

WORKERS

www.workers.org.uk

JUNE 2013 £1



BOOK REVIEWS



14

SCOTLAND: NO TO
BREAK-UP

SECRET EU TALKS THREAT TO TRADE AND JOBS

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



Emergency care Professionals speak out | 03



Energy supply Playing poker with power | 09



Our future Face up to the challenge | 11

IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS

“ Let’s start being inflexible

LABOUR MOBILITY sounds much better than labour immobility – who wants to be immobile? Just as labour flexibility sounds much better than labour inflexibility – who wants to be inflexible? But both are bad for us.

Who backs labour mobility? The World Bank, which tells us we must end “constraints on labour mobility”. The International Monetary Fund. The European Union. The European Roundtable of Industrialists. The Confederation of British Industry.

The employing class wants labour mobility. It wants no restraints whatsoever on its activities. Labour mobility is part of the neo-liberal consensus that has plunged us into this second great depression.

Karl Marx was right. In a address from the First International in 1867, he wrote, “A study of the struggle waged by the English working class

reveals that, in order to oppose their workers, the employers either bring in workers from abroad or else transfer manufacture to countries where there is a cheap labour force.”

Unions representing for example lecturers, teachers and journalists all too often back labour mobility. Some even talk about the “right” to work in other countries.

Workers in these unions should reflect. One material condition of their work – an excellent command of English – offers an element of protection unavailable to most workers (although the recent widespread outsourcing of, for example, editing work to India should prompt a pause for thought). Those in agriculture or building who oppose labour mobility do so not out of stupidity or prejudice but because immigrants from Eastern Europe directly compete with them for scarce jobs. ■

A degree of infamy

DESPITE ALEX Ferguson receiving greater television and media coverage and honours without dying, the Thatcher minority cult continues with yet another foundation being established in her name.

The problem is not so much that £100 million is being arranged to fund so-called poor

and deprived young people to go to university, but the obnoxious list of patrons. Tony Blair, George Bush (Senior), Mikhail Gorbachev et al have lined up to add their infamy to her name as sponsors, patrons and accomplices in crime. What a curse for any young person to graduate with a degree inspired by Thatcher’s name! ■



WORKERS is published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)
78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB.
ISSN 0266-8580

www.workers.org.uk
Issue 170, June 2013



Contents – June 2013

News

Health professionals speak out over A&E crisis, p3; Greeks fight mass sackings, p4; Government continues downward pressure on pay, p5; News Analysis: How British students are being squeezed out of higher education, p6

03

Features

Secret talks to sell Europe’s nations to the multinationals, p6; Playing poker with power, p9; Our future: face up to the challenge, p11

06

Book Reviews

Scotland: No to break-up!, p14

14



A&E	Professionals speak out
TRADE	Deficit leaps, again
GREECE	Fight against mass sackings
HOUSING	A pay packet from disaster
PAY	Downward pressure
NATIONAL DEBT	Interest payments soar
LEGISLATION	Redundancy notice cut
NEWS ANALYSIS	British students squeezed out
WHAT'S ON	Forthcoming meetings
EUROBRIEFS	The latest from Brussels

Crisis in emergency care

IN THE PAST few months a series of bodies have been telling NHS workers what to do: the Care Quality Commission, The Francis Report, the Health Minister and so on. Now the College of Emergency Medicine and Accident and Emergency nurses have taken charge of their own workplaces, the emergency departments across Britain.

In April emergency department nurses at the Royal College of Nursing congress described how they were struggling to cope and what they thought should be done. The tone was set when East Dorset Branch proposed a motion on changes to emergency care, asserting in the briefing notes that "In all cases the consideration of A&E closures should be owned by those most knowledgeable in emergency care – health care professionals".

Then in May the College of Emergency Medicine produced a detailed but concise document entitled "The drive for quality: how to achieve safe, sustainable care in our emergency departments." The document describes why the government's approach is unsafe and makes a total of 10 recommendations. As to be expected from those who prioritise to ensure survival, it even prioritises which should be done first while arguing that their total package of ten offers the best route out of the current crisis.

The demand for emergency care has risen significantly in recent years and, while there is a rise in older people using the service, the report points out that 58 per cent of people who attend Accident and Emergency are between 16-64 years of age. The rise in demand combines with the funding formula to produce the crisis. Under rules designed to encourage the system to reduce A&E admissions, hospitals are only paid 30 per cent of the normal fee when the numbers rise above the levels that were seen in 2008-9. Do the words "Alice" and "Wonderland" come to mind?

In response, hospitals have cut nursing posts. While there has been a small rise in the number of consultant posts, the medical posts to support the consultants have been difficult to fill as the workload is seen as unmanageable. So consultants in emergency medicine are providing significant direct "shop-floor" cover to help maintain safety in emergency departments, especially out of hours. This means their availability to support junior colleagues is stretched and the negative cycle deepens.

The College's plan to break out of that cycle is radical and has four key elements: system redesign to manage workloads and decongest the emergency department; expansion and sustainable working practices for staff; a radical change to the way in which emergency care is funded; and a better system to measure the success of improvement rather than four-hour system performance alone. Its warning to government is stark: Do what we say or we hold you responsible for the deaths resulting. For more detail see www.collemergencymed.ac.uk. ■

TRADE

Deficit leaps, again

BRITAIN'S TRADE deficit soared to £57.7 billion for 2012, up from £20 billion in 2011. This is the worst gap since 1989. It explodes the government's pledge to rebalance the economy away from consumer spending and towards exports.

The deficit on trade in goods was £36 billion, 50 per cent up on 2011. There was a £27 billion deficit on trade in goods in the last quarter alone: the disaster is accelerating. The deficit on trade with the EU was £70.5 billion, up from £43.6 billion in 2011. The surplus on trade with non-EU countries was £12.9 billion, down from £23.4 billion in 2011.

The trend continues to worsen: the deficit in trade in goods was £9.41 billion in February, up from £8.17 billion in January. ■

FASHION

Retailer agrees to union code

EQUITY, the actors' union, has won an agreement with the store chain Debenhams that it will abide by the union's code of conduct on working conditions for models. The rules say that models must work no more than 10 hours a day, with regular breaks, and be provided with food and water. Currently, fashion models are often expected to shoot an entire catalogue in a day.

Nude or semi-nude shots must be agreed in advance, and there should be nothing "dangerous, degrading, unprofessional or demeaning". The magazine VOGUE has also agreed to the code. ■

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

EUROBRIEFS

The latest from Brussels

Going down, going down

THE EUROZONE economy shrank by 0.2 per cent overall in the first quarter of this year. That's the sixth quarter in a row – the longest recession the eurozone has seen. The Greek economy contracted for the nineteenth straight quarter. France has its third recession in the space of four years. And Italy's GDP contracted for the seventh quarter in a row – its longest recession for over 20 years.

Going up, going up

PUBLIC DEBT in EU member states carries on rising. Germany was the only country in the EU with a budget surplus for 2012. The overall debt was 85.3 per cent of GDP in 2012, up from 82.5 per cent in 2011.

A new record

UNEMPLOYMENT IN the eurozone was at a record high in March at 12.1 per cent. In total 19.2 million people are now out of work in the region thanks to the pernicious effect of the single currency. Greece and Spain recorded the highest rates in the eurozone, 27.2 per cent and 26.7 per cent respectively. Youth unemployment is 64.2 per cent in Greece and 55.9 per cent in Spain.

The longest recession

NEW EUROBAROMETER poll figures show that trust in the EU has fallen dramatically in its six biggest member states since the start of the financial crisis.

Between May 2007 and November 2012 the proportion of people saying they tended not to trust the EU rose from 49 to 69 per cent in Britain.

The increases were comparable in France, 41 to 56 per cent, and Germany, 36 to 59 per cent. Elsewhere the increases were greater in proportion: Poland from 18 to 42 per cent and Italy from 28 to 53 per cent; greatest of all was Spain from 23 to 72 per cent.

The head of the European Council on Foreign Relations, José Ignacio Torreblanca, said, "The damage is so deep that it does not matter whether you come from a creditor or debtor country ... citizens now think their national democracy is being subverted." But EU president José Manuel Barroso put it down to a "lack of understanding". ■



Photo: Andrew Wiard/www.andrew-wiard.info

Black balloons released at Tower Hill on 28 April, Workers Memorial Day, commemorate those killed in accidents at work.

Greeks fight mass sackings

SOME 15,000 state workers in Greece are to be sacked by the end of 2014. The government said this was needed to cut costs and secure more bailout funds from the EU and international creditors. As the measures were passed there were protests outside the Greek Parliament building organised by ADEDY, the federation of civil services unions, and private sector union GSEE. Unions say the plans will only add to Greece's record unemployment rate of 27 per cent and will mainly affect older workers already struggling to ensure their families' survival.

The IMF has said that Greece is too reliant on voluntary departures in the public sector and that "the taboo against mandatory dismissals must be overcome." Under the current bailout plans 150,000 public sector jobs are to be cut by 2015, 20 per cent of the total.

A May Day general strike was also held a few days later which severely disrupted transport, bringing trains and ferries to a halt. Hospitals and other public services were also affected. There were further demonstrations in Athens and across the country with unions demanding an end to spending cuts and tax rises which have brought Greece to its knees with almost two-thirds of its young people out of work.

The general secretary of ADEDY said "people just can't take any more". Greece is in its sixth year of recession and the IMF predicts a further contraction in the economy of 4.6 per cent in 2013. ■

HOUSING

One pay packet from disaster

HOUSING CHARITY Shelter is warning that millions of families may be just one pay packet away from losing their homes. More than a third – 35 per cent – of those questioned in a YouGov survey say that if they lost their jobs they would be unable to pay their rent or mortgage for more than a month. And 18 per cent would be unable to pay their rent or mortgage at all unless they got another job straightaway.

Despite record low interest rates there are signs that home repossessions are on the rise. Debt charity StepChange reported that over 34,000 people contacted it in 2012 about problems with their payday loan debts, up 20,000 on 2011. The average debt was £1,657.

Payday loans are typically for hundreds of pounds borrowed for a period of weeks at interest rates that can be over 1,000 per cent if calculated annually. A 29-year-old teacher had payday loan debts of £6,000. Another person's loan of £350 had grown to £1,100 with interest and charges. ■

LEGISLATION**Redundancy notice cut**

WHILE THE Commons noisily debated press regulation, MPs elsewhere in the House quietly signed away workers' rights. On a delegated legislation committee (a backdoor means of sneaking through contentious amendments), nine Conservatives and two Liberal Democrats voted to reduce the consultation period for

collective redundancies from 90 days to 45. This reduction is based on a proposal in the infamous Beecroft Report.

At present, employers planning to make 100 or more redundancies are legally required to consult with trade unions for 90 days to help to seek alternatives to job losses. Jaguar Land Rover proposed making over 1,000 staff redundant in 2009, but later avoided job losses after identifying £70 millions of savings during the consultation. ■

Downward pressure on pay

THE EMPLOYERS' pay offer to workers in local government amounts to miniscule rises of between 6p and 9p per hour. This added to the three-year wage freeze has also seen wages reduced by 17 per cent in practice. A 1 per cent increase for health workers equates to the same. The proposed increases in the national minimum wage – 12p an hour for adults (bringing it up to £6.31p), 5p an hour for 18- to 20-year-olds (up to £5.03p), 4p an hour for 16- to 17-year-olds (up to £3.72p) – reveal a deliberate intention to make the national minimum wage wither on the vine.

The proposal by the privatised Islington Home Care company to buy workers out of their existing local government terms and conditions and offer them the national minimum wage plus 1p is even more cynical, brutal wage cutting. The proposal comes after Islington Borough Council had made great fanfare about having the London living wage, £8.55p, as the minimum rate that should be paid for outsourced services.

The government wants the national minimum wage, the weakest safety net, to be reduced to no safety net. Those campaigners for the Living Wage, applying to fewer than 10,000 mainly public sector workers in London and promoted by trade unions wanting to avoid the real battle for wages, have set another safety net. This safety net is based upon charity from a very limited number of employers, usually to avoid bad publicity and encourage the wrong thinking in trade unions – that legislation will save us from having to fight for wages.

Britain is seen as a low wage economy with over 60 per cent of those in work having to claim benefit in some form or other. WORKERS has described pay and the fight for wages as the elephant in the room. Apparently a very subdued elephant. ■

NATIONAL DEBT**Interest payments soar**

ACCORDING TO figures prepared by the Office for Budget Responsibility, interest payments on the national debt (the accumulated stock of borrowing) are soaring. In cash terms, the national debt stands at £1,189 billion this year. In 2017-18, it will be £1,637 billion.

Back in 2009-10, the debt stood at £759.5 billion. In the current year, the

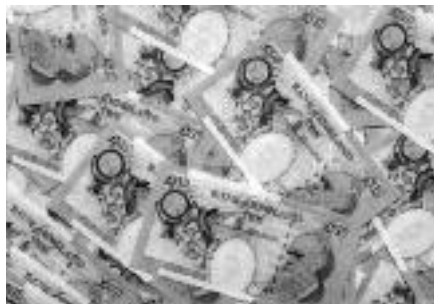
interest on government debts will cost taxpayers £46.5 billion. By 2017-18, interest payments will consume £71.3 billion. This is more than the combined annual budgets of the Home Office and the Department for Education, which between them spend around £65 billion.

Borrowing is now forecast to be over £200 billion more than was forecast in the last Spending Review.

In May 2010, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee forecast growth of 3 to 6 per cent in 2013, and 5 per cent in 2015. These were plainly absurd. The Office for Budget Responsibility now forecasts that growth this year will be 0.6 per cent – half its earlier forecast of 1.2 per cent.

Even during a severe capitalist economic crisis that is causing great hardship and suffering to workers, sections of finance capital are profiting directly from the largesse of government.

All in it together? Neither misery nor accumulation is shared. ■

**WHAT'S ON****Coming soon****JUNE**

Tuesday 11 June, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

"Fighting for peace"



Public meeting organised by the CPBML. From European Union and NATO to the US and a string of capitalist alliances, imperialism is turning to war to break independent nations and deter any opposition to its rule. But they are not having everything their own way. Come and discuss. Everybody welcome.

CHILDREN**Unicef report**

A WEEK after publishing its new league table of child well-being, Unicef held a workshop at the House of Lords to debate the issues arising from the report and give its recommendations "to those who can do something about them".

In the report Britain came 16th out of the world's 29 richest countries – worse than most European countries, including Ireland, Slovenia, France and Germany. This is a move up the table since the first Unicef overview in 2007, but the improvement is not consistent across all areas.

Unicef warned that cuts to local government services are "having a profound negative effect on young people". It expected young people's conditions to worsen following the government's £300 million cut in services for young people.

At the workshop, other research was presented which added to the evidence that Britain's children and young people were heading for further downgrading. Dave Gordon, a professor and expert on child poverty at the University of Bristol, provided an update on children's material well-being based on POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE UK, an independent survey measuring the change in the nature and extent of poverty and social exclusion over the past ten years.

Gordon said the financial insecurity of nearly half of the British population is already having negative effects on children, and these are likely to get worse. ■

NEWS ANALYSIS

The squeeze on British students

BRITISH UNIVERSITIES should have as their main purpose the higher education of British students. Yet, in effect, the current strategy is to recruit overseas students and limit access by British students through the imposition of greatly increased fees. Figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show the strategy is working. The total number of students fell by 0.2 per cent from 2010/11 to 2011/12. But the number of overseas students rose by 1.6 per cent in this one year, and the overall decrease was entirely due to lower numbers of students from Britain.

Overseas students are concentrated in postgraduate studies. They made up 13 per cent of all first degree students, 46 per cent of all taught postgraduates, 48 per cent of full-time research degree students and 41 per cent of all research postgraduates.

Foreign students have already reached a majority in some institutions: 67 per cent of students at the London School of Economics are from overseas, 41 per cent at the University of the Arts London, Birmingham University and Imperial College, and 39 per cent at City University and University College London. 32 per cent of engineering and technology students are from overseas and 36 per cent of business and administration students. We are educating our competitors. The biggest senders are China 78,715, India 29,900, Nigeria 17,620 and the USA 16,335.

Deterring access

Tuition fees are primarily a way to control access, to deter British youngsters, not a way to fund higher education. Higher education institutions now tout for foreign students in a new and enervating export drive. Soon some universities will exist only to educate the offspring of a foreign ruling class.

Access to higher education is being further limited among British entrants to higher education. In schools where pupils achieved an average of 801-850 A-level points each (900 is equivalent to three A grades), 45 per cent of private school pupils went on to the most selective universities, but only 26 per cent of comprehensive school pupils.

Just five schools in Britain sent more pupils to Oxford and Cambridge over three years than nearly 2,000 others combined. Four private schools – Eton College (fees £32,067 a year), Westminster School (fees £31,350 a year), St Paul's School for boys (fees £29,466 a year) and St Paul's Girls' School (fees £20,160 a year) – and state-funded Hills Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge, together sent 946 pupils to Oxford and Cambridge between 2007 and 2009. By contrast, 2,000 other schools sent a total of 927 students.

We should prioritise the recruitment of home students. This would encourage more of our young people to develop their talents to the utmost, and provide Britain with the educated young people we will need for our future. ■

Free trade agreements are the new defend their own industries. Now th US. And thanks to the last Labour g

Secret trade talks to sel

WHEN THE US speaks, the European Union obeys. And so when US President Barack Obama called in his State of the Union address on 12 February this year for a free trade agreement with the EU, it took Commission President José Manuel Barroso just one day to say that talks would take place to negotiate it.

Obama's reasons were plain: "Because trade that is fair and free across the Atlantic supports millions of good-paying American jobs." That's nice to know. EU Trade Commissioner Karel de Gucht said it would mean "hundreds of thousands of jobs" in the EU. Cameron was quick to support it. "A deal will create jobs on both sides of the Atlantic and make our countries more prosperous," he said. That is a lie.

The idea that allowing free movement of goods and services (and, inevitably, a fair few "essential" people as well) will create jobs all round is a fanciful mirage peddled by vote-seeking politicians. Industrialists know that's not how it works. Free trade eliminates tariffs and opens up markets, allowing big fish to swallow up minnows. Jobs will be lost, because the multinationals are always seeking to cut costs.

Free trade agreements vary in scope, but the aim is common. It is to identify the areas of trade where tariffs will be scrapped or reduced, allowing companies easy access to markets abroad. They cover both goods and services such as banking or insurance. And they put nations in chains.

The push to negotiate these agreements arose out of the stalling of talks held under the auspices of the World Trade Organization, known as the Doha round after they started in the Qatari capital in 2001. For the past five years, these talks have effectively ground to a halt as developing countries have objected to the prospect of their home markets being taken over by multinationals.

So the favoured technique of imperialist countries has become the bilateral free trade agreement, where they can exert maximum pressure on individual nations.

The volume of trade between the US and the countries of the EU is staggering, amounting to some \$2 billion a day. How much of this will be covered by the EU-US free trade agreement is not yet fully clear. The French parliament, for example, wants audiovisual and cultural industries left out, so that it can continue to insist, for example, on a certain proportion of its music broadcasts being in French.

No such demands for protection have come from the British side. Cameron called in May for the talks to cover everything possible. Nothing, the prime minister said, should be left out. "That means everything on the table, even the difficult issues, and no exceptions."

Stay in the EU, says Washington

Extraordinarily, the US administration has been waging a campaign to keep Britain inside the European Union. Worried that its key globalising ally might leave, the head of European affairs at the US State Department (equivalent to Britain's Foreign Office) came to London in January. "We have a growing relationship with the EU as an institution, which has an increasing voice in the world, and we want to see a strong British voice in that EU," Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon told reporters. "That is in the American interest."

On 13 May Obama also waded into Britain's internal politics, seeking to influence debate on a referendum on the EU. He talked about "a special relationship" with Britain. The US's capacity to partner with a Britain that is "active, robust, outward-looking and engaged with the world" is "hugely important to our own interests as well as the world," he said.

battering rams designed to break down countries' ability to
 the EU is negotiating – in secret – the biggest one of all, with the
 government, we effectively have no say about it...

All Europe's nations to the multinationals



Photo: feiyuezhangjie/Shutterstock.com

Multinationals want to be able to shift goods, services and production wherever wages are lowest and profits are highest.

The language is interesting. British politicians anxious to puff up their own importance often talk about the “special relationship” with the US. True, the US tends to think of Britain as a special country, because few countries since the Second World War have proved to be more subservient to its wishes. So when the US itself talks about the special relationship, it tends to be because it wants us to do

something for it.

Obama's intervention should – but probably won't – finally lay to rest the fairy tale that the European Union is some kind of a bulwark against the nasty United States. The US likes the European Union because it creates one huge market with which it needs only one agreement. Without the EU, US imperialism would have to painstakingly, and publicly, discuss with

each country separately.

When it comes to US influence over the European Union, Britain is a front door to Brussels. If Britain left the EU, that influence would be sharply reduced – yet another reason why British withdrawal would not only be good for Britain, it would be good for the peoples of Europe.

Anywhere will do

Multinationals don't care where they make things as long as the labour's cheap and they can sell their products anywhere. A network of free trade deals would mean they could, say, manufacture in India and sell in the US. Listen closely, for example, to Jürgen Hambrecht, boss of chemicals giant BASF and a member of the European Commission's High Level Group on the industry, backing the agreement: “A strong manufacturing industry is essential for

Why the EU negotiates for us

UNDER THE Lisbon Treaty of 2009, signed by the last Labour government, the negotiation and agreement of trade treaties now falls within the European Union's competence. The EU does the negotiating, not the individual countries.

What's more, no one (or even two or three) countries can block a trade agreement, since – again under the Lisbon

Treaty – such deals are now covered by what is called qualified majority voting. In order to block a deal, countries covering more than 35 per cent of the population of the EU have to vote against it.

Given the number of client states dependent on Brussels support and hand-outs, that is always going to be hard to achieve. ■

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

Europe but we don't need subsidies. What we need is a level playing field. We will take care of our own restructuring."

Here's a free translation: "We don't care where we make things, and we don't want subsidies that will tie us down to employing workers in any specific country. We want to be able to move goods and production wherever and whenever we want. We are quite happy to sack people in Europe if that's what it takes."

The European Parliament reckons negotiations won't actually be starting until July, and is busy passing resolutions about what should and should not be covered. Meanwhile US and European officials are pressing on with...negotiations. The word is that they are proceeding surprisingly quickly (though it seems also that agriculture, including the US's GM products, has not yet been agreed).

The Commission is reported to be aiming to get the agreement negotiated this month, which would be some kind of a record (the EU's free trade agreement negotiations with India have been going since 2007). Doubtless whatever agreement is to be reached has already been largely done, with rubber-stamping the main task facing national governments and the European Parliament.

For the time being, no one has been told what is going on in what are misleadingly called "informal" talks. According to the NEW YORK TIMES, US and EU

officials said that even before Barroso had agreed that negotiations would take place, "they had resolved some of the stickiest issues behind closed doors".

This kind of secretive operation is typical of trade agreements. In fact, the European Commission is currently being sued by the campaign group Corporate Observatory Europe for withholding information about the free trade negotiations with India. The Commission has been sharing all its negotiating documents with corporate lobby group BusinessEurope, for example, but not with public interest groups. Judgement is expected (from the European Court, so don't hold your breath) on 7 June.

Setting the rules

Some of the rush is to use the deal – the biggest in the world – to set rules that the US and the EU can force other countries to follow. "An EU-US partnership can act as a policy laboratory for the new trade rules we need," said Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht (see Box below), referring to issues like regulatory barriers, competition policy, localisation requirements (having to adapt products to local markets), raw materials and energy. Indeed, a month after Obama's announcement, the EU began negotiations on a free trade agreement with Japan.

One voice absent from the debate over this proposed agreement is that of the British trade union movement. The TUC has not uttered a word. Compare that with the AFL-CIO, its counterpart in the US. In a

“They create deserts and call them ‘level playing fields’...”

statement, the AFL-CIO noted that “in many respects, the European nations’ social programs to protect families and the environment exceed those of US laws and regulations” and said “...any US-EU agreement must not be used as a tool to deregulate or drive down these higher standards. If that is the goal, working families of both regions will pay the price.”

Driving standards from higher to lower is precisely what free trade agreements are all about. They create deserts and call them “level playing fields”. The AFL-CIO knows this, commenting that the established approach to trade has resulted in “increasing income inequality, stagnating or declining wages and unacceptably high trade deficits that are sapping economic growth”.

Silence at home

Why the silence from our trade unions? At the very least, workers should be demanding that their organisations do some research and take a close look at what is planned. Free trade agreements wreak havoc with economies. A free trade agreement with the world's biggest economy has the potential to wreak havoc at an immense scale.

In recent years there has been some progress on this general issue in Britain, most notably at the 2011 TUC Congress in London, where a motion from the RMT calling for opposition to the largely unreported “Mode 4” part of the EU-India free trade negotiations – allowing Indian workers to come to Britain – was carried. This has led to information on Mode 4 being available on the TUC's website, but, in truth, not yet much else.

Workers still see free trade agreements as something to be left to the politicians. That's an attitude that will have to change if we want to keep jobs in this country. ■

The sneering Commissioner

NEGOTIATIONS on EU free trade agreements are led by the Directorate-General for Trade, whose Commissioner, Karel De Gucht, has little time for national concerns. A controversial Belgian politician, he clearly has contempt for the intelligence of the British people.

When the BBC's Stephen Sackur, interviewing him on 12 July last year, put to him that “Europe's politicians resemble the cast of a third-rate disaster movie,

trapped in a Eurozone crisis from which there is no obvious means of escape”, he loftily declared that it had to escape because that was a political necessity: “Maybe your population don't completely understand this, but European monetary union is not only about monetary affairs, economic affairs...it's a political project.” He topped this off with a remark this year that Ireland, with 15 per cent unemployment, was out of recession. ■

Multinational companies and government ideologues are playing a cynical game over energy supplies. Are we the poor saps in the middle?

Playing poker with power

THE MOST cynical game of poker is being played with energy supplies to the 60+ million people of Britain, all their related workplaces, civic institutions and infrastructure. The players are the multinational energy companies, the ideologues of the Coalition, with the people of Britain the saps in the middle.

Disinformation spews forth daily in inaccurate, false and misleading press releases from all the companies involved. One day we are advised that the demand for gas has seen an 18 per cent increase on the previous period last year due to the extended winter. The next day we are told that there are only three weeks reserves of gas available. The day after that, Centrica, privatised offspring of British Gas, announces a £10 billion, 20-year deal with US gas partners to provide gas to 1.8 million homes.

You have to go to the small print to read that the gas will not be provided until 2018. The aside is that this gas will be delivered to the existing moribund mothballed power stations and storage facilities on the Isle of Grain in Kent. This means that Boris Johnson's white elephant scheme of building the replacement to Heathrow Airport in the Estuary and Isle of Grain has no chance. Centrica's clout outweighs the Mayor of London.

Blackouts 'inevitable'

SSE Ltd, once South Scotland Electricity in the days of one unified nationalised electricity industry, has announced that power cuts are inevitable as the generating gap – between the power stations we have and the demand for power – is now so close that anything can trip power cuts and blackouts. Interestingly, Ofgem, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, the supposedly independent regulator of the generating companies, has issued a similar supporting statement. The regulator's funding will be reduced in the next round of government cutbacks

What is really going on is poker of the highest stakes. The "free" market is determined to maximise profits from the right to fuel, which in certain quarters has been defined as a "human right" by



Didcot combined coal and oil power station – closed in March this year as a result of a European Union directive.

Photo: CBCK/shutterstock.com

ensuring that government, i.e. the taxpayers, funds the utilities infrastructure to the tune of anything up to £200 billion. In between a conscious deliberate anarchy is created across energy supply to confuse, frighten and overwhelm people with a sense of fatalism and doom and gloom.

Centrica, after deciding that provision of gas supplies is its core business, hence the 20-year deal with US gas suppliers, decides to withdraw its investment in the Hinckley Point nuclear power station renewal project. They use the argument that building the station will take ten years and not five years and they cannot tie up investors' funds in such a lengthy project. No nuclear station has ever been built in five years. This is a fiction and diversion to justify investor greed elsewhere. And where is that investor greed? £500 million

redistributed to Centrica gas shareholders now and investment in established US gas production. – investment that is without risk, without delay and produces bonanza profits now.

The cynicism of Centrica is clear in its pious statements about holding gas prices as low as possible. A 6 per cent rise in November 2012 obviously has no bearing on the 7 per cent overall profit increase for 2012, giving a global figure of £2.93 billion! A figure deemed not a bonanza. Similarly Centrica withdraws its £200 million investment in the Race Bank offshore (North Sea) wind farm project on the basis that the government should stump up the £2 billion investment required. Again, what this is really about putting money into

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

investors' pockets as a short-term fix while the long-term gamble is the government will buckle in the face of power cuts.

If only gas and nuclear provision were the only energy sources in dire straits! UK Coal, which provides 5 per cent of Britain's coal for generation, is effectively bankrupt after the fire at the Daw Mills pit. Discussions about going into voluntary liquidation have now been overtaken by the government proposing to re-nationalise the pits of UK Coal.

If nationalisation was good for RBS and Lloyds then it's good for UK Coal. So much for the dreams of those who believe that nationalisation under capitalism is the solution to all problems – especially when this government is ideologically committed to the “free market”, no state intervention, no subsidies to industry.

The proposed re-nationalisation under the Coal Authority is another high card being played to avoid even more crippling demands on the Pension Protection Fund, which would cost the government more than the £500 million black hole in the miners' pension funds.

The financial restructuring of UK Coal in 2012 separated the vastly profitable property assets that UK Coal inherited from British Coal from the two deep mines and the six open cast mines. It was property versus mining, and now mining is in further crisis with over 10,000 miners' pensions at risk. So the government bails them out and lets the property speculators run amok.

Meanwhile, a £1 billion contract has been awarded to Peterhead and Drax Power stations to develop a carbon capture and storage programme to deal with carbon emissions from these two coal-fired power stations. The carbon will be stored at Shell North Sea oil and gas sites which have been exhausted over the past 50 years. Shell will move from pumping fuel from the North Sea to storing carbon waste and will be paid very handsomely for it.

Think the unthinkable

What the government has done by accident is to reinforce the idea that the technology to deal with carbon emissions from coal works and therefore the possibility to mine coal in Britain is real, if the political will is there. Britain's energy shortfall crisis will force the thinking of the unthinkable. If they can renationalise pits to bail out their

property developer mates they can rebuild the coal industry.

The poker game being played will result either in the government funding the infrastructure investment required or in an ever-declining oligarchy of utility and energy companies strengthening their grip over provision of energy while hiking up profit margins. If the “right to fuel” is a human right, then the right to take away from the exploiters their abuse of fuel and energy provision follows logically.

Workers have to define a new energy strategy for Britain without competition or waste, balancing generation mix and supply between gas, nuclear, coal and other feasible energy sources.

We need to harness the vast profit margins for reinvestment, resulting in a reduction in fuel costs to domestic and industrial users, reduction in duplication of parasitic employment and parasitic investors – how many chief executives and coupon clippers do we need?

It is beyond belief that Britain, which leads the world in the export of power generators worth over £1.29 billion – taking a fifth of the world market for electrical generation – should be facing power cuts and blackouts at home. ■



CPBML/Workers Public Meeting, London Tuesday 11 June, 7.30 pm “Fighting for Peace”

Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Nearest tube Holborn.

From European Union and NATO to the US and a string of capitalist alliances, imperialism is turning to war to break independent nations and deter any opposition to its rule. But they are not having everything their own way. Come and discuss. Everybody welcome.

Nothing induces stress more than the slump that capitalism has plunged Britain into. And nothing eases stress better than the commitment to make a revolution...

Our future: face up to the challenge

This article is a shortened and edited version of a speech given at this years CPBML May Day Rally, held in Conway Hall, London, on 1 May. The speaker is a health worker based in London.

HOW MANY of you work in workplaces where everyone is pretty anxious about the state of the country? If you are retired or not in work, you may indeed come across this view even more frequently. So what to do about this anxiety?

Nurses and doctors on a regular basis hear people say, the worst thing is “not knowing”. I have seen people get a difficult diagnosis but they visibly become less stressed because they know what they are dealing with. The human race is here because it can deal with difficult problems. We are not daunted by adversity.

No one in the Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist doubts that a revolutionary change in the way we do things would be extremely difficult but human beings have achieved very difficult things in the past. So although “make a revolution” is not the standard treatment for anxiety, I recommend it.

You might be sitting there still toying with the Labour Party being different to the Conservatives, but in your heart you know that Labour in power did not reverse any legislation hostile to trade unions, and it supported the Private Finance Initiative started by Thatcher.

Indeed, you know that John Major, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were Thatcher’s sons in that they all continued the policy of destroying Britain’s industrial base and promoting finance capital, which led directly to the financial crash of 2008.

Face up to it

So face the situation as it is. Yes, it’s grim. Yes, it is anxiety-provoking. But once you have faced how it is, the anxiety starts to lessen because you channel your anger into doing something about it. Better for your blood pressure and the state of the country.

Workers deal with difficult stuff. In day-to-day nursing and medical work, we use a



Image: ml/shutterstock.com

simple process for any situation: Assess, Plan, Implement, Evaluate. Probably no different to an engineer building a bridge.

So in tonight’s title we are not just thinking about the struggle of ideas in an abstract way. No, we need to have our ideas and our assessment in order to plan, to act and then evaluate. Imagine being the first emergency service at the scene of that hen party minibus crash. It must have been horrendous. But they just got on with it – assess, plan, implement, and probably everyone involved is still trying to evaluate whether we could have done it better.

Politicians try to tell you they deal with the difficult stuff but how do you think Cameron, Duncan Smith, Gove would have coped at that crash scene? Workers every

day deal with much more daunting things than politicians can even begin to imagine. Marxists talk about practice, theory, practice. What you will notice is that everything starts and ends with practice, meaning your active involvement. We are up against an enemy that wants to prevent this process even beginning.

Take one very recent practical example. On the 23 April the Archbishop of Canterbury said we are in an economic depression. George Osborne, who appointed him to the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards, was asked on the TODAY programme on Radio 4

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

that very morning, “Do you agree that we are in a depression?” To which he answered: “I agree with the Archbishop’s analysis” and so he was asked again, “So, do you agree that we are in depression?” To which he answered: “I agree with the Archbishop’s analysis.” It was like one of those nursery stories but the big bad wolf was short of time and wasn’t able to ask the little pig for the third time...

Of course, if you have been reading our journal WORKERS or have attended our public meeting series you would have known that we have been writing about the current depression, the first of the 21st century, for some time. I merely use the story of the Archbishop and the Chancellor as one illustration of things we are not allowed to think and indeed in this instance a word we are not allowed to utter.

The reason that the acknowledgement that we are in an economic depression is important is because solving any problem begins by a process of assessment of it. At the moment the state of the country is like a patient in denial who never presents for assessment let alone diagnosis and treatment.

The Thatcherite maxim “There is no alternative” is underpinned by another daft idea which needs tackling. Version One is that no one saw the financial crisis of 2008 coming. Version Two is that the whole world economic crisis was created by the last Labour government – even though they admit that the subprime mortgage market was an important trigger, and as you know, that started in the United States. So pick and choose from those two incompatible daft ideas.

In 2008 the Queen went to the London School of Economics and upon meeting some learned economists asked, “Did none of you chaps see this coming?” A top question.

The crises keep coming back

If any one of those academics had an ounce of history about them they could have said that a certain chap with a bushy



The City: the heart of London, and the heart of Britain’s problems. Billingsgate, once the biggest venue” sits dwarfed by expensive and bombastic new buildings. Tourist boats float by. And where

beard back in the 19th century wrote about “crises that by their periodical return put the existence of the entire bourgeois society on its trial, each time more threateningly”.

Karl Marx wasn’t predicting the future, he was analysing his present time. He was analysing the nature of this system that human beings have created, and he worked out it was pretty naff:

“And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.”

The final stage in our everyday work process: Evaluate. Evaluate that learning.

Marx has been proved right so far and with the 1930s Great Depression lasting 10 years, his reference to “more extensive” proved accurate.

Marx also understood finance capital. Money-lending long preceded industrial capital and was external to it, he explained. It existed in a symbiosis much like that between a parasite and its host. “Both usury and commerce exploit the various modes of production,” he wrote. “They do not create [production], but attack it from the outside.”

But even Marx underestimated quite

how stupid our current day capitalist class would be. Anything like the 2008-09 Bush-Obama-Brown-Cameron bailouts of financial speculators in his day was unthinkable.

Talking about finance capital Marx said, “The entire artificial system of forced expansion of the reproduction process cannot, of course, be remedied by having some bank, like the Bank of England, give to all the swindlers the deficient capital by means of its paper and having it buy up all the depreciated commodities at their old nominal values.”

Marx never dreamt that this ludicrous solution would be attempted in autumn 2008 as the US Treasury paid off all of AIG’s gambling and “casino capitalist” losses at taxpayer expense, followed by the Federal Reserve buying junk mortgage packages at par. We are in uncharted waters here.

And in Britain we started a list of bank bailouts with Northern Rock. According to the National Audit Office, Britain has since 2007 committed to spending £1.162 trillion at various points on bailing out the banks. The actual figure has fluctuated.

How to get a sense of scale here? Well, the whole of the NHS, despite a rise in the population and an even greater rise in the elderly population, has to save £20 billion in the period of this parliament. And in the past week we have had more chatter about health and education budgets bailing out defence.



Photo: Workers

fish market in the world and now an “events
e in all of this is production?”

Real wealth only comes from two routes: from natural resources which have a value and from the labour of workers who make things which are then sold. The employer takes the lion’s share in profit. Workers get back a little in wages, the amount dependent on how organised they are. The factory owner in Dhaka and all the long chain associated with him were so keen to take profit that they forgot to keep back even the tiny fraction needed to keep the factory standing.

What is going on across Europe now is an investment strike of epic proportions. And all our historic wealth as a country is being diverted to what Marx called the “swindlers”: banks, tax avoidance schemes, energy company rip-offs. Add them all. Can a small, medium or large enterprise get a loan from a bank to produce something real? No! The parasite that Marx talked about is bringing down the host. It will even sacrifice industrial capitalists.

Most definitely it is content to take down workers and indeed whole countries, even though we are the only ones who can generate wealth. Greece down, Cyprus down, Spain, Italy – and so on.

Self-inflicted blocks

Money flows to swindlers, there is an investment strike, and all the time they’re telling us to do our bit. Yes we do need to get our ideas straight on those things but self-inflicted blocks to our thinking are

more serious. We workers have been equally stupid. Instead of fighting for decent wages – investing in ourselves – in recent years we have also “printed our own money” by getting the credit card out. Of course the banks sent us letters sometimes more than one a day, encouraging us to take loans out. But we did it.

Employers soon worked out that getting employees into debt was a top plan for them, making it less likely that we would take industrial action – that and the readily available reserve army of labour flowing across Europe to keep wages low.

We have disinvested in trade unions, sometimes by leaving them but more often by treating them as an insurance company. Unless trade unions are grounded in the workplace and are about a collective solution to everyday problems, they are nothing.

Free movement versus planning

A huge section of the population has worked out that the free movement of labour across Europe means you cannot plan anything. Life is endlessly unmanageable. In our recent Congress we said that the British people have to declare

their intention to leave the EU, they are looking for a means to do that.

The real struggle of ideas is with ourselves – within the working class. There is even a motion going to the annual congress of my union, UCU, from the national executive saying we have to stay in the EU to protect the rights of workers. We need to get our own heads in order.

We have stayed out of the single currency. As a people we are now looking for a way to declare our intention to leave the EU. We want to stabilise the population to rebuild.

Only Marxist economics can get us out of this hole. The enemy class is mobile, it doesn’t care about Britain. It does not care if the lights go out.

I don’t underestimate the difficulties we would face if we tried to impose our assess, plan and implement – our logical workers’ way of doing things. They would not like it. They would definitely try to pull the plug. But we remain a very skilled working class, and we are good at solving problems.

- Don’t make it harder by waiting for the attacks to increase.
- Play your part in the struggle for ideas.
- Join this Party! ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain’s new series of London public meetings began on 27 September 2012, with further meetings on 15 November 2012, 12 February 2013 and 11 June 2013; all are held in the Bertrand Russell room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL, nearest Tube Holborn, and start at 7.30 pm. Other meetings are held around Britain. All meetings are advertised in What’s On (page 5). Further meetings will be announced in WORKERS and at www.workers.org.uk.

M The Party’s annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2013, it was on Wednesday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There were also 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 email info@workers.org.uk

This month we review two books that put the SNP's plans to break the spotlight – and find these plans full of flaws...

Scotland: No to break-up

THE MODERN SNP: FROM PROTEST TO POWER, edited by Gerry Hassan, paperback, 230 pages, ISBN 978-0-7486-3991-5, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, £21.99.

LABOUR'S POLICIES towards Scotland produced the outcome it claimed to oppose, as John Curtice points out in his excellent contribution to a revealing set of studies of the Scottish National Party. Curtice writes: " 'Devolution,' famously quipped the former Labour Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, George Robertson, 'will kill Nationalism stone dead.' Yet eight years after the founding of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, the SNP leader, Alex Salmond, was installed as Scotland's First Minister and a nationalist administration was formed for the first time. ... devolution threw an electoral lifeline to the SNP that eventually enabled it to come to power." Curtice remarks, "Labour's Scotland Act had provided the means for the SNP to gain power."

Contributions to the book by Stephen Maxwell, and Jim and Margaret Cuthbert, expose the SNP's neoliberalism. They show that the SNP backs the privileges and powers of finance, that it wants a lower corporation tax and lower wealth taxes and that it praised the Irish "Celtic Tiger", where poverty and inequality were among the worst in the developed world.

The SNP backs, and is backed by, big capital. It backed Donald Trump's luxury golf resort against local people's wishes, and accepted vast sums from Brian Souter, the extreme right-wing millionaire. The SNP was silent on the bankers' promotion of other people's debts and on finance capital's role in landing us all in the crisis which destroyed the Scottish-led banking sector.

As Hassan writes of the SNP's neoliberalism, "by 2007 this influence had gone much further with the party embracing a 'Scotland plc' agenda of independence based significantly on the financial sector, light-touch regulation and not challenging vested interests – all of which has been thrown in the air by the global economic crises of 2008-9."

The SNP embraces the EU's single



This year's Scottish TUC rejected a motion to support the break-up campaign.

Photo: Workers

market and wants to give the EU powers over Scotland's economic policy, defence and foreign policy. It backs the EU policy of privatisation: it even wants to sell off Scotland's forests.

Next year's referendum is a huge decision – the SNP's attack puts our nation's 300-year history of unity at risk. We have to defeat the SNP and the ultra left, both of which openly call for break-up. The government's decision to allow a separate vote in Scotland concedes the SNP's case, that only Scotland can decide its future; it assumes the point at issue. A separate vote promotes the idea that "it's nothing to do with us".

But even in this gerrymandered referendum, Scotland must and will vote against break-up. In 2007, when the SNP won the Scottish Parliament election, 25 per cent backed break-up. Polls now show just 30 per cent support, a mere 5 per cent rise in six years. At this rate, it would take till 2037 to win a majority for break-up.

SCOTLAND AND THE UNION, 1707-2007, edited by Thomas M. Devine, paperback, 246 pages, ISBN 978-0-7486-3542-9, Edinburgh University Press, 2008, £24.99.

THOMAS DEVINE, Professor of Scottish History and Palaeography at the University of Edinburgh, edited this intriguing collection of essays. There are three essays in a section on the foundations of the Union, four on the history of the Union, three on challenges to the Union, and three on devolution and the future.

The 1707 Treaty was not a conquest or a colonisation. It recognised and respected Scotland's ancient sovereignty. It overcame English assumptions of superiority over Scotland.

Capitalists did well out of the Empire; not so the working class – as Devine notes, "The majority...remained mired in poverty." Between 1815 and 1939, two million people emigrated from Scotland overseas and another 600,000 moved to England. But

ak up Britain under

the Empire did not define the Union; we don't want to echo the Empire's claim that it did.

On the future, William Miller, Professor of Politics at the University of Glasgow, showed, worryingly, that the fall in unionist votes, i.e. votes for parties ostensibly for retaining the union, is greater than the rise of nationalist votes. And that the fall in opposition to a Scottish parliament is greater than the rise in support for break-up. He also shows that Scottish culture is no more egalitarian than English culture. Class determines attitudes to equality, not whether people are Scottish or English.

In the 2007 elections, the SNP got just 32.9 per cent of the constituency vote. Polls showed that 64 per cent of those intending to vote SNP-backed separation. Labour's support did not collapse: it fell only slightly. Overall, a large majority of the electorate voted for unionist parties. The SNP won only because the pro-separatist Socialists and Greens failed so dismally.

Our only defence against fascism and rampant capitalism is a united British working class – the very thing that Scottish separatists would end up smashing.

A Scottish breakaway would split the British working class, which has been a single, united class for more than 300 years. The break-up of Britain would split our trade unions, to the benefit of the employing class.

Britain has been a single united country for 306 years now, in a way that the EU is not, with a unified economy, unified transport and communications systems, a single political system, a single, National, Health Service, a common language, and united trade unions. Most of us dislike the idea that policy standards now vary from place to place because of devolution.

This year's Scottish TUC rejected a motion to support the Yes to break-up campaign. The Scottish branches of ASLEF mandated their delegates to oppose the Yes campaign, and urged the need for a united working class throughout Britain.

Trade unionists have a special responsibility to ensure a No vote and reverse this separatist trend once and for all. United we stand, divided we fall. ■

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.

4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

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

5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

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

6: Build the Party

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

Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
- 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.
- You can ask to be put in touch by writing or emailing to the address below.

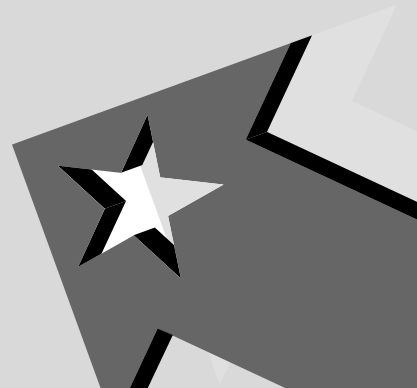
WORKERS

78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

email info@workers.org.uk

www.workers.org.uk

phone 020 8801 9543



Back to Front – The sick joke

‘Our equality rights did not come from the EU. And they don’t depend on the EU either...’

ALL THE ACTS outlawing discrimination in Britain – the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – were passed well before the EU Employment Equality Framework Directive of 2000. So our equality rights did not come from the EU; and they don’t depend on the EU either.

The law doesn’t protect you – any employer who follows procedure can fire you easily unless you have the collective strength of a trade union at work. Employers may not fire you for being a woman, or gay, or disabled or black – perish the thought – but they can fire you just because they want to.

At one workplace, the only person that the employer tried to sack who kept her job was one who had a near-unanimous vote in favour of strike action in her support. It is membership action and involvement at the workplace that wins battles, not laws from Brussels.

EU laws have done nothing to stop 56 per cent of Spain’s and 64 per cent of Greece’s young people being unemployed. And even if these laws worked, the best we could hope for would be equal numbers unemployed. Men and women, black and white, young and old, able and disabled, gay and straight, all equal but all out of work. It’s the equality of the dole queue.

But as we can see from Greece, the laws don’t even achieve that. For Greek women the unemployment rate is 29.3 per cent, 5 per cent above that of Greek men.

The EU promotes labour flexibility claiming that this will cut unemployment.

Instead, flexibility has increased it. Why? Because flexibility makes it easier for the employer to sack people. No wonder the World Bank praises flexibility: it forces wages down and workers out.

Backing the EU means backing the employers’ attacks on our trade unions. Opposing the EU strengthens our trade unions against the employers’ attacks.

Some unions recognise this. The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers recently called clearly for Britain’s immediate withdrawal from the EU. Seemingly a lone voice among union general secretaries, Bob Crow has urged Labour to back an in-out referendum.

With admirable clarity, writing in *THE GUARDIAN* on 18 May, Crow referred to the “sick joke of social Europe”. He said: “Social EU legislation, which supposedly leads to better working conditions, has not saved one job and is riddled with opt-outs for employers. It is making zero-hour contracts and agency working the norm while undermining collective bargaining and full-time, secure employment.”

The EU is bad for all the peoples of Europe. It aims to prevent countries from rebuilding their economies. It tries to stop support for British industry through state investment. It seeks to impose the free movement of capital, which stops us protecting ourselves from speculative attacks on our economy.

Each nation should be free to make its own decisions, free from the orders of the European Central Bank, the European Roundtable of Industrialists and the European Commission. ■

Subscriptions

Take a regular copy of **WORKERS**. The cost for a year’s issues (no issue in August) delivered direct to you every month, including postage, is £15.

Name

Address

Postcode

Cheques payable to “**WORKERS**”. Send along with completed subscription form (or photocopy) to **WORKERS** 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB



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.

Publications

CHANGE BRITAIN, EMBRACE YOUR PARTY

This pamphlet brings together the statement from the Party’s 2009 Congress with those from two former Congresses in 2003 and 2006. Also included is a statement on the European Union: “The fascist dream of a united Europe resurrected.” (£2.75 including P&P).

To order...

Copies of all pamphlets and a fuller list of material can be obtained from CPBML PUBLICATIONS, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB. Prices include postage. Please make all cheques payable to “**WORKERS**”.