

# WORKERS

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**THEY'VE ALWAYS WANTED  
TO STEAL OUR BREXIT...**

**PARLIAMENT**

**VS**

**THE PEOPLE**

**...DON'T LET THEM!**

**Transport** Worth the fight

**Peace** US dumps treaty

**Brexit** It's up to us

**EU** Swiss challenge

**Scotland** Separatist failure

**Nuclear** In disarray

**People smuggling** Big profits

*plus* News,

**NHS plan** Not fit for purpose

Historic Notes

**Teaching** Plug the gap

and more

# WORKERS



## It's up to us

**BRITAIN IS STIRRING.** We the people voted to leave the EU, and the realisation is growing that we must do far more. By now it is clear to all that we cannot sit back and expect Westminster to do what it promised and implement the referendum result.

Many of the groups that campaigned in the June 2016 referendum have re-formed. And new organisations have been created, both local and national, drawing together people from across the political spectrum.

In fact, the old political spectrum now counts for nothing. Brexit, the fight for control, has split Labour, Conservatives, even the Greens. Left and right have become meaningless in the face of the most important struggle of our time, the fight for control over our own lives.

As we said at our most recent party congress (see article, page 4), either we live in an independent Britain controlling our own future, or we become slaves to international capital.

Go along to any of the explosion of meetings on Brexit taking place around the country and you will see the beginning of this political understanding. It is revolutionary in its implications for Britain.

And yet it's just a start. We must do more, much more. The opposition to Brexit – to Britain as a nation state – is currently fractured, but don't

expect that to last. They hold all the levers of traditional state power, they have majorities in the cabinet and in both houses of Parliament. The establishment does not want independence.

Most MPs are happy with their sinecure seats, sitting pretty while all the real decisions are taken in Brussels. How dare these MPs claim the "sovereignty" of parliament? Instead of representing us, they have handed their votes to the forces of globalisation. And they are stringing us along, saying one thing and doing another.

Some whose constituents voted to Leave say they will vote for Theresa May's "Withdrawal Agreement" on the basis that they will be "delivering on the referendum". That's typical Westminster hypocrisy.

We must make them do as they pledged – do what we told them to do. We must spell out to MPs that they must vote down this con of a deal. They must be bombarded with letters and emails demanding they do their democratic duty.

Our sovereignty is not theirs to give away. Our democracy is not theirs to give away.

So who rules? The people of Britain or Parliament?

Parliament is sovereign only in the sense that no force outside Britain can tell it what to do. Parliament is not sovereign over the people: it's the other way round. ■



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## Contents – March/April 2019

### News Digest

US dumps nuclear treaty, p3; So free movement is ending? p4; Anger over rail yard closure, p5

03

### Features

Seize control for a clean Brexit, p6; People smuggling and profit, p9; Public transport – no future without a fight, p10; Nuclear gap, p13; SNP and Greens try to stop Brexit, fail at home, p14; NHS plan – still not fit for purpose, p16; Plug the education gap to build Britain's future, p18

06

### End Notes

Book Reviews: Britain's soft borders, p20; Sovereignty matters, p21  
Historic Notes: William Tyndale, independent thinker and poet, p22

20



<b>PEACE</b>	US dumps missile treaty
<b>CONTRACTING</b>	Uncompetitive practices
<b>HOUSING CRISIS</b>	Not just in the cities
<b>FREE MOVEMENT</b>	Is it ending, or not?
<b>ONLINE TAX</b>	Union silence
<b>RAIL</b>	Anger over yard closure
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>	Challenge to EU
<b>E-NEWSLETTER</b>	How to subscribe
<b>ON THE WEB</b>	More news online
<b>WHAT'S ON</b>	Coming soon

US Department of Defense



A launching unit for US ground-based cruise missiles.

## US dumps nuclear treaty

IT'S A SIGN of the importance of Brexit that the otherwise headline-grabbing news coming out of Washington and Moscow has been sidelined. The US's dangerous decision to withdraw from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which at another time might have brought millions out on the streets, has slipped under the radar.

The signing of the INF in 1987 by the US and the Soviet Union banned the deployment of land-based ballistic missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres and led to the removal of nearly 3,000 nuclear missiles from European and Soviet soil.

But in further evidence that the collapse of the Soviet Union has accentuated the threat to peace, US withdrawal from the treaty predictably forced Russia's hand to follow suit – it has now “suspended” the treaty for six months. Such moves would have been unthinkable during the so-called Cold War, when the Soviet Union was the arch bogeyman.

Now that capitalism rules on both sides of what used to be called the Iron Curtain, we are back to where we were before socialism – not NATO – kept the peace in Europe. And there is much talk that the US's target is more China than it is Russia. As the US's biggest trading “partner”, China has naturally become perceived by the White House as its main trade threat.

No doubt the armaments firms in the US will make a fortune out of the development of expensive weapons systems – US withdrawal from the INF treaty could spark a new and lucrative nuclear arms race. ■

• A longer version of this article is on the web at [www.cpbml.org.uk](http://www.cpbml.org.uk).

## CONTRACTING

### Uncompetitive practices

RESEARCH BY the GMB union shows that the value of taxpayer-funded contracts – including central and local government – given to outsourcing companies increased by 53 per cent last year to £95 billion.

The GMB said this showed a government “hellbent” on privatisation, despite the warning signs given by the collapse of Carillion.

Meanwhile, *FT* analysis shows outsourcing has become markedly less competitive over the past three years, with 23 per cent of public sector contracts awarded to sole bidders in 2018.

Elsewhere, the Federation of Small Businesses has urged the government to “radically strengthen” its voluntary system of rules governing payment terms – and name and shame repeat offenders when it comes to late payments. It also wants cash ring-fenced for suppliers, not left on the balance sheets of the primary contractors, for all major public sector projects. ■

## HOUSING CRISIS

### Not just in the cities

THE DELIBERATE under-resourcing of publicly funded housing often raises images of cities, with tower blocks and urban decay. But the problem is truly national, with non-urban, or rural, parts of Britain suffering just as much in their turn.

Government data shows there are now 177,688 families on waiting lists for social housing in rural council areas. But, says the Campaign to Protect Rural England, just 1,336 such rental homes were built in those locations last year. ■

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



Kay Roxby/shutterstock.com



## ON THE WEB

A selection of additional stories at [cpbml.org.uk](http://cpbml.org.uk)...

### 'Austerity' alive and well as government dodges responsibility

Millions are feeling the consequences of a system that has washed its hands of the people and handed control to the European Union, the market, or both.

### Car jobs on the line

The loss of jobs in the car industry is blamed on Brexit; that's not the case. To think that the EU or May's deal is any answer will disarm the fight to maintain and build the industry.

### Hands off Venezuela!

There can be little doubt who is behind the flagrant interference in the affairs of a sovereign nation.

### Infrastructure delays pile up

An independent report from KPMG found that the delayed Crossrail project is eating up cash at the rate of £30 million a week.

### Revealed: the inside plot against Brexit

Shortly after the defeat of the government's proposed deal with the European Union on 14 January, three senior ministers held a conference call with representatives of big business...

### Plus: the e-newsletter

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## Union silence on online tax

SHOP WORKERS' union USDAW was one of the many unions that fell tamely in line with the government in 2016 and argued that it was "undoubtedly in the best interests of Usdaw members to vote to remain within the European Union on 23 June".

Yet now that the government has said EU law will stop one of the key planks in Usdaw's industrial strategy for retail, the union has fallen uncharacteristically silent.

The strategy called for reform of tax laws to ensure that companies "pay their fair share of tax (i.e. reducing corporation tax avoidance) as well as creating more of a level playing field between online and bricks-and-mortar retailers e.g. online transaction tax or sales tax."

Earlier this year the Financial Secretary to the Treasury wrote to the House of Commons Treasury select committee saying that there was a "high risk" that such a tax would breach EU rules on state aid – and so the government was abandoning the idea.

Why, after the vote to Leave, is Britain still worried about EU rules? Because under the draft withdrawal agreement negotiated by Theresa May Britain has accepted "dynamic alignment" with Brussels on such rules. "Dynamic alignment" means that during the transition period any rules introduced by the EU are automatically applied in Britain without any parliamentary scrutiny (so much for parliament being "in control").

- A longer version of this article is on the web at [www.cpbml.org.uk](http://www.cpbml.org.uk).

## FREE MOVEMENT

### Is it ending or not?

JUST BEFORE Christmas the government slipped out its proposals for managing immigration post Brexit. According to Migration Watch UK, "These proposals amount to continued free movement for EU workers, whether skilled or not, with no effective means of ensuring departure. They also enormously widen the field for skilled and semi-skilled workers from the entire world with no caps on number."

The Immigration White Paper proposes to remove any cap on skilled migration (degree level) from anywhere in the world. Also to abolish the requirement that jobs should first be advertised in Britain, sacrificing the interests of British workers for

the convenience of employers.

Semi-skilled workers will have a new route in for jobs paying £21,000 or more without a cap from anywhere in the world. Unskilled workers from "low risk" countries will also be allowed in to find work and stay for a year, then return after a year – a licence to exploit for employers.

There are no measures to reduce the sheer scale of immigration to Britain – currently running at a net 270,000 a year, according to official figures. These measures show that the government intends to extend (nearly) free movement of labour into Britain from the entire world.

Lord Green of Deddington, Chairman of Migration Watch, called the White Paper "a betrayal of all those who voted for Brexit in the expectation that immigration would be reduced."

## CPBML

### Congress document

THE CPBML has published the political document from its congress in London at the end of last year.

Entitled *British Independence and the Working Class*, it describes the control-free world that transnational, monopoly capitalism is seeking, and the consequences for Britain.

"We know what that world would be like, because we have been living in a huge free trade area for several decades. It's called the European Union," it says.

The document, which is available free for download from [cpbml.org.uk](http://cpbml.org.uk), sets out the battle lines for the future: "British independence, through Brexit, after Brexit, is our battleground – and it is everywhere. There is not a single area of solid struggle where the concepts of independence and control cannot find an echo."

## SWITZERLAND

### Challenge to EU

IN SWITZERLAND the clock is ticking, and it's not the cuckoo kind. Time is running out for the EU to get agreement on a new "Framework" agreement covering all aspects of its relationship with Switzerland.

Crucially, the agreement would commit the country to uncontrolled freedom of movement from the EU.

In January, the Swiss president said, "We need to renegotiate significant points

for the deal to have a chance of being accepted – that's my view." Ominously for the EU, he said it was inevitable that the issue would go to a referendum.

The EU has given Switzerland until the end of June to come to heel, threatening dire economic and financial sanctions.

Perhaps significantly, Switzerland was one of the first countries to negotiate a post-Brexit trade deal with Britain, signing a trade continuity agreement in the capital, Bern, on 11 February this year.

Switzerland is Britain's seventh-largest export market. ■



Train leaving the Caley yard in Springburn, Glasgow.

## Anger over yard closure

REPRESENTATIVES FROM the Unite and RMT unions fighting the threatened closure of the historic "Caley Railway Yard" in the North Glasgow district of Springburn were left dismayed when they turned up for a meeting with Scottish transport secretary Michael Matheson at the end of January – only to find he had skipped off and in his place sent delegations from Scottish Enterprise and Transport Scotland.

The yard, owned by Gemini Rail Services, carries out maintenance, repair and upgrades on ScotRail trains and employs over 200 skilled workers. The unions had gone to Edinburgh to meet Matheson after Gemini refused requests to extend the statutory consultation period for redundancy.

This is yet another piece of evidence that the SNP does not represent the interests of working-class people from areas like Springburn – once home to a proud industrial landscape that employed many people from the local area. Its workforce once produced more locomotives than anywhere else in Europe.

Times have changed. At 3.7 per cent, Springburn has one of the highest proportions of residents receiving job-seekers allowance in the country. A 2012 report by the Scottish government ranked Springburn's Kepochhill neighbourhood as the third most deprived in all of Scotland, and the loss of 200 skilled jobs in the area would only make things worse.

Unions are calling for the yard to be nationalised, but until a final break with the EU – and certainly during Theresa May's proposed transition period – that would require permission from the EU, as would anything amounting to perceived "state aid".

And yet, the Scotland's SNP cabal is committed both to leaving the United Kingdom and to re-joining the EU. That would bring it back under the control of the EU's Single European Railway Directive, which was designed to facilitate the growth of private rail companies.

Nationalisation would be a mere reverie in an "independent" Scotland that was subject to EU law, and would not be able to guarantee these jobs in the long term. ■

## WHAT'S ON

### Coming soon

#### MARCH

##### MANCHESTER

Tuesday 5 March, 7.30pm

The Britons Protection, 50 Great Bridgewater Street, Manchester M1 5LE

"Brexit 2019: Seize control!"

##### CPBML Public Meeting

Obviously, 17.4 million people voting to leave has not been enough. Details, page 17.

##### GLASGOW

Wednesday 20 March, 7pm

Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP

"For an independent Britain"

##### CPBML Public Meeting

Scotland's future lies within an independent Britain, not as a province of the EU. Details, page 17.

##### LONDON

Wednesday 20 March, 7.30pm

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

"Brexit: Parliament v the people"

Sovereignty resides in the people, not in parliament. The people must take control. Details, page 17.

#### MAY

GLASGOW, LEEDS, LONDON

Wednesday 1 May

Details to be announced – follow us on Twitter @cpbml, and at cpbml.org.uk



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**Why would 630 people sitting in a Westminster conclave that voted for Brexit do not have the luxury of sitting back and**

# Seize control for a clean

BRITAIN IS at a pivotal moment in its history. There has been a seismic change in people's thinking in favour of our country's independence though it still has to be completely accomplished. Will we leave the EU, or will we be thwarted?

The referendum result must be implemented. All the attempts to thwart, undermine or overturn it in parliament are illegitimate, for the referendum vote has established the legitimacy of Brexit and of a clean leave.

So whenever the establishment and members of parliament do try to squirm away from delivering the people's instruction, the momentum set in train by 17.4 million people must be brought into play – to overwhelm the backsliders scrambling around trying to prevent the democratic will.

With so much of importance at stake on both sides, it is only to be expected that the temperature of debate is rising, leading to the emergence of many fine ideas but also to much unpleasantness and caricature. Probably in this charged climate, it's best to adopt a resolute yet dignified stance: keep calm and insist on independence.

If we are to survive and prosper, if we are going to rebuild our creaking country, what will propel things forward? It seems that only the British people have the capacity to enforce what is wanted. The people have no choice but to advance centre-stage, disperse the set-piece parliamentary wrangling and seize control for a clean Brexit.

## Out of the impasse

This is the only way to break out of the engineered impasse, close the chapter on an annoying two-year delay, advance the country and end uncertainty, the only way to reunite the people through the practical gains of Brexit and a growing independence.

The slogan "Take control" is powerful, liberating and encompasses so much potential. To take control, the people will have to behave as Marx suggested when he said in *The Communist Manifesto*: "The working class has to constitute itself as the nation."

• This article is an edited and shortened version of a speech given at a CPBML public meeting in London on 12 February.



Etienne Ansote/European Union

**Off once more in search of a crooked deal : Jean-Claude Juncker and Theresa May in Brussels, 7 Feb**

In Britain the working class is the vast majority of the people, whether or not they see it.

When the people take control, it's saying away with the old establishment, it's saying we can work things out for our own interests now, and it's saying let's be very careful that we don't allow a new establishment to get supremacy over us either.

For Parliament to plan and execute a coup against democracy it must raise a non-existent parliamentary sovereignty against an actual people's sovereignty. Why would 630 people sitting in a Westminster conclave think they can outweigh 17.4 million votes? Why would we tolerate it?

Some free market Conservatives want to let the markets take control. Do people want that? One suspects not. Others tend towards letting the United States take control so Britain can be in its thrall. Do people

want that either? One suspects not. You don't kick up a major fuss to throw off control from Brussels only to accept it coming from Washington.

Brexit is an opportunity to stop the existing system from continuing as it has done over the last 46 years, to end the system's trampling of the people and putting the interests of big business, large banks and the profit motive first. We either live in a truly independent Britain, or become slaves to the operations of international capital.

Nor is Brexit the preserve of a minority in the Conservative Party whose ambitions for Britain seem limited to the ending of tariffs, unilateral declarations of free trade and import of cheap food and goods, which they oddly think will keep working people happy. Brexit is much wider and deeper than that.

Westminster has engineered conditions

think they can outweigh 17.4 million votes? But those who  
spectating events...

# n Brexit



January 2019.

of constant uncertainty, so we must prepare for all contingencies. Whatever is thrown at us we will have to cope with it, whether it's a relatively clean Brexit and we organise to maximise opportunities, or a denial of Brexit and we organise the outraged backlash to force its reinstatement.

Theresa May has made repeated attempts to cobble together enough MP votes to back an inadequate, subservient, traitorous agreement, a white-flag surrender. It locks Britain in limbo as an EU vassal state, even without the backstop. It hands over £39 billion with no guarantee we will get anything in return.

The European Court of Justice's jurisdiction would not definitively end. The control of our country that people voted for in the referendum would be illusory.

May's surrender was voted down by a

## 'Who knows the risks the plotters will take as time runs out?'

huge margin in January. Parliament voted it down for a variety of tactical reasons, not all honourable. Then she swirled the gruel on offer a little bit, but when it settled it looked very much like the same stuff, and so far nobody's been keen. Someone observed that "Her Plan B is Plan A in a false moustache". We've probably reached Plan D by now, still failing to attract followers.

Even if a version of the Withdrawal Agreement is belatedly passed, it would sort nothing, as all the major matters would stay undecided – there would still be no agreement about trade, Britain wouldn't be able to trade freely around the world, there'd be no limit on ECJ jurisdiction over Britain.

### Manoeuvres

May's plan is to defer the process a little further and restart Brexit talks under even less advantageous circumstances. Such a manoeuvre would not provide certainty, rather uncertainty would continue throughout the so-called transition and stupidly we would have thrown away £39 billion and still not gained our independence, or even have taken any steps forward.

Worse – it would probably be harder in future for Britain to bring about the promised Brexit. The transition period would necessitate the people battling with the EU for 21 months or more without any guarantee of making any further steps to true independence.

Parliament must continue voting down May's agreement – a bad deal, even if it undergoes some minute cosmetic surgery. MPs of both major parties must be held to account, bound by the referendum vote and their respective manifestos to support a clean, no-deal exit.

However, the phrase "no deal" could mislead. It might be considered to imply that

if we left the EU without reaching an agreement, then no political or trading system would exist. That won't be the case. No deal would simply mean that Britain would trade under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, which is standard across most of the world, and not at all quirky.

In fact, 90 per cent of world trade is carried out on WTO terms and 60 per cent of Britain's trade with other countries is done on WTO terms. It's not unusual. WTO conventions would give Britain full access to the EU's single market. Access does not require membership of the EU and it would be illegal for the EU to restrict it.

So Leave first, then negotiate afterwards, is a cleverer strategy. Plucking up the courage to be an independent nation could mean Britain can negotiate with the EU afterwards from a position of strength not abject weakness, while the EU is still reeling from its diminution and has to appease our desire for independence.

Article 50 being withdrawn is not likely yet, as there isn't sufficient courage amongst parliament's plotters to openly deny democracy. But if it were ever to happen, Britain would have to restart the whole process of departure. Even a delay would still leave the key issues unresolved, prolong uncertainty for our economy, break the promise to leave on March 29th and provoke an angry response. It will also lessen the pressure on the EU to make proper concessions if it ever has the mind to do so.

The call for a Second Referendum lacks support among the plotters for it risks the same decision to leave being taken by the people in an even more highly-charged atmosphere. But who knows what risks they will take as time runs out?

Anyway it's a peculiar state of affairs: parliament can't decide what to do, so it "must be put back to the people" – but the people have already decided; it's just that parliament won't implement the decision.

Then there are those who are putting their faith in the parliamentary deadlock producing a general election. But a general election will solve nothing. Brexit has caused such a fundamental rift inside both major parties that a general election would not

*Continued on page 8*

*Continued from page 7*

eradicate the basic quandary, when are we leaving the EU? It could also ruin the prospects of both major parties, who have not kept faith with voters after the last election.

And if we were kept in the EU, we should remember that the EU is working for ever tighter control over the nations of Europe, ever more dictatorial, ever more centralised, ever more anti-democratic, ever more pro-austerity in the future. The British people hated this before, why would they tolerate it again without rebelling?

A novel situation has developed since the referendum campaign. Growing numbers of working people have a view on how the economy should be organised, how an industry should be run, how public services should function. Then gripped and consumed by the ideas of how to run a country or an industry, they have moved forward into discussion, organisation and struggle to bring about a change.

### Dual power

These pressure points and networks should not subside. They should continue whatever happens in the future. We do not yet have conditions of dual power – the people against the state – but it would appear we have the beginnings of it, and that is awesome.

People are wondering whether we need a new breed of MP, one that will uphold democratic decisions and accept they serve the people, not the other way around, or whether we need a new form of democracy.

When we have such a major task to win and secure independence, perhaps it's going to be difficult to sort these problems of democratic structure simultaneously, particularly as it's never been solved satisfactorily anywhere yet throughout history. The problem most probably resides in the idea of representation in assemblies and the development of a separate caste of politicians and it is not yet obvious how to move beyond this method to a better method of governance.

Making parliament bend to the will of people and leave the EU will be a good enough start. ■



Workers

## Pile on the pressure!

THOSE WHO voted for Brexit, as well as those who have come to believe in and respect it, do not have the luxury of sitting back and spectating events. They have to enter the public domain, influence the exchange and set the overwhelming mood. They have to exert much more pressure to defend the referendum result.

They will have to pressurise the Remain MPs so much that parliament dare not oppose the people. There is no other way. The people will have to make and enforce a clean Brexit.

Commentators like to fix and obsess on parliament, as if it holds more than the semblance and trappings of power. Leave campaigns will obviously have to target it too with agitation and demonstrations, but parliament shouldn't be the sole preoccupation. In the weeks and months ahead Leave campaigns should not forget that the sovereign people live and work all around the country in places where they feel they are in their natural element. These must be turned into bastions of withdrawal from the EU.

Obviously all the Leave organisations must roar into life before 29 March. The clamour must be deafening.

And the signs are promising – all the Brexit organisations have returned and they don't show any inclination whatsoever to be fobbed off with nothing or illusions. More, new organisations have emerged such as Leavers of Britain.

Leavers are organising all over the country, are taking the Brexit message directly to their local communities in ingenious ways. Once it was Leavers of London; now it's Leavers of everywhere – Leeds, Warrington, Glasgow. You name it and they're springing and swinging into activity. All those towns and areas where sizeable majorities voted to leave, places like Plymouth and Sunderland, why don't they go out and publicly transform their areas and neighbourhoods into Leave strongholds.

Take the demand to implement Brexit back to the people. It seems that Britain is not going to behave like Ireland or Greece, it is not going to cave in to the EU and go along with reversal plots. ■

## Smuggling people has become more profitable than smuggling drugs...

# People and profit

THE NUMEROUS small boats trying to cross the Channel to Britain over the Christmas/New Year period forced the Home Secretary Sajid Javid to cancel his holiday and return home. We had just one cutter and two smaller boats patrolling the Channel coast, quite unable to cope with the size of the problem.

In January Javid signed a deal with his French counterpart Christophe Castaner, that involved spending over £6 million on surveillance equipment. Castaner said afterwards that both France and the UK want to stop the new smugglers who attract new migrants. It will not be so easy for smugglers to operate from France as it is for them in Libya.

### Navy?

Where is the Navy? There isn't a great deal of it left, and some of it is deployed in moves against Russia and China, or on patrolling other people's borders. The Navy sent a ship to the Black Sea to protect Ukraine after an incident with Russia near the Sea of Azov. *HMS Albion*, a warship, has been sailing around the South China Sea, which China called a provocation, since the waters around the Paracel Islands are disputed.

Two ships, *HMS Echo* and *HMS Bulwark*, are operating in the Mediterranean to pick up thousands of migrants crossing in small dinghies and boats from Africa. Part of Operation Sophia, an EU project, they deliver them to European ports.

Javid at last took up the Navy's offer to provide backup for the Border Force, and

**'The absence of border controls across the EU Schengen area will continue to affect Britain after Brexit.'**



US Air Force/Capt. Alysia Harvey

**Dover: better security at Channel ports probably led to a rise in smuggling using small boats.**

announced two Border Force cutters would be returning home from abroad, while *HMS Mersey* would be deployed to help with patrols in the interim. Most observers see this as inadequate, given the length of coastline around Britain. Illegal crossings are reported as far north as Lincolnshire.

### Ports

The increase in attempts to cross by boat coincides with increased security at ferry ports and Eurotunnel. According to the BBC, more than 56,000 attempts were made by people trying to get into Kent from French ports and terminals in 2016.

Of the 504 migrants recorded as seeking to cross the Channel in small boats in 2018, 276 managed to get to British waters and coasts and 228 were intercepted by the French authorities. This is just the latest form of people smuggling into Britain. Regular cross-Channel routes see thousands attempting the journey illegally every year.

One reason why the slogan "Take Control" won so much support in the Referendum is that our border controls have become inadequate to deal with the rapidly escalating problem. The absence of

border controls across the EU Schengen area is a contributing factor and will continue to affect Britain after Brexit.

Also significant is that the Border Force actually had a staff cut of 7 per cent in 2017/18. The National Audit Office reckoned in October that it would need 2,000 more staff to cope with Brexit. Yet trade magazine *Personnel Today* revealed at the end of last year that Border Force "had still only made 452 offers of employment, of which just 149 had been accepted".

Some say it is immoral not to allow all would-be migrants into Britain. But that is a sure way to increase the trickle to a flood. And if they fear persecution, why risk their lives – and those of their children – to come here when they could claim asylum in France?

Britain cannot accommodate all the people of the world who want to come here – and should not give special exemptions for people rich enough to buy the services of organised smugglers.

Securing our national borders is a prime function for government – but in fact this government is more concerned to allow greater legal migration into Britain (see news item, page 4). ■

Rail workers in the RMT union have scored a significant victory to secure the future of guards on trains. It's part of a wider fight for

# Public transport – no future



Workers

**RMT rally outside parliament, 25 April 2018. The campaign to keep guards now has final victory in sight.**

ONE OF Britain's biggest train companies, Northern, has finally agreed to the union's demand that there should be a guard on all trains, both those currently running and all new trains that will replace them. This came after 47 strike days during a bitter two-year dispute.

The RMT union suspended its action in a deal with the German state-owned company after talks brokered by former TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber, now chair of ACAS. Talks will continue to finalise guarantees which will allow RMT to formally end the dispute.

RMT General Secretary Mick Cash paid tribute to RMT's guard members in Northern Rail, praising their resilience, and describing them as an absolute credit to both RMT and the wider trade union move-

ment. He also thanked the travelling public for their extraordinary support.

The Northern victory comes after similar success in Merseyrail after a long period of one-day strikes. Train drivers, members of Aslef, refused to cross picket lines during that dispute, making the industrial action much more effective. Elsewhere Aslef members have been less willing to take such action.

## End in sight

Talks between RMT and Merseyrail have gone on for many months. The end is now in sight; but it remains to be seen if the company will give the union the guarantees it seeks to end the dispute.

At South Western Railway (SWR) RMT has secured progress along the lines of

Northern after an emphatic renewed mandate for action by its guard members to carry on the fight to put public safety before private profit. A massive 88 per cent voted in favour of industrial action. This was the fourth such ballot, forced on the union by anti-trade union legislation.

SWR guards are seeking assurances about their future on the route which runs from London to Portsmouth, Southampton and Exeter. They have held a number of one-day strikes, and guards and RMT drivers had been instructed not to book on for any shifts on 22 February, 9 March and 16 March. As *Workers* went to press, that action had just been suspended.

That huge vote for action at SWR came a day after the RMT secured its victory at Northern. The pressure was on SWR to

ictory in their battle with private train companies to  
ight...

# ture without a fight

respond seriously about running all trains with a guard on board. It was the last company holding out. One by one the others have made deals with the union.

RMT members have been resolute in their campaign, taking on the private train companies and the government. Both have been hell-bent to abolish guards in the pursuit of greater profits – at the cost of making railways less safe and less accessible.

Dogged determination has paid off. Company after company eventually caved in as they realised the effect on their finances. The government propped up the rail companies' finances, but that was as ineffective as its anti-union laws in stopping the guards.

The union has run a series of well attended public meetings up and down the country in support of its campaign. It also made astute use of social media and video. This has attracted great support from the public, as well as the many trade unionists who have supported picket lines.

Train company finances are fragile. The guards' widespread industrial action and the self-inflicted timetable fiasco last May have hit their income. For example SWR's dispute resulted in an 8 per cent fall in passenger journeys. There are rumours that this company is in serious financial difficulties and will be the next one to hand back its franchise.

Office of Rail and Road, the rail regulator, reported rail industry income of £19.4 billion last year, 1.3 per cent down on the previous year. Income from fares was down 2.4 per cent while costs rose by 1.4 per cent.

Annual franchise payments to the

**'Virgin Group owner Richard Branson has netted over £25 million in dividends from the West Coast...'**

government fell from £700 million to £400 million. The private operators paid out dividends of £300 million. Although that was about one-quarter lower than last year, it is about 6 per cent more than 5 years ago.

Mick Cash slammed this as "another £300 million added to the great rail rip-off." He went on: "...that could have been invested in guaranteeing safe staffing levels and improving services [but] has been siphoned out of the railway in dividends by the greedy private train operators while they have slashed their returns to the public purse by the same amount."

Network Rail, the state-owned infrastructure owner and operator, paid out £400 million in compensation to train operators for delays caused by them. Much of that sum contributed to the operators' profits instead of going to the passengers who are entitled to it. Passengers are now paying an average of 3 per cent more for their tickets. As wages fail to keep pace with fares, rail travel is becoming unaffordable for many.

Virgin Group owner Richard Branson has netted over £25 million in dividends from the West Coast operation. His partner Brian Souter's Stagecoach not only had a similar amount from West Coast but also made £35 million from the East Midlands Trains franchise.

Branson and Souter have been happy to bank their profits after dumping the loss-making East Coast franchise back on the public sector without fulfilling their promises

to the government. This shows how running trains is a virtually risk-free enterprise for privateers.

Network Rail recently announced a radical reorganisation following the appointment of Andrew Haines as their new chief executive. He has talked about the need for devolution "to enable us to get much closer to our (private) partners...", "embedding a customer mindset" and "cutting through red tape and bureaucracy".

It's unclear what that all means for safety. But the overall aim is clear – align the Network Rail structure closely with the private operators to facilitate even greater profit-making at the expense of passengers and taxpayers.

But memories of Network Rail's private predecessor Railtrack are still vivid. Railtrack was brought down by the Blair government in 2002 after the profit motive was put before safety and there was a series of serious avoidable rail accidents.

Network Rail's devolution announcement might be premature. Chris Grayling, still clinging on somehow as Secretary of State for Transport, has asked former British Airways chief Keith Williams to undertake a "root and branch" review of Britain's railway industry with the instruction to "seek revolution not evolution". Or possibly Grayling intends the review to provide a fig leaf to spare his blushes over the shambles he has presided over.

A post-Brexit Britain must have the ability to manufacture its own railway equipment, particularly for HS2. Unite the Union, which has just won recognition at Hitachi's new train factory in northeast England is concerned that Britain's resurgent rail manufacturing industry could be shunted into the sidings. The union has urged the government to support British manufacturing, jobs and skills by investing in rail infrastructure and awarding contracts to British factories.

Unite Assistant General Secretary Steve Turner wrote to Grayling warning that high-quality skilled jobs across Britain could be hit unless the government acts. He called for the government to bring forward the investment needed to upgrade the existing



**Left: Northern Rail is actually owned by German state company Deutsche Bahn!**

*Continued on page 12*



Photo courtesy RMT

**11 January 2019: Members of the RMT demonstrate outside the Department for Transport in Westminster. The union is fighting for UK employment on Brexit ferries**

## Ferry contract scandal

THE RMT was prominent in reacting to the farcical award of a contract for ferry services to Seaborne Freight, a company with no ships. It is said to have copied its contractual terms and conditions from the back of a pizza restaurant's menu!

The government wanted ferry services as a contingency to keep cross-Channel traffic moving after Brexit. This Grayling-inspired move went down badly not only with RMT but also with existing ferry operators, port authorities, and Eurotunnel.

The union organised a series of high-profile demonstrations in protest at the contract announcement. RMT rightly called for any Brexit ferry contracts to be fulfilled using ships crewed by British seafarers, on decent pay and conditions

negotiated through recognised trade unions.

The contract was later cancelled. General Secretary Mick Cash said: "...the news...comes as no surprise to us at all. The whole exercise is a complete and utter shambles with the government ignoring union calls on what needs to happen. Instead they are blundering on from crisis to crisis.

"This Government 'wing and a prayer' approach was always doomed to failure and it's time for Chris Grayling to stop attacking RMT and start listening to people who actually know what they are talking about instead of the chancers selling him a pile of old rope they don't even own." ■

*Continued from page 11*

regional and intercity rail networks and to award contracts for new rolling stock to British-based train manufacturers as part of a proper industrial strategy.

The problems of the rail industry are eclipsed by the crisis facing the bus industry, although that attracts less publicity.

Around one-fifth of public transport journeys are by train. But buses are the backbone of Britain's public transport system, accounting for 60 per cent of all trips.

The Campaign for Better Transport reports that local authorities have axed a huge number of bus routes in the wake of a steep decline in their overall spending. About 17,000 routes have gone since 2013.

## 'Rail's problems are eclipsed by those of buses...'

This leaves the bus network smaller than at any time since the 1980s.

Councils have little or no obligation to subsidise buses – last year 11 councils spent nothing at all on running bus services. More will be tempted to follow as their statutory spending obligations are under increasing pressure.

Existing subsidised routes are under threat too unless government funding increases. 12,700 existing English bus routes are subsidised, that's about 44 per cent of the total.

Councils are legally obliged to provide free bus passes to anyone of state pension age and to disabled people, and to reimburse the bus operators for carrying them. Local authorities have to pick up the bill – £652 million last year. The government doesn't fund that, of course.

The Local Government Association wryly observed that unless the government urgently provides more funding, free travel for older people will be ended as there will be no buses for them to travel on!

### Bus profits

RMT has criticised private bus companies in England for pocketing £3.3 billion in profits while presiding over deep cuts to vital routes and attacking the jobs, pay and working conditions of their staff.

The elderly, the least well-off and the unemployed suffer the most from the bus crisis. Mick Cash said, "With services in decline and vulnerable and isolated communities taking the brunt of the cuts it is now clear that decades of bus privatisation have failed and we need a new national strategy for our buses underpinned by public ownership."

British workers should perhaps take Grayling's advice when considering what change is necessary to secure a decent transport system for Britain – seek revolution not evolution. ■

**Britain has allowed its nuclear strategy to be held hostage by foreign companies...**

# Nuclear disarray



Andrew Woodvine (CC BY 3.0)

**Wylfa power station, Anglesey, now no longer producing energy. A new, replacement station now looks as though it won't be built.**

HITACHI IS abandoning development of the Wylfa Newydd nuclear power station. The £16 billion project would have supplied about 6 per cent of Britain's electricity.

Britain's independent nuclear energy policy is now in disarray. The Japanese conglomerate's plan for another station at Oldbury in Gloucestershire is likely to be withdrawn. And two months earlier, Toshiba ditched its project at Moorside in Cumbria and scrapped its UK nuclear division after failing to find a buyer.

## Damage

The loss of around 850 highly skilled engineering jobs at Wylfa, coupled with up to 9,000 involved in construction, is a blow to the economy of North Wales. Similar losses will be repeated at the other sites. But the damage goes far wider.

Successive governments have been unenthusiastic about nuclear power, but recognised its place in a balanced energy mix. Supply from renewable sources is intermittent, and the alternatives apart from nuclear create carbon emissions.

The government's 2013 nuclear strategy included building up to 12 nuclear reactors

by 2030, providing about 30 per cent of the expected demand. Now only three sites remain. Hinkley Point is under construction, with questions about its technology and economics. Bradwell in Essex and Sizewell in Suffolk are planned, but their completion is uncertain.

Britain's weak-kneed government is left desperately scrambling around to explore unsatisfactory alternatives. It will have to burn more fossil fuels, increase the pace of its renewable energy investment or rely more heavily on Chinese investment.

This cannot go on. There has to be a strategic shift as we leave the EU and its aversion to governmental, state-led intervention. Britain must quickly develop a national nuclear body again and invest for the future.

We must build on the construction, tech-

**'Britain's weak-kneed government is left scrambling around...'**

anical and engineering skills still available and establish the expertise to build our own new nuclear plants. Then we will not be hostage to foreign companies charging the earth or failing to come up with the goods.

## Independence

Business secretary Greg Clark bewailed the failure to secure a deal with Hitachi, despite a "generous and significant" package of support. That included a guaranteed price of £75 per megawatt hour for 35 years against a current market price of £50.

This government support seems to have been particularly generous to consultants and advisors too. Accountants PWC were paid £4.5 million as financial advisors. But it also advises Horizon, the Hitachi subsidiary that has now pulled out.

As well as PWC, engineers Arup and lawyers Linklaters are acting for both government and nuclear plant developers. Meg Hillier MP, chair of the Public Accounts Committee said last year before the problems emerged: "Given how little we have to show for it in progressing delivery, there are questions that have to be asked about the advice to government." ■

The Scottish separatists have become Britain's "can't do" haven't been able to stop Brexit. And their stewardship of

# SNP and Greens try to s

ON 14 FEBRUARY a Scottish National Party amendment intended to wreck Brexit progress by extending Article 50 for "at least three months" was decisively defeated in the House of Commons. After failing to win a second referendum, the SNP was trying to push Britain into the period of European elections, binding successful candidates to serve their full term.

This is typical of its actions over recent years – in co-ordination with Scottish Greens and other anti-Brexit elements – to play the role of a "fifth column" within Britain, serving the interests of the EU.

Meanwhile, to maintain its viability as a "government", this SNP minority administration is forced to rely on the six votes of the Greens in the Scottish Parliament to pass its budget for 2019-20. Their agreements have resulted in what many trade unions see as a series of attacks on workers, a serious decline in services and severe financial crises in several cities.

## Heads in the sand

That's nothing to do with Brexit. Instead, it's the SNP's typical "head-in-the-sand" delay in dealing with the financial crash of capitalism that for the past decade has allowed debts to build. All this has re-energised trade unionists faced with job losses and declining wages, as well as citizens suffering the effects of these cuts. And some successes have spurred on their efforts.

A vigorous campaign has emerged to fight the imposition of a "workplace parking levy", widely seen as an attack on workers merely going about the business of having to get to work. They are now faced with a bill of £498 a year just to park at their own work-

places. The Greens made the adoption of this levy a condition of their support for the SNP administration.

They are copying the only council in Britain to have adopted such a plan – Nottingham – where a similar levy costs £415, with VAT bringing the cost close to £500 a year. Teachers have been adversely affected by this and the largest teaching union here, the Educational Institute of Scotland, is demanding that they be refunded.

The GMB union wrote a strongly worded letter to the SNP Finance Minister, Derek Mackay, saying that its members "would be absolutely furious if they were hit by the levy" and accusing him of "siding with the Greens over ordinary people trying to get to work." Gary Smith, of GMB Scotland, wrote: "ill-thought out punitive measures, like this one, appear to have been conceived in ignorance of the reality of the journey to work for many of our members."

The SNP and its Remain supporters also fail to see the advantages of a successful Brexit that would render obsolete the need for "competitive tendering" where rail and ferry services have to be open to all comers throughout the EU. Abellio – owned by the Dutch state – was awarded the franchise to operate ScotRail. The SNP administration has been seen by rail unions and the travelling public to have been soft in their oversight of Abellio, allowing standards to slump with growing delays and cancellations.

With the next ScotRail franchise due for reconsideration in 2020 the opportunity would now be available to bring the network back into public ownership. Meanwhile unions are having to tackle problems such as the rundown and transfer of rail customer service jobs from Fort William to Glasgow, with the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association demanding intervention to protect jobs in the Highlands.

## Debt

A serious threat to cities in Scotland is arising in the form of debt and financial crises. In Edinburgh the city's Trade Union Council was due to protest at the council offices on 21 February at the prospect of £53 million cuts in 2019-20. This would threaten over 300 jobs, worsen decline in social services,



Photo courtesy GMB Scotland

Above, Valentine's Day union demonstration against cuts in Dundee. Right, hundreds of music students in Dalkeith, Midlothian, played outside the council offices, forcing them to overturn a decision to scrap music tuition in schools.

compound homelessness and addiction, and throw schools and teaching into crisis.

Already unpaid volunteers are taking over some services, as in community centres that have lost their dedicated Community Learning & Development Workers. The Edinburgh Integration Joint Board – funded by the City Council and Lothian Health – is already in financial crisis but is now expected to make a further £35 million in cuts in 2019-20, with 1,000 people waiting for care to be provided and 1,500 waiting for assessments.

On 14 February, Unite, GMB and other trade unions joined with Dundee TUC in delivering a protest Valentine's Day' card to

**'The SNP plays the role of a "fifth column" in Britain serving the interests of the EU.'**

party. They can't push through separation, and they the Scottish economy is increasingly rejected...

# Stop Brexit, fail at home



savemidlothianmusic.com

the city council which voiced opposition to planned cuts to services in the city and condemning the lack of planning and action from the council in ensuring industrial employment opportunities in the area (see photo, top).  
 These issues will be raised when the city hosts the forthcoming STUC annual conference from 15 to 17 April at the Caird Hall. Delegates will have the opportunity of hearing arguments for the benefits of Brexit in

the form of a motion from Clydebank Trade Union Council and at a fringe meeting.  
 In late February the City Treasurer of Glasgow is due to announce £41 million of cuts when presenting his budget. All council-owned buildings such as museums and concert venues will be re-mortgaged – already under way. Many local facilities – including libraries, swimming pools and golf courses – face closure.  
 The successful struggle over 13 years for equal pay and conditions by women council workers means an additional search for funds. This had never been properly planned for under the Labour administration which dealt with the early years of this campaign. There has been a decade of cuts in the city amounting to around £500 million.  
 The SNP minority administration in Edinburgh has been accused of starving the city of funds. Its block grants from UK central funds have been rising in recent years, yet it continues to starve local government

budgets throughout Scotland. So a city once known as a Yes city (in the sense of yes to separatism) – is at the receiving end of SNP impoverishment. No wonder the campaign Union City Glasgow is taking hold there.  
 With such job losses in prospect it is understandable that the SNP's pleas for a separate immigration system for Scotland is falling on deaf ears. Its plan is one of many that would give it direct access and links to the EU over the head of any UK government, and facilitate its attempt to re-join as a separate country and adopt the euro.  
 Scottish "embassies" have been invented and placed around the world in an attempt to claim an independent foreign policy – to hand over to Brussels should they achieve separation. Offices in Paris, Berlin and Dublin have opened in recent years at a cost of around £1.1 million a year.  
 Scotland House in Brussels costs £2 million a year, with 18 diplomats and civil servants. There's a diplomatic presence, too, in China, USA and Canada.  
 But SNP efforts to evolve an independent immigration policy via the Scottish Affairs Committee in Westminster have been rejected by businesses in Scotland.  
 Business leaders have now indicated their preference for a single UK-wide immigration system and this was confirmed by Gregor Scotland, the principal policy advisor for the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland.  
**Music success**  
 A heartening success in the fightback against cuts to services was the forced reversal to the plans of Midlothian councillors to scrap music tuition in their schools. The outcome was largely achieved by a vigorous campaign by teachers and their school students, backed by EIS and Musicians' Union (catch a taste of this on [vimeo.com/316844667](https://vimeo.com/316844667)).  
 The campaign culminated in hundreds of the music students playing brass, woodwind, guitars and percussion outside the offices of the Labour-led council in Dalkeith on 13 February. The annual budget meeting could not ignore the harmonious protest and overturned their decision. Savings were still enacted to sort a shortfall of £10 million by raising council tax by 4.79 per cent. ■

The government published its overdue NHS Long Term Plan in January. There's significant spending – but several critical

# NHS plan: still not fit for



Workers

Junior doctors in dispute over contracts and patient safety, Bradford Royal Infirmary, April 2016.

THE HEALTH service desperately needs long-term planning. The attacks in recent years on health and social care finances, wages and pensions have lowered staff morale and undermined patient care. And in turn this has affected recruitment, retention and training. It will indeed take a decade to rectify the damage.

In 2010-11, just 5 per cent of NHS providers overspent their annual budgets. By 2015-16, two-thirds of trusts were in deficit as the slowdown in NHS funding took its toll. The injection of £20.5 billion over the next five years will not transform the service, though it's welcome support.

Lifting of the pay cap is an important step too. The junior hospital doctors dispute in 2016 played its part in enabling these changes.

If, as it should, Britain leaves the EU without a deal it will save £39 billion that would otherwise have been spent on the divorce bill in return for nothing. Part of this must be secured for health and social care, although there are other priorities. More importantly there must also be planning to ensure that part of the money spent on our current annual payments to the EU is ear-

marked for health and social care

However welcome extra expenditure on the health service is, a "long-term plan" must be strategic and comprehensive. The government's plan is problematic in several ways.

One limitation is obvious in its title – this is a plan for England, while the NHS is national. Devolving health matters to Scotland and Wales constantly interferes with rational planning.

## Social care

Equally frustrating is that the long-term plan does not engage with the crisis in social care. The King's Fund, responding to the plan, pointed out that the NHS and social care are "two sides of the same coin, yet the publication of the social care Green Paper has been delayed yet again".

The plan includes worthwhile commitments to promote public health. And yet local government funding for public health services continues to be cut. But what most exasperates NHS staff is the plan's failure to address the many workforce issues. It feels as if the government has decided to spend the money on a new conservatory while the

roof is leaking.

The plan frequently refers to how new technology can enhance health care. This was emphasised in the independent Topol Review published on 12 February. There is great potential in the application of DNA sequencing (genomics), artificial intelligence, robotics and other digital technology. The NHS is well positioned to exploit this, but the technology alone is not enough.

As the BMA says, "Fundamental to the expansion of cutting-edge treatments and digital consultations is to first get the basics right, such as the workforce. There is no use in opening the digital front door to the health service if we don't have the healthcare staff behind it."

The trade union Unison also highlights this as the most disappointing aspect. It points out that although the long-term plan recognises that workforce planning is "disjointed at a national and local level", it actually has no detailed workforce strategy within it.

The challenges facing the NHS show no signs of abating. Figures published by UCAS in February show that the number of applications for nursing degree places continues to fall. It is now down by around 30 per cent since bursaries were abolished in 2016. That's 13,000 fewer nurses entering training this year when there are 40,000 vacancies.

Waiting times for accident and emergency treatment continue to increase too. In January they were at the worst level since targets were introduced in 2004. And despite relatively low levels of flu, many intensive care units are full.

This failure to include the workforce strategy must be deliberate. A draft workforce strategy was published nearly a year ago. The final version was due to be published in July 2018 to coincide with the 70th birthday of the NHS.

At the time *Workers* welcomed the draft strategy as it was the first time the government acknowledged publicly that nurse recruitment numbers had been cut. The draft said "...had the rate [of UK nurse recruitment] remained at 2012 levels through to 2017, we would have 16,000 more nurses working in the NHS today – that's almost half of our currently vacant nurse posts filled."

plan for England in weaknesses...

# purpose

**'The failure to include the workforce strategy must be deliberate.'**

That document also made the important historical admission that "maximising the self-supply of our workforce is critical. It cannot be right for the NHS to draw staff from other countries in large numbers just because we have failed to plan and invest."

At the launch of the long-term plan in Sheffield, the Prime Minister announced she has appointed Baroness Dido Harding to produce a workforce strategy. But she made no reference at all to the 2018 draft workforce strategy. It seems the government wants to forget the home truths it let out last year.

The reality is that NHS workers and their trade unions have to work their hardest to address the workforce strategy deficiencies in the plan. For this they need their own short and long-term planning goals.

## Urgent

The most obvious urgent need is retention of current staff. That means improving staff pay and conditions and assistance with accommodation costs. The plan includes only a small amount of money to aid such measures. Pressing for an increase and expansion to this funding must be an immediate priority for trade unions.

Solutions for the medium and long term can only come from NHS staff themselves. For example, doctors point to one post-referendum achievement, namely the expansion of the number of medical school places this September.

Since its inception the NHS has imported doctors. Yet there is no shortage of UK applicants with the enthusiasm or academic qualifications to meet our own needs. The aim of the long-term plan and the yet to be seen workforce strategy must be self-sufficiency in health care staffing. ■

# CPBML public meetings



## Manchester

**Tuesday 5 March, 7.30 pm**  
**"Brexit 2019: Seize control!"**  
 The Britons Protection, 50 Great  
 Bridgewater Street, Manchester M1 5LE

We should be out of the EU by now, but the enemies of democracy keep finding ways to spin the process out. They want to stop Brexit completely. We have to force politicians to do as we instructed. Come and discuss. All welcome. Free entry.



## Glasgow

**Wednesday 20 March, 7 pm**  
**"For an independent Britain"**  
 Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street,  
 Glasgow G2 4JP

Separatism has failed in Scotland, though that hasn't stopped the SNP from trying to block the democratic vote for Brexit. Scotland's future lies in an independent Britain free from the EU not phony freedom under the Brussels thumb. Come and discuss. All welcome. Free entry.



## London

**Wednesday 20 March, 7.30 pm**  
**"Brexit: Parliament v the People"**  
 Brockway Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion  
 Square, London WC1R 4RL

As 29 March, the date set for leaving the EU, approaches, parliament is on a collision course with democracy. Who rules? The people of Britain or Parliament? Parliament is not sovereign over the people: it's the other way round. Come and discuss. All welcome. Free entry.

## Meet the Party

**As well as our regular public meetings we hold informal discussions with interested workers and study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further. If you are interested, we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or send an email to [info@cpbml.org.uk](mailto:info@cpbml.org.uk). And look out for news of our May Day meetings, to take place in London, Glasgow and Leeds on 1 May.**

As our eyes are drawn to parliament's Brexit pantomime, education...

# Plug the education gap

THE GAP between aspiration and reality in education is large – and growing. Funding has declined in real terms, the damage amplified by long-term government failure to plan for and resolve critical problems. And teaching unions have yet to respond effectively to that challenge.

The school curriculum has to develop to meet Britain's needs. That's recognised – for example the House of Commons Education Select Committee is looking at realising the potential of a more technological age.

Professor John Baruch, director of the Leeds Beckett University Centre for Education for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, gave evidence in December 2018. His institution focuses on the rise of robotics and artificial intelligence. "The trajectory of current policies on education curricula and skills is not helping to launch the new economy," he said. "Every child should have a strong background in science".

Baruch pointed out the shortage of scientifically literate teachers in primary schools. "To prosper in the future, British education should be science based, where everyone benefits from an understanding of how science works, hands on experience with materials and models, and practical science in biology, chemistry and physics."

## Urgent

Many teachers and parents will agree. But the crisis threatening the curriculum now is even more urgent. Dwindling resources are changing how schools are run.

Schools are facing budget cuts despite government claims to the contrary. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that funding per pupil in England fell by 8 per cent between 2010 and 2018. There are 66,000 more children in state schools this year than the year before but with 5,000 fewer teachers.

**'Dwindling resources are changing how schools are run.'**

Even last summer's announcement of a "fully funded" pay award from the Department for Education was not what it seemed. Schools minister Lord Agnew conceded that the first 1 per cent will have to be paid for by schools.

Yet when the National Education Union announced the results of an indicative ballot on pay in January, it admitted that only 31 per cent of those surveyed actually responded. If that were replicated in a proper legal ballot, it would fail to meet the required 50 per cent threshold.

This was surely no surprise to the union executive – which has avoided any effective response to the government's refusal to endorse and fund the School Teachers' Review Body's 2018 recommendations.

Rather than put pay at the centre of the union's strategy to retain its members, the executive has decided to ignore the issue. Yet even the DfE admits that "teacher median salaries have seen a drop of 11 per cent in real terms". The outlook for the coming year is even worse, with the government saying its below-inflation pay rise is to be funded from within existing school budgets.

## Planning

This is about planning for the future in education. It entails fresh thinking in the curriculum, making vital subjects attractive to teachers and pupils and creating financial stability. It also means preparing in advance for the number of pupils coming through. We have that opportunity by extricating ourselves from the EU, whose "free movement of labour" has become such an obstacle to educational planning in Britain.

As things stand, head teachers can only manage lower income by reducing outgoings. Increasingly that means staff costs as other budgets have already been cut. The Local Government Association estimates a £536 million shortfall in education funding. And money intended to support special needs students is now routinely diverted to other pressing claims.

Leadership salaries in academies have reached such eye-watering levels that even education secretary Damian Hinds had to comment. This diversion of resources has resulted in the widespread sacking of support staff employed to meet maintenance



Infants on a field trip in Eastleigh, Hampshire. "Ev

and similar needs.

It is now common for retiring or leaving staff to be replaced by less expensive young or newly qualified teachers. They bring enthusiasm and a freshness of approach, but are being denied opportunities to share experience with more seasoned colleagues. And younger teachers wonder what's to become of them when the next generation, even less well paid, comes along.

Low staff retention rates are undermining effective education. Ten per cent of teachers leave after one year in the profession. After three years, 30 per cent have had enough. And yet that's when teachers are really hitting their professional stride.

Amani A/shutterstock.com

another government failure threatens the world of

# to build Britain's future



every child should have a strong background in science," says education expert John Baruch.

This retention crisis is compounded by excessive workloads. But the workload problem centres around imposed evidence gathering rather than productive direct teaching time or marking.

Teachers have to spend many hours outside of the classroom, evenings and weekends, supplying evidence that they have been professional. That's to prove that they can tell the difference between a quick and a slow learner. Prove that they have different strategies for girls and boys, for the disruptive and the introverted, for those who learn by listening and those who learn by doing. For those who want to learn and those who don't.

There must be scrutiny, of course. No one wants an incompetent teacher. But the evidence gathering imposed on teachers shows little or no respect for their training and professionalism, which includes catering for individual needs.

Yet education authorities have long been unable to insist that every teacher is qualified to teach as their oversight of schools has been removed in academies and free schools. In those schools, unqualified staff are widely used instead of subject specialists. And in those academies, a yearly turnover of 25 to 30 per cent in teaching staff is common.

As well as struggling to keep their teach-

ers, schools find it hard to recruit enough new ones. The Department for Education claims a record number of teachers in our schools. But it refuses to acknowledge that there are nowhere near enough teachers to cope with the explosion in pupil numbers.

The number of secondary school pupils is expected to rise by more than 600,000 over the next few years. Even to stand still on workloads, teacher numbers have to rise by 47,000 over the next five years.

The shortfall also affects specialist teaching, particularly those where graduates can easily earn more outside teaching, such as physics, maths, chemistry and languages. In 2018 the Education Policy Institute, using government data, found that only half of those teaching physics have a relevant degree and even fewer for GCSE maths.

## Targets missed

In December 2018 the government's annual teacher-trainee census showed that it had missed its secondary school recruitment targets for the sixth year running. Maths and physics are already chronic shortage areas. But recruitment fell well short of targets – finding only 65 per cent of required maths specialists and just 47 per cent for physics.

There is little point in teachers demanding a graduate profession if specialisms do not match the subject taught. This has been going on for a long time, but the lack of a grounding in the subject is bad for both teachers and students.

This isn't simply a secondary school issue. Primary schooling has moved towards subject specialism over many years. If we are serious about our young people thriving in an advanced, science based, highly skilled economy, a solid basis must be provided from the outset.

In January Damian Hinds announced a Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, supposedly to tackle the critical failure to retain newly qualified teachers. Yet his 11-point plan failed to address the main issues cited by those leaving – which include poor pay and excessive workload.

Teachers cannot leave it to the government or indeed to their union executive to come up with solutions: they will have to seek them themselves. ■

**A former top Home Office official discusses how to enforce immigration policy...**

# Britain's soft borders



1000 Words/shutterstock.com

**Travellers queuing up for passport checks at Heathrow Airport, London**

*Controlling Britain's Borders: The challenge of enforcing the UK's immigration rules*, by David Wood, 74 pages, paperback, ISBN 978-1-906837-97-6, Civitas, 2019, £5 or downloadable for free.

DAVID WOOD worked for the Home Office from 2006 to 2015, ending up in charge of immigration enforcement. So he knows his stuff. His illuminating study defines the important difference between refugees and migrants and makes some sensible proposals for cutting immigration into Britain.

Asylum seekers, under the 1951 Refugee Convention, are those fleeing war and persecution. Britain provides asylum or other forms of protection and resettlement to about 10,000 to 20,000 refugees every year. Wood notes sympathetic attitudes towards refugees across all social backgrounds,

**'Why does someone who has travelled across Europe wait until reaching Britain to claim asylum?'**

ages and ethnicities.

Around 55 per cent of the UK population agree with the statement: "Britain should protect refugees fleeing war and persecution." And there is broad acknowledgement, even among those most hostile towards immigration, that refugees' needs are different from those of migrants.

But this requires an effective way of identifying genuine refugees and dealing with those who are not. Wood explains in detail why our current asylum system does not achieve those objectives.

## Refugees?

Wood points out that many of those claiming asylum are not refugees. They are economic migrants with no legal claim to remain here. Many exploit the asylum system to prolong their stay, sometimes indefinitely.

The question for Wood, and many others, is why someone who has travelled across Europe waits until reaching Britain to claim asylum – and even then often after a long delay? Why would someone who was fleeing tyranny and seeking sanctuary wait that long and not apply for asylum at the first safe opportunity? Their failure to do so is evidence that they are migrants not refugees.

He argues that "late claims should place a duty on the claimant to show they have good cause for the delay in claiming before the claim is considered. If there were no justifiable reasons then the claim would auto-

matically fail without further consideration. Whilst the UK is part of the EU and its policy infrastructure this would not be possible but it could be considered after Brexit."

Currently fewer than half of failed asylum seekers are removed from the UK. 80,813 applications were refused or withdrawn between 2010 and 2016. But only 29,659 were removed – leaving 51,154 failed asylum seekers in the country from that seven-year period alone. This provides further incentives for people smugglers to target Britain and for economic migrants to attempt to reach here.

Wood points out that the migration statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics make no attempt to include any estimate of the substantial numbers of illegal immigrants coming into the UK each year.

## Overstaying

The Office for National Statistics estimated net inward migration at about 270,000 in the year to the end of March 2018. To that should be added the Home Office's internal estimate of between 150,000 and 250,000 foreign nationals a year who fail to return home when they should. That failure to follow up on people overstaying is another incentive for those who have no legal right to remain in Britain.

Wood observes, "What has emerged in the Mediterranean has been, in effect, some [nongovernmental organisations] providing a taxi support service for the criminal gangs who are facilitating the movement of illegal immigrants to the shores of Europe. The opening up of this route has partly been the result of the removal of Colonel Gaddafi from Libya, which has led to anarchy there."

Wood makes many suggestions for changes, for example this, "One measure that might be introduced is to insist that lorries have tamper-proof locks to a recognized standard to secure their vehicle trailer so that any entry would involve interfering with the lock and would be obvious...Whilst the UK is in the EU, EU law may prevent such legislation, but the UK may be able to consider such legislation in the future."

Many of the problems Wood describes are due to decisions by successive British governments. But a recurring theme in this book is the conflict between our interests and EU law. ■

## The argument that national sovereignty is essential for democracy is gaining ground...

# Sovereignty matters

*Reclaiming the state: a progressive vision of sovereignty for a post-neoliberal world*, by William Mitchell and Thomas Fazi, paperback, 302 pages, ISBN 978-0-7453-3732-6, Pluto Press, 2017, £18.99. Kindle and eBook editions available.

AUSTRALIAN ECONOMIST Bill Mitchell and Anglo-Italian activist Thomas Fazi refute the conventional rationale for austerity, that governments must prioritise the reduction of public debt. They stress that most governments are never revenue-constrained because they issue their own currency. And they have the means to achieve and sustain full employment and social justice.

They show that the Treasury is consistently wrong because it bases all its forecasts on the neoliberal assumption that governments cannot use fiscal policy and currency sovereignty to compensate for free market failings.

Mitchell and Fazi argue that a government which chooses to use its powers to bring idle resources back into productive use can achieve full employment and economic growth relatively swiftly. To do so it would need to re-establish some control over capital, trade and labour flows, as well as over financial institutions and other key sectors of the economy.

### Monetarism

The Labour government of the mid-1970s was the first to embrace monetarism. That shifted into neoliberalism, not due to outside imposition but of its own volition. And that paved the way for Thatcher.

In 1981 French president François Mitterand was elected on a platform of reflation and redistribution. Instead he turned to austerity, succeeding only in destroying Keynesian reflation and redistribution as a legitimate alternative.

Mitchell and Fazi comment, "For the left, this has essentially meant giving up on the notion of achieving any form of meaningful change at the national level, and accepting the idea that true change can only come at the supranational (and ideally global) level."

In 1985 Jacques Delors, who had been Mitterand's finance minister, became President of the European Commission, later pushing through the 1992 Maastricht



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Of the world's top 50 companies, 45 are financial firms.

**'Capital, primarily financial capital, increasingly runs economic policy...'**

Treaty. The free movement of capital became a central tenet of the emerging European single market – a binding obligation not only among EU members but also between EU members and third countries.

The consequence was a global shift to liberalisation and the "freeing" of capital.

The European Trade Union Institute found that between 2009 and 2012 the EU's increasing influence on national wage policies resulted in falling real wages in most EU member countries.

The authors sum up: "in all these cases, supposedly pro-market policies did not lead to the emergence of a mythical 'free market' in the concerned countries but, on the contrary, resulted in the concentration of vast amounts of wealth and power into the hands of a small political-corporate elite, often leading to the emergence of monopolies

and oligopolies, at the expense even of local business interests ..."

So, 147 transnational corporations now control 40 per cent of the world economy. 45 of the top 50 companies are financial firms. Capital, primarily financial capital, increasingly runs economic policy.

Capitalism on this scale now threatens the existence of independent democratic nation states. As the authors point out, "if we want global capital to have no limits whatsoever, then nation states have to disappear ...and confine themselves to being servants of global profit-making."

So, peoples must defend their nations: "History attests to the fact that national sovereignty and national self-determination are not intrinsically reactionary or jingoistic concepts ... virtually all the major social, economic and political advancements of the past centuries were achieved through the institutions of the democratic nation state, not through international, multilateral or supranational institutions, which in a number of ways have been used to roll back those very achievements ..."

The EU has become a threat to nations, to democracy and to sovereignty. People will choose national democracy, however imperfect, over the fantasy of a democratic global or supranational society. ■

## Around 500 years ago William Tyndale produced a Bible in English for it with his life...

# An independent thinker and

WILLIAM TYNDALE (1494-1536) was one of the great independent minds who set England on a course to think and act for ourselves – helping to make English a great language of poets and writers the world over.

The earliest of these thinkers were often Church men – since the Church educated those who were going to work for them. Two hundred years earlier John Wycliffe had asserted that people could congregate and think for themselves without the need for clergy.

### Influence

Wycliffe and his followers the Lollards were denounced and persecuted as heretics by the Church. But their influence continued into Tyndale's time when capitalism and a working class were beginning to develop within the feudal order. The Catholic Church, headed by the pope in Rome, still controlled thought and ideas. His local agents were the clergy, whose use of Latin excluded almost everyone else.

Like Wycliffe, William Tyndale also studied theology and became a popular preacher. Growing up in the Gloucestershire countryside, he knew the people working on the land, who were mostly illiterate. Around 90 per cent of men and 98 per cent of women were then illiterate, according to academic studies based on parish register entries.

Tyndale saw the need for a good English translation of the Bible as a key part of the struggle to widen access to an independence of thought. Speaking of the Pope, he said, "I wyl cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture, than he doust." A great linguist, he executed an ambitious plan to translate the Bible into the English spoken by working people.

By Tyndale's use of his talent, the

**'A good translation of the Bible was part of the struggle for independence of thought...'**

illiterate ploughboy could then hear and understand the Bible read out in his own language, consider and discuss it, make up his own mind about the meaning. It was a great stimulus to the growth of literacy and surely to the long-term development of democracy too!

For centuries, probably millennia, ploughmen had walked and talked together along the long ridges and furrows typical of fields in medieval England. Now better informed, their discussions could become much more confident. They could also take note of what was not mentioned in the Bible – such as the Papacy, sacraments, confession, payment for indulgences and so on.

After the Church authorities heard his views, Tyndale had to flee England. He hid out in Germany and the Netherlands to continue translating. Newly established printers there published his work and smuggled copies into England. While spies and agents of the Pope, King Henry VIII and the Holy Roman Empire searched for him, local protestants and printers helped him.

### Meaning

Tyndale knew that the Latin Bible was not his starting point, so his translation is very different from the earlier one of John Wycliffe. He knew that to find the meaning he had to get back to the languages in which it was originally written, Greek and Hebrew. That enraged the Church.

In England Tyndale's New Testament translation was eagerly bought and circulated, though mere possession of it was grounds for torture and burning. The Establishment of the day were obsessed with eradicating Tyndale and his translation.

The Bishop of London bought up an entire edition of 6,000 copies and burned them on the steps of the old St Paul's Cathedral. Sir (later Saint) Thomas More called William Tyndale "a hell hound in the kennel of the Devil." He pursued and tortured Tyndale's old friends.

In 1536 Tyndale was finally captured by the agents of the Holy Roman Empire, taken to Belgium and burnt at the stake, but not before he had translated the New Testament and a good part of the Old. These later became the basis of the King James, "Authorised", Version of the Bible.



**Right: Tyndale's Monument overlooking his birthplace in Gloucestershire – "in grateful remembrance". Above, the Gospel of St John in Tyndale's 1526 Bible, now in the British Library.**

Tyndale's creative mind worked magic on the texts. Melvyn Bragg, in his book *William Tyndale: a short biography*, pointed out that he found and used the monosyllables that have made great English prose and poetry ever since. Almost as an accidental by-product, he gave us a huge array of great phrases – some of which come out of his childhood in the Cotswold countryside, some of which were taken from Anglo-Saxon and Hebrew, all of which he transformed into our everyday language.

Shakespeare was familiar with Tyndale's language and played with it. See what he does with Tyndale's translation of 1 Corinthians 2:9: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him". Shakespeare and his audience knew it so well that he could conjure up this from Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen,...nor his heart to report what my

# English – and paid and poet



David Evans (CC BY 2.0)

dream was!"

The phrases Tyndale gave to our language include: "let there be light", "my brother's keeper", "knock and it shall be opened unto you", "a moment in time", "fashion not yourselves to the world", "seek and ye shall find", "ask and it shall be given you", "judge not that ye be not judged", "the salt of the earth", "a law unto themselves", "filthy lucre" and many more.

Until recently, Tyndale's creation of the core text that formed the King James Bible was erased from the record, though he gave his life for it. Born of a deep love of his country, its people and language, his legacy is knowledge and poetry. ■

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# ABOUT US

**As communists, we stand for an independent, united and self-reliant Britain run by the working class** – the vast majority of the population. If that's what you want too, then come and join us.

**All our members are thinkers, doers and leaders.** All are expected to work to advance our class's interests. All must help to develop our understanding of what we need to do and how to do it.

**What do we do?** Rooted in our workplaces, communities and trade unions, we use every opportunity to encourage our colleagues and friends to embrace the Marxist practice and theory that alone can lead to the revolution that Britain needs. Marx's understanding of capitalism is a powerful tool – the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 explains the crash of 2007/8.

**Either we live in an independent Britain** deciding our own future or we become slaves to international capital. Leaving the EU is the first, indispensable step in the fight for national independence.

**We have no paid employees, no millionaire donors.** Everything we do, we do ourselves, collectively. That includes producing *Workers*, our free email newsletter, our website, pamphlets and social media feeds.

**We distribute *Workers*, leaflets and pamphlets** online and in our workplaces, union meetings, communities, market places, railway stations, football grounds – wherever workers are, that is where we aim to be.

**We hold public meetings around Britain**, in-depth study groups and less formal discussions. Talking to people, face to face, is where we have the greatest impact and – just as importantly – learn from other workers' experience.

**We are not an elite, intellectually superior to our fellow workers.** All that distinguishes Party members is this: we accept that only Marxist thinking and the organised work that flows from it can transform the working class and Britain. The real teacher is the fight itself, and in particular the development of ideas and confidence that comes from collective action.

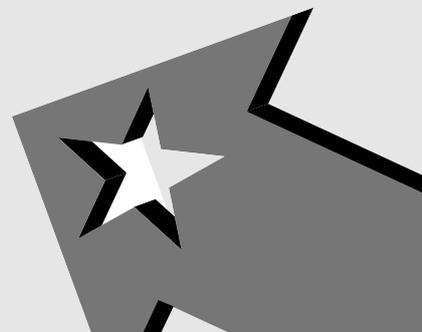
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### CPBML

78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

email [info@cpbml.org.uk](mailto:info@cpbml.org.uk)  
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# Beware the saboteurs

**'Another form of sabotage is the constant exhortations from the establishment calling for the EU to give no ground to the government.'**

A FEW honourable MPs aside, the Labour Party has dumped its manifesto commitment to respect the Brexit referendum result. It is now calling for Britain to stay in the EU's customs union forever – which would effectively mean being locked into the EU forever while having no say at all over how it works.

Say what you like about Theresa May's negotiating skills, her task would anyway have been nigh on impossible given the continual attempts at sabotage from politicians and others in Britain.

One example: when May went to Brussels in February she was told by Donald Tusk that Jeremy Corbyn's proposals for a permanent customs union represented "a promising way out" of the current impasse on Brexit.

Another form of sabotage is the constant exhortations from the establishment calling for the EU to give no ground to the government.

Brexit is in danger. At the time of writing a clean Brexit is still the default position, leaving on 29 March to trade on WTO terms. Yet despite the defeat in parliament on 29 January of every binding amendment to block or delay Brexit – including Labour's permanent customs union – Theresa May's so-called Withdrawal Agreement is still on the table. Even though MPs voted against it on 24 January, May still wants MPs to vote again on it, still using No Deal as a threat rather than an opportunity.

Her chief adviser Oliver Robbins said, in a staged leak, that she will give MPs a choice – her deal, or a "long" postponement of Brexit. Brexit has been delayed for far too long already! Extending Article 50 would keep us in the EU. So would her deal.

Extending Article 50 would solve nothing. A general election would solve nothing. Only leaving will cut the Gordian knot that MPs have tied.

To be clear: her deal with the EU is not a Withdrawal Agreement – it is a Remainer

Agreement, in every clause on every one of its 585 pages. It is No Brexit. It would bind us forever into a United States of Europe.

It is meant to be permanent, inescapable. The Attorney General told the Cabinet that there was no legal escape route from the backstop Protocol and that it would "endure indefinitely".

Her deal would give the EU tariff-free access to our market and control of our trade policy, force us to fund the EU's defence programme, give EU fishing vessels free access to our waters, give the EU control of our farms, and allow free movement of labour through clauses about "mobility". And we would pay £39 billion for the privilege!

No surprise, then, that Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, boasted that the EU got "almost everything" it wanted with the deal.

MPs rejected May's deal – almost the only thing they can agree on – then voted to tell her to go yet again to Brussels with her faithful lieutenant Oliver Robbins, to beg the EU to drop the Irish backstop.

And as it stands, May's deal would trap us without an exit – a legally binding international treaty that can only be changed by the unanimous consent of the 27 EU member states.

As the Attorney General stated, "in international law the Protocol would endure indefinitely until a superseding agreement took its place, in whole or in part, as set out therein. Further, the Withdrawal Agreement cannot provide a legal means of compelling the EU to conclude such an agreement."

So, we would be locked into the deal unless the EU agrees to let us out. The EU does not want us to leave, so it could just block an agreement forever.

Under her deal, the EU bars the exit. But exit is precisely what the British people voted for in the referendum of 2016. Anything else would be a betrayal. ■

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