

WORKERS

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JULY/AUGUST 2017 £1



TRADE UNIONS IN CRISIS

Defence Industry we need

Independence Take control

Sharia One law for all

Cuba Lessons for Britain

Terror Take responsibility

Albania EU interference

Rail Skills shortage

Law EU primacy?

plus News,

Book Review

Historic Notes

and more

WORKERS



Five foundations for independence

BRITAIN WILL need strength, clarity and obduracy if it is to progress towards independence over the next two years. This cannot be left to politicians. The working class itself needs to take responsibility for control and integrity of our land, language, law, money and economy.

Control over our land and waters. Our borders are not forever closed as the doom merchants would have it, but we wish to control who comes in. We must control the size and composition of our population. It's the national equivalent of contraception, it's family planning.

If it's in the national interest for someone to enter, it should be considered – whether a research scientist or seasonal agricultural worker in East Anglia – but it must be registered and controlled.

Britain must be able to defend itself against external threats. That means armed forces and weapons, including nuclear weapons. But our defensive capability must be independent.

Control over our currency and our finances. One of the first things any conquering empire does is impose a single currency on its subject states. We've always resisted this, but stood by as other controls were let go. The EU seeks to lure our financial institutions out of London – an empty threat.

Control over our law. Not Sharia, not EU, not NATO, but British law. The precedent is already set

and we see the danger, whether Sharia divorce courts in parts of Britain, EU fishing quotas, NATO troop movements. We can't compromise on this and serve many masters: one rule for all in Britain.

Control over our economy. This is primary, the foundation on which everything else rests. Health and education are therefore secondary.

An economy is about importing as well as exporting. It's about manufacturing industry and service industry. It's about a balanced energy supply to serve the needs of industry and of consumers. It's about prioritising what we need to be self reliant in.

Control of our language. English is the international language of trade, of industry, of diplomacy. It is even the chief means of communication within the EU, despite Juncker's drunken efforts to the contrary. But it is the only national language of Britain, and we don't always treat it with the respect it deserves. This is not about "text speak", but about the cultural significance of language in binding people together.

To speak and communicate effectively in English should be a requirement for all here, not least those in a professional capacity where one wrong word or number can mean great danger.

Brexit should be a massive opportunity for us. But we must change too. There needs to be a move from opposition mentality to government mentality. The working class must take control. ■



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Torchlight vigil with family and friends of the dead and missing, here the family of Jessica Urbano.

Fire deaths were preventable

ALONGSIDE THE terrorist outrages of the past two months, the horrific fire which swept through a Kensington tower block on 15 June stands apart as a wholly preventable event.

With the high number of deaths by fire at Grenfell Tower being reported, another story is emerging: deliberate, planned destruction over years of rules designed to keep the populace safe. Successive governments, Labour and Conservative, have dumped their responsibility to plan for public safety, instead deregulating so that profiteers can flourish.

A letter in the *Daily Telegraph* on 16 June from a former Greater London Council district surveyor describes how, after the Great Fire of London, construction was controlled by the London Building Acts of 1667 and associated bylaws. These were enforced with statutory powers by a team of surveyors and officers independent of national and local government. Owners of defective buildings were rigorously prosecuted. This service was replaced in 1985 by the Thatcher government with a system controlled by "politicians and accountants". The letter states that the Grenfell Tower fire could not have happened under the GLC.

The 1997 Labour government showed contempt for professional and technical experts, scrapping fire certificates and handing over the responsibility for building safety to landlords and owners. The story since is of decreasing safety enforcement by successive governments. Fire brigades have been cut, and services to the private sector. Contracts have gone to the cheapest bidders. In 2014 the housing minister said that the installation of sprinklers was "the responsibility of the fire industry rather than the government".

STUDENTS

Debt soars

STUDENT LOAN debt has risen above £100 billion for the first time, underlining the rising costs young people face in order to get a university education. Student debt is rising at a faster pace than any other form of debt, eclipsing credit card debt of £68 billion.

Outstanding debt on loans jumped by 16.6 per cent to £100.5 billion at the end of March, up from £86.2 billion a year earlier. There were 6.4 million borrowers.

The rise in debt has been driven mostly by rules allowing universities in England to charge up to £9,000 a year in tuition fees from 2012 – a huge rise from the previous maximum of £3,225. In the year ending 31 March 2012, student debt was less than half the current level, at £45.9 billion.

In England, students are graduating with an average debt of £32,220. By comparison, the average debt of American students by the time they graduate is \$34,000 (£27,000).

BIRMINGHAM

Dustcart strike vote

BIRMINGHAM'S refuse workers have voted for strike action over council plans to axe 122 jobs. Members of the Unite union voted by 90 per cent to strike, with 93 per cent in support of industrial action short of a strike.

The union is considering its next move in the dispute, which involves changes to working patterns, including a cut in the number of staff on rounds and concerns about the safety of workers loading dustcarts.

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession call us on 020 8801 9543 or email workers@cpbml.org.uk



ON THE WEB

A selection of additional news at cpbml.org.uk...

No progress without leaving the EU

Following the election, the overwhelming priority must be to ensure that Britain manages a clean break with the EU.

Victory over paramedic pay

Ambulance employers have given way and agreed to the unions' demand that paramedics be upgraded.

EU delusions, French style

Emmanuel Macron's first foreign trip as French President was to meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel – where they threatened Britain.

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Bristol Temple Meads station.

Skills shortage hits safety

GOVERNMENT CUTS in funding to Network Rail threaten to precipitate a major skills shortage in the industry as well as threatening jobs and safety.

Contractors are becoming increasingly concerned about the implications of Network Rail's cuts to planned renewals work. Network Rail contractor Carillion has already announced plans to make 35 per cent of its track renewals staff redundant and close its Newcastle depot. Other contractors look set to follow suit.

The rail industry already has a serious skills shortage, and the impending cuts will exacerbate this. The age profile of the workforce is very high, and if significant numbers of skilled railway engineering staff are forced out of the industry, they are unlikely to return as many will opt for what effectively will be retirement. Younger staff made redundant with those skills can often find similar work in other industries.

Privatisation of the railways in 1996 did much damage to the skills base of the industry, and the belated steps taken by employers, Network Rail in particular, to introduce engineering apprenticeships will not compensate for this loss of key skills. So a future upturn in work will result in a massive shortfall in skilled staff.

Rail union RMT has attacked the government's short-term approach to Network Rail funding, pointing out that the immediate consequences will be trains running on older and inherently less safe track, and the union vowed to fight to retain skills and jobs. ■

EDUCATION

Casualisation in FE

OF THE 17,171 teachers in further education, 28 per cent are employed on insecure contracts, says a new report released by the UCU union on 9 June, *Precarious teachers: insecure work in the English further education sector*.

The most common form of insecure work is hourly paid teaching. 69 per cent of people on insecure contracts were hourly paid, with 19 colleges employing more than half their staff on such contracts.

Some colleges are using wholly owned subsidiary companies to develop a "shadow FE sector", employing teachers on worse terms and conditions and hiring them back into the college to teach.

UCU says these companies employ staff on casualised contracts which deny them the same rights as permanent staff, including protection from unfair dismissal, redundancy pay, and maternity leave and pay. These contracts also take them out of the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

The union warns that the emerging "hire and fire" culture in further education not only harms teachers, exposing them to financial hardship, but is also bad for students' learning. The teachers are not paid for preparation or marking time, nor

for their professional development. "This all ultimately weakens the FE colleges." ■

TRANSPORT

Police break-up slammed

FOLLOWING THE suicide bombing in Manchester in May the rail union TSSA has demanded that the SNP halt its plan to merge British Transport Police Scotland with Police Scotland.

General Secretary Manuel Cortes said, "If the plan to devolve BTP into Police Scotland is not given a stay of execution before the bill goes before Holyrood, far from protecting policing in Scotland, the SNP will be responsible for snuffing it out."

In January TSSA said the merger would cause lasting damage to rail security and jeopardise lives, adding that no one in the rail industry wants the merger. BTP Deputy Chief Constable, Adrian Hancock, said it "would create an unnecessary border for officers".

This attempt to reinforce separatism now looks like it is stalling, with the SNP further isolated following its election losses. ■

• A longer version of this article is on the web at www.cpbml.org.uk.

POLICING

The numbers game

FOLLOWING the appalling Islamist terrorist attacks in London and Manchester the current Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and others pointed to cuts in police numbers. Their claim is that fewer police necessarily leads to an increased chance of success for the terrorists. That doesn't tell the whole story. Cuts in officer numbers and police force budgets are not welcome for public safety, but the relationship to preventing terrorism is not straightforward.

The most recent figures show that in March 2016 there was the equivalent of 124,066 full-time police officers in England and Wales. That is the lowest level recorded under current strength measures, but there are large variations between forces and not all have lost officers since 2010.

The Metropolitan Police has the highest

ratio of police officers at 368 per 100,000 head of population. For Greater Manchester Police (GMP) the figure is much lower at 218, although that is the 5th highest. The European average figure is 353.

Former London Mayor Boris Johnson was correct to say on 6 June that the Met had kept its numbers relatively high and that his successor's assertion of a dramatic drop did not stand up. In 2010 London had 33,367 officers, which dropped to 30,398 in 2013, and rose again to 32,125 in 2016.

Sadiq Khan commissioned a report on London's readiness to respond to terrorist incidents. The recommendations made by Lord Harris in October 2016 had not been implemented by the time of the attacks in Westminster and Southwark.

The drop in numbers in Manchester is much greater. The figure for March 2016 was 6,297, down nearly 2,000 since 2010. And GMP has the second lowest rate of front-line deployment. ■

EU claims 'superior' law

THIS SUMMER the European Court of Justice is set to rule on a case about the rights of a woman with dual UK and Spanish nationality. The likely verdict was indicated at the end of May when the court's advocate general, Yves Bot, produced an initial opinion on the issue.

So far, so technical. But the case has shone a light on facts that some people prefer to ignore: that citizens of EU countries have more rights in the UK than do UK citizens – and that the EU is claiming to be the judge of what rights are held by UK citizens with dual nationality. It also highlights the fact that maintaining the rights of EU citizens in the UK after Brexit cannot be a question of simply saying that they will continue, as some are arguing.

The particular case is straightforward. It involves the Turkish husband of a Spanish-born woman who took British nationality in 2010. The British courts said that as a British national – along with more than 60 million Britons – she had no automatic right to bring her family into the UK.

But, astonishingly, EU nationals do have an automatic right to bring their families with them to the UK. And the European Court is set to rule that EU law trumps UK law, so that right remains even if an individual has taken British nationality. What's odd about this is that there is a basic code that operates all over the world: if you are a national of two (or more) countries and you are living in one of those countries, then only that country's law applies to you.

Not so, the EU is now saying: our law is superior to your law. Or more specifically, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union is superior to British law.

EU nationals living in Britain already have rights not available to UK citizens. And of course EU nationals living in Britain also have rights (these come from the EU, not from Scotland) to free tuition in Scottish universities.

If this situation is maintained after Brexit, Britain will find that the rights of EU citizens (and of citizens with dual UK/EU nationality) will be determined and policed not by Britain but by the European Court. And that's a long way from the government's position that after Brexit the rulings of the European Court will cease to apply here. ■



The European Court of Justice, Luxembourg.

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

JULY

Saturday 8 July

Durham Miners' Gala, 8am to 5pm

The biggest labour movement gathering of the year (see feature article, page 6). For details of this year's event, see www.durhamminers.org/gala

Friday 14 July to Sunday 16 July

Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival, Tolpuddle, Dorset

The annual festival commemorating the Tolpuddle Martyrs, six farm labourers deported to Australia in 1834 for the crime of forming a trade union. Music, poetry, discussion. The procession starts at 2pm on the Sunday, followed by speeches. For more detail, see www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk

Saturday 22 July to Monday 24 July

International Conference on Freedom of Conscience and Expression, Central London

Subtitled "Celebrating blasphemy and apostasy", this conference will bring together speakers from around the world – including many from North Africa and the Middle East – to defend freedom of conscience and expression and argue that freedoms are not western but universal. Tickets must be bought in advance. More information at www.secularconference.com

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 3 September, 11am to 5pm

Burston School Strike Festival, Burston, Near Diss, Norfolk

Annual rally to celebrate the longest strike in history. Organised by Unite with assistance from the South East Region of the TUC. For details, see burstonstrikeschool.co.uk

Thursday 28 September, 7.30pm

Brockway Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

"House the People"

CPBML Public Meeting

Housing in Britain is broken. Instead of filling a need, it is an investment from which huge profits can be made by taking advantage of the acute rise in demand. Meanwhile, council housing is left to rot – with deadly consequences. Come and discuss. All welcome.

**The annual Durham Miners Gala started life as a celebrati
celebration of trade unionism and working class values...**

This year's Durham Gala

THE ANNUAL Durham Miners Gala started life as a celebration of mining communities. And this year's gala on Saturday 8 July has much to celebrate and look forward to.

In the early 1990s, with the closure of all the coalmines in the Durham coalfield, the gala faced an existential crisis. But it survived and developed thanks to the efforts of regional trade unions, individual trade unionists and well-wishers.

Attendance has risen to record highs in recent years. The Gala continues to feature brass bands, banners from the historic Lodges of the Durham Miners Association and regional and local trade union banners. Groups of workers from all over Britain and beyond make their way to Durham for this festival of solidarity.

Democracy

One of the key values of trade unionism is our working class democracy. When trade union members vote there is an unwritten law – that we will all abide by a majority decision, whether we agree with it or not. That's true whether it's on action during a dispute or for acceptance or rejection of a negotiated offer. This is our working class democracy. Miners, because of their long tradition of pit-head ballots, understand this probably more than anyone else.

The Gala this year follows a General Election called in the wake of the referendum on 23 June last year on whether or not Britain should remain in or leave the EU. In March the government triggered Article 50 of the European Union's Lisbon Treaty. This will take Britain out of the EU, giving effect to the decision of the majority who voted to leave the EU.

The government was so shocked by the result of the referendum that David Cameron resigned, first as Prime Minister and then as an MP, just in time for him to be seriously criticised for his 2011 adventure in attacking Libya. Cameron's resignation as Prime Minister was swiftly followed by the sacking of his Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne.

These were the two politicians most hated by Britain's working class. So the vote by workers in the referendum not only put us on the road to independence



Shaun Dodds/shutterstock.com

Band preparing at last year's gala in Durham.

from the EU, but also brought down a hated government. It goes to show that when the working class acts in unity, it can move mountains.

Workers across the Durham coalfield, which covers County Durham, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead, played their part well as did workers in other coalfields. They voted to leave the EU by an overwhelming majority. That is something to be proud of.

There was an overwhelming vote for independence from the EU in the North East. In County Durham alone there were 153,877 votes for Leave compared with 113,521 for Remain, in spite of the strong Remain contingent of the Durham University student community.

As trade unionists we should uphold working class democracy and respect the outcome of the referendum. Some have not accepted the result and are actively seeking to undermine this democracy.

We have a name for anyone in our trade unions who tries to subvert our democratically arrived at decisions – “fifth columnist”. That term rightly applies to those trying to undermine the referendum result whether they are Scottish Nationalists, Liberal Democrats, Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson, parliamentarians, investment bankers, or from within our own ranks.

The term Fifth Column comes from the Spanish Civil War. Franco's General Emilio Mola and his Fascist army

on of mining communities but it has become a

a – much to celebrate



‘The referendum vote came too late for the Redcar steel plant, denied government intervention because of EU competition laws.’

in Britain. Through public service procurement policies we can ensure that, as far as possible, British goods and services are purchased. We should be training our own nurses and doctors, instead of poaching them from other countries.

Future needs

The North East economy was traditionally based on heavy engineering, shipbuilding, mining and merchant shipping – all inter-related. The biggest employers today are public services including the NHS, HMRC and local government plus retail and call centres. Important though these are, we need to plan for our industrial needs for the 21st century.

Nissan has confirmed that the next two models will be produced at the Sunderland factory, securing its future, but Brexit will be too late for the Redcar steel plant, denied government intervention because of EU competition laws.

What will an independent Britain need to produce to replace our huge trade deficit with the EU? How can we make it here? These questions and more are what our trade unions should now be discussing.

The EU is in terminal decline. It's pointless to cling on to this dying, anti-democratic bureaucracy. We are striking out on our own, as part of the wider world, as an independent working class in an independent Britain. ■

besieged Madrid with four columns of troops. Mola claimed he had additional troops, a fifth column of the fascist Auxiliary Force dreaded by the Republicans, hidden inside the city itself. This is a fair description of those who are in the minority doing the EU's work by trying to overturn a decision made by the British majority.

Opportunities

So where do we go from here? We are moving inexorably towards British independence from the EU now Article 50 has been triggered. We should be thinking of the many opportunities that independence would bring.

We will be able to plan our economy

for the first time in 40 years. You cannot plan an economy unless you know what your population is likely to be, and that depends on controlling your borders.

Britain needs a new energy policy and an industrial development strategy for the 21st century. A new policy for agriculture and fisheries can ensure Britain is as self-sufficient as possible in our food needs.

We can develop further education, including bringing back polytechnics and proper apprenticeships, to arm young people with the skills they will need for the future. We will be able to ensure our transport infrastructure is based on using British industry and British made steel.

We will not have to invite EU based companies to tender for work on projects

The lowest membership since the Second World War, the I began – these are symptoms of a failure of purpose that m

Trade unions in crisis –

BRITAIN'S TRADE unions lost 275,000 members in the last 12 months, the largest annual drop in membership since comparable statistics were first collated in 1995. Total membership is at its lowest since the Second World War.

The number of workers in Britain is greater than ever at more than 32 million. Union membership in the private sector stands at around 13.4 per cent. Things look better in the public sector, with membership at 54 per cent. But since 2015 155,000 trade union members have been lost in education alone – a direct result of academies and privatisation of education. While there are still 6.5 million workers in trade unions, not all are affiliated to the Trades Union Congress.

It is projected that by 2020 public services will be provided more by private than by public sector workers. This is in line with George Osborne's statement in 2010 (when he was Chancellor) that he would reduce employees of the state by 50 per cent within ten years.

There is already an increasing number of workers from the private sector delivering public services. So we no longer have a National Health Service but instead we have "National Health Service Providers". The brand remains but the wolves have slipped in amongst the flock. These changes in terminology are fundamental to a change in thinking.

The contradiction among the three biggest trade unions – Unison, Unite and GMB – is that they are now all competing

to recruit the same pool of workers, all unsuccessfully. They are becoming general unions without any reference to their originating skills, traditions, values and purposes.

The teaching and education trade unions are now making the same mistake as was made by Unison, Unite and the GMB: mergers and takeovers, one size fits all, which will obliterate identity and promote trade unionism as a business.

Business unionism aims to maximise income and pursues splinterist divisive in promoting diversity and equality. This approach does not create unity but panders to every fad of the moment as an excuse not to address the fundamental flaws in thinking and organisation.

Every union promotes itself as an organising union. Yet in practice they operate as pseudo-insurance companies servicing individualism.

Paralysed

And what is going on in these three general unions? Unison is paralysed by internal ultra-left destructive attacks on the union structure spearheaded via the Certification Officer, with attempts to hijack member subscriptions for no other purpose than to split and divide the union.

Unite is about to launch itself on a similar destructive mission as the union structure is challenged by the losers in the recent general secretary election. The declining GMB, predator as ever, tries to poach members at every opportunity,

'None of these actions addresses the central danger facing trade unionism.'

ludicrously trying to present itself as the diverse union of steelworkers, British Airways staff, and Ford workers at Dagenham.

All these displacement activities are hidden behind ever larger flags and balloons on demonstrations but membership continues to decline. None of these actions addresses the central danger facing trade unionism – there is a lot of fiddling going on while Rome burns.

Organisation exists in name only if at all in large swathes of manufacturing industry and in the traditional base of Unite and its predecessor unions. At the same time, though, strong trade unionism has flourished in the RMT and Unite in privatised rail and bus companies. And why? Because workers there have been willing to fight for their jobs, wages, terms and conditions, and have not hidden behind "partnership working" and the magnanimous goodwill of the employers.

In the public sector unions there has been a generally flawed and failed attempt to retain union membership once outsourcing has occurred. There appears to be a paralysis of mind and action, and an inability to organise among groups of workers. The concentration on outsourced security, catering and cleaning support functions ignores wholesale transfers of highly skilled sections of workers because to the do-gooders it is easier to rescue those seen as the dispossessed and downtrodden.

The irony is that it was in the private sector of the economy that trade unionism blossomed originally – the public sector in Victorian times was tiny. Trade unionism grew through necessity, struggle and

Strikes hit new low

ACCORDING TO figures released by the Office for National Statistics, 81,000 workers went on strike in 2015 – the lowest number since records began in 1893.

There were 106 strikes – less than half the number in 1995, an eighth of those in 1985, and a twentieth of those in 1975.

The strikes meant a loss of just 0.003 per cent of all working days. The majority (60 per cent) of strikes lasted no more than three days, and over two-thirds of them

were related to pay.

The TUC's response to the data was somewhat surreal – indicating that many in the trade union movement are in denial.

"These figures show that going on strike is always a last resort when your employer won't negotiate and won't compromise," said TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady. That's only partly true. The other last resort, far more frequently taken, is not to fight. ■

lowest number of workers on strike since records
most unions are trying their hardest to ignore...

time to change



©Andrew Ward 2015

All those in favour...but is anyone noticing any more?

sacrifice. It grew through workers organising for themselves, not expecting someone else to do it for them, through identity and common goals. And from workers who organised without expectation of expenses, promotion, self-advancement or reward.

Unison has just elected its National Executive Council on an average 4.7 per cent turnout. For whom do the executive council members speak?

If the trade unions are going to have a renaissance in the 21st century then they

‘Unions grew through workers organising for themselves.’

need to address the core and uniting issue of class, not the separateness of race, gender, disability and 101 other divisions. They need to address the fact that union membership has a casualty rate. The employers and their government want a union-free workplace. To be a leader in the workplace targets you to be sacked, bought and sold.

The meaning of unity

While there are more workers than ever in Britain's history there is an inability to recruit them. There has to be a renewed understanding of what unity means, not the tribalism of competing trade unions to the employers' advantage. The TUC anti-poaching Bridlington Agreement stood the unions in good stead for over 50 years before being outlawed by Thatcher. The basic principle that unions should work together as working class organs needs to be reasserted.

There has to be a renewed understanding of why work brings workers together – in defence of skill, in collectivism, in identity, in unity, in strength.

The time-serving parasitic structures and so-called democracy of many trade union branches, regions, districts and executives are a terrible parody, divorced from what they were created to do.

The Trade Union Act 2016 will cut through all of this, especially the functioning of trade unions around facility time off, collection of subscriptions and industrial action. There will have to be a ruthless, root-and-branch refreshing to ensure that basic workplace organisation is fit for purpose – because at present much isn't.

The challenge is not about structures or magic wands to encourage participation and identity but to revive the thinking and understanding – that we need class organisation to be able to assert ourselves as a working class. ■

the referendum vote for independence. And the working class must hold it to its promise...

taking control

‘Privatisation is the opposite of control, of self-reliance.’

energy, for an integrated transport system, for sound and safe infrastructure, for high-quality secular education, and for a National Health Service.

Some want us to stay in the EU Single Market. But staying in the EU Single Market is the opposite of control: it means staying in the EU. Note that exports to the 111 countries with which we trade under World Trade Organization rules have grown four times faster than exports to the EU.

Inside the Single Market we would keep on paying £11 billion a year to the EU. We would still be bound by its free movement of labour rules and subject to its laws, subject to the European Court of Justice. We voted against all that.

Free movement of labour is the opposite of control. It's not internationalism but free-for-all exploitation. The opposite of free movement is not no movement but planned movement, controlled movement.

EU leaders refuse to settle the issue of

citizens' rights, saying "no negotiation before notification". They refuse to guarantee these rights unless we agree to stay subject to the European Court of Justice. The EU is imposing this condition, nobody else.

Hollow, fast-emptying trade unions mis-run by the ultra-left are the opposite of control. So too are falling real wages and worsening conditions of work.

Separatism

Division is the opposite of control, so we oppose separatism. The Scottish National Party is now ancient history. When it lost its 2014 referendum, it lost its *raison d'être*.

We have to be able to defend our land, we are not unilateral disarmers. Nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented.

All the political parties opposing our independence call for policies illegal in the EU. Labour calls for public ownership of rail, energy and water. The LibDems call for public procurement to boost local economies and for cutting agricultural support for large landowners. Labour, LibDems and Greens all call for controlling our own trade deals. The SNP calls for "Scottish control of Scottish fisheries" while pledging to rejoin the EU.

The Labour party opened the door for damaging policies like tuition fees, the Private Finance Initiative, commissioning in the NHS and devolution. The message of Labour's campaign to stay in the austerity-

enforcing, Greece-destroying EU was, "No we can't". No we can't be independent; no we can't make our own decisions.

Some say that if Labour had backed the referendum, or if it had campaigned to leave the EU or if it fully had accepted our decision to leave the EU, we would not now be facing a hung parliament. But we always have to deal with reality. Labour could never have done those things, any more than it has ever backed workers against employers.

The Labour party is a failed experiment, which the working class created to avoid thinking and acting for itself, very much like the EU. History shows that societies whose members do not take responsibility for their actions fail.

But our class here, our British working class, is not failing. We won in 2004 against Labour's EU-style regional scheme to break up Britain. We won in 2011 against the EU-style Alternative Vote scheme. We won in 2014 against the EU-backed break-up of Britain. These great victories all built up to when we won last year.

The time for referendums is over. We have made our decisions to be united and independent. Now we must take charge of Britain's future and build an independent, self-reliant country. ■

• This article is an edited version of a speech given at a CPBML meeting in London.



CPBML/Workers Public Meeting, London

Thursday 28 September, 7.30 pm
"House the People"

Brockway Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

Housing in Britain is broken. Instead of filling a need, it is an investment from which huge profits can be made by taking advantage of the acute rise in demand. Meanwhile, council housing is left to rot – with deadly consequences. Come and discuss. All welcome.

We are witnessing the growth of parallel legal systems run

Why it has to be one law



See LI (CC-BY-SA 2.0)

April 2014, London: Protesting against the Law Society's decision to recognise sharia law in Britain.

IT SHOULD BE an easy principle to agree: that there should be “one law for all” in Britain. Who would disagree? And yet this principle is under threat on a number of fronts.

Firstly there is the historic difficulty of a different legal system in Scotland with, for example, the age of criminal responsibility set at 8 years in Scotland and 10 years in England and Wales. In a welcome move Scotland is now proposing to raise the age to 12 years in 2018 – but surely we should be using the opportunity to harmonise and raise it to 12 years across Britain?

Secondly, there is the attempt to continue the enhanced legal rights of EU citizens living in Britain even after we leave the EU (see news article, p5). Finally there is the systematic attempt to normalise a parallel legal system via religious groups which is expanding rather than diminishing.

Both before and after the recent terrorist attacks in Manchester and London there were and are difficult conversations to be had. There are questions of domestic policy and foreign policy which need society-wide discussion. The only challenge is where to begin.

Parallel system

It is suggested that the problems may be insurmountable as the issues are “inside the head” of the terrorist and therefore not amenable to a human solution, but that is ducking the issue. Yet the growing use of religious “courts” as a parallel legal system for example, is not “inside the head” of anyone but a material reality that many seem reluctant to confront.

Many people are unaware that in Britain we have the involvement of, for example, Catholic tribunals, Jewish Beth Din courts,

along with sharia councils and Muslim Arbitration Tribunals, in a whole range of civil law matters, especially divorce and child custody issues.

In recent years both the Jewish Beth Din and sharia councils have seen a growth in their activity. The total number of sharia councils is unknown, but academic estimates range from 80 to 100.

At a parliamentary select committee in 2016 they reported “one thing on which we can all agree is that we don’t know how many Sharia councils there are in this country. We don’t know how many people are visiting Sharia councils. We don’t even know how many mosques and imams are registered in this country. It is a very complex scenario.”

It is not correct to say that sharia law applies in Britain. It does not. Judgements made in a sharia council do not have legal

n by religious courts...

for all

force and they are not courts of law. But those who use them experience a parallel legal system, as they do not enjoy the same legal protection as other citizens.

For years the campaigning organisation One Law for All (onelawforall.org.uk) involving secularists, many Muslim women and ex-Muslims, has been arguing that the existence of discriminatory religious “legal”, mediation and arbitration systems creates conflicts in law and gaps in the protection of citizens.

In particular the organisation highlights that under sharia the testimony of men is valued above that of women, that men can seek divorce at no cost by uttering the word three times – and that women must pay to request a divorce and repay any dowry. One Law for All says that religious courts are incapable of reform or regulation, and campaigns for their abolition.

Review

An independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales was launched when Theresa May was Home Secretary in May 2016. This seemed to be hopeful news but then the terms of reference stated:

“...many people in England and Wales follow religious codes and practices, and benefit from the guidance they offer. However, there is evidence some sharia councils may be working in a discriminatory and unacceptable way, seeking to legitimise forced marriage and issuing divorces that are unfair to women, contrary to the teachings of Islam. It will also seek out examples of best practice among sharia councils.”

So from the outset the “independent review” was accepting that a parallel system

‘Those who use sharia courts do not enjoy the same legal protection as other citizens.’

Sharia – a recent introduction

MARYAM NAMAZIE of One Law for All gave evidence to the government review of sharia law on 1 November, and faced hostile responses. In turn the organisation stated that “accusations of ‘anti-faith’, ‘Islamophobia’ and racism constitute an attempt to delegitimise the evidence of secular witnesses to the inquiry”.

Namazie’s oral evidence gives a historical context which is not widely known. Here is an extract: “Sharia courts ... [in Britain] came in the mid-1980s. They are a result of the rise of the political Islamic movement internationally, the repercussions of which we have seen here in Britain and in Europe. If you talk to older women who were living in Britain prior to this period, none of them were required or pressured to go to Sharia court...”

“In the past they would get civil

divorces, which are acceptable in Pakistan, Iran and elsewhere. In a sense, we see this as part of the rise of the Islamist movement. It is one of their projects to manage and control women. They created a problem, and then they came forward and pretended that Sharia courts were the solution to the problem that they had created. It is highly problematic.

“We need to look fundamentally at why women from minority backgrounds should have different rights and rules applied to them. Why are we not stressing one law for all?”

“In any sort of religious law—not just Sharia courts but Beth Dins and any sort of parallel legal system where religious arbitration is at play—you will find that women are discriminated against because of the nature of these sorts of rules.” ■

was possible and its task was to improve the functioning of systems that were discriminatory in effect and intent. Instead of an independent judge, the chair of the review was the theologian Mona Siddiqui, OBE, Professor of Islamic and Interreligious Studies at Edinburgh University. Instead of experts in British and international legal matters the two advisers to the panel were religious scholars. So don’t hold your breath for the outcome of this review, which is due some time later this year.

Also in 2016 a Home Affairs Select Committee held an inquiry into sharia councils but did not come to any conclusions before the dissolution of parliament for the May 2017 election. Like the independent review, the select committee appeared to have its eye on “reform” of religious courts.

Extension

The extension of sharia practice into other areas of life in Britain is being facilitated in a number of ways, including into student debt. Following a government consultation in 2014 an alternative “sharia compliant student loan process” was developed.

This “compliant” model is identical to the

current interest-based system in terms of costs and repayments but supposedly uses a “non interest-based finance mechanism” acceptable to sharia councils. Initially an implementation date of 2016 was planned and postponed but there is now considerable pressure for it to be brought in next year. There are some advantages to a hung parliament.

Following a storm of protest in 2014 the Law Society, representing solicitors, withdrew controversial guidelines for its members on how to compile “Sharia compliant” wills amid complaints that they encouraged discrimination against women and non-Muslims. Presumably in an attempt to make sharia compliant student loans “non-discriminatory” the government proposal says that they will be available to all regardless of religion!

The principle of one law for all must be guarded and fought for on all fronts. Legal differences between Scotland and the rest of Britain must be systematically reduced over time. Preferential treatment of EU citizens in Britain must be opposed. The use of religious courts/councils/tribunals as a parallel legal system must be abolished. ■

Socialism brought real progress to Albania, but now the country has been thrown remorselessly into the arms of the European Union...

Albania's election – with



Workers

Mural over the entrance to Albania's National Historical Museum, Tirana, built by the Party of Labour of Albania in 1981.

THE ACTIONS of the European Union during recent weeks in Albania should finally end any illusions of the EU as a force for democracy or peace. Indeed, the blatant collusion between the EU ambassador to Albania, the US ambassador, senior NATO figures and the Albanian Democratic Party to undermine elections there on 25 June 2017 reached a peak in mid-May.

A 70-day "camp", a marquee adorned with Democratic Party, US and EU flags, outside the president and prime minister's offices, produced endless calls demanding the EU actively intervene in the elections.

The Democratic Party originally boycotted the election, probably because it thought it would lose. Barely a month before elections originally scheduled for 18 June, it reached agreement with the ruling Socialist Party, delaying the elections by a week.

It is calling for an EU-supervised and chosen "technical" government, which naturally would include itself, to take control. The technical government would then oversee Albania's full integration into the EU without

any pretence at democracy.

The Socialist Party differs only in that it wants to be the ruling party that ensures full integration with the EU. Both parties accuse each other of corruption, drug trafficking, and conniving with the army and police to seize power. Essentially both want Albania to be a rogue criminal state in Europe.

Advised by...Blair

Albania's Socialist Party has led a government of privatisation, outsourcing, free market economics, advised by Tony Blair (and other Labour Party figures). It has abandoned all notions of independence or sovereignty for Albania. It sees only one strategy: submerging Albania in the EU.

Staggering EU loans to Albania – overall, its external debt is more than 75 per cent of its annual GDP – have reduced the Albanian economy to a worse standing than Greece, Italy or Spain. The EU will never get its money back.

German, US, Chinese and Saudi Arabian loans and investment have flooded into the

economy. China runs the only commercial airport in Albania – propped up by EU money – after buying the concession from a German company. Amid the poverty, Mercedes-Benz and BMW cars proliferate.

Albanian industry, developed under the genuine socialist years of the Party of Labour from 1947 to 1991, has been destroyed. Manufacturing industry has effectively been privatised and closed.

Textile production in Berat has now closed or been reduced to tourist handicrafts. Light engineering has been abandoned. Steel and metal production at Elbasan has shut. The railways are all but abandoned. The unique and extensive film industry has withered to almost nothing.

The oil industry has been privatised into foreign hands and is now bankrupt – the workers haven't been paid for over 18 months.

The metal and mineral extraction and refining industries – aluminium, chrome, bauxite – have been privatised and downsized. The electricity industry remains in

Country is a playground for capitalism being driven

h EU interference

state hands, but what was once free to the public under the Party of Labour is now expensive and everyone is a “customer”.

In a latter-day version of Britain’s Private Finance Initiative, Albania is encouraging privatised hydroelectric plants throughout its extensive river network. The state is funding everything and guaranteeing to buy the power – another licence to print money.

Meanwhile, Albania claims to be going green, abandoning all energy generation other than hydro and solar. The power stations once used for heavy industry lie dormant and collapsing, as do the industries (such as cement, fertilisers and steel) they once supplied.

Unemployed

About half of the population are unemployed, with a fifth of the 4.5 million population described as “in transit” – that is, having to work abroad. Fully 30 per cent of all 15- to 29-year-olds are officially described as being outside of education or employment.

Though two of the legacies of the socialist years of 1947 to 1991 remain – free education and a free health service – both are being targeted by EU privatisation. Such measures led to the temporary closure of the new private university of the city of Berat due to what have been politely described as “irregularities”, such as the awarding of degrees to a Middle Eastern prince who never set foot in Albania.

Albanian agriculture lies largely abandoned. An estimated third of the population has moved from the north of the country to the south, from villages and agricultural towns to urban centres, looking for work.

With the collapse of the communes and collectives, the terracing of Albania, which guaranteed food production and self-sufficiency throughout the 1970s and 1980s, has been abandoned. Without the collective

‘The depopulation of the countryside is coupled with illegal land grabs.’

responsibility to maintain them, the schemes which drained Albania’s mosquito-ridden marshes and reclaimed rich agricultural lands, another legacy of the Party of Labour years, are on the brink of collapse.

Tirana, the capital, has seen its population explode from 130,000 in 1990 to 800,000 today. It is estimated that half of Tirana’s population are transient, picking up jobs in services, bars and car washes.

The depopulation of the countryside is coupled with illegal land grabs, falsification of land deeds, and unprecedented unplanned construction. With the land grabs comes the emergence of large-scale capitalist farming.

The once-unspoilt Albania Riviera could now pass for Alicante. Rows of empty apartment blocks are for sale or to let, many built without planning, unregistered to avoid taxation. Planned development for people’s need is replaced by anarchy.

The economy is described as 50 per cent black and 50 per cent grey, with criminality and corruption rife. All the talk about democracy and freedom is just a fig leaf for unbridled greed and degradation of people – capitalism without restraint.

Tourism, touted by the EU as Albania’s economic saviour, is dominated by gangster interests. It’s a tourist market aimed at Eastern Europe, one which will undermine Greek, Italian and Spanish tourism: another crisis waiting in the EU’s wings.

Many of the gangs that dominate drug smuggling arise from the criminal elements repressed from 1947 to 1991. They found a natural home with the Democratic Party, though the Socialist Party has its own cohorts. Albanian agriculture now produces vast cannabis crops – so much so that Italy’s anti-drug police openly comment on the air pollution created when the gangsters fire their fields rather than let the police and army bulldoze production in the mountains.

To be part of the EU you must – in practice – be part of NATO. While Albania’s integration into the EU is slow because of the instability of the economy (the country has been relying on advice from Irish financial consultants, survivors from the Celtic Tiger crash of 2007/2008!) its integration into NATO was achieved at lightning speed.

By joining NATO, Albania, a country

‘The once-unspoilt Albania Riviera could now pass for Alicante.’

whose standing army numbers just two to three thousand plus Special Forces, has become a surrogate for Turkish military interests. As the biggest military force in NATO after the United States, Turkey becomes Albania’s shield – and more.

Turkey’s attempt to regain a presence is reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire. Turkish, Iranian and Saudi funds vie with one another in re-establishing mosques, while US foundations bid for the Christian market.

Regional power plays

Turkish president Recep Erdoğan’s sabre rattling and regional power plays, conniving with Isis in Syria and elsewhere, are reflected in the Democratic Party’s call for a Greater Albania and the revision of the 1913 Balkan Treaties.

The socialist government of 1947 to 1991 had always rejected treaty revision, which would bring with it the threat of regional war. In ominous echoes, the Greater Albania call comes with agitation in the region for a Greater Macedonia, Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia.

This warmongering serves only to split the region, enabling the EU’s divide and rule. Its murderous track record in Yugoslavia shows its model for regime change.

What is the EU’s commitment to Albanian “democracy”? It is to conspire to overthrow the elected (pro-EU and capitalist) government and likely winner of the forthcoming 25 June elections.

Meanwhile, the EU commitment to “peace” through its NATO partners threatens the nominal independence and statehood of Albania, barely a century since the treaties which put a stop to the Balkan Wars of the early 20th century.

The Albanian word *shitet* means “for sale”. It appears everywhere – very apt for the EU dream. ■

Cuba's own experience when Soviet aid was suddenly lost – nothing to fear from self-reliance – and everything to gain.

Lessons for Britain from

THE WITHDRAWAL of Soviet aid in 1990 left Cuba's economy on a knife-edge. Cubans lost all their markets in sugar. They ceased to receive foodstuffs, fuel, wood, soap, raw materials. Calories and protein intake were reduced by half. Plans for nuclear energy had to be abandoned. The US intensified its blockade, passing the Helms-Burton Act. It was a case of adapt or die.

No one expects Brexit to be like this, but we will need to be more self-reliant – and self-reliance would be good for Britain. For Cuba, it became an absolute necessity. Small parcels of land were set aside for family gardening. City spaces were utilised for the production, hydroponically, of three million tons of vegetables a year.

This gave jobs to 300,000 citizens. Using straw and other agricultural waste and employing drip irrigation or micro-jets, they achieved this without emitting a gram of carbon dioxide.

Marxism-Leninism was the theory which enabled Castro to apply his natural intelligence to any seemingly impossible situation. "Without these lessons," he said, "I wouldn't have been able to play any role at all." In a matter of five years, under his leadership, Cuba's economy was turned around. The world saw a nation unbowed in the face of adversity. The revolution was saved.

Dependence

With Brexit a new generation will need to learn how to manage and control Britain's assets. Dependence on EU institutions has severed the pathways of understanding, the chain of knowledge – theory and practice – passed on from generation to generation. The economics of running the country in the interest of our children cannot be left to sclerotic bourgeois old politicians.

'Planning was the key, and young Cubans were encouraged to be fully involved.'



Katdani

Dancers in Havana, January 2017. Art, music, dance, drama and sports all get state support in Cuba.

New questions have arisen demanding scientific answers: efficiency versus the environment, GM crops and herbicides, for example. In Cuba the answers have been guided by scientific research, not the prejudices of politicians.

After the thinking comes the planning. Castro said of the revolution that it would "establish all necessary controls. We are not a capitalist country, where everything is left to chance". Planning was the key, and young Cubans were encouraged to become fully involved, as they are to this day. Their Youth Labour Army was crucial to successful agrarian reform, building railways, schools and houses in areas short of labour.

Castro put the young Che Guevara in charge of industry and economics, "not because he had a degree in it, but because he had read a great deal and observed a great deal". Che argued for voluntary labour. He led by example, in fields and mines, on

building sites and in the docks.

At the time of the revolution in 1959 the nation was bankrupt, its assets stolen and sent abroad. The revolution was initially slow to react, with the result that the US was able to freeze millions of dollars that had not been taken out of banks. Nationalising banks, nickel, oil and sugar refineries was essential to develop and protect the nation. But Cuba did not go down the road of forced collectivisation.

Cuban sugar cane farmers had started the first war of independence in 1868 by freeing slaves, who joined with their masters in the war against Spanish colonialism. Descended from farming stock himself, Castro recommended leaving small farmers to run their own businesses, but foreign expropriators were duly expelled. Only the big landowners were nationalised, with compensation.

This approach was sensitive, and not

t shows that a country that relies on its people has

...

the Cuban revolution



Cuba.

entirely economical, compared with that of the USSR, but Castro's concern was unity – the avoidance of the trauma of loss, and of bureaucracy and “gigantism”. There was the flexibility for farming co-operatives to emerge out of efficient state enterprises, and for these small independent farmers to provide electrical power, water, schools and health services.

Investment

Free to determine its own policies, and led by highly qualified scientists and experts in renewables, Cubans have invested in an Energy Revolution – out of necessity rather than environmental concerns (though they care about the planet too). Hurricanes, a world economic crisis, shortage of imported oil, and outdated power plants have all compelled them to decentralise electricity in favour of smaller distributed units.

Clean energy has been brought to

Cuban homes through the free circulation of modern appliances, including fridges. Cuba was the first to transition from incandescent bulbs to fluorescent lamps. And all on the basis of social equity – poorer households pay less, or even nothing.

Solar panels, which are economical to buy and maintain, have brought electricity to rural areas for heating and drying. Cuba is a country of contrasts – relatively temperate in the west, hot and arid in the east. Consideration for the whole country and its varying needs has contributed to unity and mass support for the revolution.

Wind energy is exploited within its limitations. Like in Britain, the traditional burning of fossil fuels still plays the major part in energy supply but only until new technology, carbon capture, or nuclear supply can replace it. The point for both countries is that when that day comes, the people are sufficiently in charge to be able to grasp the opportunities.

Cuba's fishing industry is a similar mixture, on a smaller scale, of state-owned and independent, all-family concerns, with many communities dependent on shrimp for a livelihood. Trawlers are often past their sell-by date, and the seas have suffered from over-fishing. Some 40 per cent of the big fish have simply gone. But the coral reef is still pristine, and steps are being taken to develop fishery co-operatives to improve food security and biodiversity alongside production.

It is a striking feature of Cuba's socialist planned economy that out of work fishermen are not simply left to languish, as in Britain – the state takes responsibility for identifying alternative livelihoods for them.

If nothing else, the world knows about Cuba's great achievements in the sphere of education and medicine – its pioneering work on meningitis, hepatitis, and molecular immunology. Experts in Britain marvel at the success of Cuba's literacy programme, and lifelong learning delivered free to all.

In recent years the training of computer programmers and designers has been seriously promoted and IT has become an integral part of universities and youth clubs.

Further education is seen as a way out of crime. Courses have been taken into prisons. Public health study centres have been

‘Experts in Britain marvel at the success of Cuba's literacy programme.’

set up in polyclinics, health units and blood banks. Excluding universities, 600,000 Cubans work either as students or teachers. It is an interconnected approach: 100,000 teachers of higher education formerly worked in sugar cane *centrales*. If for any reason workers have to be laid off their salaries are still paid so they can return to education (this is voluntary).

Arts

When it was seen that the children were outstripping their disadvantaged parents from the barrios, grants were provided for the over-45s too. “They are going to be among the most revolutionary of our citizens, because these programmes represent a rebirth for them,” said Castro. Art, music, dance, drama and sports all get state support in Cuba.

In Britain by contrast there is an ideological attack on education and on our health service. We import health workers at ridiculous cost to the NHS, while tiny Cuba trains enough of its own and to spare. Within Cuba's sphere of influence doctors share their skill and knowledge, and students from developing countries can attend training in Cuba free of charge.

Infant mortality stands at 49 per 1,000 live births worldwide: in Cuba (according to the CIA's *World Factbook*, no less) it is a mere 4.5 – lower than the USA. Unicef says 700,000 children could be saved annually if the world copied Cuba.

Attempts to destabilise and isolate Cuba continue, but Cuba is safe so long as the people stand by their revolution. We can be sure that if Britain is successful in re-establishing national sovereignty, we and others will be punished for trying.

Our answer must be to stand together, at home and abroad, against the false internationalism of the EU. ■

Leaving the EU will also take us away from the advancing more important that Britain maintains an independent military

Independence requires a

THE WORKING CLASS'S decision to leave the European Union was received with dismay by the Brussels bureaucracy. They knew that without Britain, the EU would lose around a quarter of its defence capability.

In defence, as in so many areas, Britain has been a net contributor to the EU. In the referendum campaign, the EU and their proposals for integration of defence and a European army had been controversial.

Some advocating Remain claimed that there were no such plans. After the referendum results the cat was well and truly out of the bag. Indeed their plans advanced rapidly.

By September 2016 a position paper by the French and German Defence Ministers was leaked to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. It called for the establishment of a "common and permanent" European military headquarters, as well as the creation of EU military structures, including an EU Logistics Command and an EU Medical Command.

Germany's Defence Minister in September declared, "It's time to move forward to a European defence union, which is basically a 'Schengen of defence'." The Italian defence and foreign ministers called for a coalition of member countries willing to establish a joint permanent military force

In November at a press conference held, intentionally, on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier off the Italian island of Ventotene, Germany's Merkel, France's Hollande and Italy's Renzi declared their intention. They

proposed a "new Level of Ambition to develop a stronger Union in security and defence".

The ambition extends much further. According to a European Parliament report on the European Defence Union, it includes military air traffic control, space and even cyber-space. It extends to the EU committing itself – in the name of "countering disinformation and effectively communicating our actions internally and externally" – to a programme of propaganda and subversion.

As for the defence industries of EU member states, the EU announced a programme of "clusters of excellence" to be designated on a quota system. We are well out if this.

Negotiations

In the Lisbon treaty talks the EU tried to claim rights to control the North Sea including installations in the sea, such as gas and oil rigs and pipelines. Though these were rebuffed at the time, the EU has not forgone these ambitions, and we can expect them to re-emerge in the Brexit negotiations.

Behind the EU's crucifixion of Greece lay the threat, ultimately, of military action if they had not caved in, but its plans do not only affect member states. The EU has arrogated to itself a role in the world. The so-called High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (a Gilbert and Sullivan job title if ever there was one), Federica Mogherini, has outlined their future

scope worldwide (see box overleaf).

Brexit means that Britain need no longer fear being sucked into a European army, though we should beware the potential for such a force to be used against nations that step out of line, including ourselves. But it now means that we must consider the future of the defence of the independence we win, and how it may be strengthened and maintained.

The British working class has no interest in forming or continuing in alliances of aggression, territorial expansion, or hanging on to former colonial possessions.

NATO was founded as an anti-communist military bloc to take forward capitalism's aggression against the USSR after the defeat of fascism. We described it, accurately, as the armed wing of the EU.

After 1991, capitalism tried to find a new role for NATO. Blair, Bush and others wanted it to function as an international gendarmerie to subdue governments that thought for themselves and would not obey orders. The EU sees it as an ally in its manoeuvrings against Russia.

One day, we will withdraw from NATO, but it is not the priority at the moment. When defence civil servants strike, they take the country out of NATO. We know we have the power to leave, when we choose to use it.

Many of us work in the defence sector. Apart from a little under 200,000 service personnel, including reservists, there are over 300,000 workers employed in defence, and it makes up 10 per cent of our manufacturing output.

Economic benefits

Beyond the benefits of such highly skilled work in itself are the benefits to the economy as a whole. Shipbuilding is a case in point. Further, civilian trauma care has benefitted considerably, for example, from the experience of surgeons and paramedics working in Iraq and Afghanistan, whose experience of saving lives and limbs abroad has been applied to non-combat situations.

Lessons learnt in battle in managing extremity haemorrhage, blunt trauma that damages veins and arteries, blast injuries and burns, and severe traumatic brain injury have all been applied to civilian casualties, and lessons in the best way to organise and

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's series of London public meetings in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1R 4RL, continues with on Thursday 28 September with the title "House the People" (see notice, page 11). A further meeting on 16 November will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

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 send an email to info@cpbml.org.uk

moves to form a European army – and make it all the military capability...

a defence industry



Cpl Paul Oldfield/MOD/Crown Copyright 2016

A new-generation RAF F35-B “stealth” fighter over RAF Marham, Norfolk. British Aerospace builds 15 per cent of the airframe, while the fan enabling vertical take-off and landing is made by Rolls Royce.

manage trauma care have saved workers’ lives.

Does it make sense, economically or militarily, to degrade our defence industry and import from abroad? Many in defence procurement connived at the EU’s plans to

‘We need to define the research and development in defence that we need.’

centralise and rationalise, that is, move out of Britain, our defence procurement.

Even experienced senior service personnel were dazzled by buy-one-get-one-free offers from foreign suppliers. The working class must now assert control of procurement. If it makes sense to make it here, then we shall.

Evidence

A 2015 report by researchers at King’s College London highlighted how the Ministry of Defence has changed the way it collects statistics on the defence industrial base and in its procurement it excludes wider employment, industrial or economic factors. This should be rectified as soon as possible, so we can make strategic decisions on sound

information and evidence.

We need to define the research and development in defence that we need for the future. In doing so, there is no room for woolly sentiment, or superstitious opposition to technological development. Those in the class who persist in demonising particular weapons systems need to think again, and stop jeopardising the jobs of fellow workers for the sake of their own consciences.

The GMB has taken a lead in asserting the interests of workers in defence and ship-building and has been treated shamefully by those claiming to represent other trade unions, notably at the STUC in 2016.

It has been left to the GMB to fight,

Continued on page 20

The EU's military vision

© Claude Truong-Ngoc / Wikimedia Commons



The EU's Eurocorps on parade, Strasbourg.

This is the EU's idea of the role of a European military force, as expounded by "High Representative" Federica Mogherini:

- Supporting conditions for achieving and implementing peace agreements and ceasefire arrangements, and/or rapidly providing EU bridging operations for the deployment of wider UN peacekeeping missions, including in non-permissive environments;
- Temporarily substituting or reinforcing domestic civilian security, law enforcement or rule of law, in case of breakdown of normal state functions;
- Projecting stability in order to re-establish security in a degrading humanitarian situation, by protecting civilians, denying a terrorist organisation or armed group a foothold in a fragile country, or creating a safe environment in which a country can

recover from war and destabilisation;

- Contributing to maritime security/surveillance worldwide but most immediately in areas relevant to Europe in the context of specific security needs, including with aerial and space capabilities;
- Providing rapid support to national or UN actors involved in addressing massive health pandemics or the fall-out of national disasters, including situations of public disorder;
- Supporting the evacuation of European citizens if required with military means.

This list has been described as a 21st-century Monroe doctrine, the EU asserting its right to take military action wherever it perceives its interests to be threatened: "areas relevant to Europe". The EU has its eye on the Middle East, Russia and China, to name but a few. ■

Continued from page 19

largely alone, for shipbuilding, dockworkers and other workers in the defence industry at sites such as the Clyde, Rosyth, Faslane in Scotland, Plymouth, Devonport, Appledore and Falmouth in the South West, Barrow in

the North West and Portsmouth in the south of England – truly a national industry, that the class nationally should fight for.

We need a strong navy. The Senior Service has since the days of King Alfred been the central pillar of the defence of an island. A modern navy for an independent

Britain needs less the ability to intervene on the far side of the world, and more the capability to defend our own borders.

There are three areas of particular importance here: fisheries defence, in conjunction with the RAF, the control of our borders, and drug and people smuggling.

At the moment our fisheries protection fleet is woefully small, and was further attenuated by the diversion of vessels from the Fishery Protection Squadron to assist in trying to manage the Mediterranean migrant crisis.

If we assert, as we should, and as our fishermen demand, a 200-mile fisheries limit, enforcing that limit will need more ships, more crew, and concomitant onshore support.

Drug and people trafficking are not insoluble or intractable problems, though their consequences are considerable, both for the direct victims and for the areas where these problems are rife. The National Crime Agency estimates that a large number of those illegally importing drugs to this country have cultural and familial ties to the countries the drugs come from or travel through.

Counter-terrorism

Our harbours and marinas need a stronger presence – more police, coastguards and harbour staff. Counter-terrorism will continue to be an issue. It is workers who die and are injured in terrorist atrocities. The working-class should question why fascist terrorists reported for their activities have not been followed, and demand an account of those responsible for those errors.

What matters now is that it is our class who asserts control.

The working class is for peace, not war. That is not the same as pacifism, nor unilateralism, nor anti-nuclear this, that or the other. We have the opportunity to change the world through a new British approach to defence. The British working class never wanted, nor benefited from, British imperialism. Interventions abroad to advance anti-communism held no interest for us.

We need to start from a clear and honest assessment of what we need as a nation, and how we might achieve it. No part of working class life can be left out of our calculations and our planning. ■

Brexit means we are no longer beholden to the EU. As far as fisheries are concerned, we are now in charge.

Take back our fish!



Fishing fleet in Pittenweem, Fife, on the Firth of Forth.

Seizing the moment: The opportunities for UK fisheries after Brexit by John Ashworth, 38 pages, ISBN 978 1901 546 637, published by the Campaign for an Independent Britain, 2017, free download from campaignforanindependentbritain.org.uk.

THIS LATEST contribution from the author of *The Betrayal of Britain's Fishing* provides a guide to the steps our country can take to protect and develop this key industry.

In 1995 we had 8,073 fishing vessels and 19,044 fishermen. The provisional figures for 2015 are 6,187 vessels and 12,107 fishermen. But that decline is not the only story – the decline in fishing stocks is not the main factor.

EU vessels take almost 700,000 tonnes

'No one knows the real volume of fish taken from our waters.'

of resource from our waters. This amounts to 55 per cent of the total catch of all EU vessels. That underscores just how dependent the EU fleet has become on our marine resource. In 2015, we imported 238,000 tonnes net of fish, worth £1.3 billion. Furthermore, we do not have any accurate discard figures, so no one knows the real volume of fish taken from our waters or where they were caught.

Treaty ends

When we leave the EU, the rule will be that "The Treaties shall cease to apply". All EU fisheries regulations will be of no effect. This includes the current 10-year derogation (Regulation 1380/2013) which restricts the rights of EU vessels to fish within 12 nautical miles of our coast and also the agreements allowing EU vessels to fish in our waters.

Under international law – the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea – our government will be legally responsible for managing our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). That's a zone of 200 nautical miles or the median point between countries. We will automatically revert to the Fishery Limits (1976) Act and the subsequent amendments. The regulations governing EU quotas

and determining who fishes what and where in our zone will all cease to apply.

Brexit means that control of our EEZ comes back to Britain. The EU will have no input into how we manage our EEZ, nor any rights over it. Brexit means we are no longer beholden to the EU. As far as fisheries are concerned, we are now in charge.

The SNP was, until the general election, talking about a second referendum on breaking away from Britain so that Scotland can join the EU. If it ever does so, Scotland's waters will be handed back to the EU and would be subject to CFP rules once again. But there would be a sting in the tail. Scotland would have to share in the overall reduced EU capacity required by the loss to EU waters of the English, Northern Irish and Welsh EEZs. Scottish fishermen would end up with even less quota in their own waters than they have now.

'Red line'

No wonder the Scottish fishing areas voted against the SNP in June. No wonder Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson is now saying that control over fisheries is a "red line" in the Brexit negotiations.

Non-EU Iceland and Norway have full control over their fisheries. Upon independence, we can do the same. The Faroe Islands, situated north-west of the Shetland Islands, are a template for our future fishing policy which will bring both social and environmental benefit. They are not in the EU and have adopted a fishing policy which determines allocation by the number of days at sea. This is a much better system than the EU quota system.

In the 1970s and earlier Iceland successfully fought a series of "Cod Wars", primarily against Britain. Its aim was to protect its fishing industry and to expand the exclusive fishing limits. During the same period Britain joined the Common Market – giving away rights for our fishermen that it sought to deny those from Iceland.

Ashworth concludes, "In this booklet, we have attempted to point the way towards a future fisheries policy which will undo over 40 years of damage, revitalising our coastal communities and creating new jobs while at the same time, improving the management of the entire marine environment." ■

History shows that when we rely slavishly on legislation our advance have subsided, along with our organisation...

Don't give way, make he

THE BRITISH working class makes gains and improvements when it has a striving, self-reliant mentality and applies its collective strength to solve problems. Conversely, when we rely slavishly on legislation our aspirations for advance have subsided, along with our organisation. Capitalist legislation about work is designed to block or side-track our progress. It will not lead us to the Promised Land.

Here are some examples. There are many others.

Our class used to employ its collective strength at work to defend, or occasionally expand, the number of jobs. In 1965 the Labour government introduced the Redundancy Payments Act. This aimed to prevent struggle to protect employment levels, and tempted workers with "fool's gold". The Labour government of the late 1970s continued the same stratagem, using social democracy and apparently benevolent legislation to neutralise working class struggle for both jobs and pay.

Unimpeded

Since then redundancies and closures have proceeded largely unimpeded. Our class has rarely contested decline and argued for greater employment or campaigned for proper apprenticeships for the young. In 1981 Thatcher implemented the EU Acquired Rights Directive with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations Act (TUPE). This claimed to protect people whose work units had been sold or handed to another employer. In reality it undercut workers' resistance and enabled large-scale privatisation.

British trade unions made huge strides forward to gain paid holidays for millions of workers between 1918 and 1939, despite economic recession. It was the biggest industrial reform since the introduction of the eight-hour day and resulted from well-

'Many trade unionists have become wedded to legislation.'

organised struggle, asserting the interests of labour over capital. (The May/June 2017 edition of *Workers* has a fuller account.)

Organised labour discussed and publicised the demand at all levels. It was high on the agenda in workplace negotiations and official representation and when necessary was pursued by direct action. Holidays with pay were secured mainly through voluntary collective agreements between employers and workers and not the 1938 Holidays with Pay Act of 1938, which covered only a minority of Britain's workforce.

Some unions regarded legal provisions on holidays with suspicion "as a window-dressing stunt to be produced at election time". British trade unions at the time still preferred collective bargaining to waiting for state legislation.

Workers' attitudes to pay in recent decades show the same pattern as to redundancies. Many trade unionists have become wedded to legislation for the "minimum wage" or the slightly higher "living wage". In reality, to live with more dignity workers on low wages need better union organisation on the ground to achieve the major breakthrough to higher wages.

Poverty wages

A national minimum or living wage implies an acceptance of poverty wages, perpetuated through state benefits. Workers and many unions have failed to fight for better wages; tax credits and housing benefits have become a lifeline for far too many people on low pay.

Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown introduced tax credits in 1999, which effectively shored up poverty wages and discouraged wages struggles. Workers receive pay so low that they can't live on it or raise a family. Rather than fighting in a trade union together to force the employer to raise wages high enough to live on, workers claim a top-up in the form of working tax credit.

One set of workers pays another set of workers to make it possible for them to work for a wage which is so low they can't survive on it. That's brilliant for employers, but bad for our class in many ways. We must re-learn how to fight for the dignity of a decent wage!

Workers in Britain and elsewhere have



Crosfields factory occupation, London, 1975. Red heading off struggle for the right to work.

fought for centuries to reduce working hours and limit the working day. Contrary to propaganda, this didn't start with the EU Working Time Directive, which has been followed by deterioration. The number of hours people are working is climbing steadily. So too is the amount of unpaid overtime, particularly in monthly-paid jobs.

In almost every workplace we have lost control of the hours that we work. Rather than resist and assert ourselves, we tail behind what capitalism permits. Employers make collective action among workers more difficult by using home-based workers, zero-hours contracts, agency workers, internships and so on.

Promoting division

Employers actively promote division between employees and generate competition between workers. Our trade unions need to get back in contact with people at work and attempt to rebuild collective identities and workplace unity in these worsened conditions. It won't be easy but it must be done.

It is a similar story with agency work. The EU's Agency Workers Directive hasn't protected anyone except employers. It has

our aspirations for headway



Redundancy payments legislation was aimed at

encouraged and normalised a massive growth in casualisation. Employers seek to escape from employment rights and to evade tax and national insurance. Workers mostly acquiesce.

The Agency Workers Regulations came into force in October 2011, implementing the EU Temporary Agency Work Directive. But this doesn't assure agency workers the right to equal treatment on their basic terms and conditions of employment. The only way to enforce that parity is through workplace organisation and not through the courts.

Unions need to ensure that people working in the same roles, alongside one another, are given the same rewards for doing the same work. One step would be to stop employers from using employment agencies or fake "self-employment" as a cheap alternative to employing workers on permanent contracts.

Recourse to legislation appears to be the only cut and dried response. But this lazy thinking proscribes any other way to determine a better solution. To progress as a class, we must revert to pressing our needs and claims with good collective organisation. ■

NO ADVANCE WITHOUT INDEPENDENCE

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist held its 17th Congress in 2015. The published Congress documents are available at www.cpbml.org.uk. At that time the need to leave the EU was urgent, and on 23 June 2016 the working class of Britain took the vital step to eject the EU from Britain and entered a new epoch. The tasks identified at the 17th Congress remain as relevant as ever, and the decision to leave the EU makes the question of Britain's independence immediate and practical. The tasks facing the working class and Party are:

Develop a working class industrial strategy for the building of an independent industrial manufacturing base for Britain, including the development of our energy industry. Our capacity to produce is the basis for providing the public services the working class needs.

Rebuild Britain's trade unions to embrace all industries and workplaces. The trade unions must to become a true class force not an appendage to the Labour Party or business trade unionism. Reassert the need to fight for pay.

Preserve national class unity in the face of the European Union and internal separatists working on their behalf. Assert workers' nationalism to ensure workers' control and unity. Resist the free flow of capital and the free movement of labour.

Oppose the EU and NATO (USA) militarisation of Britain and Europe and the drive towards war on a global scale. Identify and promote all forces and countries for peace against the USA drive for world domination by economic aggression, war and intervention. Promote mutual respect and economic ties between sovereign nations on the principles of non-interference and independence.

Disseminate Marxist theory and practice within the working class and wider labour movement. There is no advance to socialism without Marxism. Develop again our heritage of thinking to advance our work in and outside the workplace.

Re-assert that there are only two classes in Britain – those who exploit the labour of others (the capitalist class) and those who are exploited (the working class). Recruit to and build the party of the working class, the Communist Party of Britain Marxist Leninist.

Interested in these ideas?

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Take responsibility against terrorism

'Al Qa'ida and its offshoot Islamic State copy the worst aspects of US interventions, the murders, the torture, the rapes. There is no appeasing them.'

THE RECENT murderous attacks in Westminster, Manchester and London Bridge show that the government's Prevent strategy to combat terrorism is right to say that "the greatest (terrorist) threat to the UK as a whole is from Al Qa'ida and groups and individuals who share the violent Islamist ideology associated with it." That remains true despite the vicious Finsbury Park attack (itself a ghastly echo of London Bridge), which happened as *Workers* went to press.

Al Qa'ida and its offshoot Islamic State copy the worst aspects of US interventions, the murders, the torture, the rapes. There is no appeasing them. In July 2016 Islamic State said: "The fact is, even if you were to stop bombing us, imprisoning us, torturing us, vilifying us, and usurping our lands, we would continue to hate you because our primary reason for hating you will not cease to exist until you embrace Islam."

This is fascism. People who will carry out nail bombings on young girls at a concert, stab at random and use vehicles to mow down pedestrians in the street, are nothing but fascist murderers. Such barbarous criminals can have no excuses for their actions.

Yet some groups in Britain defend Islamist terrorism. For example, Cage, which calls itself "a human rights advocacy group", has described an Isis beheader as "extremely kind" and "extremely gentle". They have described criticism of Boko Haram, the Nigerian Islamist group which abducted 275 schoolgirls, as "demonising Islam" and that the Bring Back Our Girls campaign is a "colonial trope". Such people let terrorists off the hook by blaming imperialism. Yet Isis seeks to create an Islamic empire.

Islamists claim that the government has invented a threat in order to criminalise Muslims. Ibrahim Ali, from the Federation of Student Islamic Societies, said at a Cage event, "Prevent is itself a racist agenda, it's an Islamophobic agenda; an agenda that's based on no evidence."

The Prevent strategy aims to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, and seeks to challenge all forms of extremism. It claims to have helped to stop 150 people, including 50 children, entering war zones in Iraq and Syria in 2015. The strategy has had its problems, and has modified its approach to some extent in response to some genuine concerns. But those groups who denounce it wholesale are echoed by those who use the catch-all slur of "islamophobia" flung at anyone who dares to speak against them.

Such apologists for terrorism deride the views of Muslims who bravely speak out against the rise of Islamic extremism. Nazir Afzal, the former chief prosecutor who reopened the case against Pakistani-origin taxi drivers for street grooming, rape and abuse of young girls in Rotherham, appeared on *Question Time* in May this year. A Muslim himself, he said of Islamic extremists, "You have to confront them."

In the programme a woman who described herself as a British Muslim spoke from the audience about the "elephant in the room". She said "there is an issue with regard to radicalisation and extremism that does exist within our community...[which] we have to accept and deal with... Saudi-trained clerics [are] coming in and speaking to children as young as seven."

She advised that all Saudi-financed mosques should be closed down for now. "We have home-grown terrorism and terrorism is also being imported right under our noses."

Of course programmes like Prevent are inadequate. All of us must take responsibility for our future. We must exert proper control of our borders, and assert the principle of one law for all in Britain, with no jurisdiction by the European Court. And we must deal with sources of division in our society, remove religious schools which separate children, emphasise the need for all citizens to speak English, and fight for decent jobs and pay to unite us all. ■

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