

WORKERS

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JULY 2014



RAIL FRANCHISE CHAOS: BRING BACK BRITISH RAIL!

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



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IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS



Positive thinking

PERHAPS IT is a result of more than three decades of counterrevolution. Perhaps it is simply a refusal to take responsibility for our futures. But sometimes it seems as if opposition to capitalism and the consequences of the rule of profit remains just that – opposition. Are we so mired in the trenches that we cannot lift our sights and think not about opposing their plans but proposing our own?

Everywhere we see the result of capitalism’s planning – that is, if grab and run can be dignified as a plan. They want to weaken us, divide us. That’s no reason for us to feel weak or divided.

There are hints of an attitude that needs to be cherished, promoted. In this issue you can read that the National Union of Mineworkers is not just opposing pit closures but showing a clean coal future is possible. Or the rail unions using the

East Coast example to show how rail can run in public ownership.

Let’s look at our strengths. We live in a world where workers represent the clear majority, and in a country with the world’s sixth-largest economy. We are literate, educated, cultured. We have a skilled workforce, and inhabit an island sitting on centuries-worth of coal and gas surrounded by a sea of fish. We have a proud history of fighting to win, and we know how to run our country.

So why should we believe that only capitalists can rule, or that Britain is so small and insignificant that it must let the European Union negotiate all our trade agreements, for example?

To use a phrase from the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, we have a world to win. So let’s start thinking and talking about how we will win it. ■

Dangerous manoeuvres

NATO MILITARY exercises are due to take place in Ukraine in July. British troops will be deployed as part of NATO’s Rapid Trident manoeuvres.

This is a dangerous move that will inevitably escalate an already tense situation. You have to ask yourself what is going on.

Ukraine, despite the dreams of its current dictators, is nowhere near the North Atlantic, from which

NATO takes its name. It is not even part of Europe, however defined. It is not a member of NATO. It is, though, on Russia’s borders, and that seems to be a justification for almost anything.

Britain’s participation in military exercises by a nuclear-armed alliance with a first-strike policy can only further destabilise Ukraine. We should have no part of it. ■



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Pit faces early shutdown

THE WITHDRAWAL of Hargreaves Services from the funding package to keep Kellingley pit in West Yorkshire open for a further two years of managed closure has brought to the fore the prospect of an early shutdown.

In spite of levels of production being well above expectation in the past month and coal prices rising on the global market because of a number of factors, the government is still reluctant to commit to increasing levels of support beyond the £10 million already promised.

The National Union of Mineworkers is arguing for an employee buyout on the lines of the Hatfield, Doncaster, scheme agreed last year.

It seems illogical to open the clean coal capture and storage (CCCS) trial – known as the White Rose project (see *Workers*, May 2014) – at nearby Drax power station, only to shut the local pit that supplies 2.3 million tonnes to Drax each year.

Closure of the Big K, as Kellingley has long been known, would leave the country even more reliant on Russian and US coal imports at a time when demand from China and India is pushing prices up. It also means that experience of CCCS – a potent force for coal use globally and for the export of expertise in clean coal usage based on local supplies – could be squandered.

Further meetings with energy ministers are planned for the unions and companies still active in the deep and surface mining industry. ■



The Kellingley NUM banner. The picture was taken during the miners' strike of 1984/85. When the strike began there were 187,000 miners in Britain. Now just three pits are left – two of them planned for closure.

EDUCATION

Victory for reason

IN A DRAMATIC victory for rational thought over mysticism, the government has decreed that creationism cannot be taught as science in any existing or future academy or free school.

A new set of funding agreements released in June notes the requirement for academies to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Pointing out that creationism flies in the face of established scientific evidence, and that it does not accurately and consistently use the scientific method, the document concludes "...as such it should not be presented to pupils at the Academy as a scientific theory".

It is one legacy of the Blair government's promotion of religious schools that creationism could have been taught in 21st-century schools. Now this simple clause within a dry treatise on funding means publicly funded schools may no longer teach creationism as evidence-based theory. ■

MINERALS

Tungsten mine for Devon

THE FIRST new metal mine in Britain for 40 years will open next year in Devon following the approval of £130 million of investment. The Hemerdon tungsten and tin mine, on the edge of Dartmoor, will be the third- or fourth-biggest tungsten mine in the world, Dr Robin Sharl from Camborne School of Mines told the BBC.

Tungsten sells for £25,000 a tonne, making it extremely valuable. It has a variety of industrial uses, especially for hardening metal alloys. ■

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

NEWS ANALYSIS

Where's the holiday?

WORKERS ARE failing to take the full amount of holiday they are entitled to, according to a survey of more than 2,000 staff by workplace review website Glassdoor.

The survey found that staff on average use only 77 per cent of their annual leave. With British law requiring almost all employers to give 5.6 weeks' paid holiday per year (including bank holidays), this means workers are giving up more than six days away from their jobs every year. The survey also revealed that people aged 16 to 24 are least likely to take off all the days they are due.

Workers need the time off that they have earned to rest and recharge. Working too hard for too long can be unhealthy and unproductive. Sensible employers will encourage their workers to use their holiday allocations; where necessary trade unions should ensure members take up their entitlement.

Another disturbing finding was that many workers do some work while they are supposed to be on leave, either because they have a difficulty switching off or because their manager or colleagues have contacted them. Some 44 per cent of respondents admitted they did some work while on holiday.

Fear

The most common reason cited for working on holiday was fear of falling behind; a minority did so because they were fearful of losing their jobs; others because they felt no one else could do their work!

Some 8 per cent believe working is better than not working (obviously they need help to find ways to entertain themselves).

Often unmanageable workloads and economic pressures can make people reluctant to take time off properly. Another lamentable feature is the increasingly common trait of senior staff feeling their presence at work is almost always required. Smartphones have added to the problem as they pressure people to be "always on".

Holiday entitlements were not always a feature of work. In many industries they had to be fought for by previous generations of unionised workers. So, get a life, take your holidays – and learn to relax. ■



5 June: health workers protest outside University College Hospital, London

NHS protests across England

AS PART of the ongoing pay dispute in the NHS, Unison and other health unions organised protests across England with lobbies, banners and stalls at dozens of hospital gates on 5 June. Fourteen trade unions and NHS professional bodies, the All Together for the NHS campaign, involving TUC and non-TUC organisations, delivered a monster cheque to the London offices of the Department of Health showing the millions of unpaid hours worked by NHS staff.

The same day health trade union leaders tried to meet with the Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt at the NHS Confederation conference in Liverpool to discuss pay, but yet again he refused to meet them.

Further protests are planned on 1 July, with a lobby of MPs, and on 4 July, when protests will take place inside hospitals as opposed to outside at the main gates. The division of devolution is seeing separate campaigns in Wales and Scotland. Unison is expected to ballot for industrial action in the NHS over pay in the autumn. This will be the first national action in the NHS over pay since the early 1980s. ■

NEWSPAPERS

Hitting back at the hub

A WAVE of industrial action is sweeping through local newspapers owned by the US-owned Newsquest group as members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) strike back against pay restraint, redundancies and management plans to move editorial production to a central hub in Newport, South Wales.

As *Workers* went to press, journalists at titles in North West England and South London were set to walk out for 24 hours on Wednesday 25 June.

The papers affected include the *Warrington Guardian* and *Northwich Guardian* in Cheshire; the *Sale and Altrincham Messenger*, Trafford; the *Wirral Globe* in Birkenhead; the *St Helens Star* in Merseyside; *Bolton News*; *Bolton Journal*; *Bury Journal*; *Bury Times*; the *Lancashire Telegraph*; and the South London Guardian papers.

The action follows strikes in February over similar issues at Newsquest offices in Darlington, York and Bradford.

Ballot votes for action ranged from 83.1 per cent in Blackburn to 93.1 per

cent in Warrington, and 100 per cent in South London, where they have had only one pay increase in six years and management plans to close the *Elmbridge Guardian* and the Twickenham office, losing posts in the process.

Members believe the plan to move production to the Welsh subbing hub will put at risk editorial quality, lead to redundancies and unacceptable workloads, says the NUJ. The issue has seen votes for strikes at Newsquest (Sussex), which includes the *Brighton Argus*. In June, 150 members working for Newsquest (Hampshire), including the *Southern Daily Echo*, voted 89.7 per cent for strike action over pay and job losses.

At the NUJ's biennial conference in April, held in Eastbourne, Newsquest Group Chapel FoC Bob Smith called production hubs the equivalent of sweatshop call centres and accused them of severing the link between newspapers and the communities they serve.

Members are also "sick of having their dedication and skills disregarded by a management more interested in squeezing out profit for the American owner's shareholders", said NUJ national organiser Laura Davidson. ■

Water cannon Johnson campaign ploy

THREE SECONDHAND ex-German Federal Reserve Police water cannon have been bought by Boris Johnson, Mayor of London – without Home Office authority to deploy them. The justification was that if the Metropolitan Police didn't buy them some other police force would.

The Deputy Mayor gloated over buying this military weapon for £30,000

as opposed to £870,000 new, ignoring the view of the German authorities that the cannon are dangerous.

This decision has nothing to do with the risk of public disorder on the streets of London, or incidentally of any other British city. It is solely about Boris Johnson's campaign to be leader of the Tory Party when he returns to the House of Commons at the next general election – trying to position himself as "harder" than his rival candidate Home Secretary Theresa May. ■



Workers

13 June: Pickets at Southwark tube station, by the Palestra offices of TfL.

Second strike at TfL

TRAVEL CENTRES at stations across the capital were disrupted on 13 June in what the unions involved have dubbed a "let them eat cake" dispute at Transport for London, TfL. More than 1,500 staff belonging to TSSA, RMT and Unite walked out for a second 24-hour strike over management proposals to freeze pay and reduce pensions for most staff – but not for the top 300 bosses at the body responsible for London's transport, who all earn over £100,000 according to the unions.

Standing on a picket line outside TfL's headquarters in Victoria Street, Westminster, TSSA leader Manuel Cortes accused Boris Johnson and his "Golden Circle" of bosses of acting like the Bourbons (the autocratic kings of France, one of whom met his end at the guillotine).

The unions report substantial increases in membership since the dispute began, and tell of well attended picket lines across London. ■

HOUSING

Fake boom

HOUSE PRICES in London have risen by 17 per cent in the past 12 months – a disastrous and artificial boom presented by the government as the flagship for Britain's economic recovery. The boom is fuelled by foreign investment, buy-to-let landlords and greed.

Such rises in house prices are falsely presented to illustrate an alleged divide

between the poor North and the wealthy South. One statistic not reported is that London boroughs now account for 17 of the top 20 hot spots for repossessions.

According to housing charity Shelter, 58,000 households are at risk of eviction or repossession in the boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Barking and Dagenham and Southwark, easily among the poorer boroughs of London if not Britain. That could mean anything up to 300,000 people dispossessed and potentially homeless. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

JULY

18 to 20 July, Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival, Tolpuddle, Dorset



Workers

The annual Martyrs' Festival continues to go from strength to strength – and has even developed its own fringe festival. Particularly notable last year was the large number of young people.

The site is open from midday on Friday 18 July, and the festival kicks off at 7pm with a one-woman suffragette musical. There are too many acts – from folk to punk – to list here: go to tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk for a full list. The traditional laying of a wreath on martyr James Hammett's grave is at 1pm on Sunday afternoon, followed by a march with brass bands and rally.



Workers on the Web

• Highlights from this and other issues of **WORKERS** can be found on our website, www.workers.org.uk, as well as information about the CPBML, its policies, and how to contact us.

The franchise to run the heavily used Thameslink service for French state railway operator SNCF...

Government renews rail

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST rail passenger franchise was awarded in June...to a company partly owned by France's state-owned rail operator, SNCF. In line with EU rules designed to break up state-owned railways, the government blocked its own state-owned rail operator from bidding but allowed in the French one.

The new seven-year Thameslink franchise will provide train services from September extending from Brighton and Gatwick Airport to Cambridge, Peterborough and King's Lynn, connected through central London using the Thameslink rail line – which has recently been upgraded at taxpayers' expense to the tune of £6.5 billion.

But this franchise will not take the usual revenue risk normally associated with the privatised railway. Instead, it will be a "management contract", and an estimated £8.9 billion will be provided in subsidies over the seven years. No wonder there was stiff competition!

No guards, no conductors

It is no surprise that the government has awarded the franchise on the basis that the new operator cuts out guards or conductors on the trains. This will leave a train driver in sole charge of trains that may be involved in serious incidents in tunnels under London with up to 12 coaches packed with passengers.

No wonder then that rail union RMT has condemned the proposals to do away with the guards, and launched a campaign of opposition. This was one of the key aspects of the much criticised McNulty report, which called for massive cuts in rail staff and whose recommendations are now being implemented by stealth as each franchise comes up for renewal.

The British state-owned rail operator that currently runs East Coast, the route from London to Edinburgh, wasn't allowed to bid for it, just as it wasn't allowed to bid earlier this year to continue running East Coast after 2015. The government was forced to take control of this franchise in 2009 after the private operator National Express ran into financial difficulties.

The TSSA rail union says the line has been a success story under public owner-



Waterloo Station, London. British workers are contributing through sky-high fares and subsidies

ship. "This is nothing short of economic vandalism by a chancellor who does not want voters to know the truth about the East Coast line – it is a public sector success story," said Manuel Cortes, the TSSA's general secretary. "It has been the cheapest franchise to run for the past five years and it has produced the greatest return to taxpayers – over £600 million."

It's also no wonder that foreign companies are queuing up to bid for British franchises, with SNCF leading the charge in

their bid for East Coast. The German state rail operator Deutsche Bahn has also been awarded a lucrative contract by Transport for London (TfL), along with a Chinese partner, to run services from London Liverpool Street to Enfield, Chingford and Cheshunt under the London Overground branding.

So British workers will be contributing through subsidies and sky-high fares towards profits that foreign rail companies will then reinvest in the railways of Paris,

For seven years has gone to a company partly owned by

rail franchise chaos



s towards profits to be reinvested abroad by foreign state rail companies.

Berlin and Hong Kong!

Sleeper franchise

Another announcement was for the new sleeper train franchise for overnight services between London and destinations in Scotland. The devolved Scottish government was happy to fork out £60 million to help Serco buy new trains. This is the company that was involved in the electronic tagging scandal and had to repay £68.5 million to the government for over-

charging.

Serco was awarded the franchise, apparently on the somewhat dubious basis that they ran a “luxury” sleeper train in Australia! Rail union RMT said it was

‘But pinning hopes on Labour may be futile.’

“deeply concerned” that the contract had been given to Serco, with their Acting General Secretary Mick Cash saying “this is a company with a truly shocking track record in the delivery of public services. With their appalling list of failures in the UK and globally, they should never have even been considered as contenders for the Scottish sleeper service.

“The logical option of public ownership was not even looked at. Serco has a reputation for promising the earth and delivering quite the opposite as they seek to maximise profits and sweat their assets for every single penny piece.”

No wonder either that rivals First Group were “gutted” having lost out again in their bids for a major franchise. Their gravy train seems to have hit the buffers!

The next announcement will be that for the franchise covering services from London Fenchurch Street to Southend. For some reason, the award has been postponed by at least a month.

Hold-up

The unexplained hold-up is giving fresh hope to those opposing the privatisation of East Coast, which the rail unions have been trying to delay using the tactic of seeking a judicial review. That seems doomed to failure, although even a small delay would potentially mean the decision would have to be made after the General Election in May 2015.

But pinning hopes on Labour is likely to be futile. So far, the Labour shadow cabinet have been making sympathetic noises about wanting to retain East Coast in the public sector “for comparative purposes”. But they have been clear that if it is indeed privatised before the election, they would not seek to reverse the decision if they were in office.

Of course, the malign influence of the European Union (EU) may mean that unless they are prepared to defy EU law (and they won’t!), the Labour Party will be powerless in the face of the provisions of the latest pronouncement from the European Commission and European

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Parliament in the form of legislation known as the Fourth Rail Package.

This legislation follows other EU laws that were embraced by John Major's government in the 1980s to bring about privatisation and fragmentation of British Rail. Later EU laws have imposed competition and deregulation on rail freight and international passenger services, usually resulting in lower pay and worse conditions for rail workers across Europe.

Public ownership

Many thought that the Fourth Rail Package couldn't make things worse in Britain, since as originally proposed it would merely introduce to the rest of Europe the discredited system now operating in Britain. They were wrong. Although the original proposals were watered down, the effect would be to prevent any future government from returning the railways to public ownership, and prevent a reunification of train operations with the infrastructure.

'Taxpayers continue to pay around four times the subsidy at today's prices that British Rail received in its final year of existence.'

Even worse, the creation of a European Railways Agency (ERA) around 10 years ago is now threatening the ability of each nation state to exercise its right to oversee the safety regimes of rail operators. For example, new operators will be able to choose whether to go to the British safety enforcer (the Office for Rail Regulation, sometimes still known as Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate) or go to the ERA.

This can only serve to undermine the health and safety of both passengers and rail staff.

Network Rail becomes an official public sector company in September. The company continues to upset both rail workers and passengers with its lack of willingness to address structural weaknesses in the rail industry.

The directors of the company, among the highest paid public servants in the country, continue to arrogantly pay themselves huge bonuses while denying many of their managers pay rises that keep pace with inflation.

Meanwhile, the company announced profits exceeding £1 billion, a situation that is unlikely to be lost on managers who have had years of pay cuts in real terms, and whose union TSSA will shortly be submitting their pay claim.

An opportunity to bring all of its track renewal activities back in-house was missed when the company chose to bring its mechanised work in, but insisted on awarding new contracts for other track renewals. The new set-up seems designed yet again to undermine the pay, terms and conditions of the staff who will find that the protections provided by the TUPE regulations go only so far. Pensions in particular look likely to suffer.

Huge costs

Britain's taxpayers continue to pay around four times the subsidy at today's prices that British Rail received in its final year of existence. The McNulty report recognised the huge costs of fragmenting the railway to bring about its privatisation, but failed to provide any workable solutions beyond cutting staff and their pay. It did not even address the issue of the huge profits to be made from the rail industry, something not lost on foreign state-owned rail companies who see Britain as a nice little earner.

All of this was made possible by the EU. It's time Britain's workers said NO! to privatised railways, and NO! to the interference of the EU in our affairs. Britain needs a railway system that will serve the needs of Britain's workers, not the needs of foreign get-rich-quick companies. Bring back British Rail!



Workers

An East Coast Trains service at Leeds station. Owned by the government, East Coast Trains has been unable to bid to run other lines.

The 18 September referendum is all about stopping the move for Britain's independence from the EU...

Scotland's false flag



The Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh – flying not just the UK and Scottish flags but also that of the European Union.

THE SCOTTISH referendum is a false flag operation. It is an attempt to turn the growing desire in Britain to be an independent country into its opposite, for Britain to be partitioned instead.

There are numerous historic instances of partition being used as a political device to head off growing national movements. If they didn't invent the idea of divide and rule, the British ruling class certainly perfected it in the division of countries such as India (Pakistan), Cyprus, Malaya (Singapore) and of course in Ireland.

The new twist is that in Britain today they are trying to give up sovereignty over Britain itself and hand it over to the EU.

It's Scotland for starters and the remainder to follow – an irony often missed by many on the “left”, who delude themselves into thinking the SNP is fighting British Imperialism and the State (oh, how we laugh).

Britain

Given the level of confusion, it's as well to be clear on what is meant by Britain. When *Workers* talks of Britain we mean the British Isles excluding Ireland. We British workers always cast our borders in this manner. This is the only land in the world that we as a working class lay claim to. The division of Ireland and the British government's claims to sovereignty over

such far-flung territories as Gibraltar and the Falklands solely reflect the interests of the ruling class.

Ask Salmond and his covert Westminster sponsors whether they want an independent Britain and you soon see how fake these people are in practice. Any “bit-by-bit gradualists” who believe that Scotland breaking away is a step towards British independence or even towards socialism, are simply befuddled. Who on earth in the labour movement would want to weaken British workers at a time like this – that is apart from those

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who try to present political cowardice as somehow progressive, and the economic illiterates who originally wanted to join the euro? It is political and economic emasculation that is on offer by the SNP and its covert Westminster supporters. Why else would these specimens be offering a referendum in the first place?

What the Westminster and Holyrood parliaments have in common is that neither wants Britain to be an independent country. Not gradually, not ever. It is this shared outlook that unites them in their desire to divert.

Their joint exercise in contriving a spoiler Scottish “independence” referendum is a political attempt to undermine the coherent desire of workers for true independence throughout Britain. The idea of British independence makes the

‘As well as fomenting political division, regionalism is a device to break up our national utilities and services.’

toes curl of those that govern. The last thing they want is to face a united country and be seen as culpable for the mess they have created with their destructive policies over the years.

They know full well their economic disaster hasn’t gone away. Although there are huge social tensions at present it is only going to get much worse. What both Salmond and Cameron fear politically is an integrated working class. So in their view it is better, one way or the other, to try to break us up into harmless regional tribes.

It has become obvious that as well as fomenting political division, regionalism is also a device to break up our national utilities and services. From energy to water to railways, all are now owned by cartels hiding behind facades such as Northumbrian Water, actually owned by Cheung Kong Infrastructure Ltd. What’s regional about Thames Water in London being owned by Macquarie Bank of Australia, or Scottish Power being owned by Iberdrola of Spain?

In the absence of a national economic

Researchers speak up over threat to Scottish science

SCOTLAND IS a world leader in the highly competitive arena of biomedical research, which makes a huge contribution to the Scottish economy and secures thousands of high-technology jobs. And it is becoming increasingly clear that separation could cause immense harm to Scotland’s research base.

Among the latest to sound a note of caution is a real heavyweight – Paul Nurse, Nobel prizewinner, President of the Royal Society, and former head of Cancer Research UK

“Scotland, with wonderfully-innovative biomedical teams engaged in path-breaking research, relies on money that comes from UK organisations such as the Medical Research Council, the Wellcome Trust and Cancer Research UK,” he said in June.

A former researcher at the University of Edinburgh, Nurse noted that the loss of this funding would “be a major problem for Scotland and with progress in biomedical research, including the treatment of diseases such as cancer.”

June also saw author J K Rowling come out in support of the Better Together campaign with a donation of £1.7 million. Among the reasons she cited for opposing separation was concern over the future of medical research in Scotland.

“Having put a large amount of money into multiple sclerosis research here, I was worried to see an open letter from all five of Scotland’s medical schools expressing ‘grave concerns’ that independence could jeopardise what is currently Scotland’s world-class performance in this area,” she said.

International renown

Those five medical school heads were part of 14 leading scientists who had expressed their concerns in the open letter. The letter was coordinated by Sir David Carter, Scotland’s former Chief Medical officer and vice-chairman of Cancer Research UK, and Karen Vousden, director of Glasgow’s Cancer Research UK Beatson Institute, alongside

a roll call of internationally renowned researchers.

Pointing out that Scotland won 13.1 per cent of Britain’s research funding with 8.4 per cent of its population, they said: “We regard creation of a post-independence common research area as an undertaking fraught with difficulty and one that is unlikely to come to fruition.

“We write as individuals with no party-political agenda but with extensive experience of heading world-leading research groups, units and institutes in Scotland, and participating at the highest level in the work of grant-giving government agencies, UK Research Councils and health-related charities.

“Life sciences research provides thousands of high technology jobs; it is now and can undoubtedly remain a cornerstone of the Scottish economy.”

They concluded, “Scotland’s research interests will be much better served by remaining within the common research area called the United Kingdom.” ■

Workers



Pittenweem, Fife: Scotland's fisheries have been annihilated by the European Union.

plan, those who advocate regionalism are simply involved in promoting a delusion. On the one hand they introduce backward political division and on the other they enable sources of national wealth to be broken up into bite size chunks to be acquired and bled white by private monopoly.

It's not just utilities but also food, commerce and relatively new activities that get meekly handed over. For example, two-thirds of Scotland's farmed salmon production is now owned by Norwegian companies. Of course, our off-shore fishing grounds were handed to the EU with devastating effect some time ago.

Fake

The EU's pretence of having nothing to do with the Scottish referendum is nonsense. Its fingerprints are dabbed all over Scotland's fake independence menu. In fact Salmond's underlying intent is entirely in keeping with the EU heritage of conniving in the partition and euro occupation of a country.

What defines Britain, and defines the workers of Britain, is nation. Welded together in the industrial revolution, British workers invented trade unions and led a fight for survival, literally. They forced reductions in the working week and

pushed up pensions payable at a younger retirement age.

After 1945, workers forced the creation of the National Health Service, now a central part of our national culture (and therefore a prime target for attack). The values of Britain are embedded in collectivism, not those of the tourist guidebooks or right-wing dreamers. The English are not defined by Morris dancers or warm beer on summer afternoons, any more than tartan and haggis define being Scottish.

Nations and the protection they provide through borders allow indigenous industries and commerce to grow and develop. Where in classical economics do you read that for a country to industrialise, it is first necessary for it to give up its national borders or to be divided into regions?

That notion has been nurtured by those "modern-day thinkers" who hate the idea of British jobs for British workers. They conceal their hatred by implying that competition and globalisation can only be managed if we workers run backwards.

The first thing in order to get us out of this mess is for Scotland to vote No to partition in September. Let's do something positive and start thinking as a country. From Land's End to John o' Groats - Rebuild Britain. ■

Worked around the future of the land?

10 REASONS TO OPPOSE THE BREAKUP OF BRITAIN

1. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
2. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
3. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
4. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
5. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
6. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
7. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
8. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
9. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
10. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...

A LEAFLET from the Communist Party spells out the links between membership of the EU and the drive to devolution. It provides sharp, reasoned argument why both are bad for Britain and bad for British workers.

For free copies, send a self-addressed A4 envelope (with large stamp), to CPBML, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB.

Worked around the future of the land?

10 REASONS TO LEAVE THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
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8. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
9. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...
10. Devolution is a scam to divide up the wealth of the nation...

www.workers.org.uk

In a two-part analysis of class in the 21st century, *Workers* is central to making sense both out of our day-to-day experience as a class can end the disastrous economic, political and social

Which class wants sup

WE BEGIN with a simple snapshot of Britain and the world in the 21st century. Here, we find mounting problems of survival grow more severe for working people. In an effort to prolong itself, capitalism in decline turns on workers, its normal ploy. It bogs us down in a quagmire of problems, while those in control enjoy the fruits and maximise the spoils, relying on the opposition being distracted by crises.

Growing impoverishment and oppression is reserved for workers in or out of work. Gargantuan amounts of wealth are amassed by capitalists on a scale never witnessed before, particularly by finance capitalists, who prosper inside an economic depression that is entirely of their own making.

The smokescreen of “We’re in it together” is trotted out with repetitive hypocrisy – a whopping falsehood believed only by the gullible, certainly never entertained by aggrandising capitalists. The enemies of working people are actually very few, either in Britain or across the world – just tens of thousands – with an estimated 7 billion people in the world, most of whom are workers dependent on selling their labour power to survive. And yet it is the interests of the minority that dominate.

How do we account for the recent loss of class identity and consciousness? In the 1970s – just a few decades ago – chatter was about “Who Rules Britain?” Nowadays, few commentators even bother with our class or credit it with any influence. Both of these attitudes are flawed, the first a gross over-inflation, the second a result of media fascination with wealth and glamour.

Among other factors, how our class interpreted and experienced the post-war decades is highly significant. Due to the military and political successes of the

‘Some prefer to cling to illusions that they are middle class.’



Andrew Ward/www.andrew-ward.com

Soviet Union in the victory over fascism in the Second World War and working class advance elsewhere, the rulers could not rule in the old way and were forced to run society with full employment, a free National Health and education service that went against the grain of capitalism. Instead of keeping to the traditional culture of our class, complacency set in. When the assault of the ruling class was renewed from about 1970, our class was not in the best state of health to respond.

Although there are only two classes in Britain, not everyone in the working class admits (or welcomes) their class position. Some prefer to cling to illusions that they are middle class or superior professionals or special individuals distanced and apart from a working class even though the vast majority are only a salary payment away from difficulty and a few payments away from destitution. These illusions lessen people’s willingness to organise collectively yet surely making or growing things or pro-

viding essential services or culture – real value creation – is better than being an investment banker or a hedge fund manager who produces nothing for the betterment of society as a whole.

Clarifying class

Class is not decided subjectively but determined by your relation to the means of production. Either you own them as a capitalist, or you do not – and have to sell your labour power to those that do.

If you seek a perceptive theory of class, then you have to explore the writings of Marx, as he is far-and-away the pre-eminent thinker on the matter. We can admire the prescient sweep of these two observations in the *Communist Manifesto* written in the 19th century:

“Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into

dismisses the notion that class is dead. The idea of class experiences and of the world at large, and argues that action social system of capitalism...

remacy?



two great classes directly facing each other – bourgeoisie and proletariat.”

and:

“The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers.”

Growth of working class

Over the last 300 to 400 years there has been a stupendous growth in the size of the working class, as capitalism has gradually spread over most of the world. Marx’s observation in 1848 that the world was splitting more and more into two classes was very prophetic. While others perceived only mutually exclusive social groups, he discerned a vital trend and projected its potential.

A transformative process that started in Britain with the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries has fanned out

almost everywhere.

Where Britain led, others have followed. The world’s peasantry are fast disappearing, as more and more of agriculture is run along capitalist lines. In terms of size the working class of the world is now the predominant class, set in future decades to grow globally even bigger. A wholesale shift of population from living in overwhelmingly rural societies to urban, wage-earning ones has occurred throughout the world. Inexorably, the trend continues.

A class for itself

Though the working class of the world grows in leaps and bounds, so far there is perplexingly little sign in recent decades of corresponding ideological development to accompany the numerical growth. There has even been a noticeable lessening, or even collapse, of working class consciousness in recent decades; not just in Britain but elsewhere. If the world is to be saved from the misrule of capitalism, this worrying withdrawal from organisation and identity has to be confronted and reversed.

While a reactionary class operates across the world according to similar strategies and is conscious of its class interests, our revolutionary class does not act yet as a class-for-itself, conscious of its

destiny. In Britain and the world, there is a glaring disparity between our limitless potential and the crippling, self-imposed limitations of our current thinking.

Why then are workers so reluctant to bury capitalism, which ought by now to be as faded a relic as rule by landed aristocracy? Why do we tolerate such an outmoded, anachronistic, anti-democratic system? If the ruling classes of the world and of Britain are clear about their class and strategic interests, why can’t workers in Britain and elsewhere be clear too? If the rulers, who have to overcome innate competition, can identify and act on their essential interests, why can’t we? As a conundrum it’s easily stated, but lack of a solution so far to this quandary remains the fundamental stumbling block that curbs humanity’s progress. ■

- Can conclusions be drawn from our development as a working class? Are there pitfalls to avoid and advantages to maintain within our chequered past? In the next issue of *Workers*, in the second part of this analysis of class in the 21st century, we will study how the promise and despair of the rich experience of the first working class can help chart our way out of absolute decline.

Meet the Party

M The Communist Party of Britain’s new series of London public meetings continues after the summer on 14 October and 12 November. Both will be 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 will be advertised in *What’s On*, page 5.

M The Party’s annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2015, Friday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There will also be May Day meetings in Edinburgh and Leeds.

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

All harmless fun? There's another side to the Eurovision so not pretty...

Eurovision's orchestrate

THE TASTELESSNESS and tackiness of the Eurovision "song" contest is legend. So much so that *Workers* and many others may have wrongly neglected its significance for too long. But there's a lot going on there; pretty much all of it should trouble thinking workers.

To begin with, look who participates. Some countries aren't even in Europe, Israel for one. Some countries aren't even real countries...Israel for one. One which was, Yugoslavia, was banned from competing even before it was forcibly destroyed by NATO and the EU. And now, as well as the fragmented Balkan states, there's the post-Soviet rag-bag of former feudal fiefdoms and wannabe 52nd, 53rd, 54th states of the United States of America, for which their membership of the EU and NATO is preparing them (or so their politicians think).

Ask yourself; why do so many countries who proclaim their right to be independent, to be different, all actually want to be the same? Leave aside for the moment the grinding monotony of the virtually identical "music" pumped out. (Though there was a time when this contest was predicated on contrasting national styles; how quaint.) Focus instead on the language.

North American

Almost every act sings in English; North American English to be precise. Even entrants from countries proud of their language, such as France or Spain, frequently lapse into the sub-Californian whine that is now an element of what is described as cultural globalisation. In truth that is liberal-speak, a euphemism for old-fashioned US imperialism. Homogenised language is as much a part of that as uniform burgers across the world.

Wasn't linguistic freedom part of what national minorities in the Soviet Union wanted? They are now separate countries; they said that meant freedom to express themselves in their own language, but perhaps it didn't.

One of the lies held against the Soviet Union was that it imposed the Russian language on non-Russian nationalities, for example in the three Baltic states. In fact



Andres Putting (EBU)

On stage during the finale of this year's "song" contest.

'Almost every act sings in English; North American English to be precise.'

what the USSR did was to insist that everyone in the country was literate. That was no mean feat in itself, given that the rate of illiteracy in the non-Russian parts of the pre-revolutionary tsarist empire was commonly greater than 90 per cent. The USSR also aimed that everyone should be able to speak in one common language so that all citizens could understand each other, that language being Russian.

At the same time as creating literacy and mutual understanding, the USSR

legally ensured that local languages were compulsorily taught and learned. If they were guilty of anything it was forcing people to learn two languages, to become bilingual – how terrible! The ruling tsarist class had always spoken Russian in, say, Turkmenistan, so the policy was that workers there be enabled to do so as well.

Speaking English in the former British Empire, India for example, is painted in the media as positive and modern, in contrast to the supposed oppression of speaking Russian in USSR. Soviet language policy could have been described as being not so very different in fact to aspects of proclaimed language policy in Wales now. Yet we see no international outcry over human rights in Wales.

But look at the present day: presenters, singers and audiences from Lithuania, Latvia and other parts of the former USSR all speak or sing in Californian. So much for their freedom & independence. Or perhaps that was what they wanted all along...

ong contest, and it's ed abuse

But this year's Eurovision contest on 10 May really took the biscuit. Whenever Russia was mentioned we heard an orchestrated howl of off-screen abuse, booing and catcalls. We say "orchestrated" because the notion of anything happening unscripted at Eurovision is as unlikely as it was for Russia to win this year's contest.

Subsequently it was claimed that this was due to Russia's prejudice against homosexuals, there being a large gay audience for Eurovision. It was supposedly nothing at all to do with the EU's (and therefore also NATO's) continuing attempt to annex the Ukraine, and Russia's attempt to stop them. Nothing at all. Oh no. This brazen effort to mobilise anti-Russian sentiment among gay workers is all the more brazen for being so crassly hypocritical.

Prejudice

The British media, no innocents when it comes to anti-gay prejudice, seem suddenly keen to right injustice and end discrimination. Perhaps they should explain that it was only after the destruction of the Soviet Union that homosexuality was recriminalised in Russia. They could also point out that the Soviet Union was the first country in the world to decriminalise homosexuality – in 1924! You'll wait a long time before you hear Graham Norton say that.

So in effect we've exchanged anti-gay prejudice for anti-Russian prejudice; a big step forward there then Graham. And this peddling of yet another version of the hatred of the east and all things Russian fits perfectly with US, EU and NATO ambitions towards Russia. That's not at all accidental when you consider the US involvement in promoting internal opposition in Russia, Ukraine and so on.

We will of course be told that "it's all harmless fun". A bit like how strippers used to be described when the link between that activity and violence against women wasn't properly understood (and maybe still isn't). Perhaps we should always be wary of the phrase "it's only harmless fun".

And France was robbed. Sung in French, it was by far the best entry. Listen to it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwVDXWGXE_8 ■

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.

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 grand-parents, 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.
- Get a list of our publications by sending an A5 sae to the address below, or by email.
- Subscribe to Workers, our monthly magazine, by going to www.workers.org.uk or by sending £15 for a year's issues (cheques payable to Workers) to the address below.

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Iraq: tragedy and farce

'The US's pet dog Isis has slipped the leash and gone into business for itself.'

KARL MARX famously wrote that history repeats itself – the first time as tragedy, then as farce. That just about sums up the contortions that the US is twisting itself into over Iraq, shabbily abetted by David Cameron.

And then of course there is the modern equivalent of the lunatic in the attic, Tony Blair, rolling his eyes and claiming everyone else is wrong. Blair is accused by an academic who briefed him before the invasion and occupation of Iraq, that he bears total responsibility for Isis. Noted Arab expert George Joffe and others warned him in 2002 that the country would descend into civil war and a Sunni-led insurgency. He wasn't listening, said Joffe, who is a visiting professor at King's College London, in an interview with the *Huffington Post*.

As we go to press, the US is about to send 300 "military advisers" to Iraq. The US has a history of sending its military advisers around the globe. In May 1961, for example, President Kennedy sent 400 of them to South Vietnam, all wearing green berets. In January this year it sent some to Somalia. In May the *Washington Post* reported Obama as considering sending military advisers to Syria.

Why is the US suddenly becoming so generous with its advice? The answer is obvious: its pet dog Isis, variously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or of Iraq and Syria, or of Iraq and the Levant, may have slipped its leash and gone into business for itself.

In another tragedy/farce repetition, the US had been training Isis in Jordan, in much the same way as it initially trained and funded Osama bin-Laden. Its role in Iraq was to spur the partition of that oil-rich country, the better to keep its oil under US control. The idea was to have Kurds ruling the north, Sunnis the centre and Shiites the south.

But with Isis clearly reckoning it can take the lot, panic buttons are being pressed around the world.

Now Cameron has piped up, claiming that

the reactionary Isis terrorists (for that is what they are) in Iraq are "a real threat to our country". No: they are only a threat to us if he allows any of them return freely to this country. But if they are a threat, why the reports that British Special Forces have been training them in the NATO bases in Turkey?

While the British and US governments train the Isis fighters, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, both US allies, fund them, says Iran, to fervent US denials. It's par for the course. The Saudi and Qatari autocrats support reactionary extremism and terrorism across the world. The government here allows Saudi money to fund the most reactionary forms of Islamism in Britain.

The plain fact is that the US and Britain have been using religion to break apart the secular states of the Arab world – because these secular states are strong and independent.

Ask anyone who visited Syria before the civil war and they will tell you how everyone lived peaceably side by side. Much the same was said about Egypt. Or Libya.

In their haste to destroy these countries, Western politicians sneered at, for example, Assad's clearly justified claims that foreign jihadists were having a field day in Syria – and that they would be returning to their countries of origin armed and dangerous. The West threw money and weapons (cash more openly than arms, but arms all the same) at these haters of civilisation and progress.

Cameron is so clueless he's having to turn to Iran for help (or at least, to pretend he's making friends there). Labour's Ed Miliband is playing his accustomed role of poodle, supporting what the government is doing. Foreign Secretary William Hague is working overtime to say British troops will not get involved in Iraq. So is Obama. They protest too much. They are clearly thinking about it. And if history teaches us anything, it is that people like them never learn.

But workers have learned. We demand hands off – no foreign wars in our name! ■

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