, on time. And so people come to it, rather than leave: its population is on the increase while rising numbers of people are fleeing the stricken south of Europe, fleeing the effects of the euro. One million people left Spain alone from early 2011 to mid-2012.

There is also people trafficking, the world’s third largest illegal money-making enterprise, after running weapons and running drugs – the UN estimates it could be worth \$12 billion a year. A 2003 estimate was that nearly one million people were being trafficked every year, including possibly 175,000 a year from Russia and Eastern Europe’s countries.

### **Organised crime**

Free movement of labour also assists criminals to move goods and people across borders. Once the traffickers and their victims are inside the European Union, all member nations are fair game and movement for organised crime becomes relatively free.

Traffickers use Britain as a transit point to other EU members, partly because there is no requirement for interviews when children are brought into Britain, unlike in France and the USA. The lack of exit checks also assists traffickers. The Labour government ended these checks in the 1990s; the present government pledged to reinstate them by 2015, but Clegg admitted recently that they wouldn’t meet this pledge. Funny how Cameron uses Clegg to announce broken promises. Is his real job

title the Minister for Broken Promises?

Countries have the right to regulate entry; they can prevent or reduce migration. Opening our doors in January to all Bulgarians and Romanians will create an even greater oversupply than we already have. Scarce jobs will become even harder to find and employers will have every incentive to reduce wages.

Why are we opening our doors? Is it because Parliament decided to? Or that the people decided so in a referendum? No, it’s because the EU is ordering us to do so. We should decide, not the EU. Would they have jobs to come to? No – they would be competing for scarce jobs with indigenous British people, black and white. A greater supply of labour would force wages down even further and put extra strain on our housing, healthcare and education. So we need a stop to new entrants.

A recent FINANCIAL TIMES poll, showed 83 per cent of us want less migration, raising the issue of power: Who decides? Is it us, or the EU for us? In 2007, Britain opted out of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. Now the European Court of Justice, for the EU, has opted us in. What next? Will the EU opt us into the euro?

We need a referendum as soon as possible, so that we can leave the EU as soon as possible. We have to organise in our workplaces, revive our trade unions and stand and fight where we are.

We need to take responsibility, decide what level of migration we want, and then make it so. ■



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In less than 18 months the Co-op banking group has gone from taken over by three US hedge funds...

## Smash and grab in the high street as US vultures



Boom, the (almost) bust: the Co-op Bank's rescue came at the expense of staff and customers.

THREE AMERICAN hedge funds have now seized 70 per cent of the Co-op's assets, reducing tens of thousands of shareholders' and small investors' bonds to junk value. With a customer base of 4.7 million people, linked to the wider Co-op group base of 7 million people, the only bank in Britain operating on ethical investment principles, having turned away £1.2 billion of unethical business since 1992, has now been devoured by US vultures.

The postmortem is still being carried out on how a £1.5 billion black hole emerged in the Co-op's finances. With most of the senior boardroom executives and drivers of supposed expansion now gone – many with extremely handsome payoffs – it is worth reviewing what went wrong. In the background is the amazingly disingenuous position of the government: they publicly state they want to see the breakup of the monopoly position of the four big banks

(Lloyds, Barclays, HSBC, RBS). The government suggests that the solution to this bank monopoly is the development of mutual banking. Mutual banking is not supposed to run the risks of unethical banking procedures, policies and criminal activity that have dominated banking worldwide since the 2007 collapse.

### Standard practice

Looked at historically such unethical banking procedures, policies and criminal activity have been the norm – standard practice since the banks achieved a monopoly over finance and industrial capital in the early 20th century.

The true position of the government regarding the banks has been to promote, strengthen, bail out, acquiesce to their demands, and ensure that banking and finance is supported against all other interests in Britain. The government's promotion of mutual banking was and is a

smokescreen to camouflage their real intentions from the gullible who still think “we are all in this together” or that “austerity economics” works.

Far from promoting mutual banking, what they really were doing was signalling to their financier friends to attack and destroy mutual banking as they did with building societies in the late 1990s.

The Co-op was encouraged to merge with the Britannia Building Society in 2009 to expand its financial base. The Britannia had very close links with the trade union mutual and building societies dating back to 1856. But the Britannia and six other building societies were the target of predatory raids in the late 1990s during the destruction of building societies – when their assets were stripped and they were converted or absorbed into banks.

As far as the misnamed banking “industry” is concerned, building societies are juicy morsels ripe for eating. But how

being the largest mutually owned bank in Britain to being

# Culture funds sink their talons into the Co-op

much cleverer to get a mutual bank to eat the building societies, rather than the high street raiders, and then devour the mutual!

The merger with Britannia was given the green light by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), which found nothing amiss with Britannia's accounts. At the same time the Co-op was encouraged to take over 631 branches of Lloyds Bank, after it crashed in the 2007-8 banking crisis.

As the merger with Britannia developed, toxic debts totalling over £600 million were identified from loans geared to the buy-to-let housing market, sub-prime market scam etc. The FSA missed most of those debts. In fact it only identified between £30 million and £40 million in dodgy loans. The combination of dodgy Britannia debt, the Co-op choking on trying to swallow the Lloyds branches, poor management and inefficient computer systems, sent the overwhelmed Co-op into spiralling decline.

## Gaping hole

A gaping hole of £1.5 billion emerged in the Co-op's accounts. Britain's largest mutual was faced with bankruptcy, or begging for a government bailout as their non-ethical competitors had done previously, or seeking a market solution. Seeking a market solution was not really an option as the "market" had already seen an opportunity, a solution which suited them. Aggressive share and bond purchase by the US hedge companies gave them financial control of the bank.

The ensuing "rescue" has turned the Co-op into yet another unethical bank. Job losses of 10 per cent amongst the 10,300 workforce have been announced. 15 per cent closure of branches, 50 out of 324, are to follow. A shift to online and Internet banking will see the Co-op float not only on the Stock Exchange but very likely off-shore.

The 170-year tradition of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, which established in 1844 their mutual banking opposition to capitalist banking, will be well and truly dead. How long will the ethical principles of the Co-op remain, now ownership of the bank has transferred from

its 4.7 million customers to shareholders, tax exiles, finance houses and other con artists? How long can the "Co-op" name and mutual banking regulations be applied to the Co-op? The very basis of the bank has changed. Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business is already being challenged under the Companies Act, section 76, to seek governance assurances from the new owners to uphold the Co-op's ethical principles and rules – but this is a futile effort to disguise the truth

All the proponents of expanding the Co-op into a huge high street challenger to the so-called big four banks have now departed. The Co-op as was lies in ruins, occupied by the very forces the mutual banking ethos was supposed to see off. Is this an accident or deliberate plan by those ideologues of the so-called free market who saw the opportunity to destroy a national entity, with the largest customer base opposed to the culture of high street banking? In the last 18 months the Co-op has seen thousands of new accounts opened as banking customers fled from the big four banks and their dodgy practices.

Now a coup by hedge fund managers, ably assisted by expansionist greed and self-interested management, has wiped out the refuge of millions of customers who are not enamoured of the corruption of bankers. The attack on the Co-op, a working class institution, is similar to the attacks on other national institutions and entities – the NHS, the BBC – which market capitalism also wishes to devour.

Worldwide banking, despite the 2007-8 crisis and subsequent crash, has seen two interesting phenomena: job losses and rising profits. In 2008, 795,000 workers were employed in banking. That figure has dropped by around 24 per cent in 2013 to 606,000 – RBS had 78,000 job losses, HSBC 59,000, Lloyds 31,000, Barclays 21,000. Lloyds posted half year profits of £2.1 billion in August, RBS £826 million for the quarter ending in March, and HSBC £5.4 billion in the first quarter of 2013.

The Co-op has been truly smashed, its assets grabbed – and a 170-year tradition in working class history and exercise of power different to capitalist ethos brought to an end. ■

## Meet the Party

**The Communist Party of Britain's new series of London public meetings continues in 2014 on Tuesday, 4 March, 5 June, 14 October and 18 November; all are held in the Bertrand Russell room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL, nearest Tube Holborn, and start at 7.30 pm. Other meetings are held around Britain. All meetings are advertised in What's On, see page 5.**

**M** The theme of the meeting on Tuesday 4 March, is "Class in the 21st century". Details of further meetings will be announced in **WORKERS** and at [www.workers.org.uk](http://www.workers.org.uk).

**M** The Party's annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2014, Thursday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There will also be May Day meetings elsewhere in the country.

**M** As well as our regular public meetings we hold informal discussions with interested workers and study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further. If you are interested we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or e-mail to [info@workers.org.uk](mailto:info@workers.org.uk)

Our ruling class has a track record of not protecting Britain's national interests. A typical episode occurred at the end of the Second World War...

## More than a loan – the Anglo-American Agreement

ONCE THE Second World War was won in 1945 by the allies and peace became the next prospect, the precarious position of Britain's economy, distorted by six years of total war, was apparent. Britain was exporting only around a fifth of what it had before the war and non-military imports were five times higher than in 1938. There were still 1.4 million people in the armed forces by 1946.

The British economy had been heavily geared towards war production at around 55 per cent of GDP, much greater than in the Soviet Union or America. To make matters worse, US President Truman abruptly ended in August the wartime Lend Lease arrangements that had run since 1941, by which war effort equipment had been donated. Suddenly, payment was expected for undelivered supplies, Britain found it did not have enough dollars, and bankruptcy loomed. As an emergency measure, the government sold gold and minerals, but this could not suffice for long.

Prime Minister Attlee dispatched John Maynard Keynes, the economist and government financial adviser, as Britain's negotiator in Washington. Most of Britain expected a gift in recognition of the country's contribution to the war effort, which had predated that of the US, and Keynes believed he could wrest a multi-billion dollar grant-in-aid out of the USA rather than a loan. Despite three months of severe clashes and hard wrangling, Keynes returned with a loan and a heart-attack for his troubles. The Anglo American Agreement produced a business loan instead of a subsidy, with extra conditions stacked in America's favour.

Unsurprisingly, the USA ignored sentiment and pressed its own imperial interests proving that a "Special Relationship" had never existed, except inside the confines of Churchill's mind. Two determining factors were at work: our diminished productive base limited Britain's ability to manoeuvre in a peacetime environment; and our rulers' senseless wish to sustain the empire post-war (though it was clearly unaffordable) made them chase a costly external loan.

Although the granting of the loan did



The Blitz, London, 1941: a devastated Britain emerged from the way in debt up to its eyeballs to the USA

strain relations between the two countries, the agreement was never really threatened, despite some opposition in the House of Lords and the likening of America to Shylock by a Cabinet Minister. In December 1945, Attlee and the Labour Government succumbed, agreeing to not only a US loan of \$4.34 billion (double the size of the then British economy) but also other onerous stipulations.

Contrary to the impression given by politicians in later decades, the loan was never used to finance the war itself, though outstanding Lend-Lease supplies still in transit when peace was declared were paid for within the overall loan. The loan (structured like a mortgage) was to be paid off in 50 annual repayments starting in 1950; payments were mostly interest in the early years and shifted toward capital later on.

Other stringent conditions were imposed on a submissive Labour government, namely acceptance of the convertibility of sterling and the liberalisation of trade. The convertibility of sterling directly caused the financial crisis of 1947, as Britain was forced to let holders of sterling convert their earnings

into other currencies such as the dollar and allow these earnings to be spent outside of the sterling area. Convertibility meant the demise of British economic management at home and of economic control of the colonies. Gradually, America exploited liberalisation of trade to displace the position of British companies in former colonies.

### Not for Britain

Despite assertions in subsequent decades, the purpose of the loan was not to rebuild Britain or aid domestic recovery but to meet expensive imperial commitments. As Keynes himself wrote in 1946, "...the American loan is primarily required to meet the political and military expenditure overseas." Keynes estimated that Britain spent £2,000 million on policing and administering the Empire. This expenditure was largely responsible for the country's post-war financial difficulties.

A telling comparison emerges if you look at the provision made available for essential sectors of the domestic economy on which working people's livelihoods depended: between 1947 and 1949 only £320 million was invested in building

ational interest. One

ement of 1945



he United States.

manufacturing industry; £262 million in transport and communication, £160 million in energy industries and £85 million in agriculture and fisheries.

As there were six deferred instalments, this debt to the USA was only fully repaid by the British government in 2006. Although at the time Treasury Minister Ed Balls acclaimed it as “a sign that the UK repays its debts”, what is probably unusual is that the debt was repaid at all, as Britain has a patchy record on debt repayments. There are unpaid debts that predate the Napoleonic Wars, and debts still owed for the First World War. Moreover, at the height of the Great Depression in 1931, a moratorium on all war debts was agreed and no debt repayments were made or received after 1934.

It was complete stupidity to take on the burden of a huge loan when in 1946 Britain’s national debt stood at about 250 per cent of GDP and when the loan was not directed to the essential task of rebuilding our industrial capacity but squandered on a futile attempt to prop up a crumbling empire and support the obsolete role of world policeman. ■

# 6 *SIX CALLS* *TO ACTION*

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

**Our country is under attack. Every single institution is in decline. The only growth is in unemployment, poverty and war. There is a crisis – of thought, and of deed. The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist has recently held its 16th Congress, a coming together of the Party to consider the state of Britain and what needs to happen in the future. Here we set out briefly six Calls to Action for the British working class – for a deeper explanation, see [www.workers.org.uk](http://www.workers.org.uk).**

### **1: Out of the European Union, enemy to our survival**

The European Union represents the dictatorship of finance capital, foreign domination. The British working class must declare our intention to leave the EU.

### **2: No to the breakup of Britain, defend our national sovereignty**

Devolution, and now the threat of separation, are both products of only one thing: de-industrialisation. Any referendum on the break-up of Britain must be held throughout Britain.

### **3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation**

Unions exist as working members in real workplaces or they become something else entirely – something wholly negative. Take responsibility for your own unions.

### **4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground**

The fight for pay is central to our survival as a class, and must be central to the agenda of our trade unions.

### **5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future**

The regeneration of industry in Britain is essential to the future of our nation. Our grandparents, and theirs, knew this. We must now reassert it at the centre of class thinking.

### **6: Build the Party**

The task of the Party is singular: to change the ideology of the British working class in order that they make revolution here.

### **Interested in these ideas?**

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
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# Hope for the dismal science

**‘Failed economists helped cause the crash. They’ve been rewarded with prizes. But they’re still on the syllabus in universities around the world...’**

ECONOMICS IS widely known as the “dismal science”, and the description rings true, so dimly has classical economics performed over the past century or more. (Marx, of course, was right.) One bright spot is that the new generation of students seems unwilling to stick with the mistakes of the past.

Economics students at the University of Manchester had been wondering (in their own words) “whether economics undergraduates were being taught the right things in the light of the 2008 Financial Crisis”.

A good question. They were being taught the dismal theories of the discredited economists who had played their full part in blowing up the bubble that burst so disastrously in 2008. People like Robert Lucas, awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics, who in 2003 said the “central problem of depression-prevention has been solved”. Unchastened by reality, he said in 2011 that the big threats to the US recovery were Medicare and higher taxes on the rich.

Then there’s Robert Merton and Myron Scholes, from Harvard and Stanford, Nobel laureates both. Along with Fischer Black, who died before he could collect his Nobel, they founded the “science” of derivatives. In 1970 there were no derivatives traded on the markets. Then Black and Scholes published an infamous equation “explaining” how it could all work. Merton came in later. By 2004 the notional value of derivatives traded globally was \$273 trillion.

These bourgeois economists helped cause the crash. They’ve been heaped with prizes. They’ve been rewarded as befits loyal servants of finance capital. And they’re still on the syllabus in universities around the world.

The Queen asked at the LSE why no one saw the crash coming; no one could answer her. No wonder the Bank of England called a conference on the subject, “Are economics graduates fit for purpose?” (As if the Bank

itself were actually fit for purpose!)

No wonder, too, that the students at the University of Manchester this year set up the “Post-Crash Economics Society”. They believe “that the content of the economics syllabus and the way it is taught could and should be seriously rethought”.

What is surprising – and a tribute to the students – is how seriously their challenge to economics orthodoxy is being taken. Prominent (non-neoliberal) economists have flocked to their banner. The students put their finger on a problem that no one wanted to talk about but that could no longer be dodged.

One echo has been the development in a project headed by Wendy Carlin, a professor at University College London, to introduce a new first-year curriculum for economics students. According to reports, it will include in-depth study of economic history and the way financial markets can undermine economic stability.

“The pressure for change from students, faculty, business and policy makers, along with new developments in economics, makes this an auspicious time to seek improvements in what economics students learn, and how they learn it,” said Carlin.

The students, then, have been teaching their teachers a well-earned lesson. Not so dismal after all.

Actually, the term “dismal science” was coined by one of the most dismal bourgeois economists of all time, Thomas Carlyle, better known as a (pretty dismal) historian. He used the term to attack John Stuart Mill for saying that abolishing slavery would lead to an improvement in the lot of the slaves. Carlyle, dismal as he was, argued strongly and, as it turned out, totally wrongly that emancipation would be bad for the slaves.

Getting things wrong has been a theme among bourgeois economists for quite a time, it seems. ■

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