

WORKERS

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INDUSTRY- ESSENTIAL FOR BRITISH WORKERS

Regulators Tame capitalism? **Ukraine** Stay out!
Immigration A class issue **Farmers** Fight continues
Grenfell Costs and delays **Arts** Education battle
Grooming Wrong thinking *plus* Historic Notes,
Cass A materialist approach **News, Reviews and**
Heathrow Expansion error **more**

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

TAKE CONTROL: BUILD THE NEW BRITAIN

WORKERS



No troops to Ukraine! Out of NATO!

THREE YEARS after Russia invaded Ukraine, and after decades of US meddling in that country, there is no peace in the region. Nor is there likely to be while foreign powers interfere.

A change of government in Britain has not changed policy. If anything, Starmer is ramping things up with talk of “boots on the ground” – as his arrogant article in the *Daily Telegraph* on 17 February made clear.

Starmer continues to impose the costs of war on British workers – billions spent already supporting Zelensky and a renewed promise to keep on spending. His commitment to the Ukrainian president is clearly greater than his commitment to Britain.

You cannot produce armaments without steel and a reliable energy supply. And Britain’s defence and other hi-tech companies are being sold off to US corporations, on the cheap.

Starmer wants to send “peacekeepers”, who may be drawn into an escalating conflict they are ill-prepared to fight and which Britain’s industry and resources may not be able to support. Like most of his government’s announcements, this has the whiff of a fairy tale – with the potential to turn into a horror show.

What are Britain’s armed forces for? Surely to defend Britain’s borders and national integrity. Britain should not be involved in overseas conflicts.

When that’s happened in the past, as in Afghanistan, it has made a bad situation worse.

Trump is painted by politicians and media as the bogeyman, illiberal and aggressive. But like Starmer, much of his foreign policy is continuity policy.

The call for European countries to increase military spending, because the US “won’t guarantee security”, is one often repeated since NATO was founded.

Starmer is only too happy to meet that call, at British workers’ expense. Trump is not talking about cutting US nuclear weapons or communications spying based in Europe – and Britain is their main location.

British workers are concerned about the increasing prospect of war in Europe, involving Britain. But so far they have largely left debate and decisions to others.

The British people must force a debate on what’s in our national interest and not leave it to politicians – who are all of one mind. What good will come of a European Army? What good will come of increased US economic and military dominance?

If “we must do something”, as we are constantly urged, let that be to rebuild industry and infrastructure in Britain, and end the political culture that denies the importance of manufacture here, preferring dependency on the USA or EU. ■



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Leon Neal/PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo



Farmers demonstrating in Buckinghamshire on 13 February.

Farmers' fight continues

FARMERS ARE not giving up on their struggle against inheritance tax changes and other attacks on their industry.

Keir Starmer had to abandon his visit to a housing development in Buckinghamshire on 13 February due to a noisy protest by tractor-driving farmers. As he beat a retreat in a blacked-out car the protesters shouted, "If you're in there, just talk to us!"

This action follows a tractor rally in Whitehall organised by Save British Farming on 9 February to coincide with MPs' debate on an e-petition signed by more than 148,000 people calling for the current inheritance tax arrangements for working farms to remain.

The National Farmers Union president Tom Bradshaw said, "The strength of feeling around the proposed family farm tax is still incredibly high."

The NFU held a national Farming Day of Unity on 25 January, with scores of events across the UK. Farmers brought food, tractors, and livestock to town centres to raise awareness of the impact of the planned reforms to inheritance tax for farming businesses and force the government to review its decision. As part of the action, a dramatic convoy of 75 tractors crossed the Humber Bridge. ■

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

BREXIT

Youth mobility 'reset'

THE STARMER government intends to offer EU member countries a youth mobility scheme as part of its "reset" with the EU. This fits with several policy initiatives to realign Britain with the EU – by stealth if necessary.

Tens of thousands of young EU students and workers would be allowed to live and work here for up to three years. The scheme would also allow young Britons aged 18-30 similar access to EU countries.

The EU has been demanding that a youth movement scheme is key to a deal they hope to agree at a summit meeting in London on 19 May. Until very recently, the government rejected any such scheme, but it is now caving to accept the EU demand; this is likely to prove all too typical.

The EU is also demanding that Britain ends checks on the export and import of foods and plant products, and eases veterinary checks. ■

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

FACTS MATTER

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If you want to check our references for a particular story, look it up online at cpbml.org.uk and follow the embedded links. If we've got something wrong, please let us know!

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession call us on 07308 979308 or email workers@cpbml.org.uk



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The Chancellor's enthusiasm for expanding Heathrow is misplaced.

ON THE WEB

A selection of additional stories at cpbml.org.uk

Steel strategy – cautious welcome

Steel is a vital product, yet the future of the industry in Britain is still threatened. Recent action by the government is an opportunity to change that, as long as it addresses energy costs.

As unsafe as houses

Workers must be prepared to fight for their own safety, not least in housing. Predictable risks of flooding and fire have been ignored too often.

Social care – disgraceful delay

The government has launched yet another review into social care provision. It won't even report for three years – a disgrace after decades of indecision.

Migrating doctors

The negative impact of migration is a topic that seemingly can't be discussed. Yet there's a pressing need to do so, not least in relation to doctors and healthcare workers.

Chancellor bows down to the banks

Rachel Reeves is trying to shield banks from their responsibility to pay compensation for mis-selling car finance. She talks about "growth", but what we see is disregard for the needs of British people.

Plus: the e-newsletter

Visit cpbml.org.uk to sign up to your free regular copy of the CPBML's electronic newsletter, delivered to your email inbox. The sign-up form is at the top of every website page – an email address is all that's required.

Heathrow expansion error

A GOVERNMENT with no idea about tackling Britain's financial problems has latched on to the expansion of the country's airports as the transport answer to promoting growth. The outcome might not be as positive as promised.

Large construction projects do provide skilled jobs and stimulate the economy. And investment in transport infrastructure is certainly necessary to improve employment opportunities, access to new housing, and industrial growth.

Since the Covid pandemic, Britain's airports have increasingly relied on outbound travel for foreign holidays. Inbound tourism to Britain is less than a third of that, and business travel has dropped off. The recent approval of expansion at London City and London Stansted airports is to be welcomed, as is the support for early decisions on expansion at London Gatwick and Luton, and the re-opening of Doncaster Sheffield Airport, meeting the needs of growing leisure traffic.

Air freight is important too. According to industry reports it accounts for around 40 per cent by value of British exports, and an increasing proportion to non-EU destinations. The approval of new facilities at East Midlands airport to attract more freight traffic is also welcome.

But Rachel Reeves' enthusiasm for expanding London's principal airport at Heathrow is misplaced. Lucrative business travel has declined since the pandemic with little sign of resurgence. This undermines the assumptions made by the 2015 Airports Commission report saying Heathrow was the best option for the expansion of airport capacity. The present government seems to be relying on that.

Aviation expansion needs to be planned as part of the overall transport provision for the country, and properly integrated with other transport modes. Reeves' prioritisation of Heathrow expansion over other transport needs is questionable. For example restoring HS2 in full to expand rail capacity will have advantages for much more of the country, given the predicted capacity needs. ■

SCOTLAND

Perks for foreign students

ON 22 JANUARY, Scotland's First Minister, John Swinney, gave a speech in Glasgow at the Scottish headquarters of multinational financial services firm JP Morgan Chase – a revealing choice of venue and audience.

Despite having no power to alter British immigration policy, Swinney called for a Student Graduate Work Visa Scheme for Scotland, to enable foreign students, after they graduate from a Scottish college or university, to stay on and look for work in Scotland.

Foreign students are big business for colleges. As the *Scottish Daily Express* reported on 20 January, "There is no limit to

what universities can charge students from overseas, with some courses costing in excess of £20,000 a year. Fees for those from the rest of the UK are capped at £9,250."

Over the past eight years, student numbers from the rest of the world increased by 65 per cent, from the rest of the Britain by 24 per cent, and from Scotland by just 19 per cent.

By 2021/22, Scotland's student roll had grown to 301,230: 61 per cent were Scottish residents, 28 per cent from the rest of the world and 11 per cent from the rest of Britain. ■

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

WATER

The burden of Thames

THAMES WATER continues to be a burden on its customers and the public purse. Its latest financial plan agreed in the High Court is just the most recent step in a catalogue of failure, which drew criticism from water campaigners and trade unions as well as protests outside the court.

The company, debt-ridden and poorly performing (see page 6), announced earlier this year that it would run out of money by

24 March. It unveiled a plan to deal with the problem by inviting creditors to pour even more debt into the disgraced utility.

The alternative was to submit to an effective re-nationalisation, having been privatised free of debt. But the Labour government, though historically opposed to the privatisation of public utilities in the late 1980s, has no taste for taking on the running of a company at an estimated £2 billion a year. ■

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



Courtesy Eileanne Green

Members of the Arts and Minds campaign outside the British Museum during their cultural Grand Tour on 13 February.

Battling for arts education

WORKERS IN the arts continue their fight to reverse decades of cuts in government funding. The Arts and Minds Campaign wants the arts and literature to be restored to the schools core curriculum. And not just as a token measure, but fully funded.

Members of Actors Equity, the Musicians' Union, the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematography and Television Union, the Public and Commercial Services Union and other supporting unions joined forces on 13 February during "Heart Unions" week.

They conducted their second walking Grand Tour protest around key London national cultural sites. Starting out from TUC HQ at Congress House in Bloomsbury, Creative and Leisure Industries Committee coordinates members in the sector, they took in the British Museum, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the British Library, also visiting the National Education Union offices at Hamilton House.

Arts and Minds includes more than 20 organisations. In February they were joined by leading arts performers and culture secretary Lisa Nandy at Tate Modern for the campaign launch. The campaign's primary aim is that all children should be able to study arts subjects, and that arts funding in schools should be fully restored.

The campaign is calling for costly audition fees to colleges of music and drama to be waived. Otherwise only well-heeled applicants can establish themselves in artistic careers now, meaning that much working class talent is excluded.

Musicians' Union national organiser Chris Walters said, "MU members care passionately about access to music education for all children, regardless of their ability to pay. I am delighted that this campaign seeks to unite all art forms, showing that the same struggles are common across all of us. Together, we will hold the Labour government to its manifesto pledges to support arts subjects in education." ■

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

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

MARCH

Wednesday 5 March, 7.30pm

Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

In person CPBML Public Meeting
"Food for the people"

Britain's farmers have drawn attention to the threat to our food security posed by capitalism. Good agricultural land is taken over by speculators and taken out of production. What we eat and how it is produced affects us all. Come and discuss.

All welcome. Free entry.

Saturday 8 March, 2pm

Upstairs, The Rain Bar, 80 Great Bridgewater Street, Manchester M1 5JG

In person CPBML discussion for
Workers readers, Manchester

Join us and fellow *Workers* readers for an informal discussion. There's no set topic for discussion – just bring your questions and ideas.. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for details

APRIL

Tuesday 8 April 7pm

Online CPBML discussion meeting (via Zoom)

"British Workers: Strength in Unity"

Unity between workers is our main strength – we have a common class interest and the ability to make progress when we act together. But everywhere that unity is under threat. Come and discuss. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for an invitation.

MAY DAY MEETINGS

"Politics is not Parliament! It's on us, the British working class"

See the notice on page 15 of this issue for details of times and venues

Celebrate International Workers' Day 2025 at the CPBML's May Day meetings, held this year in Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester and London.

To keep informed about upcoming CPBML meetings, make sure you're signed up to receive our electronic newsletter (see page 4).

In the last issue we looked at the background to how regul
Britain is being held back by too much regulation, but also

Capitalism cannot be reg



Gencat (Public domain)

AstraZeneca pulled out of a planned vaccine manufacturing plant in Liverpool after a cut in Treasury support – giving the lie to government claims that it is regulation that is holding back the economy.

WHEN YOU read some stories in the press you hardly know whether to laugh or cry. As, for example, when chancellor Rachel Reeves “hauled in” the country’s top regulators in January to tell them – apparently – to scrap rules that hold back growth.

If you thought you’d heard all this before, you have. Three months earlier in October the new science minister, Peter Kyle, had announced the creation of a body to do precisely that. The new Regulatory Innovation Office, housed in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology would, we were told, “reduce the burden of red tape”.

Back further than that, before the last

election, Tulip Siddiq (a now disgraced ex-minister) had promised the finance industry that a Labour government would “streamline the regulatory burden on financial services and tear down the barriers to competitiveness and growth”. Not that she had any concrete suggestions, mind you.

Of course, it takes more than the announcement that something has been created to actually get it up and working. The Regulatory Innovation Office has yet to find someone to chair it, or even a website to show its credentials to the public.

The idea that Britain’s regulators are so fixated on safety and the avoidance of risk that they are holding back the country from

a golden era of economic glory has been doing the rounds for decades. It’s a measure of the government’s desperation that it’s jumping on the same old bandwagon.

Vaccines

What’s really holding back hi-tech growth in Britain is not regulation. It’s the lack of investment. That was graphically illustrated two days after Reeves’s intervention. That’s when pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca pulled out of a supposedly done deal to build a £450 million vaccine manufacturing plant in Merseyside after Reeves’s Treasury cut support for it.

And as the last issue of *Workers*

regulation operates. Here, we examine not just whether
 but whether capitalist monopolies can ever be regulated...

regulated – only destroyed

showed, when it comes to the giant utilities and financial corporations there's hardly any actual regulating going on. Mostly, companies have convinced government that the very best regulation is self-regulation. We are all living with the damaging results.

Our utilities have become the playthings of international finance. While Welsh Water is not-for-profit and the Scottish water companies are in public ownership, England's water companies are more than 90 per cent owned by foreign companies.

If you want to see where that leads, take a look at Britain's largest water utility, Thames Water. In 2001 it was bought by a German energy company, RWE. Five years later, the Australian financial services giant Macquarie Group paid £4.8 billion for it.

Macquarie's intentions were made clear that same year when it more than tripled the dividend to £656 million – an astonishing £415 million more than the profit for the year. And to varying degrees, the asset stripping continued.

Complex

It was a complex deal involving Macquarie taking on £2.8 billion in debt. Macquarie then contrived, using offshore companies, to repay £2 billion of that debt by moving it to Thames Water.

When the utility was privatised in 1989, it had been debt free. In March 2024 its debt, according to an estimate by credit ratings company Moody's, was £16.5 billion. That's after piping billions over to investors since privatisation.

Macquarie also took over control of Southern Water in 2021. The picture there is much the same: poor performance, rising debt and higher bills.

In the face of massive evidence that dividend payments were being made at the expense of consumers and vitally needed investment, Ofwat, Britain's water regulator, took on new powers in March 2023 enabling it to stop a company's dividend payments "if they would risk the company's financial resilience".

"These changes to company licences reduce the risks that a company's poor financial health may pose to customer interests and its ability to invest to protect

the environment. If the company falls short, Ofwat will be able to step in and take enforcement action," the regulator said.

Now, two years since Ofwat's blather about increasing resilience, Thames Water is on the verge of bankruptcy. It wants to bring itself back to solvency by shuffling its debts and increasing prices by 52 per cent between now and 2030. Ofwat has said no.

So far, so promising. But when you look further you find that Ofwat has said Thames can raise prices by a huge 38 per cent over the period. Consumers – that's all of us – are going to have to dig deep whatever happens.

Bills rise

That's true not just for those in the Thames Water area but for households across Britain. On 30 January Ofwat announced that water companies could increase bills by £31 a year for the next five years, or £155, but for 2025/26 it helpfully allowed the water companies to increase them by an average of 26 per cent, or £123 in cash terms. They call this extortion "front loading".

Following this news was the announcement that the water companies, between them, would invest £104 billion in infrastructure to improve water quality and supply over five years.

"This is an ambitious programme of work..." said Ofwat, promising, "Where companies underperform, or investment isn't delivered, we will hold companies to account and protect customers." Bill payers may be excused for being sceptical, given Ofwat's history of underperformance and failure to protect consumers.

The essence of social democracy is the idea of peaceful coexistence with capitalism, that workers – both at work and at home – and capitalists can sort out their problems. In this context, regulation is portrayed as the way to keep capitalists in check.

Class interest

It's an impossible task, given that the class interests of workers and capitalists are diametrically opposed. All regulation tries to do is to allow the best interests of capital to prevail, a tricky task since capitalists rarely

'What's really holding back hi-tech growth in Britain is not regulation. It's the lack of investment...'

know what is in their best interests.

In fact, the main product of regulation is increased prices for consumers. Companies just treat the risk of regulatory fines as a cost of doing business, and price up their products accordingly.

Last year the Financial Conduct Authority issued fines totalling more than £176 million. There's even a website, Violation Tracker, dedicated to following the number of enforcement actions taken by government regulators. At the time of writing, the website lists the staggering figure of 117,000 cases since 2010.

The fines for poor service keep coming. And prices keep rising.

More of the same

Even those who believe in regulating capitalism and taming the monopolies recognise that regulation hasn't worked. For them the answer is more regulation (or when it suits them, less regulation).

There are already a lot of regulators, exacerbated by devolution – around 90 of them according to 2024 official figures, including at least eight for the water industry alone.

And for connoisseurs of the absurd, there's another idea. Why not set up a regulator to regulate the regulators? That, precisely, was the suggestion of the House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee last year. The solution, it said in its report, published in February 2024, was to set up an Office for Regulator Performance (Ofreg?). Dream on. ■

Part One of our investigation into the far-reaching consequences after the fire, residents across Britain are still suffering in

Costs and delays – the i

THE CHARRED Grenfell Tower, with its iconic white shroud and green heart symbol, is set to be dismantled by 2027. By then it will have stood testament for ten years to life-threatening capitalism, and the reluctance of finance capital to make reparations.

A National Audit Office (NAO) report in November last year said the impacts of the fire “have extended far beyond the immediate victims...with many people suffering significant financial and emotional distress”. Recent figures show that nearly 5,000 high rise buildings (18 metres high and over) have been identified as being unsafe. But under half of them have had work done to remove flammable cladding and insulation.

The number of buildings considered unsafe is expected to soar as mid-rise blocks (over 11 metres high) are taken into account. Between 9,000 and 12,000 buildings, in both the public and the private sector, inside and outside London, are said to be in need of cladding removal or other forms of remediation. Over 600,000 people are estimated to live in buildings with such fire hazards.

The NAO warned that the work could take more than a decade, while some structures may never be identified.

Excuses

Excuses abound for the slow pace and failure to meet the material needs of traumatised residents.

By definition, the government stance that social housing remediation requires a “long term strategy” implies a protracted process that may never be completed. Councils are at breaking point, over-burdened with many other housing problems – as well as crippling debt in several cases.

With residents still living in fear and demanding timescales for work to be done, the NAO urged government to set a target date for cladding safety work. In response, housing minister Angela Rayner came up with an “acceleration plan” promising to make safe all high rise blocks, both private and social, by the end of 2029.

An array of overlapping remediation funding schemes has developed. Together they fall well short of the NAO’s estimate



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A 2019 memorial for the 72 who died in the Grenfell fire.

that the cost would be over £22 billion. The NAO blames Treasury restrictions as a major cause of dispute and delay.

The main source of funding is the Building Safety Fund for buildings over 18 metres high. Research by the National Housing Federation reveals that money is being diverted away from new and existing social homes into the Building Safety Fund. It estimates that one in ten planned homes to buy or rent cannot now be built.

In his final report released last September, the Grenfell Inquiry chairman Sir Martin Moore-Bick criticised the “complex and fragmented” regulatory system, with multiple government departments, local authorities, Trading Standards and commercial organisations all responsible for different aspects of the refurbishment, creating “inefficiency and an obstacle to effective regulation”.

The government promised to consider

the inquiry recommendations, “to ensure that such a tragedy can never occur again.” Things aren’t turning out quite like that.

Rayner’s promises to get landlords and builders to meet her targets seem delusional, given known problems with regulation. A Local Government Association spokesperson said that for local government to carry out enforcement as quickly as possible they would need guarantees of multi-year funding. The “new money” offered as an inducement by Rayner is simply an exercise in juggling sundry inadequate pots of funding.

Insurance

Leaseholders are in a particularly precarious situation. Although exempt from paying for cladding remediation they are responsible for most other remediation costs, passed on to them through their service charge. They cannot get affordable insur-

consequences of the Grenfell Tower disaster. Nearly eight years of unsafe buildings and the survivors wait for justice...

Impacts of Grenfell



ance or mortgages to move on with their lives or start a family.

While freeholders and developers hag-

gle over liability, these buildings remain a fire hazard. Residents must pay additional monthly charges for night patrols, the so-called “waking watches”. The Leasehold Advisory Service puts this at £331 for each dwelling, £499 in London.

After a 4-year delay the government has set up a Building Safety Levy, aiming to ensure that developers pay to fix safety problems caused, for example, by use of combustible cladding. This will not operate until autumn 2025 – few have faith in its effectiveness. Crucially the levy depends on proving a developer’s culpability – never an easy task.

While remediation of existing dangerous buildings is delayed, so too is justice for Grenfell survivors. No date has yet been set for a court hearing into the conduct of the cladding and insulation companies working on the Grenfell refurbishment. The Crown Prosecution Service blames “the sheer volume of evidence and complexity of the investigation...”.

The conclusions of the Inquiry couldn’t be clearer, yet 180 police officers have been deployed to conduct a “line by line” inquiry of their own into the Inquiry before they will bring charges. The Met points to an “increasingly complex web” of over 60 suspect organisations, multinational companies, and individuals.

The NAO inquiry interrogated, among many others: the main contractor Rydon; the architects Studio E; the cladding sub-

‘The government promised to consider the inquiry recommendations. Things aren’t turning out quite like that...’

contractor Harley Facades; cladding manufacturer Arconic; insulation manufacturers Celotex and Kingspan; the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and their building control department. All are engaged in what one lawyer called a “merry-go-round of buck-passing”.

Possible charges are corporate manslaughter, gross negligence manslaughter, fraud, and misconduct in public office. But securing convictions, will be subject to all the drawn-out procedures of lawyers acting for big business. ■

• Part 2 of this article, covering the impact of Grenfell on building regulation and what still needs to be done, will appear in the May/June issue of *Workers*.



Workers

CPBML public meeting

Wednesday 5 March, London, 7.30pm

Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

“Food for the people”

Britain’s farmers have drawn attention to the threat to our food security posed by capitalism. Our land is taken over by speculators and taken out of production. What we eat and how it is produced affects us all. All welcome. Free Entry. For details, see www.cpbml.org.uk/events

The Cass Review into the care of young people questioning gender identity: a materialist, evidence-based approach over zealotry and dogma

Cass: a materialist approach



Workers

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, home of the GIDS service until it was closed.

THE RIGOROUS approach taken by Dr Hilary Cass in her review of gender identity services is a turning point, not only in the care of such young people, but in the public discussion of these questions.

There had been a dramatic rise in cases of gender dysphoria (a state of feeling very uneasy about one's gender) among young people. And then, a growing controversy about the way young people were being treated by the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS), based at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust in London.

In autumn 2020 NHS England and NHS Improvement (now merged) commissioned Cass, an eminent paediatrician, to lead the Independent Review of Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People.

GIDS was established in 1989 at St George's, moving to the Tavistock in 1994. It took referrals from across England. In the early years it saw small numbers, fewer than ten a year, and predominantly prepubertal boys. Only a few would be referred for hormonal treatment when they reached the age of sixteen.

In the late 1990s and 2000s doctors in the Netherlands developed the Dutch protocol, as it was known. Patients, who had to be at least 12 years old with lifelong gender dysphoria and no serious co-existing psychiatric conditions, could receive gonadotrophin-releasing hormone agonists, generally known as "puberty blockers". The rationale for this treatment was that it would buy time to think, so that the young people could be helped, over time, to an informed decision about their future.

The use of puberty blockers is controversial. They reduce bone density in the short term, which can contribute to poor bone health in adulthood and old age, leading to osteoporosis. They can also increase the risk of developing hormone-dependent cancers later in life.

And, most importantly, they can impact fertility in later life. When the use of puberty blockers may cause long-term adverse effects, the case for using them becomes weaker.

But in the USA an approach developed known as the affirmative model. This theorised that a child of any age could know its

"authentic" gender identity, and should be supported to transition at any stage of development. This perspective gained ground at GIDS, and in 2014 the service began an "early intervention" policy, allowing children to be readily referred for puberty blockers at age 12.

Clinical practice at GIDS changed from an approach to buy time, and to exclude patients with serious psychiatric conditions, into one where puberty blockers became the default treatment. This was favoured by clinicians who supported the affirmative model and, increasingly by patients themselves, and, sometimes, their families.

Change in referrals

The Cass review describes a remarkable change in referrals to GIDS. In 2009 the service received 51 referrals, with a majority of boys. By 2016 there were 1,766 referrals, nearly 70 per cent girls. Waiting lists exploded.

Not only was GIDS unable to cope with demand, but increasingly clinicians in the service tried to raise safety concerns. In 2018, one of the consultant psychiatrists

ing their gender identity represents a triumph of a
dogma...

back to healthcare



and a staff representative on the Tavistock's council of governors, Dr David Bell, submitted a report to the trust board, expressing concern at an "excessively affirmative" approach, and concluding that GIDS was not fit for purpose.

He also pointed out how the whole trust had come to depend on guaranteed income from GIDS, which came to make up over a fifth of total income.

Other staff shared his concerns. Some even resigned.

In 2021 the Care Quality Commission found GIDS to be inadequate. The CQC cited: a waiting list of over 4,600; poor management of risk of vulnerable patients; poor record keeping, with no care plans; variations in clinical approach between staff; inconsistent recording of patients' consent, competence and capacity; and staff unable to raise concerns without fear of retribution.

A court case (*Bell v Tavistock*) in 2020 was brought by a GIDS patient on the question of whether children under 16 could give consent to puberty blocking treatment. Ultimately the Court of Appeal

found against the patient, but the case helped to shift the climate of opinion and contributed to the NHS setting up the Cass review.

The puberty blocker lobby vociferously claimed that a ban on puberty blockers would lead to a large increase in suicides among young gender dysphoria patients.

But a review by Professor Louis Appleby, the Department of Health and Social Care adviser on suicide prevention, found that there was no data to support this claim.

Appleby castigated those who turned the issue into a social media furore: "The way that this issue has been discussed on social media has been insensitive, distressing and dangerous, and goes against guidance on safe reporting of suicide."

Unsafe

The interim report from Cass appeared in February 2022. It found that GIDS was not safe or viable in the long term. She pointed out that many of the patients presenting to GIDS clinicians had other co-existing complex medical conditions and needs, but once diagnosed with gender-related distress, those clinicians adhering to the affirmative approach would tend to neglect these other issues.

NHS England closed GIDS, and replaced it in the short term with regional centres based in children's hospitals. Dr Cass was insistent that specialist services should be developed around the country, working to common standards.

The final report of the Cass Review was published in April 2024. It insists on the principles of evidence-based medicine. Treatments should be guided by the best available evidence, the patient's preferences and values, and the clinician's expertise and experience. Cass and her team had commissioned a series of systematic reviews of the evidence, and heard from young people, parents and carers, and a wide range of professionals.

The report makes 32 recommendations, on how care should be provided, both by clinicians and its organisation within the NHS, and on future research. In response NHS England announced that puberty blockers would not be prescribed,

'A review found no data to support the claim that a ban on puberty blockers would lead to a large rise in suicides...'

except in clinical trials.

The review received widespread clinical and academic support. Yet in July 2024 the British Medical Association's (BMA) UK Council voted to "publicly critique" the review, claiming its recommendations were "unsubstantiated".

A whistle blower brought this to the medical profession's attention. It was revealed that while 21 members of the council voted to oppose the Cass review, 13 abstained and 11 voted against the motion.

A grassroots campaign among BMA members, "Not In Our Name BMA", took off and quickly gathered over 1,500 signatures to an open letter to the chair of the BMA Council. Questions of treatment protocols, as covered by the review, are usually the domain of the medical Royal Colleges, not the BMA, the trade union. The BMA Council retracted its position, changing it to one of neutrality.

The battle is not over. Proponents of the affirmative approach continue to argue that all the effects of puberty blockers are reversible. A few critiques of Cass have appeared online too.

The authors of a paper published early in February 2025 analysed the critiques published to date and concluded that they "have contained incorrect or inadequately contextualized claims". None of them cited any of the recent systematic reviews, the authors pointed out.

Meanwhile, Kiera Bell, who bought the 2020 court case, is campaigning for further restrictions on hormone treatments for young people. ■

Britain, its workers and industry are intimately connected. getting a grip on the undermining of industry...

Industry matters to Britain

IN BRITAIN today it is important to explain and debate why industry matters. This is a strange state of affairs for a country that was the first to go through an industrial revolution and which has done so much to bring about modern industry.

And it's strange too that the British working class, whose existence is so bound up with industry, should need to ask the question. The problem is not a lack of understanding that the modern world depends on making things, but the understanding of what to do about capitalism, which controls production and is destroying it here.

Three aspects of this problem are worth exploring: why industry creates real value; why workers need to exert control over industry; and why Britain needs industry to maintain independence and a balanced economy.

What is industry?

What do we mean by industry? Industry is the application of hand and brain to produce what people need to exist and thrive. Yet when we talk about industry, most people will think of heavy industry factories manufacturing things, usually in metal.

Industry is far wider than that. It ranges from mining raw materials to manufacturing toys – not to mention machines that can make other machines. It includes biotech and medicines, aircraft and the simulators essential for pilot training. And it includes all the infrastructure and transport necessary to support manufacture.

Ever since the industrial revolution industry means large-scale, integrated production which created the modern world with all its achievements and benefits. So the future of industry isn't a return to hand-made, artisan products. Nor is it a nostalgic recreation of the industries of the past. Modern industry is about developing and transforming production. Data centres are a good example of this (see Box, p13).

Without industry to create real value and the manufactured items we need, a nation will tend towards relying on debt to pay for those goods. And in turn that increases dependency on other countries to make them.

As far as heavy industry is concerned,



Workers

The Rampion wind farm off the Sussex coast. The turbines were made by a Danish company, MHI

the current government has continued the destructive policy of the British state since at least the 1980s – the Thatcher era. In its short time in office, this Labour government has overseen: the closure of the last British coal fired power station; the closure of blast furnaces at Tata Steel; withdrawal of support for the development of a coal mine in Cumbria; the continued decommissioning of the nuclear estate; and blocks on further oil and gas extraction.

The justification for such destruction is a blinkered anti-industrial view on the lines of, “these industries killed many workers, and create climate change”. But technology has moved on; investment in these fundamental industries has gone to other countries and not to Britain.

Steelmaking, mineral extraction and power generation still exist – just not all that we need in Britain. These fundamental industries matter! Without them there are

But a future for both nation and class depends on

sh workers



Vestas.

no manufactured goods – no medical scanners, computers, wind turbines, agricultural machinery, bricks and so on. And the service sector – from tourism to financial institutions – can't exist without these manufactured goods.

Education could be viewed as the archetypal service industry, yet it is intertwined with manufacture. Modern industry reflects advances in scientific knowledge which drives education of the whole class

forward. And in turn educated workers are the source of further industrial development. The demise of technical higher education and the lack of skills training are badly damaging to our industrial future.

The need for industry

Britain needs modern industry to create value from the skills of people to enable a civilised nation to live healthily.

As things stand now, some industrial sectors in Britain still show some leadership and outstanding capability, or could do so with the right investment. But in many other sectors, as we know, our industries have been decimated.

Many workers do see that industry is necessary to meet the needs of the people of this country. They are unconvinced by the policies of successive governments towards industry and wary of the anti-industrial view. But there's a lack of confidence in how to challenge the decline.

While it is relatively easy to understand the connection between industry and progress, it is difficult to achieve real interconnected policies allowing the range of industries to work efficiently and grow.

Global capitalism has been busy carving up the key blocks of modern industry, dividing them between countries. This has been an essential aspect of the EU project too. The aim is to maximise profit and at the same time diminish the economic power of independent nations.

Collectivism and control

Modern industry is cooperative and interconnected. But the capitalist dream is to limit and control the working class, so they do not extend their cooperation to their control of production and investment. Capitalists prefer a fragmented working class, competing with each other for work and wages.

For workers to exert control over their future means working together, collectivism. And we need to maintain manufacturing industry to ensure and encourage the continued collectivism of workers in Britain.

Collectivism brings into life the ideas needed to exert control over industry, not just to making things but to decide what is

'Britain needs modern industry to create value from the skills of people to enable a civilised nation to live healthily...'

made how and when. Collectivism and cooperation exist in other sectors, often in abundance, but in manufacturing the interaction of many workers to create real wealth is paramount.

Britain and industry

Industry matters to Britain as a nation – to be independent and to retain a balanced economy. This is recognised to an extent, partly as a result of Brexit. But as a nation we have not fully realised the consequences and what's needed.

The view that Britain needs a broad range of industries from heavy to light is frequently challenged in practice – “we don't make anything anyway”, “we can't compete with other countries”, “we can import whatever we need” and so on.

All those statements or beliefs boil down to an acceptance that capitalism is the only way to organise production and that the existence of Britain as an independent nation isn't possible under capitalism.

And in the hands of multinational corporations, manufacturing in Britain becomes fragmented and incomplete, serving only the needs of global capital.

The more that manufacturing decreases and debt increases, the more the cycle of decline continues. International capital markets make more loans – taking more wealth out of Britain as interest payments rise. This way offers no future for the

Continued on page 14



Continued from page 13

next generation.

The number of British companies sold to foreign investors continues to rise, up sharply again last year. This “investment” is not positive as this government and its predecessors claim. It is handicapping future progress. This is far more damaging than the privatisation mania of the Thatcher era – bad as that was.

And in trying to attract inward investment, the government bows to international companies, for example in the creation of freeports, a surrender of sovereignty and another way of undermining an integrated industrial economy.

Investment

There is capital – plenty of it – that could be used for investment here in Britain. Billions of pounds are invested overseas by British companies – nearly £80 billion in 2022, with total overseas assets of almost £2 trillion. That value should be used to invest for future production here. No discussion of

‘No discussion of the future of industry in Britain can avoid the impact of net zero polices...’

Who controls the data centres?

DATA CENTRES are an interesting case – a fairly recent development, certainly at scale. They control and support large sectors of the economy, handling essential transactions and data, as well as influencing through social media and other communications. By any criteria building and running them are part of industry.

Data centres are now a key component of a modern economy, indirectly adding value. And they will become more so with wider adoption of artificial intelligence tools.

We have data centres in Britain but on a small scale compared to other countries. Many data centres used by British companies and government are based overseas. It is another key industry that we urgently need to develop.

The Labour government appears to have woken up to this, with announcements about the importance of this sector.

But then they show their true colours. What they want is to throw the door open to foreign ownership of data centres in Britain. And that “investment” can just as easily go elsewhere sooner or later.

Data centres are power hungry, so much so that Google and other large IT companies are investigating small scale nuclear power plants dedicated to their own data centres.

But in Britain data centres will be subject to the same high energy prices and net zero dogma that beset steel production. And the government is ignoring the potential of small modular reactors, in which Rolls-Royce is a world leader. ■

the future of industry in Britain can avoid the impact of net zero polices. Directly these affect energy production and indirectly they impact all manufacturing – negatively.

Vehicle manufacturing here is under threat. In November 2024, Vauxhall Motors owner Stellantis announced the closure of its Luton plant – partly due to the electric vehicle (EV) mandate banning the sale of internal combustion engine powered vehicles from 2030. And BMW has put on hold the production of EVs at Cowley due to government Zero Emission Vehicle targets.

Tesla has received £200 million in grants since 2016 – mostly through the electric vehicle subsidy. Their cars are not made in Britain.

Steel

In January the British government launched a new Steel Council to revitalise the “neglected” sector. It says that it aims to secure the future of steelmaking as a cornerstone of British industry. It also announced a steel strategy the following month.

Workers in the sector may be under-

standably cynical given crippling high energy costs, overseas ownership and so far unrealised dreams of carbon-free steel production.

But there may be some promise in the latest government moves, despite the suspicion that they are window dressing. The opportunity to force positive action in Britain’s interests is too important to pass up. Unions have broadly welcomed these developments.

But everyone – including the companies themselves – is pointing to the need to address the key question of energy costs; British steelmakers are paying twice as much as their French and Spanish counterparts.

Workers can make a difference by taking on government policy – and even by working with employers where possible. What’s happening in the steel industry is one instance, but there are many more opportunities when workers take on the full implications of the necessity of industry. ■

• This article is based on contributions made at a CPBML Zoom discussion meeting held in January 2025.

CPBML MAY DAY MEETINGS 2025

POLITICS IS NOT PARLIAMENT! IT'S ON US, THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS

Celebrate International Workers' Day 2025 at the CPBML's May Day meetings, held this year in Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester and London.

On May Day we take stock of Britain and the world. The priority for the British working class – all who live and work here – is Britain.

Capitalism outsources production and strips Britain of our national assets – and unchecked it will drag us further into war and bring Britain to ruin.

Workers built our nation. We must rebuild Britain to meet our needs and cannot rely on politicians or parliament to do it for us.

Come to celebrate May Day and join the discussion.

All welcome. Free Entry.

Workers of all lands, unite!

Fight for independence!

No to war!



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The big question raised by the grooming gangs is not that they seek to take advantage. It is how on earth such abuse we

The British state and gro



Flake/Alamy Stock Photo

Oldham Civic Centre, 2011. Last year the council voted to demolish it.

THE BLIGHT of the sustained and organised sexual abuse of vulnerable young white girls by gangs of British men of Pakistani origin has been a stain on many of our towns and cities.

Why is it that over the years the response of local authorities and others charged with investigating this abuse, with some notable exceptions, has been to downplay it? It was done either by denying the problem exists, or by burying any investigation in such time-consuming and bureaucratic processes that the impetus to seek answers was stifled.

Downplaying the abuse continues. In January, Oldham council requested government funding to enable it to re-examine historical claims of such abuse in its area,

but safeguarding minister Jess Phillips refused. A rare unanimous vote of the council on 13 February rejected Phillips's claim that local inquiries were best and called for a statutory judge-led review as it would have more powers.

Silence

The Conservative parliamentary opposition, sensing an opportunity to embarrass the government, called for a national enquiry, despite having remained silent for 14 years when in office. Starmer, with a huge parliamentary majority, was always going to win the vote on 8 January. But that didn't prevent a national outcry.

So Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced plans for a nationwide review of

grooming gang evidence, and authorised government support for five local enquiries. Set against decades of evidence of grooming abuse in up to fifty towns and cities, such a limited proposal was never going to be enough.

For decades politicians of all stripes have sought to gain favour with so-called communities and community "leaders", always self-identified or chosen by the politicians, never by the people. Everything else was seen as low priority – notably the class interests of workers whatever their religion or origin.

So nothing happened when, in the 1990s, rumours began to emerge of vulnerable young white girls being targeted for abuse. That the abusers were said to be of

... some men, especially in tightly knit communities, might
 ... on for decades...

...ooming gangs

Pakistani origin resulted in a predictable official response, either denial or counter-accusations of racism. In effect, the abusers were given carte blanche to continue.

In 2001, care home workers and social workers in Rotherham began reporting that girls in care homes were being picked up in taxis and driven away to be plied with drugs and alcohol and then repeatedly sexually abused. Again, the girls in question were almost exclusively white, while the taxi drivers were of Pakistani origin.

Reports of this abuse, along with the identities of taxi drivers involved, were forwarded to the police and the council. But as it emerged later, no action was taken despite further evidence from Dr Angie Heal, an analyst working with South Yorkshire Police, and local solicitor Adele Gladman.

The evidence of organised grooming was mounting, but those who tried to identify the perpetrators were at best ignored, at worst vilified. In 2003, MP Ann Cryer made public her allegations that British Asian men were grooming underage white girls in Keighley. Branded a racist, she was denounced by her local Labour Party.

Courageous

But Cryer and others would not be shut down. Other MPs and some courageous journalists, not least Andrew Norfolk of the *Times*, continued to raise awareness about this scandal. Eventually, in 2010, five men were convicted of sexually abusing children, the first grooming gang prosecution in Rotherham.

Genuine attempts to uncover the facts were met with official resistance and a failure to take the matter seriously, largely in an effort to shield local authorities and police forces from criticism. But the weight of evidence, particularly in Rotherham, was overwhelming.

In 2009, the government had put Rotherham children's safeguarding service into intervention, effectively concluding it was not fit to do its job. Belatedly and reluctantly, Rotherham council had to act.

In 2013, the council commissioned Professor Alexis Jay to lead an independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham between 1997 to 2013.

The ensuing report, published in 2014, was a bombshell which completely undercut the attempts of officialdom to deny the extent or the seriousness of the abuse. It described in detail the extent of the abuse of some 1,400 victims, including rape of girls as young as 11 by large numbers of male perpetrators, and the trafficking of victims to other towns in northern England.

Blatant collective failures of political and officer leadership in councils were identified. Police were found to have seen car crime and burglary as more worthy of attention, treated many child victims with contempt, and failed to act on their abuse as a crime. Safeguarding staff were overwhelmed by the sheer number of cases.

Of particular concern was that the vast majority of perpetrators were described as "Asian", a non-specific designation, often deployed to avoid the more accurate "British of Pakistani origin". Several staff members reported they were afraid of being labelled racist. Some said their managers instructed them to be non-specific when describing the abusers.

Ignored

The 2014 report was thorough, but its focus on Rotherham meant that elsewhere similar patterns of abuse continued to be ignored. Inquiries in Bristol, Telford, Oldham and Rochdale among others, confirmed that such abuse continued and that there was widespread failure of those in authority to ensure the safety of vulnerable young people.

In 2016, the Conservative government turned back to Professor Jay, asking her to take over and lead the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. Launched in 2014 in the wake of the Jimmy Savile and other abuse scandals, it was reconstituted as a full statutory inquiry the following year.

Its report when published in 2022 described CSE in England and Wales as an epidemic, with tens of thousands of victims. It made many recommendations, not least that police should focus on investigating the criminal conduct of sexual exploitation, rather than sanctioning children for anti-social behaviour. The inquiry also called on the Department for Education to ban the placing of 16- and 17-year old chil-

'Cultural sensitivities must not prevent the investigation and prosecution of criminal exploitation of children...'

...dren in semi-independent or independent care if they were at heightened risk of becoming victims of CSE. Most significantly, it said that police forces and local authorities should collect data in every suspected case of CSE, including the existence of criminal gangs and the ethnicity of perpetrators.

This January, Professor Jay gave evidence to the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee about the progress on the inquiry's recommendations. She expressed her frustration that none had been implemented, and that representatives of the then Conservative government had been unhelpful, even at times antagonistic.

Jay bemoaned the failure of the British state to ensure the care of so many vulnerable young people, but she was clear that another national inquiry was not the solution that so many appeared to think it was. As she explained, public enquiries are good at establishing the facts, but have no power to enforce remedial action.

British workers cannot expect the British state to remedy the situation of its own volition. It will offer regrets, excuses and apologies, but nothing more. We cannot allow cultural sensitivities to prevent the investigation and prosecution of criminal exploitation of children. Above all we need a change of ideology: put class interests first, don't allow imposed ideas of "community" to obscure class needs and action to protect children. ■

Massive migration into Britain is hitting pay, working conditions, and the working class, and requires a working class response...

Immigration is a class m



Chris Craggs/Alamy Stock Photo

Border control at Manchester Airport.

FOR DECADES British governments have encouraged massively increased immigration, and have ignored what workers think about that.

Not only is this an economic attack, but it is fostering divisions between workers at

‘What makes the British working class is far more than the mixture of their backgrounds...’

a time when they need unity.

Immigration affects the whole of society: any sort of planning for infrastructure and public services – houses, schools, hospitals and so on. And it has the effect of holding down pay, undermining working conditions and facilitating the continued lack of adequate skills and training.

Some ideas that not too long ago were mainstream in discourse between workers have now become marginalised and demonised. That perversion of debate is as deliberate as the migrant policy itself and is designed to cloak and protect that policy.

We have a strange relationship with professed nationalism in Britain and are wary of it – think the BNP (and SNP too, also fascist in origin). The easy answer is to cry “far right, boo, avoid” when confronted

with an argument that Britain should be independent and should also have control of its borders and who lives here. We need to look deeper.

Opponents of immigration control say that “we are all migrants, refugees welcome here”. On one level, historically that’s true. But that obscures the reality. There is no pure-bred British worker (or any sort of Briton) – truly we are a mongrel nation.

Independence

But to conflate the wish for national independence with racism or a hatred of migrants in general sets up an idea that there is a group of workers whose thoughts and views must be suppressed. This creates the opportunity for just the sort of attitude and actions it professes to oppose.

ditions and vital infrastructure. It is an attack on the

matter



And the drive to separate parts of Britain and divide it up in the name of local democracy or historical nationhood (for Scotland, quite contentious, for Wales even more so) is out of the same ideological toolkit as the denial of control of our borders and national independence.

These views use the great range and diversity of British workers as a way to weaken the whole class, undermining unity. But we must do more than point the finger at those who have a different view. And to do so we have to look at class – what makes us workers.

The idea of class is fundamental to political thinking – and to economic and cultural reality. It's objective, not subjective. It's about our collective circumstances and experience, not about individuals.

What makes the British working class is far more than the mixture of the backgrounds of those who have come to make it up. It is a synthesis: workers, no matter what their background, all find themselves in the same circumstances. As wage workers they have the same interests and concerns, facing the same exploitation.

Retreat into ghettos, the promotion of multiculturalism, the denial of British culture and the need to assimilate, will all make the class weaker, less able to deal with the ruling class. Acceptance that we are all one working class, and that we all have our part to play, will make us stronger.

It's one thing to say "there's a limit to what I can do in this fight (for wages etc)" and another to raise that to a political attitude – which goes along with "all workers are thick and stupid (except my pals)", "Britain is finished", "we are too weak to exist alone, we need to be in the EU (or in the US sphere)".

Common interest

So why would a communist, or any class conscious worker, who sees the common interest of exploited workers across the world, think that nations are a good thing? It's at that level – a shared territory, language, economy, and culture – that we are strongest in dealing with the ruling class.

So let's return to where we started, what's behind the immense change in the population of Britain? We need debate –

not to decry the changes but to understand them and assert our own common interests as workers.

As British capitalism continues to decline it can't reinvent itself, or invest in the skills of its working class. It searches for desperate measures to survive, turning to the last gasp measure of employing both cheap labour and importing skills from abroad, in order to squeeze profit from its archaic practices.

Precious

Rather than viewing the labour of workers as a precious resource to be used with great care, many are engaged in work neither socially useful nor productive. Numbers of workers in the service industries have soared because employers see opportunities to exploit recent migrants at low wages and under poor conditions.

Rather than an employer undercutting its workers by using scabs, fire and rehire etc, now it's the state doing so with immigration against the whole working class.

That has been the dilemma since World War Two at least – they can't afford workers, though they can't do without them. We should turn that round for workers – we can't afford capitalists; but we can live without them. ■

• This article is an edited extract from a speech made at a CPBML meeting in Manchester in November 2024.

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's series of Zoom discussion meetings continues on Tuesday 8 April on why unity is essential to the British working class. All meeting details are published on What's On, page 5, as well as in our eNewsletter, and at cpbml.org.uk/events.

M As well as our Zoom discussion meetings, we hold regular in-person public meetings, with one in London on 5 March on agriculture (details on page 5), and informal meetings with interested workers – next one in Manchester on 8 March – and study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further. Plus, see our notice on page 15 for details of our May Day meetings.

M If you are interested we want to hear from you. Call us on 07308 979 308 or send an email to info@cpbml.org.uk

Britain has been the preferred hunting ground for US multinational businesses abroad, leading to a serious loss of independence.

The real special relationship



Vlad Lazarenko (CC by-SA 3.0)

Wall Street, New York City.

Vassal state: how America runs Britain, by Angus Hanton, paperback, 304 pages, ISBN 978-1800753907, Swift Press, 2025, £12.99. Kindle and eBook editions available.

THIS SPLENDID book is “a call to action to stop further transfers of parts of the economy to powerful and unaccountable American owners and to reset Britain on a course for more economic independence.”

Information from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that one of the most damaging legacies of Thatcher’s 1980s regime was enabling the wholesale transfer of British assets to American owners. Her loyalty to capital resulted in US control of our economy: it was a betrayal of Britain.

And that invitation to buy up Britain, repeated by every government since, has been enthusiastically accepted by Americans. In 1981, only 3.6 per cent of British shares were owned overseas, by 2020 over 56 per cent were.

In his book, Hanton, a British economist, examines this loyalty to the USA. His view, “The consequences could not be graver: impoverishment, loss of autonomy, and a drain on talent and trea-

sure.” The result is that money flows abroad and we lose jobs, opportunities, skills and taxes. We also lose tech sovereignty, as shown when the USA overturned the government’s decision to buy Huawei mobile phone network hardware.

Hanton explains that private equity companies are expert tax avoiders, often evading corporation tax altogether. Over 1,000 multinationals operate in Britain, making up a third of our economy but paying only 1 per cent of the government’s tax take.

Britain’s tax regime makes far greater claims on domestic businesses than on US corporations.

Profits offshored

Foreign multinational subsidiaries pay half the rate paid by comparable domestic companies. We lose more tax from the offshoring of profits than any other country.

Over 80 per cent of UK tax is paid by workers. Less than 8 per cent comes from corporation tax, of which multinationals pay only a small fraction.

Governments fail to collect tax from multinationals, then tell us they can’t afford what we need. For example, from 2019 to 2022 Starbucks declared no profit, and

paid no tax on its £1.2 billion of sales. In 2022, Amazon paid no UK corporation tax. Instead it received a £7.7 million tax credit. Finance capital never wants to spend on anything that might benefit the working class.

Between 2000 and 2018 US companies spent £56 billion more on buying British firms than British firms spent across the Atlantic. In recent years this has been by far the biggest route of cross-border takeovers in the world.

Hanton’s book shows that this foreign direct investment only rarely results in new job-creating factories. They are mostly investments in profitable existing businesses and rent-yielding properties.

Over half of all the assets that US corporations hold in Europe are in Britain. US corporations have more employees here than they have in Germany, France, Italy, Portugal and Sweden combined. Two million workers, around 6 per cent of the UK workforce, are ultimately employed by US companies. And they are paid less than French or German workers.

The largest US companies sell over \$700 billion of goods and services to Britain, which amounts to over a quarter of our total GDP. The British government spends £30 billion a year on US-made supplies. The Ministry of Defence paid £26 billion to US suppliers between 2011 and 2021, three times as much as any other government department.

US and the NHS

The next biggest spender is the Department of Health and Social Care. A brilliant chapter in the book on “The NHS cash cow” details the growing US involvement in private provision in the NHS, begun by the Labour government in 2002.

Private equity companies, the predominant model for US acquisitions, extract wealth. Hanton reports one study which found that private equity companies cut one in seven staff, cut wages and raised prices in the first two years of buying a company.

The US 2021 Build America Buy American Act mandated that all iron, steel, manufactured goods and building materials must be produced in the USA. The Made in

inationals buying
ndence...

ship

**'Over 1,000
multinationals
operate in Britain,
making up a third of
our economy but
paying only 1 per
cent of the
government's tax
take...'**

America Office enforces compliance, to "reduce the need to spend taxpayer dollars on foreign-made goods." Britain has no such act and no such office.

The impact of President Trump's government cuts isn't clear, but the "Buy America" policy isn't likely to change. So when the Labour government is huffing and puffing over tariffs, it would be well to ask what they are doing to support and promote British industry.

Labour peer Viscount Hanworth told the House of Lords in 2015, "Our rules of corporate governance amount to a system of self-regulation by the financial sector. They create few impediments to mergers and acquisitions or to financial trading and do nothing to protect the national interest. ... the failures of our industrial sector are to a great extent due to the power and influence of our financial sector, whose activities are inimical to a long-term industrial strategy." He criticised the then government for seeing nothing wrong with inward investment.

Little has changed since.

The ruling class and British governments continue to uphold US sovereignty, at the expense of Britain's economic sovereignty. The current government sees "inward investment" as positively beneficial. This book provides strong evidence about how misguided that is. ■

WORKERS

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BRITAIN 2025

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Sixty years ago a bloody coup wiped out the Indonesian communist party and along with it all the trade unions and peasant associations.

1965: The Indonesian coup

IN THE 1960s, the US and British governments were in a panic about the spread of communism, and any countries attempting to wrest independence from the NATO-led world imperialist order. The Vietnam War was ongoing.

They feared the rise of a so-called Third World. Indonesian President Sukarno was a leader in setting up the Non-Aligned Movement, after a conference in Bandung in 1955 that he hosted.

Indonesia was a particular worry. It had freed itself from Dutch colonial rule in 1949. The communist party, the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), was the strongest force for independence and the third largest in the world by number, behind the USSR and China.

Anglo-US collusion

In 1962, US president John Kennedy and the British prime minister Harold Macmillan agreed to “liquidate President Sukarno”, according to a CIA agent who summed up their off-record conversation. The two governments committed themselves to provoking a clash between the army and the PKI, presuming a defeat for the well-organised, but unarmed, political party.

Secret US national security documents explicitly endorsed the use of all feasible covert means to prevent Indonesia from falling under communist control. In 1960 the USA’s National Security Council (NSC) proposed that a premature PKI coup would justify the army’s destroying the PKI.

‘The British government’s support for this murderous counter-revolution was part of long-standing British practice...’

Britain became the largest seller of arms to Indonesia’s army – including bombs, ground-attack aircraft and riot-control vehicles.

From 1962 the US government sharply ramped up its aid to the army and also trained 2,100 Indonesian military personnel in the USA.

In February 1964, the British prime minister Alec Douglas-Home agreed a division of labour in Southeast Asia with US president Lyndon Johnson. The US government would support Britain’s role in Malaysia, and the British would support the US war on Vietnam.

From summer 1964, the US State Department developed an operational plan for political action in Indonesia. The NSC’s secret 303 Committee approved the proposed covert action programme, with immediate effect, on 4 March 1965.

The British government joined in the plotting. The Foreign Office approved the NSC idea of a premature PKI coup, predicting that the PKI might take many years to recover if they were soundly beaten.

A Dutch intelligence agent said that in September 1964 NATO intelligence agencies were organising a premature communist coup. This would be foredoomed to fail, providing a legitimate and welcome opportunity to the army to crush the communists and disempower Sukarno.

On 1 October 1965, the premature coup desired by the USA and Britain took place, the work of a small group of PKI persons who arrested and killed six generals in order to prevent a military coup, they said.

Immediately, army general Suharto then organised the real coup d’état; he later became president. The British government did all it could to help the army smash the PKI. The Royal Navy escorted a ship full of Indonesian troops down the Malacca Straits so that they could join in the killing.

On 5 October 1965, the British ambassador to Indonesia, Andrew Gilchrist, called for “early and carefully [planned] propaganda and psychological war activity to exacerbate internal strife” to help ensure “the destruction and putting to flight of the PKI by the Indonesian Army.”

Air Marshall John Grandy, head of Britain’s Far East Command, recom-



Djakarta Communist leader Njono going on trial in the aftermath of the 1965 seizure of power. He was executed in 1968.

mended using propaganda and psychological warfare to “try and ensure continuing civil war in Indonesia.”

In the name of destroying communism, the army destroyed all the people’s organisations, especially the trade unions and peasant associations.

Through manipulation of the media and covert propaganda outlets, Britain ensured that news coming into Indonesia supported the stories that the Indonesian army was spreading.

Gilchrist reported in April 1966 that its propaganda pressure on Indonesia had been effective in helping to break up the Sukarno regime. Grandy considered that Norman Reddaway, a Foreign Office official with a background in anti-communist propaganda, had made an outstanding contribution to the campaign.

Mass murder

The Indonesian army carried out a programme of extermination – the mass murder of an estimated 500,000 to 1 million innocent, unarmed civilians, maybe more. A US diplomat provided lists of Indonesian communists to Suharto’s forces when the mass killings began. The NATO powers assisted as much as they could: the killings advanced NATO’s global anti-communist crusade.

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February 1966 in the aftermath of Suharto's

British policymakers celebrated the killings. On 18 March 1966, Gilchrist told the Foreign Office that Suharto's seizure of power "must be one of the most sweeping, yet skilfully and constitutionally engineered purges of government in a world where violence and lawlessness in the change of governments has become all too familiar."

Indonesia was forced back to exploitation by foreign, mainly US, capital, with the usual policies – privatisation, spending cuts, guarantees for foreign investors, wage cuts, rule by the IMF and the World Bank.

The operation to destroy the PKI – especially the use of deliberate provocation, psychological warfare tactics, and death squads – became the acknowledged model for many other covert anti-communist operations, especially those conducted by the USA in Central and Latin America from the 1960s onwards. US journalist Vincent Bevins called this "The Jakarta Method", in a 2020 book of that name which goes into detail about the motivation and actions of the US.

The British government's support for this murderous counter-revolution was part of long-standing British government practice. The Foreign Office generally preferred a strong military regime to a communist regime. Better fascism than socialism. ■

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What do we do? Rooted in our workplaces, communities and trade unions, we use every opportunity to encourage our fellow workers and friends to explore how Marxism can be applied to Britain now. Marx's understanding of capitalism is a powerful tool – the Communist Manifesto of 1848 explains the financial 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 was the first, indispensable step. Now begins the fight for real independence.

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

We hold regular public meetings around Britain as well as online meetings, 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.

So why join the Communist Party? What 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. We learn from each other. 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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Reject the damaging productivity myth

'The employing class has used productivity comparisons to restrict or even to close down production in Britain. This is not progressive or good for British society, just the opposite...'

TOO OFTEN discussion about productivity in Britain is about British workers not working hard enough. But increases in productivity stem from investment, in new plant and machinery and workers' education and skills. The real story is a capitalist class who have been on an investment strike and a training blockade.

Automation makes work less physically demanding and reduces the labour time needed for production. But greater fixed capital is needed to buy automated plant and machinery; that's what British capitalists won't do.

Workers could see increased automation as a road to production based on social needs rather than profit motives, a road to a less oppressive way of working. But the catch for capitalists is that automation reduces the scope for extracting high levels of surplus value from labour. Instead the tendency is for the average rate of profit to fall.

Workers could also use automation to shorten the working day, favouring workers against capital. More fundamental would be to challenge the notion that maximum profit gives the best result, and to oppose allowing productivity to dominate the way that labour and capital are deployed.

The employing class has used productivity comparisons to restrict or even to close down production in Britain. This is not progressive or good for British society, just the opposite. Considering only productivity, without taking into account the impact of restricting or stopping production on working class wellbeing, is socially destructive.

Productivity is used as a weapon against workers, increasing toil and alienation. Turning this round should be the central focus for those who want change – to rid ourselves of economic repression along with its political advocates.

Such a change in working class thinking is not easy to develop. Economics seems too complicated, and too often people lack confidence in their ability to change things. Yet a reluctance to engage allows those wanting to prevent change to promote pretend solutions.

Regional devolution is one example of this

pretence. It uses productivity to weigh up regional advantages and disadvantages and then to determine the location – or dislocation – of industry and commerce. But this promotes mindless and damaging regional competition. Highlighting the comparative advantages and disadvantages of one region over another leads to even greater disparity between them.

An integrated unified British economy would be far more socially beneficial. Mutuality would mitigate the advantages and disadvantages of geographic location. Industry and commerce could be more evenly allocated throughout the country.

The same advocates of regionalism are also advocates for the so-called efficiencies of global markets. They think a country or region that trades for products it can buy more cheaply from another country or region is better off than if it had made those products itself.

This type of spurious economics – free trade economics – has laid Britain low, preventing the development of a wide range of skills and factories that would otherwise support British self-sufficiency. Instead industries have been laid to waste. Just look around the country if you think this is an exaggeration – attacks on steel and chemicals production are just the latest examples.

The British working class has to act for its own salvation. In part this entails rejecting economic wrong headedness. The profit motive – fundamental to capitalist production – has become a barrier to social development.

A focus solely on productivity is destructive, unless it is part of a working class determination to work for our own class ends and needs – impossible within the capitalist mode of production. Once workers grasp the consequences, there is nothing to prevent productivity being just one influence in the social regulation of production upon a definite plan, not a justification for closing industries.

The rise of automation has brought us close to the point where social good, not profit, could determine how we run the economy. We say, the working class must seize the opportunity to run the economy. ■

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