

WORKERS

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NET ZERO: A MONEY MACHINE FOR FINANCE CAPITAL

CHANGE People power

BRITAIN No to devolution!

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FARMING Land is for food

FOOTBALL Tainted beauty

ECONOMY Unsustainable

EU No going back

GRID On the edge

ENERGY Insecure

plus Historic Notes,
News, Reviews
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WORKERS



Power to the people

REAL POLITICAL power, not the parliamentary charade, lies in the ability of a class or a nation to make change and carry it through. And at present, that power resides within the capitalist class and not where it should be, in the working class.

The ways in which workers are marginalised and excluded are legion. There is no meaningful debate about so many vital things – energy costs, net zero, immigration, jobs, the loss of industry, the lack of opportunity for youth, the decline in education, health and other services, the dire state of infrastructure, the decline in social and cultural cohesion – and so much more.

More damaging still is self-exclusion – refusal by workers to stand up, enter the debate, take charge despite everything that is thrown at them. Is the alternative to acceptance of capitalism just too hard and unknown to contemplate? Or is it deliberate avoidance of what has to be done?

In the end it does not matter why workers have let capitalism continue unchecked in Britain. The crucial first step is for workers to start to talk openly about the state of our nation, without fear or favour. That means taking power into their own hands and seeking a collective solution to the way forward.

Workers whose thoughts and ideas conflict with the ruling class must no longer be rejected out of hand and silenced. The bad ideas will just grow if we don't allow free debate.

Workers can't leave it to others. Salvation will not come from any political party. Not from the Labour Party, with its history of reaction, nor from any of the parties seeking to supplant it – the Greens, Reform, Conservatives, and their petty devolution-motivated imitators. All are wedded to capitalism.

Workers are told that our masters know best and that it is self-evident what should be done. And that to carry out these policies a return to the EU and more devolution within Britain are necessary – again with scarcely any debate.

Sure – any opposition to ruling class orthodoxy is bound to be slapped down. Any problems with their policies and actions are denied, and anyone questioning them is demonised.

Capitalism can't be reasoned with; it is an economic force. All that matters is profit and the rate of return on their capital. Continue to allow capitalism and the market to decide what happens, and you open the way to political and economic decisions that damage our lives.

But turning a blind eye and hoping the problems will somehow go away is no solution. Capitalism never leaves workers alone. While workers individually may feel powerless to change their lives, the nightmare of what workers might do collectively dominates ruling class thinking, and always has.

It's time to make their nightmare come true. ■



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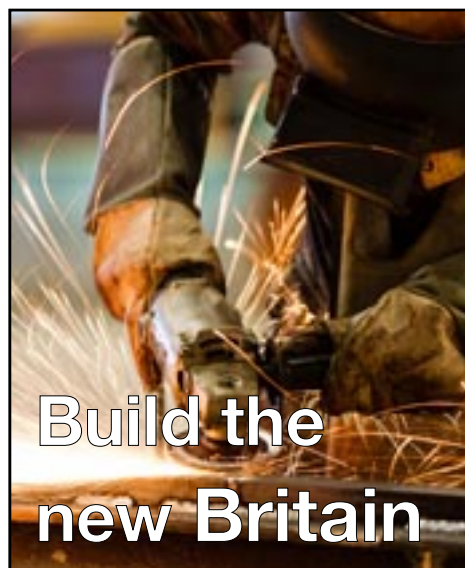
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Build the
new Britain

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Workers

National Grid on the edge

SOMETHING ODD is happening with the national grid. Details are emerging about potential failures by the National Energy System Operator (NESO), the government-owned body charged with keeping the power on.

The stability of the national electricity supply is paramount. Unplanned power cuts or voltage drops are not just inconvenient – they are costly and potentially life-threatening.

Two reports have just been published into events this June. One was the result of an independent investigation into whistleblower allegations of corporate interference in operational decisions on 23 June. The other was an Ofgem preliminary technical report on how the grid coped during the heatwave.

The allegations of interference were not substantiated, but the investigation turned up significant issues with record keeping and procedures that NESO management has agreed to rectify.

More important was the finding that five network constraints (physical limitations on the system) had been breached with no options to mitigate them, as well as confusion about the potential impacts.

This is serious: respected industry consultants Watt-Logic question whether NESO can claim with any certainty that the grid was secure if its engineers cannot say what a fault would do to the grid at any moment.

Ofgem has been unable to confirm that the electricity supply was secure – and it is still investigating what NESO did during the heatwave. ■

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

MANUFACTURING

New London factory

IT IS NOT often you are cheered up by listening to the news nowadays but on 19 October BBC London news did just that when it reported on the glimmers of industrial regeneration in Southwark, south London.

From the late 1700s to beyond the mid-20th century, London was an industrial powerhouse. But recent decades have witnessed massive deindustrialisation of our capital city.

The recent opening of a new large factory in the heart of London is bucking that awful trend. Hopefully other projects will follow.

The Isembard engineering company, at 160,000 square feet on 3 floors, proclaims it is the largest factory to be opened in London since the second world war and employs 100 people. Isembard makes parts for robotics, defence and aerospace, and it has plans to double its staff over the next year. ■

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

FACTS MATTER

At *Workers* we make every effort to check that our stories are accurate, and that we distinguish between fact and opinion.

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



ON THE WEB

A selection of additional stories at cpbml.org.uk

Heat on the NHS

Five heatwaves this summer exposed the creaking and ill-maintained NHS infrastructure. The problems won't go away and can't be left to management or politicians to solve.

Groundbreaking win on the buses

Arriva bus drivers in London have secured a groundbreaking victory to improve their working conditions, and this will apply to all the capital's buses.

V&A management under the spotlight

Victoria & Albert Museum workers are putting the museum's management under the spotlight with a lively demonstration in pursuit of their ongoing claims on wages and conditions.

Iceland says no to the EU!

The people of Iceland have said no to talks on joining the EU – an assertion of their independence and a significant setback for the EU's strategic aims.

ICR staff win historic pay dispute

Workers at the prestigious Institute of Cancer Research in London, ranging from logistics and store staff to researchers and scientists, have won their 66-day fight for better pay and conditions after their first ever strikes.

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.

Centrica plc



The Rough storage facility in the North Sea off Easington, Yorkshire.

Britain's energy is not secure

THE GOVERNMENT is still failing to decide to save the Rough gas storage facility off the East coast. Its future has been insecure since 2017, so it's not exactly news that the government needs to act to help to keep it open.

When full, Britain's reserves hold less than eight days of average winter demand. In mid-October the level was less than half that. By comparison, Germany has six weeks of reserves, France and Italy more than ten. A prolonged cold snap in the later winter months, a likely occurrence, would leave Britain extremely vulnerable to a gas crisis.

In the face of a volatile marketing and shipping situation, the Rough facility should be a key link in the chain of Britain's resilience. Centrica, which owns British Gas, has proposed to invest £2 billion to develop capacity at Rough. It is seeking government support via a "cap and floor" pricing model, which guarantees minimum returns but limits profits if prices go up.

Despite generous price guarantees forthcoming for other national infrastructure businesses, defence minister Luke Pollard has stated that "...this is a very clear commercial decision for the company." He then said that the government wants greater energy security and less reliance on overseas suppliers. Clearly, though, it's not prepared to invest in this. ■

TOURISM

A tax for England

IN AUGUST Prime Minister Andy Burnham announced an English "tourist tax" on overnight stays as part of his devolution plans. This is more significant than it appears.

Powers to levy this tax will go to new strategic authorities or the increasing number of directly elected mayors. Since 2024 Scottish councils have been able to impose a Visitor Levy. But Scotland does not have mayors with executive powers.

The English charge will not be a simple flat rate. It is designed to be voluntary and uncapped, the rate will vary from authority to authority, mayor to mayor. As well as the 42 million overseas tourists, it will apply to British citizens, even if they work or live in the same council area. Small businesses and cash-strapped working class families will take the greatest hit.

Revenues will be invested locally, at the behest of those mayors and strategic authorities, less accountable than the

councils they replace. According to a report in *The Times* on 23 October, Burnham made it clear that his plan is for mayors to introduce the tax, even if councils object.

The plan has already generated divergence between competing areas of England, with Labour's ten regional and "metro" mayors promising to cap the tax at 5 per cent after warnings from the hospitality industry that jobs could be put at risk.

There is no up-to-date set of figures on which to base such a complicated plan. Surveys based on the ONS Passenger Survey for 2024 were used by the organisation Tax Policy Associates to estimate a resulting fall of six million bed-nights in taxed accommodation, and lost spending between £46 million and £1.5 billion.

Whatever the potential merits locally, compared with the overall size of the British economy and taxation, the levy will raise only a small amount. The move appears to be driven by a belief in devolution for its own sake rather than by national economic policy. ■

CONSTRUCTION

Building barriers

BRITAIN'S LACK of capacity to produce building materials is a fundamental barrier to the government's promise to build seven new towns, says a report from the House of Lords Built Environment Committee.

In March the government announced the new town locations. They include Thamesmead and Milton Keynes, which are hardly new. There's another question: why build anyway on green field sites, destroying farmland and natural habitat.

Reserves of sand and gravel are low. Britain has to import about a quarter of the

building materials used. New towns will require constant and reliable supplies of water, energy and digital connectivity, which the report says represents a "challenge" for the government.

The report finds "minimal spare capacity" in supply of water in particular. It warns new towns will have to compete with industry and new data centres for scarce water. That issue applies across the board to the government's target of 1.5 million new houses.

Houses cannot be built by AI. They need skilled construction workers from many trades. Decades of under-investment in apprenticeships and vocational education will make it hard to recruit the workers. ■



The protest at Glasgow's closed Centre for Contemporary Arts on 20 September followed a 2 hour walk around the city highlighting the many art and music venues that have been shut down or sold off.

Glasgow cuts resisted

GLASGOW CITY Council – run by the Scottish National Party – was forced to reverse its money-saving policy of "fire and rehire" in October. It had previously tried to impose new contracts from January, which its workers opposed.

Over 23,000 workers – represented by the trade unions Unite, Unison and GMB – would have been sacked and rehired on contracts that lowered wages and worsened conditions. This practice will be unlawful under UK law from March 2027.

The tactic was being deployed by the City Council in advance of this ban. The SNP government in Edinburgh refused to act, saying it was a matter for local government.

In September, the City Council entered crisis mode as a budget gap of almost £110 million over the coming two years was confirmed. The reasons for the deficit include its obligations under the long fought for equal pay settlement of 2022 and dealing with the city's homelessness crisis – made worse as the British government clears the backlog of asylum cases without fully supporting local authority costs.

The City Council then started selling off museums and venues, arousing the ire of those working in the cultural sector and their unions, such as Equity, the Musicians' Union and BECTU. A protest movement has now developed with rallies highlighting the closed venues such as the Contemporary Arts Centre. This has gathered support from students from the nearby School of Art, whose famous Mackintosh Building still lies in ruins following two disastrous fires. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 3 November, 7pm

Online CPBML Discussion Meeting (via Zoom)

"No return to the EU!"

False rhetoric about Britain and the EU abounds ahead of the UK/EU summit meeting on 20 November. And Burnham continues with attempts to de-legitimise the Leave vote.

What can and should workers do about these threats to our class?

Come along and discuss. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for an invitation.

Saturday 21 November, 2pm

In person CPBML Public Meeting

"For a sovereign Britain, no return to the EU!"

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

Andy Burnham will be at the UK/EU summit meeting – part of the "reset" of Britain's relationship with the EU – taking place in Brussels the day before our meeting. His divisive claims cannot be ignored as he spreads lies and confusion, hoping there will not be enough opposition to block his plans.

Come along and discuss the latest developments. All welcome. Free entry.

STEEL

More woe

THE BRITISH steel industry has suffered a further blow with the liquidation of Liberty Steels Newport on 13 October. The site employs around 170 people specialising in forging, pressing, stamping and roll-forming. Its future is uncertain.

The company is the latest liquidation in the complex web of companies controlled by Sanjeev Gupta, who acquired the Newport site, formerly Mir Steel, in 2013. A separate property company is not in liquidation and owns at least part of the site. It is reported to have recently secured planning consent for a major data centre. ■

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

From the start of his tenure as prime minister, Andy Burnham fragment Britain, just when unity is most needed...

A united Britain – no to d



Steve Travelguide/shutterstock.com

Ten years to “reset” the UK. More like 10 years of chaos and reaction.

THE PRIME minister says he aims to “rewire the State” and create growth by devolving more power to regions. He also wants Britain to rejoin the EU. This is more of the same that we’ve seen over decades and is not what Britain needs.

Let’s look more closely at devolution, which Burnham is touting as his big new idea. But it’s not a new idea of course – in various guises, devolution has been government policy for decades.

In Scotland, 45 years of devolution demonstrably hasn’t worked. It breeds corruption and doesn’t improve people’s lives. It allows politicians to spend millions on diplomatic and economic links with the EU, and to use public money to promote sepa-

ratism under the guise of “examining constitutional options”.

The founding myth of Scottish and Welsh nationalism is that Scotland and Wales were colonised by England. But this is not true: it ignores the reality of the creation of modern Britain and the struggle between economic classes that forged it.

Emerging

The emerging capitalist class in Scotland, Wales and England created the British state from the middle of the 16th century to the Acts of Union in 1707. The growth of capitalism brought about the growth of the working class, wage labourers.

At times used by the capitalist against

the remains of the old order, workers were nevertheless ruthlessly exploited. Workers soon came to organise to protect their interests and then more widely as they recognised the usefulness of uniting and organising across the land.

Earlier on this was informal. Later on, workers explicitly acknowledged their strength in organising across Britain and saw the benefit of a united Britain to their class. Trade unions were united in the British Trades Union Congress in 1868.

The unity of Britain cannot be taken for granted. Nowadays, attacks go under the banner of nationalism. In September, officials of the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru and Sinn Féin pronounced that the

ham seems to be doing everything in his power to evolution!

United Kingdom and Britain must be dismantled.

They declared instead that the futures of Scotland, Ireland and Wales belong in the EU. With no apparent sense of irony, they say “their” nations have the right to self-determination. They do not even try to hide that their policy of devolution and secession goes hand in hand with subservience to the EU. But the EU is no friend of either the British or the Irish people. It should stay out of our affairs.

The Labour Party is no better: it pursues the same subservient policy. Andy Burnham opened the door to the separatist parties’ antics and their “new framework” when he completely misrepresented the 1998 Good Friday Agreement on a visit to Belfast in August.

Taking a high-handed leaf out of the EU’s book, he declared a referendum on uniting Ireland was off the table. But he has no power to unilaterally change an international treaty. As is becoming his habit, Burnham soon had to “clarify” his remarks, but the cat was already out of the bag.

Default

Successive governments have continually devolved powers to Scotland and Wales since 1979; it has become the default policy. This has taken many steps, sometimes legitimised with referendums, with voters generally hostile or indifferent.

Votes against devolution are seen as only temporary. Close votes or those marginally in favour are seen as an opportunity to push on.

The Blair Labour government enabled a devolved Scottish Parliament with considerable powers, laid the way for devolution in Wales, and in Greater London created the first directly elected mayor in the UK.

The consistency of Labour’s actions over decades suggests that their policy is to break up Britain. The Conservatives use different words, but in effect have done the same.

In response to the 2014 “no” vote against Scottish separation, the Cameron government gave yet more devolved powers to the Scottish parliament.

That government also oversaw significant steps towards devolution in England outside London. It made the 2014 Greater

Manchester Combined Authority Deal, between the local councils and the then Chancellor: an elected mayor was imposed.

Less than a fortnight into his premiership, Burnham issued a paper on his plans for devolution called “Rewiring the State”. Many of the changes outlined were already the policy of the Keir Starmer government and some were already in law.

More for mayors

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 embeds a new layer of government (strategic authorities) and makes a shift towards mayoral rule in local authorities. The government forced the act through, against parliamentary opposition. It gives central government much more control over the structure of local government, with a window dressing of community empowerment.

But that was not enough for the former mayor of Greater Manchester. One of his new ideas is that devolved regions should be able to retain some of the income tax generated in their areas. There are many reasons to think that this might be a bad idea. So is the proposed “tourist tax”.

As well as leading to greater regional disparities (but remember, “growth in every postcode”!), the experience of devolved income tax in Scotland is hardly encouraging. The House of Lords was already enquiring into fiscal devolution. There are many pertinent questions – not least concerns about lessened accountability.

The proposal to align public services with the boundaries of strategical regional authorities will bring further changes. A wide range of local services will be included – most likely local transport, housing, innovation, local energy, cultural investment, education and employment, policing, fire and rescue.

And the creation of “deputy mayor roles with responsibility for key public services” strongly implies that responsibility for services affected will lie with the mayor’s office rather than with regional local authorities. This brigade of deputy mayors will be appointees of the mayors: neither elected nor civil servants.

The experience of mayoral government in London is that the mayor’s office

‘Talk of “localism” is no more than rhetoric. There is no intention to move power away from Westminster and closer to ordinary people...’

increasingly overrides local decisions. For example, if a local authority in Greater London turns down a planning application for a residential development of more than 50 homes, it must notify the mayor’s office.

Very few applications are subsequently declined. Suspicions are that developers are squeezing more than 50 homes on to plots to get a hearing from the mayor’s office and sidestep local concerns.

Talk of “localism” is no more than rhetoric. There is no evident intention to move power away from Westminster and closer to ordinary people. Quite the opposite – another tier of government takes power away from communities and elected local councillors. Local councils will lose even more of their planning powers, and all their transport powers, to strategic authorities led by the mayor.

Many people are alarmed about these plans. A group called National Residents for Civic Accountability has been formed to fight for public accountability. It argues that “residents should be able to participate in civic life without being dismissed, marginalised, or excluded from decisions that shape their local environment.”

And some local authorities have launched or threatened judicial review proceedings against the plans, although this is likely to delay rather than halt them.

These are small and welcome steps, but a much wider challenge will be needed to roll back the fragmentation pursued by this government. ■

There is a growing realisation that increasing dependency presents many risks...

Industry and Britain – the

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, via Flickr (CC BY-ND 2.0)



Manufacturing the Mini, Oxford.

IT HAS become commonplace to say that British industry needs to be rebuilt or revitalised.

Not only is the British economy more exposed to shortages and price increases than it ought to be, but important skills and jobs are lost. Even Labour ministers have jumped on the bandwagon and have said we must reindustrialise. What they mean by that is another matter.

But beyond these observations, there is little agreement about what needs to be done and the reasons why this has happened.

First of all, it is important to understand what is meant by industry. Simply, it is the application of hand and brain to the material world to produce what people need to live and thrive. A truism, yes, – but all too

often this is overlooked or the consequences ignored.

Industry is not just about factories making things – it includes extracting and processing raw materials, designing products, transporting them and everything in between. Without this our modern material world would not exist. Services, whether education, health or finance all depend on manufactured goods – and increasingly so with the use of IT in all its forms.

Discussion

Ideas that somehow Britain can do without industry do not stand up. When you come down to it, all that means is buying manufactured goods elsewhere. This dependency should be at the forefront of every discussion about the economy and work.

The counter argument put forward is that making things in Britain is too expensive and unaffordable and in any case Britain cannot hope to make all that it needs. That is a false view which confounds two factors: and it leads to dependency on the USA, the EU or somewhere else.

Britain has not somehow evolved into a nation that is beyond basic manufacturing activity or needs. The removal of industry is the result of deliberate political and economic decisions – affecting modern hi tech industry as well as fundamental basic industries. To say that there will always be the need for imports is merely a cloak to justify destruction.

Few other countries in the world seem to disregard industry as is the case in Britain. Developing countries are keen to show that they are capable of manufacturing and selling their goods. And already developed countries are protective of their own industry, even those within the EU.

It is paradoxical that the oldest industrial country, Britain, is the one which is abandoning manufacturing industry. This isn't accidental, nor is it an organic and inevitable development. Without understanding that, it is impossible to begin to challenge and change it.

The problem is about who decides where capital is invested and in which industries. That's fundamental to the way capitalism works. Those who produce the value do not decide what is produced or where.

This is not just academic, it is real and concrete. Capitalists – employers – will shift work abroad or just close if profits aren't enough, or are not growing fast enough. The needs of Britain's people are secondary.

This is played out in ways small and large – the long destruction of industries like steel and ceramics, the more recent and no less important dismantling of petrochemicals, the closure of the only carbon dioxide bottling plant – and many more.

The overwhelming current issue for industry is high energy costs. Failing to address that amounts to deliberate destruction, as a paper from the Great

on imports of manufactured goods, food and energy

e need to rebuild

‘The government is more focused on aligning Britain with the EU plan on tariffs...’

British Business Council sets out in detail.

Trade unions fight the impact of inflation on living standards and to keep jobs. But in the end these are defensive actions. More is needed to protect and develop industry – and that requires a change in the way workers respond to these threats.

And union members might ask why MakeUK – the former Engineering Employers Federation – is clearer about the threats to industry from high energy prices than the TUC, obsessed with net zero. Some unions, notably Unite and GMB, have challenged the government on this – the rest need to get behind them.

The Starmer government issued a policy document in 2025, *The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy*. This reads more like a boastful wish list than a guide to action: it opens, “We have a record of extraordinary research and innovation; we are champions

of openness and free trade; and we continue to be a magnet for international talent and capital.”

And the new administration frequently talks about reindustrialisation. That is in response to the concern of many people, trade unions and even businesses. And in itself, this is a positive step.

But so far there are few signs that this is any more than raising a slogan while at the same time doing the opposite. Burnham shares the belief of his predecessor that private businesses are the dynamic factor of growth, so long as the government pays to support them.

Look at Jaguar Land Rover, which has announced a cut of 4,000 jobs over two years. That is small compared with Volkswagen, which is cutting more than 50,000 worldwide. The government has been cautious in what it says about any support for JLR, which produces relatively expensive vehicles.

Wanted: a plan

A more strategic approach is to ask if there should be a plan to manufacture more affordable products to compete with or prevent import of Chinese cars. Instead the government is more focused on aligning Britain with the EU line on tariffs. That may help protect VW, but does nothing for British manufacturing.

What, then, is the answer?

For starters, workers could call on the

government to do a reset – but with British industry. This might include the following.

- End the flirtation with the EU; they don't have Britain's interests in mind.

- Ditch the net zero target, an avoidable millstone.

- Focus on reliable energy generation in Britain. This requires nuclear power as well as for the moment gas, and yes renewables. Above all, this mix requires planning, investment and direction.

- Set procurement by default to prefer British products, starting with public contracts. Multinational companies and UK governments should not be able to hide behind the restrictions in World Trade Organization and competition laws.

- Invoke wider national economic interests when considering foreign takeovers.

- Direct scientific and technical education at all levels towards production. And end the farce of fake apprenticeships.

- Identify key projects, sites and concentrations of industry to promote. For example, at Grangemouth the government has promised repeatedly that there is £200 million available for investment to replace the loss of industry there. But it should not have been let go in the first place, and so far there have been only promises with little sign of real investment.

Shaping the public debate on these lines would be a good start in retaining and rebuilding British industry in the interests of Britain and its people. ■

CPBML public meeting

Saturday 21 November, 2pm

“For a sovereign Britain, no return to the EU”
Britons Protection, 50 Great Bridgewater Street,
Manchester M1 5LE

Andy Burnham will be at the UK/EU summit meeting the day before our meeting. Spreading lies and confusion, he hopes there will not be enough opposition to block his plans. What should workers do about these threats to our class?

Come along and discuss the latest developments. All welcome. Free entry.



One day the Chancellor has no money, the next day things finances doesn't change that quickly. You have to look beh

The economic state of B



Kirsty O'Connor/HM Treasury (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

Chancellor John Healey speaks to apprentices after delivering a growth speech at the Manufacturing Technology Centre in Coventry. But he will have to take account of the ever-rising public debt (see inset from debt-clock.org, as it stood on 22 October 2026).

MUCH HAS been said ahead of the Budget on 28 October (after *Workers* went to press) about the need to spend on defence and that Britain cannot afford welfare payments at the level they have been.

The country's finances are indeed unsustainable, though not for the reasons the government and economists tell us.

Reality has arrived after 18 years of quantitative easing. As is well known, this amounts to inflationary money printing. But it has also been used to switch commercial

bank losses over to the public purse. Little of lasting value has been created.

Sleight of hand

To cover this sleight of hand we now hear government expressions such as, "fiscal discipline is the bedrock of economic stability and national security". Every Chancellor announces a set of "iron rules" to achieve those aims.

Immediately prior to 2007 the yearly cost of servicing the national debt – the

interest paid – was around £29 billion. Now, the British working class are expected to pay around £120 billion and counting. The annual financial burden including bank bailouts is broadly four times greater than immediately prior to the crisis.

The underlying debt continues to rise. In September it stood at over £3 trillion for the first time, equivalent to 94 per cent of gross domestic product. The trend is inexorably upwards – passing £1 trillion in 2010 after the financial crisis and £2 trillion in

s are looking up. But the underlying state of Britain's
hind the headlines to understand what's going on...

Britain

2020 during the pandemic.

Workers have nothing to show for this – and have suffered years of low wage rises, followed by a sudden spike in inflation.

It could be tempting to say nothing has changed in Britain since 2007/2008. But this view overlooks the political change that has taken place.

Unlike 18 years ago, the main political trend is for British national independence, along with calls for an integrated British economy that has national planning at its heart. Even if we don't yet know how to achieve that.

Unsurprisingly the ruling class, capitalists and employers, try to hinder such progress. The government, acting as its mouthpiece, has come up with the pretext that “growth” is being curtailed by central decision making.

They say that Britain's economy can be revived through regional devolution. Apart from trying to create regional political division, these utterings have no economic foundation. More regional market competition simply tries to hide the rotten heart of destruction and division.

Regional failures

Look at the regional failures that already exist, such as regional water, regional electricity, regional gas, regional railways and so on. All are fragmented, privatised monopolies many of which are not local but foreign owned. Their capital has been sucked out, leaving them mostly indebted.

Another thread to the government “growth” story is that British reindustrialisation can be achieved through military weapons production. In other words an increase in weapons production can become Britain's industrial policy in exchange for more taxes and cuts elsewhere in the economy.

The first point to remember is that a US call for NATO countries including Britain to increase military spending was made some time back. So the British government is simply going along with an instruction from its supposed ally.

As for fiscal discipline and growth, offensive weapons built not to protect our own borders but to attack others don't produce tangible value. Instead the resource

and labour embodied in offensive weapons only produce inflation and death.

Quite simply behind the government expression of “keeping Britain safe” lies an inflationary dead hand: resources are used up without producing tangible domestic value. In fact making offensive weapons is similar to saving commercial banks by money printing. Both help cause inflation but are devoid of the ability to create any use value for workers' benefit.

On the other hand defending our borders by developing a suitable armoury for that purpose is a necessary cost that should be incurred. Defending borders is not something the British ruling class considers useful; but using offensive weapons to attack other countries many miles away they say is useful.

British workers have realised quite quickly that Andy Burnham is wearing the same political “emperor's new clothes” as his predecessor. And by the same measure, they have been seen as no change and an illusion, truly “he has nothing on”. So don't look to the Budget for any encouragement.

The working class struggle for an independent Britain and a genuine national economic plan continues. A ten year economic plan is due to be released by this government in November. Don't look there either.

Since 2016 previous British governments have made similar efforts. After a

‘Behind the government talk of “keeping Britain safe” lies an inflationary dead hand: resources are used up without producing tangible domestic value...’

quick fanfare, the plan is quietly put aside.

Possibly, a ten year plan this time around is meant to sound more impressive. Well it's not. Ten years is a very long time: the longer the period of projection, the less likely much will come of it. And if your plans are faulty in the first place, they will not improve over time. Any planner worth their salt will tell you that.

No doubt comments such as “give them a chance” will be heard again. Well no, what their planning “puff piece” will seek is distraction to avoid people looking down at their feet and seeing the rubbish they are standing in. ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's series of public, in-person meetings continues in Manchester on 21 November on the renewed attempts to reverse Brexit. All meeting details will be published on What's On, as well as in our eNewsletter, and at cpbml.org.uk/events.

M As well as our in-person meetings, we hold regular Zoom discussion meetings – the next one, on the dangers of devolution, is on Tuesday 3 November at 7pm, also about defending Brexit. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for an invitation. We also run study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further.

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.

So much about the government's policy of reaching net zero start looking at the billions and trillions of pounds involved

Net zero: a money machine



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Green investment levels – and profits– are set to soar exponentially.

WHY IS capitalism so keen on net zero by 2050? Any sane, rational person would wonder why successive governments have been happy to decimate industry, impoverish households and jeopardise energy security when even a slower and more rational approach would save jobs and lower the cost of living.

Any sane person might wonder why Britain has been leading the charge to net zero by 2050. Why?

Heed the advice of Deep Throat in *All the President's Men*: "Follow the money". When you do, you'd almost think that the concept of net zero by 2050 was invented purely to make money for finance capital – because that's what it has ended up doing.

Not that finance capital invented the idea, and it is even less capable of convincing the world to back it.

What finance capital is very good at, though, is recognising and seizing opportunities to make a profit. More than that, it knows how to create the conditions for profit to continue to flow.

Any sane person would be in favour of lowering carbon emissions where practical and affordable. But what Britain has is neither practical nor affordable.

For finance capital, the key concept is not net zero per se but the target, net zero by 2050. Once a target was set, governments and companies had to try to make sure it is reached.

Imposed

Big investors realised at once that a big business opportunity had arrived. A whole new set of industries, a whole new set of markets, imposed on the world and need-

ing investment. But they wanted big incentives as well. And they pushed the incentive agenda wherever they could, for instance through the UN Environment Programme Finance Initiative.

The UN said the investors underlined "the importance of investment-grade policy

'For finance capital the key concept is not net zero per se, but the target, net zero by 2050...'

ero by 2050 doesn't seem to make any sense – until you
d in getting there...

ine for finance capital

which will enable institutional investors to allocate capital towards climate change solutions, including appropriate government incentives to compensate for heightened risk and sufficient scale of technology deployment”.

They also emphasised “that long-term policy stability is critical and retroactive changes can significantly damage investor confidence”.

The language is obscure, but the meaning is clear. “Investment-grade policy” means issuing bonds with cast-iron guarantees from governments, which means the bonds are backed by taxpayers, you and me. “Appropriate government incentives” means giving money to finance capital. “Long-term policy stability” means no changes for years and years.

In other words, investors wanted governments to underwrite their investments, to boost their profits, and to set those commitments in stone for decades to come.

In June 2019, that is precisely what they got when the May government introduced the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019.

At the end of June, May left. In her final act of spite, she bequeathed Britain Net Zero by 2050. The term “net zero” doesn't actually appear in the legislation. Its first official use was in the press release Downing Street sent out on 12 June – and hit the headlines.

Now the term is so heavily used, and has attracted so much criticism, that in the middle of September the House of Commons Energy Security and Net Zero Committee complained, “The term net zero has become a distraction from the broader aims and the benefits of the energy transition and the politics of the energy transition have become mired in a stale debate on the cost and feasibility of achieving an emissions target.”

A stale debate? What MPs mean is that the country is not convinced.

When the 2050 target was put in UK law in June 2019, Britain was the first major economy to do so, as noted by Energy and Clean Growth Minister Chris Skidmore.

How, then, was/is the net zero target to be achieved? At the most fundamental level, the overwhelming assumption is that

Who invented net zero?

Where did the idea of net zero itself come from? It's an interesting question because the term “net zero” was the preserve of scientists and policy specialists until the second half of the last decade.

Net zero means that any greenhouse gases (mainly CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide) emitted into the atmosphere are balanced by greenhouse gases removed from the atmosphere.

Note: that doesn't mean that no oil or gas is burnt.

The general idea was broadly established as a target at the Paris COP meet-

ing (COP 21) in 2015. But the term “net zero” was not used in the agreement that emerged.

What the Paris COP Agreement actually said was that the aim was to “reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible”, and a balance of anthropogenic [made by human activity] greenhouse gas emissions and removals “in the second half of this century” in the context of “sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty”.

Note: not net zero by 2050, but net zero “in the second half of this century”. ■

“the market” will do it, provided that “the market” has sufficient incentives.

Of course, “the market” is just another term for finance capital. What we are told is that properly incentivised, banks and finance companies will save the world.

And, indeed, the incentives are enormous, wide-ranging and long-lasting. The British government, along with governments around the world, has said that it will be supporting the “green transition” for decades – a certainty that investors have never seen at any other time in history.

Risk free

Instead of heightened risk, what finance capital has got is investment without real risk at all. And it even gets to set the ground rules.

The UK government uses the term green financing when it borrows money on the capital markets to invest in green projects. What is a green project? The government hasn't bothered to define that itself. Instead, explicitly, it uses the definition produced by the International Capital Market Association.

Selling green gilts (government bonds) and Green Savings Bonds (for individuals) had, by mid 2025, raised £51 billion for the government (Green Savings Bonds account for about £2 billion of this total).

These incentives are replicated around the world. No wonder, then, that for the past four years banks and investment com-

panies have made more money out of the financing of green projects than they did from investing in fossil fuel production. That's according to Bloomberg.

Much of this is not actually investment by the banks – it's fees for facilitating other investors. Every time a bank facilitates a transaction, it takes a cut. A cut from financing a project, then another cut from selling it on, and another for refinancing. The merry-go-round can go on and on. Easy money.

Providing finance to reach net zero has become a major part of the world's banking business, and is set to be so for decades.

Britain is not incidental to this. If ministers have their way, London will be the global centre for green financing. The ambition was spelled out by Energy Secretary Ed Miliband in June 2025. The government press release had the bald headline, “Plans for UK to become sustainable finance capital of the world”.

However the idea of net zero began, it is now also a policy for the development of finance capital. The two are now so intertwined that the decline of one would entail the decline of the other.

Carbon has been a commodity for a long time, incorporated into physical matter, sometimes as pure carbon such as diamonds, or graphite. Sometimes as hydrocarbons, such as coal, oil and gas. Now,

Continued on page 14



Continued from page 13

for the first time in history, carbon as an abstract chemical element has become a commodity. Carbon credits are one of the main levers governments have to force manufacturers and industries (see Box 2) to produce products with lower emissions.

The carbon credit market is huge, and growing. According to estimates, the global carbon market – made up almost entirely of government-regulated carbon credits – is set to reach over \$6 trillion by 2033.

Most of this market is centred in Europe, and particularly in Britain, where the market is forecast to reach \$1.5 trillion in 2030. It's a huge number, equivalent to about 80 per cent of the total value of the world's motor industry market.

The numbers relate not to the value of carbon credits in themselves: they reflect the volume of trading in carbon credits, which can be bought and sold multiple times. It's a machine for making vast profits – and all without producing a single thing or even having any noticeable effect on the continuing rise in carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentration in the atmosphere.

That machine was invented in Britain, in the City. On its Global City website, the City of London discloses that Britain

launched the first national pilot of a carbon credit trading scheme in 2002 – and boasts that “many of the technical design features pioneered for the scheme informed the development of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme launched in 2005 and became part of a blueprint for compliance markets around the world.”

That same website says that the total “gross value added” by the UK carbon market is £1.2 billion, and that carbon credits and “related derivatives” worth roughly \$1.4 trillion were traded last year via the UK arm of Intercontinental Exchange. Trading volumes are not the same as production, of course, but \$1.4 trillion is about a third of Britain's entire GDP.

If all this were just about finance and how rich banks might be growing, it would be bad enough. But another insidious result of consistent government policy is that the financing of an entire industry deemed essential for Britain and the world – taking in electricity generation and transmission, housing renovation, transport of all kinds – has been handed by government to finance capital.

All the aspects of green infrastructure have become tradeable commodities. So what happens – whether our homes are properly insulated, the price of electricity, the building of essential new parts of the national grid – depends not on what society needs but on the attractiveness of each new project to banks and investors.

Pressure on manufacturers

The demands from government on auto manufacturers are growing. Yet actual production is declining. In June 2019, when the net zero target was announced, Britain produced some 109,000 new cars. In June 2026, a mere 65,000 new cars were made here: most are destined for export.

This year, a third of cars made in Britain are supposed to be ZEVs, zero emission vehicles. The reality, according to the latest forecast from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, is 27.4 per cent. The gap of 5.6 per cent is filled by buying credits (see Box, opposite).

The targets rise and rise until 2035, when no one will be able to buy a new car or van unless it is fully electric. How long

before we are forced to ditch perfectly serviceable cars and buy new electric ones?

The statistic of 27.4 per cent of new car sales being electric vehicles is just an overall figure, including sales of ZEVs imported from abroad. Astonishingly, there are no publicly available figures for how many new ZEVs sold here are made in Britain.

Not many. In the year to August 2026 just over 3,000 – a mere 6.2 per cent – of the cars sold here by Nissan, Britain's biggest car maker – were battery powered.

The government's handily named Jet Zero Strategy pledges net zero aviation by 2050 from Britain, and by 2040 for domestic flights. Yet the Grangemouth refinery closed last year with no support for potential developments in sustainable aviation fuel. Jet Zero? More like Zero Jets.

The government is currently reviewing its electric vehicle targets, faced with a barrage of complaints from the motor industry that they are unattainable. But with a sizeable proportion of the green finance sector literally banking on the net zero targets, the government may find it hard to make substantial changes.

That's what happens when you put all your eggs in the net zero basket, then set out to make Britain the world's centre for green finance. You create a massive market, and expectations of an even more massive one, and then it's hard to stop.

Green capitalism – surely a contradiction in terms – is not finance capital's main source of income or main focus of activity yet. For that you have to look at, for example, sovereign debt. In fact, ten or even five years ago, the contribution of net zero to financial markets might have been minimal.

But that is changing. Four years ago, one estimate put green financing at 12 per cent of overall market activity in Europe. That same website also estimated that meeting the 2050 net zero target would require a doubling or tripling of investment levels.

That's big money, and good news for finance capitalism, not least because sovereign debt is no longer the ultra safe haven it was thought to be. The green bond market isn't just highly profitable, it enables finance to spread the risk.

The City of London's website estimates

‘The financing of an entire industry has been handed by government to finance capital...’

the potential growth of the market in carbon credits by 2050 as between 50 and 190 times its current size. Hundreds of trillions of dollars. This activity is all driven by net zero targets announced by governments.

All these grandiose targets will require massive amounts of investment in new plant and processes. Management consultants McKinsey estimated in 2022 that between then and 2050 governments and households (that is, higher prices and taxation) would need to invest some \$275 trillion to reach net zero globally.

That figure is vast almost beyond imagining. It is more than eight times the GDP – total market value of all the goods and services produced – in the US each year.

When you follow the money you can see the method in the madness. Banks and investment companies want to keep their certainties, keep their profits. That's why net zero by 2050 will be so hard to shift.

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Credits and profits



Assault on workers

Hard, but not impossible. One consequence of this analysis is that the idiocies and aberrations of net zero policy, the wasteful wind plant here, the factory closure there, the surging cost of electricity, cannot be treated as individual acts of destruction. It is a systemic assault on the working class.

Why should fuel prices be determined by global events when we have what we need in the seas around our islands? Why should the government refuse to fund decarbonisation projects unless there's matching private finance?

Workers in Britain must unite to demand, for example, that the process of decarbonisation is brought fully into public ownership and public control.

Crucially, it must become compatible – ironically, as the 2015 Paris COP Agreement said, with sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. What the market and net zero by 2050 have actually brought us is unsustainable deindustrialisation and an increase in poverty.

The fight will be every bit as revolutionary as the fight for sovereignty and independence – indeed, an essential part of it.

Don't expect help from the Labour

Carbon credits have made billions for Elon Musk.

MANUFACTURERS AND landowners earn carbon credits by making a product that reduces or removes greenhouse gases, or developing a project such as tree planting, or protecting threatened forest land or peat bogs, that contribute to removing greenhouse gases.

A simple way is to make an electric car. In 2023 Tesla made \$2.76 billion by selling carbon credits, given for making electric cars, to what are called “legacy” car manufacturers. That figure was up more than half on the previous year – even though it sold fewer vehicles and overall profits fell by a quarter.

Since 2017, selling carbon credits alone has earned Tesla over \$12 billion.

You can also get carbon credits by buying them. Which is what “legacy” car

manufacturers have to do because they simply cannot meet the demands placed on them by governments. Chrysler is reported to have spent over \$2.4 billion buying carbon credits from Tesla.

In Britain, which produces so few electric vehicles, we have a rigged market that forces companies making cars here to buy carbon credits (without which they will be fined mercilessly). What's more, they are buying them in part from foreign companies selling electric vehicles in Britain. That's primarily Tesla and Chinese manufacturers like BYD and Polestar.

It's a system that hoovers up productive value and transfers it to a financial carbon credit product – in effect, a tax by finance capital on production. ■

Party – or any parliamentary party, for that matter. They cannot and will not oppose finance capital.

The inescapable conclusion is that the working class must develop itself into a force able to run things for an independent Britain. In other words, informed decision

making by workers in the mass who no longer want to be spectators to this mess. ■

• This article is an edited extract from the introduction to a CPBML public meeting in London in October.

Many people would agree that Britain's land should be used for food. But the government is doing nothing to help that, indeed quite the opposite...

Land should be used for

BRITAIN'S SELF-SUFFICIENCY in food has fallen over the past thirty years across ten of the eleven key commodities. This is clearly laid out in a report, *Ready to Grow*, commissioned by the National Farming Union (NFU) and published in September to coincide with Back British Farming Day.

Demand for many of those commodities has risen, due to population increases. That led to increased reliance on imported food.

The NFU described the summer of 2026 as the "toughest summer in a generation". Drought, the rocketing costs of diesel, energy and fertiliser, and an outbreak of bluetongue disease in livestock have all contributed. The Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board report forecasts falls in beef, sheep and pig production, as well as milk production, and increases in imported meat.

Yields are likely to decline, reversing the trend since the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth century toward ever greater productivity of agricultural land.

Dispossession

Over 30 per cent of British farms are farmed by tenant farmers, leasing the land from big landowners. For the tenant farmer, the terms of tenancies mitigate against long term planning. Farmers on short-term Farm Business Tenancies, which typically last three to five years, can't plan in the long term. And tenants face dispossession by landlords who want to take back land for more lucrative ventures, such as housing, solar projects or other "environmental" initiatives.

Farming in England is now supported, supposedly, through Environment Land Management schemes (ELMs), which replaced the EU Common Agricultural Policy's Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). The EU scheme lived on, zombie-like, until 2023, seven years after the Brexit vote.

ELMs are supposed to pay for specific land management actions, through their Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery elements. Critics say that the schemes encourage farmers to take land out of production – as did the CAP!

The SFI in particular caused anger



Tractor at a Sussex ploughing match.

among farmers when online applications were closed six hours after they opened on 22 September 2026. Farmers suspect this was an underhand way to make them vie with one another for a reduced pot of money.

The Rural Payments Agency, which handles the payments, says it issued 2,500 offers from the 12,200 applications it received. It was estimated that only 10 per cent of those eligible were able to make applications.

Furious farmers pointed out that a six-hour window for applications ignored the realities of working life on a farm, and poor

internet in rural areas. A previous round of applications to the scheme had also closed abruptly in 2025.

Red tape

Farmers are also frustrated at the administrative workload – having to provide geo-tagged photos, mapping, and input logs without which they face financial penalties.

Britain has a land area of just under 23 million hectares. About 70 per cent of that is used for agriculture, chiefly arable land for crops, and pasture and grazing land for farm animals. Towns and cities cover around 13 per cent.

ed for greater self-sufficiency in food. Yet the government

farming and food



An understanding of what we have and how best to exploit it to feed ourselves safely and sustainably is crucial to our national future. In May 2026 the government released a Land Use Framework for England and in August the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework. Yet neither document meets Britain's needs.

The framework claims that we have enough land to meet the demands of food production and housing, as well as "climate action" and nature recovery. That's based on the assumption that productivity rises in line with historical averages. It provides for

the removal of 14 per cent of land from agricultural production by 2050!

Around 9 per cent of current agricultural land will be shifted to "climate and nature outcomes". As well as urban expansion that includes habitat creation and carbon sequestration, and more for renewable energy infrastructure, that is to say wind and solar farms.

A 25-year farming roadmap is to be published later this year. It will enforce changes in farming practices. There is a particular risk to upland farming.

Natural England (described by the Tenant Farmers Association as anti-farmer) is imposing its own ideas on stocking rates. The Commons Environment Food and Rural Affairs committee recently heard this means reducing the numbers of sheep upland farmers can graze on the fells – on the basis of no real evidence. Natural England's ignorance of the basics of farming has become notorious.

Too many to feed

Maintaining current production levels is in doubt – and there are questions whether even that would be enough to cope with a growing population. Currently, official projections show the UK population rising to 71 million by 2034 due to immigration, peaking at 72.5 million in mid-2054.

The framework also fails to consider the international factors. Britain imports 40 per cent of its food and is vulnerable to supply disruptions due to conflicts abroad. While the exact nature of such risks is hard to predict, the current impact of wars in Ukraine and the Middle East should really cause the government to give this serious thought. Instead we have the defence minister exhorting us to hoard three days' food!

The National Audit Office published a report, *Resilience of the food supply chain to disruptions*, which examined Defra's actions to secure food supply in the face of catastrophic events such as outbreaks of animal and human disease, extreme weather, cyber-attacks, and energy disruption. It concluded that those actions have failed to ensure the supply chain is resilient to such events, not least because Defra depends on the private sector to manage food supply.

'Britain imports 40 per cent of its food and is vulnerable to disruptions due to conflicts abroad...'

As is so often the way with devolved areas of responsibility, the Land Use Framework, and the National Planning Policy Framework apply to England alone. Might it not be more "joined up" to consider land use across Britain as a whole?

Land is popular as an investment with hedge funds, private equity and overseas wealth funds, particularly in forestry. This has increased as these investors see the potential of trading carbon credits and Biodiversity Net Gain. Major housing, commercial and infrastructure projects are required by law to deliver a minimum percentage of Biodiversity Net Gain above a predevelopment baseline, usually 10 per cent.

The government's drive to rejoin the EU holds further threats for farmers. Already, under the 2025 Common Understanding Agreement between the UK and the EU, the parties agreed to negotiate a new Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement. A report by the Andersons Centre, commissioned by the arable industry body Croplife UK, found that if such an agreement overrides British interests, then British growers could lose 10 per cent of their income and could lose out to imports from more heavily subsidised EU growers.

The report also highlighted the risk of losing the tools Britain currently uses against increased resistance to crop pests if negotiators on the SPS Agreement capitulate to the EU position.

Rejoining the EU, as well as further eroding our food security, would bring down animal welfare standards to those of the EU. It would also open the door to the return of live animal exports, after the ban imposed by the Sunak government. ■

Like a bad smell, capitalism gets everywhere if it's not stopped. We start with football, worldwide...

How capitalism is tainting



IN BRITAIN, football as a game was banned many times by royal decree. As long ago as the fourteenth century our rulers worried about its propensity to bring people together, potentially violently. Our modern game, though, is entirely a product of the industrial revolution.

Football was ever an antidote to work: an escape, something to be enjoyed. But its simplicity is reflected in its resistance to change. For all the talk of recent innovations the basic structure of football remains the same: eleven players, 90 minutes, very few rules.

And football is international. Kicking games are recorded in China over 2,000 years ago, Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, Japan, Mexico and Central America and elsewhere. But Britain's role in developing football parallels its role in the industrial revolution.

Just as Britain became the industrial workshop of the world, modelling its factory system and proletariat for others to follow, so it was British workers abroad who spread "the beautiful game" (a phrase popularised by perhaps its greatest exponent, Pele).

Professionalism among players was a direct product of industrialisation. Workers who were good enough had to be released from their workplaces – factories, mills, mines – to be able to travel, train and play.

The burgeoning railway network made competitive games possible, evolving into regular leagues. Perhaps most importantly, it enabled large numbers of working class men to travel to support their local team.

Big enough to exploit

Gradually of course the bad smell of capitalism crept in. Clubs became big enough to be owned, and crowds became big enough to be exploited. The ubiquitous gambling and advertising began to appear between the world wars.

But owners rarely spent money on facilities for fans. It was this attitude that led to horrendous, and entirely preventable mass deaths and injuries in terrible circumstances. Most notably at Ibrox Park, Glasgow in 1971 where 66 people died and at Valley Parade, Bradford in 1985 where 56 people died.

Stall outside the Emirates Stadium before start of Arsenal's clash with Manchester City in February 2025. The result was a big win for the Gunners – but is it all really about money now?

pped. In this two-part feature we examine its impact on ng the beautiful game

Like so much else, it was during the 1970s when things changed. Clips of the 1970 World Cup in Mexico show little advertising in stadiums but by the 1974 Cup in West Germany it was everywhere.

That decade also saw the arrival of a lumpen element attending games whose violence and general mindlessness drove away those few families and women who had braved the grounds. Minor explosions of violence marred most weekends and mirrored the erosion of class consciousness that blighted the next decade with its embrace of Thatcher.

Eventually the deaths of 39 Juventus fans in Brussels, which led to the banning of English teams from European competition in 1985, and the police-assisted slaughter of 97 Liverpool fans at Hillsborough in 1989 meant that if the British, more specifically the English, wanted their football they would have to change it.

And change it they did. But in doing so they created an opportunity, one that capitalism seized with both hands.

Civilising the game and particularly introducing all-seater stadiums led to claims that the game had been gentrified. What these criticisms missed was the grab that capitalists made for the game. In 1992 the top English clubs broke away from the Football League and set up on their own.

The Premier League is a separate, elite competition based on television revenues. It soon led to foreign ownership of clubs: as a model it has proved eminently exportable. There is now a Primera Liga in Spain, League Un in France, Eredivisie in the Netherlands, all based on the Premier League.

And this profit-extracting model has even been adopted by other sports such as

tennis, snooker and darts. But it is in football that the most developed forms of capitalism can be seen.

A game of four quarters?

In the 1994 World Cup in the USA, the authorities tried to change the age-old rule that games have two halves, substituting them with four quarters so they could have more television advertising.

At this year's World Cup, again in the USA, the authorities and advertisers finally got their way. Games were effectively divided into four quarters: the advertising breaks in each half were called "hydration breaks". All said to guard player safety... even in games played in cool temperatures. Few fans were fooled.

And then there's Manchester City. Or rather the Abu Dhabi Group, as they perhaps should be known. Clubs are now owned by despotic feudal sheiks who run them like the autocratic dictators they are in their own countries.

Manchester City's owner is of the type who makes the laws – holding high office in the United Arab Emirates. This view is what is being tested in the Premier League's case about breaches of its financial rules. Who runs football? Who makes the laws of the sport? Does Manchester City have to abide by Premier League rules?

Some people may think that all club owners are as bad as each other, they're all capitalists. But all capitalists are not the same. In fact some of them are barely capitalists, being more feudal than bourgeois.

Contempt

The contempt with which City's owners have treated the process in which they are now ensnared is breath-taking. This should lift the veil on how those countries in the Gulf – all allies of the British ruling class – are run.

Breaking rules for them is not an issue: they're accustomed to making the rules in the first place. And in truth the problem is not about the club's finances – its actions only become cheating when others abide by the rules.

The overwhelming issue is whether British workers accommodate this, and in so doing become subservient.

'The Premier League profit-extraction model has been adopted by other sports...'

City fans with banners saying "in Khaldoon [the UAE-appointed Club Chairman] we trust" proclaim that they believe the foreign feudal owners rather than the English Premier League, who have found the owners guilty of breaking the financial rules.

More lickspittle still is the view of the British prime minister. He said, among other things, that there should be "no rush to judgement" – typically he tried to draw back a few days later after criticism.

The complaint of everyone except those keen to sportswash Manchester City is that it's taken far too long, not that it's been a rush job! The sport's European governing body UEFA began looking into the club's finances as far back as 2009.

The Premier League's investigation began in December 2018 after media exposures. Also in 2018 HMRC opened a probe into the club's tax affairs; it does not seem to be in a hurry either judging by its response to recent questions from the parliamentary Treasury Committee.

In this sense, football is a microcosm of the society in which it operates. Allowing British capitalists free rein to exploit is bad enough. Kowtowing to a state many aspects of whose legal system are based on Sharia, is reprehensible.

The problem with a bad smell though is that you can't keep going round closing windows to keep it out. At some point you have to remove the source of the stench.

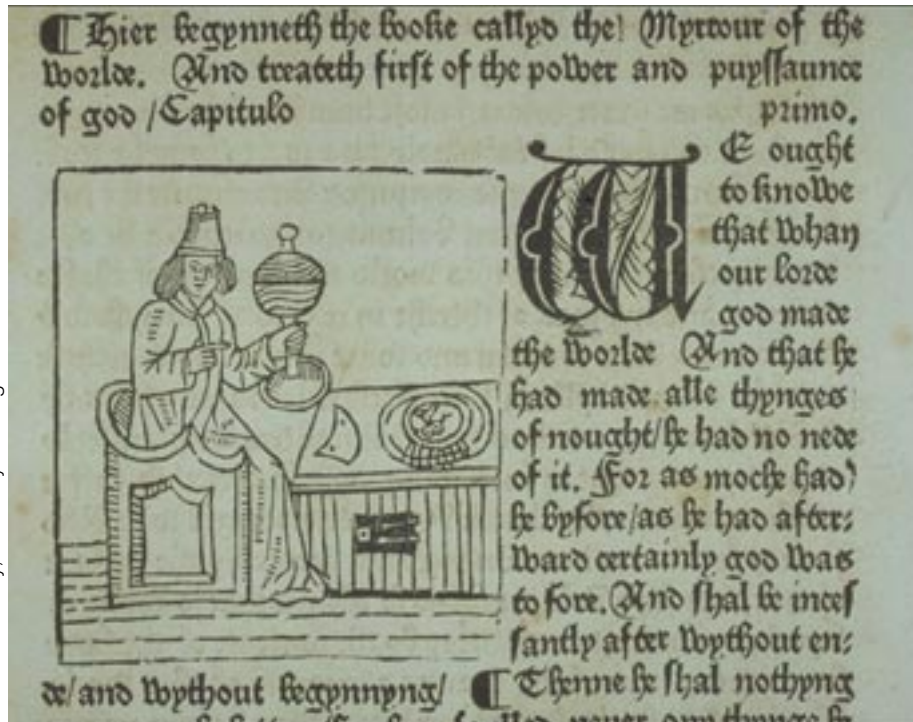
In the next issue we consider the impact of capitalism on the county-based game of cricket. Unlike football, it is almost completely flexible as a game – and indeed, as we shall see, is being flexed to within an inch of its life. ■

'Like so much else, it was in the 1970s when things changed...'

We take books for granted, but the introduction of printing revolution...

Caxton and the printed w

Hunterian Library, University of Glasgow



The start of chapter one of *The Myrrour of the World*, a popular encyclopedia translated from the French by Caxton and printed by him at Westminster around 1490.

THE 550TH anniversary of the introduction of the printing press to England by William Caxton has been rightly celebrated, although rather quietly.

Printing books was a massive cultural step forward. No longer was knowledge locked away in monasteries. This spurred the development of language and literature and paved the way for increased literacy and the interchange of ideas.

A major exhibition, *The English Print Revolution: Caxton and Beyond*, at the University of London's Senate House Library, displayed early printed books to show how printing transformed the country. In the words of the exhibition curator, "spreading ideas that fuelled reform, debate, contestation and discovery".

Westminster Abbey, where Caxton's first press stood, has arranged two talks, *The English Print Revolution* in September and *Caxton and The Printing Press in Westminster*, taking place on 19 November.

William Caxton was a wealthy wool merchant who spent much of his time in

Flanders. Gutenberg had invented movable metal type round about 1450 in Mainz. Printing was invented earlier in China, but its development in Europe came about independently.

As the new printing technology spread around northern Europe, Caxton and others were quick to see its potential. While living in Bruges, Caxton had translated *Le Recueil des Histoires de Troyes*, a courtly romance in French, into English, and arranged for his translation to be printed there, making it the first printed book in the English language.

The Westminster press

In 1476 Caxton set up a press at Westminster within the precincts of Westminster Abbey. Westminster was the seat of government and convenient for the royal court, doubtless a consideration as Caxton hoped to gain royal patronage for his enterprise.

Caxton's output, of which something over a hundred titles survive, shows a canny head for business. Rather than

devotional works, he concentrated on the popular romances and tales in translation which he knew had been so popular with the Burgundian court. Among them were Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, *The Golden Legend* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

The initial market was limited to the wealthy. Caxton, with capital acquired in his time as a wool merchant, was well-placed to establish himself. Apart from the costs of the press itself, what we would now term consumables were very expensive. Paper had to be imported at the time, the first paper mill in England being established about 1490. Vellum, by contrast, was much easier to obtain, thanks to the large sheep population.

Literacy was not widespread in 15th-century England, but beginning to grow, encouraged by the development of grammar schools. London, where printing began, had higher levels of literacy than the countryside. By Shakespeare's time, a thriving print culture had been established.

Mary I, "Bloody Mary", gave the Worshipful Company of Stationers authority to act as a censor of the burgeoning book trade. Her brief reign (1553 to 1558) saw a period of Catholic reaction; she aimed to suppress heretical or seditious publications.

The Stationers, in conjunction with Star Chamber, continued to act as censors, though with a different emphasis, up to the English Revolution. In 1640, one of the early acts of the Long Parliament abolished Star Chamber. This opened a torrent of publications, mostly in pamphlet form, debating the course of the revolution. An attempt to reimpose censorship prompted John Milton to write *Areopagitica*, his closely argued defence of free speech.

Many dialect forms of English existed in Caxton's time. He himself, in his prologue to his edition of *Eneydos*, a translation of the French *Livre des Énéides*, told the story of a merchant from the north who, landing in Kent, called on a housewife and asked her for some "egges".

She replied that she did not speak French. A bystander said that the merchant was asked for "eyren", the Kentish dialect word for eggs. Caxton commented, "Loo, what sholde a man in thys dayes now

g led to a cultural

word

‘Caxton’s decision to standardise on the London Chancery English dialect established those forms as a national language...’

wryte, egges, or eyren? Certainly it is hard to playse every man, by-cause of dyversite and chaunge of langage”.

His decision to standardise on the vocabulary and spellings of the London Chancery English dialect established those forms as a national language, playing a part in the development of a national identity.

Caxton himself did not print the bible in English. The first manuscript translation had been made by John Wycliffe in 1382–1384, nearly a hundred years previously. William Tyndale, who declared, “I defy the Pope and all his laws: and if God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost” printed an English New Testament on the continent that was smuggled into England.

Condemned by the Catholic authorities in the Low Countries, Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake in 1536, reputedly saying as he died, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes”. And months after his death Henry VIII allowed the publication of an English translation of both Old and New Testaments, largely based on Tyndale’s work, and completed by Myles Coverdale.

Once the bible could be read in the people’s language, the people could not only read it for themselves, no longer dependent on the clergy for instruction, but could also make up their own minds. A king’s claim to be anointed by God would no longer be sufficient to ensure his subjects’ obedience. ■

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The evolution of Britain's fishing industry has witnessed many ups and downs. It is tied to the development of industry and the war.

Fishing and the British

BRITAIN IS an island country with a wealth of coastal assets. Fishing here has a long history dating back to prehistoric times. By the sixteenth century, fishing was an extensive and important economic activity around the British coast and increasingly in distant waters.

But it was the industrial revolution which fundamentally transformed British fishing by changing the demand for fish and the ways it could be caught and transported.

Britain's rapidly expanding industrial towns created enormous urban markets. The combination of railway expansion and improved preservation transformed fresh fish from an unaffordable luxury into an important source of protein and oils for workers.

Fishing reflected changes taking place throughout British industry. From the 1880s, steel-hulled steam trawlers increasingly displaced sailing vessels. They were as much a product of the industrial age as railway locomotives.

Larger vessels required more investment. Capitalist fishing companies replaced small family enterprises. Fishing became connected to banks and merchants.

Employers and skippers exercised considerable control over their workers who endured physically dangerous and demanding conditions. Most of our fishing ports have sad memories of vessels shipwrecked with loss of sailors' lives.

At the same time, fishing communities developed distinctive forms of social organisation and trade unions emerged to defend workers' interests.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain possessed a huge, technologically advanced and capital-intensive fishing

industry. It led the world in the scale and sophistication of its catching, processing and distribution.

Fishing was part of an industrial system. It benefited from world-leading manufacturing, finance and maritime trade and also contributed to them. Importantly, the development of fishing helped connect remote coastal communities to national markets.

During the First World War (1914-18) fishing vessels and fishermen became involved in naval operations with their invaluable knowledge of the sea and seamanship. And the fishing fleet helped feed the country.

This relationship continued during the Second World War (1939-45), not least the role of fishing trawlers in rescuing British and French soldiers at Dunkirk in 1940.

The end of the Second World War marked a decisive turning point for fishing. Changes in fish stocks, consumer habits, international competition and post-war economic restructuring all contributed to the industry's long-term decline.

Britain's wider industrial economy was also changing with the loss of heavy industry and the decline of coal and rail freight. The economic environment which had helped produce the nineteenth-century fishing boom was fast disappearing.

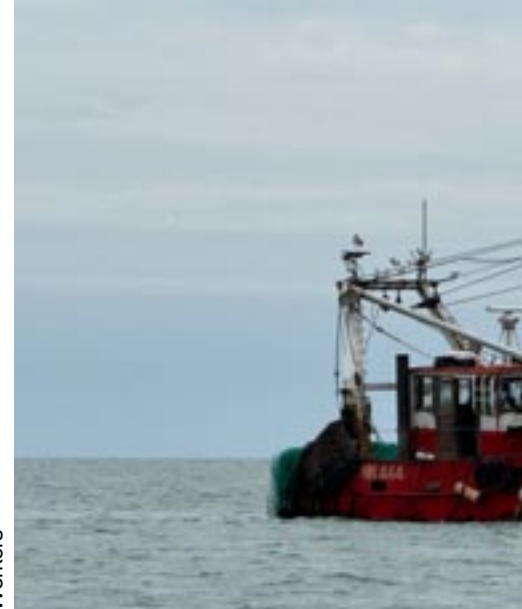
Sophisticated

What remained of the fishing industry nevertheless became more technologically sophisticated, allowing fleets to fish even further away and more intensively.

After 1945, countries increasingly asserted control over larger areas of surrounding waters. Britain extended its fisheries jurisdiction, while Iceland progressively expanded its exclusive fishing zones.

This led to the Cod Wars between Britain and Iceland in the 1970s. The disputes were about sovereignty, national economic interests and maritime power. Britain was no longer the dominant naval and industrial power. Iceland regarded control over its fisheries as vital to its economic future.

In 1973 Britain's entry into the European Economic Community marked a major change. Our fisheries became sub-



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Trawler off Newhaven, East Sussex.

ject to the Common Fisheries Policy. In 1973 Edward Heath's government surrendered our 200-mile fishing limit.

Fishermen suffered a loss of control over local resources. The impact on the home fishing fleet was catastrophic. By the end of our EU membership, vessels from EU nations were taking at least half the total catch in British waters.

Despite economic decline over the last half century, fishing acquired symbolic importance. It became a powerful expression of a particular conception of Britishness, of us as an island, a maritime nation, and a country whose interests extended into the surrounding seas.

Fishing was a frontline issue in the 2016 EU Referendum. It was important to many coastal communities and also to our national identity and sovereignty.

Fishermen showed an extraordinarily high level of support for leaving the EU. Their hope was that Britain would take control of our Exclusive Economic Zone again.

But British governments and their negotiators refused to exercise control over our waters. Instead they betrayed our fishermen by allowing EU vessels to continue to operate in British waters. A further dreadful agreement in 2025 extended EU access to British fishing grounds until 2038.

**'Fishing was a
frontline issue in the
2016 EU
Referendum...'**

many ups and
working class...

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The British fishing fleet has shrunk dramatically. By 2024, there were only 5,232 UK-registered fishing vessels, a 52 per cent reduction since 1994. And around 80 per cent of the remaining vessels are small, under ten metres long.

The British people cannot tolerate our fishing being on the road to eventual extinction. British fishing is linked to industry and independence – developing and declining together.

It will be a disgrace if British fishing disappears, to exist only in the realm of nostalgia, in museums or heritage centres. The attitude of the British people must change. They must press the government to withdraw from the unequal deals with EU and to restore national control over our waters.

Sharpen the dignity of our independence. Stop being bullied. Modernise our port infrastructure. Build more fishing boats again. Reintroduce training and apprenticeships to encourage young people into the industry. End the betrayal! Show we care for the future of fishing by enforcing positive change! ■

• A longer version of this article which looks back before the Industrial Revolution is available online at cpbml.org.uk.

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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 and doers. We work together to advance our class's interests. Every member can contribute to developing 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 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.

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.

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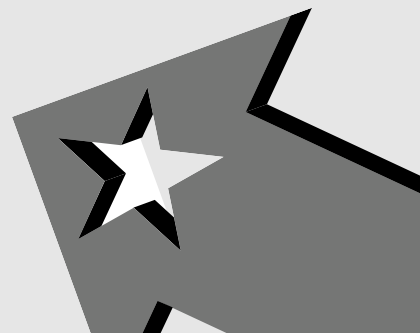
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No return to the EU

‘Burnham says Britain will be better off returning to the EU. That’s the opposite of the truth...’

PRIME MINISTER Andy Burnham is cuddling up to the European Union, trying to find a way back in – and showing his true anti-democratic colours. He is trying to de-legitimise the people’s vote in many ways, to smear the people’s democratic decision.

He insults the British people’s intelligence and denies its democratic agency when he implies that Russia won it (without offering evidence, of course). Those who voted to leave the European Union did so because they thought that decisions about Britain should be made in Britain. They were the least likely to be swayed by voices from afar.

He says that Britain will be better off returning to the EU. That’s the opposite of the truth. He says that Brexit has done more harm than good – but also boasts that Britain has the “fastest growth in the G7” (which includes EU members France, Germany and Italy).

Blaming Brexit for the unacceptable levels of legal and illegal immigration is a similar distortion. Successive governments have deliberately increased immigration for two decades or more. They wanted to drive down wages and to overload our communities and services, and still do.

Any harm is due to capitalism, not to Brexit. For example, chemical exports to the EU have been falling steadily, but this is nothing to do with Brexit. It is entirely due to Britain’s high energy costs, emissions trading schemes, the failure to invest in new production facilities, and a shortage of raw materials because so many of British oil refineries have been closed.

A total of 17,410,742 people voted for leave, more people than have ever voted for anything in British history. More voted for Leave than voted for Thatcher in her 1979 victory or for Blair in his 1997 victory (fewer than 14 million in each case). Fewer than 10 million voted for Starmer in 2024.

Burnham has no mandate whatever to overturn the 2016 decision for independence. Given the manner in which he slid into office,

he has no mandate for anything. Yet he wants to “dynamically align” Britain with the EU across the board – starting with the UK-EU “reset” summit in November.

But choosing to obey the EU’s Sanitary and Phytosanitary regulations, for example, would only bind Britain to buying imported food from EU producers rather than from cheaper and more efficient non-EU sources. This would only increase the country’s agrifood deficit with the EU.

As capitalism fails to meet our needs, it increasingly resorts to its ultimate solution – war, the mass destruction of people and productive forces. The EU is boosting NATO’s hardening drive to ramp up the ever more destructive war against Russia.

The EU is also using northern Ireland to disrupt Ireland’s struggle for independence. Ireland’s future is for the Irish people to decide, without any outside interference.

Re-opening the debate over EU membership opens the door to separatists seeking to overturn the result of the 2014 unity referendum in Scotland. And Burnham’s fixation with the EU’s favourite device of devolution plays into the separatists’ hands, validating their endless demands for ever more powers.

Labour’s Emily Thornberry blurts out what almost all Labour MPs believe – that Brexit is “not a sacred cow”, that we should just “get over it”.

Rebuilding requires that a country truly runs its own affairs. The country cannot rely on the EU, or on foreign inflows, to rebuild industry. Britain can’t reindustrialise when key decisions about the economy are made in foreign boardrooms which optimise returns for their shareholders.

Workers cannot look to any parliamentary party to serve their interests. Burnham has already given away vital national interests, even before the November summit. This government is a serious threat to us all. ■

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