

# WORKERS

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016 £1



**Scrap fees, write off the loans, open the books!**

## **FIGHT FOR HIGHER ED**

**NHS** Self-sufficiency matters

**After the Vote** What now?

**Energy** Take back control

**Football** A chance to rebuild

**Fancy That** Brexit bloomers

**Rail** Safety strikes

*plus* News,

Book Reviews

Historic Notes

and more

# WORKERS



## Get on, get out

WE HAVE MADE our decision to leave the EU, a brave, revolutionary act, but not a revolution. The British people made a declaration of independence. Now we have to get the independence we voted for.

Some are still, months after the decision, fighting the campaign, commenting on comments made by the national leaders of the campaigns. But the referendum was about the EU, not a vote on the comments of politicians.

Our vote was decisive not divisive, positive not negative. Divisive are those who say that Leave voters were just old, white and stupid. Negative are those who talk down Britain and its people, who say that Britain has no future outside the EU.

Some call for another referendum, saying the majority was not big enough to be decisive. But leave voters outvoted stay voters by a majority of 3.8 per cent – a larger margin of victory than in eight of the 19 postwar general elections. Should we have rerun those eight elections too?

The turnout, reflecting how much this mattered, was 72.2 per cent, higher than in last five general elections. Should we have rerun those too?

Those who call for another referendum want us to stay in the EU. So do those who call for the free movement of labour and for staying in the single market. Staying in the single market, the European Economic Area – the “Norwegian model” – would mean still giving the EU £11 billion a year and accepting the EU diktat of free movement of labour.

Who wants the free movement of labour? Those in the employing class who can make the minimum wage a maximum wage, spread their zero-hours contracts, and avoid having to pay to train skilled staff. So much easier to poach them from abroad and damn the consequences for those countries – and for ours. Who supports it? EU President Jean-Claude Juncker calls for No Borders.

Note, this is about “labour”, not people. It is the free movement of wage slaves, people lured by false dreams and spurred on by the devastation wrought in their own countries by eurozone-enforced poverty and decline, such as Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Jeremy Corbyn told the *Guardian*: “My view is that if we have a single market with free movement of capital, there has to be free movement of labour.” He’s right – they are two sides of the same coin, the coin of the interests of international capital. A Corbyn spokesman made it perfectly clear, “It is not our objective to reduce the numbers, to reduce immigration.”

In saying this, the Labour Party is abandoning the British working class – which gave birth to the Labour Party and still (but for how long?) pays for it. And it is digging its own political grave. Good riddance.

Corbyn forgets that across Europe workers are looking to Britain with admiration. We have dared to say no to the EU’s capitalist club. Our vote to leave has sent a jolt of electricity through the workers of the world. It’s time to follow up. Get on, get out. ■



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Image courtesy RMT



Pickets at Selhurst Depot during the Southern Rail strike in August.

## ASLEF to ballot over safety

THE GOVERNMENT wants massive cuts to staffing on Britain's railways regardless of the impact on safety or quality of service. This is currently being played out in the increasingly bitter dispute in Southern Rail, part of the Govia Thameslink Railway franchise.

The RMT is campaigning to retain guards on trains. The decision by train drivers' union ASLEF to again ballot its members for industrial action over the issue is a great boost. ASLEF had to tread carefully following a legal challenge to its first ballot.

ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan accused Southern of refusing to negotiate. "They want to impose, not to discuss. They have dug in their heels and forced us to ballot our members," he said. GTR are of course enthusiastically carrying out the bidding of their government paymasters.

RMT's guard members are in the middle of another 14 days of intermittent strike action lasting through to 8 December. They reacted angrily to news that publicly owned Network Rail has bailed out Southern to the tune of £48 million in "compensation". This followed Prime Minister Theresa May announcing an extra £20 million payment to "improve performance".

May would do better by listening to Southern's long-suffering passengers, 1,000 of whom have donated £25,000 to fund the legal costs of an application for a judicial review of the franchise. They clearly understand that it is the government that is responsible for creating the current mess and not the workers and their unions.

A protest and rally at the Houses of Parliament has been organised by RMT for 1 November and is supported by sister rail union TSSA. ■

## RAIL

### Deutsche Bahn axe

DEUTSCHE BAHN, the German state-owned rail company, has announced that nearly 900 jobs – around a quarter of its total staff – will be axed in the British arm of its DB Cargo subsidiary. This will include making nearly 400 skilled train drivers redundant.

The company, Britain's largest rail freight operator, has recently seen a massive drop in coal and steel traffic. Rail union RMT has blamed that on a lack of action by the government to protect steel, coal and the rest of Britain's manufacturing base.

Drivers' union ASLEF called on the government to support the rail freight industry, accusing it of not foreseeing the plight of the sector. ASLEF argues that the government needs to act urgently to assist the industry and ensure it retains its capacity for the future. It stated that Britain needs a strong rail freight sector in order to cut congestion on motorways. And the government must also ensure the renewal work which keeps the rail network safe is not delayed. ■

## ITALY

### Eurozone stagnation

ITALY'S GDP is up by only 0.8 per cent on last year. In this year's second quarter, there was no growth at all. Banks' bad debts total 360 billion euros, 18 per cent of all bank loans, double the rate of 2011. New EU rules say bondholders must take losses first, meaning that Italian families hold 46 per cent of the losses for Italian bank shareholders. A May poll found 48 per cent want Italy to leave the EU. ■

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



**ON THE WEB**

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

**Anti-Russia sanctions cost Europe dear**

European countries are extending sanctions against Russia because of the secession of Crimea from Ukraine. This belligerence is causing difficulties in Europe and Britain as well as for Russia...

**Pensions: later and later**

A review of the state pension age is due to be released in early 2017. But the "independent" review will simply copy the World Bank line on how to bust up a country's state pension system...

**North East rejects 'devolution' - again**

The government's plans to force councils to merge and to accept elected mayors has come off the rails in the North East of England....

**Water metering - whether you like it or not**

Residents of some of Britain's drier areas have been waking up to find water meters being installed outside their front gates....

**Commons committee slams Libya intervention**

The Commons report into Britain's role in the toppling of Muammar Gaddafi is a stunning indictment of the British state's attack on Libya in March 2011....

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Nasa

**Hurricane Matthew over Haiti, with high-speed winds hitting eastern Cuba.**

**Cuba beats off hurricane**

WHILE THERE has been plenty of media coverage of the destruction caused by the recent Hurricane Matthew, the strongest hurricane since 2007, as it moved up the eastern seaboard of the USA, not much has been reported about other victims of the hurricane. It hit Jamaica leaving destruction and a few fatalities and then headed for Haiti.

The Category 4 hurricane landed at the southwest tip of Haiti, with some people making their way to churches and schools, as the only form of shelter. Others stayed in their homes for fear of losing their possessions.

Several villages were completely wiped out and over 1,000 people lost their lives. The threat of a return of cholera, re-introduced to Haiti by UN peacekeepers, is real.

After Haiti, Matthew headed for eastern Cuba and the coast of Guantanamo Province. Cuba's experienced Civil Defence organisation had already swung into action, predicting accurately the course of the beast.

The main populated area that lay in Matthew's path, was the coastal town of Baracoa as well as the many coastal villages that would be prone to flooding. People from those villages were evacuated to Guantanamo City and into purpose-built refuges.

In Baracoa itself, TV stations ran a continuous loop telling residents to evacuate and not to use the shelters in the town, as this was an extremely strong storm. They were evacuated to safe mountain villages while loudspeaker vehicles broadcast the message in case anyone had not seen the TV warnings, and teams went door to door to get everyone out.

Matthew reduced Baracoa to rubble, but not a single life was lost. Waves 24-foot high flooded the town as a result of the storm surge, causing unbelievable damage.

The fact that there were no fatalities proves the power of organisation and class mobilisation that Cuba's Civil Defence workers regularly bring to hurricanes and other disasters.

**UNISON**

**No movement on claim**

UNISON'S GO-IT-ALONE stance over pay in local government has truly hit the buffers. The additional pay claim lodged by Unison for 2017-18 is not supported by the other unions, GMB and Unite. The Local Government Association, for the employers, has refused the claim.

The employers aren't shifting; they made an agreement from May 2016 to March 2018, and that's it as far as they are concerned. Worse, the employers clearly regard Unison's stance as an opportunity to move away from national bargaining.

Unison's ultra-left negotiating stance is driven by its conference, which only hears the rabid cries of orators. It ignores

survey after survey, consultation after consultation of the members which reject this strategy. That will be the justification the employers need to re-shape negotiations and set aside national agreement.

The Westminster government's intention is to reduce direct local government employment by 2020 to half the 2010 level. The figures of outsourcing, redundancies and cuts in public services indicate they are well on target. In the face of that threat the obviously disunited trade unions have yet to find a strategy to turn this situation around.

This is why new thinking, new unity and new approaches are required. Otherwise a despondent demoralised workforce will direct that anger against the trade unions instead of using them as our organised core.

## STEEL

### Sheerness to re-open

IN A COMPLETE U-turn, the industrial consortium Liberty House has stopped demolition of the Sheerness steelworks in Kent. It now plans to renovate and re-open them by summer 2017.

Thamesteel closed the site in 2012 with the loss of 350 jobs after a sad history. The plant had been sold off in the privatisation of British Steel; it went to Canadian and then Arab owners. Before Thamesteel closed, the witch hunt against trade unionists in ISTC (later Community) at the plant was a national scandal. US-style union busting tactics and

heavy handed threats to individuals and the community were documented by workers. Closure in 2012 demonstrated the managerial failure at the steelworks.

Liberty House bought the site in early 2016 with a view to asset stripping and relocating equipment to its plants in Scotland and South Wales. The U-turn opens up the possibility of the rolling mills at Sheerness handling up to 750,000 tonnes of steel a year. The local Peel Ports docks right next door to the site has export facilities. The hope is for the re-employment of skilled steelworkers sacked in 2012. Initially there are jobs for just 60 workers but this marks a significant resurgence of industry at Sheerness. ■

## Euro a 'house of cards'

THE ECONOMIC troubles of the EU will not go away, despite the sustained denials by politicians, echoed by some here in Britain. One expert tells a different story.

Professor Otmar Issing, the European Central Bank's first chief economist and a key figure in the creation of the single currency, said on 17 October, "One day, the house of cards will collapse. Realistically, it will be a case of muddling through, struggling from one crisis to the next. It is difficult to forecast how long this will continue for, but it cannot go on endlessly."

He went on, "The Stability and Growth Pact has more or less failed. Market discipline is done away with by ECB interventions. So there is no fiscal control mechanism from markets or politics. This has all the elements to bring disaster for monetary union...The no bailout clause is violated every day."

The ECB already holds more than 1 trillion euros of bonds bought at artificially low or negative yields, implying huge paper losses once interest rates rise again. Issing said, "An exit from the QE [quantitative easing] policy is more and more difficult, as the consequences potentially could be disastrous...The decline in the quality of eligible collateral is a grave problem. The ECB is now buying corporate bonds that are close to junk, and the haircuts can barely deal with a one-notch credit downgrade. The reputational risk of such actions by a central bank would have been unthinkable in the past."

Issing slammed the first Greek rescue in 2010 as little more than a bailout for German and French banks, insisting that it would have been far better for Greece to leave the euro. The Greeks should have been offered generous support after Greece had restored exchange rate viability by returning to the drachma.

Issing has warned repeatedly against trying to force the pace of integration, or to achieve federalism by the back door. He decried the latest EU plan for a "fiscal entity" in the Five Presidents' Report, warning that this would lead to a rogue plenipotentiary with unbridled powers over all EU member nations, beyond democratic accountability. Such a system would end the budgetary sovereignty of the member states and violate the principle of no taxation without representation, forgetting the lessons of the English Civil War and the American Revolution. ■

## WAGES

### Falling in real terms

REAL WAGES in Britain have fallen by more than 10 per cent in the past ten years, according to government figures. Among developed economies only Greece has experienced a similar fall.

Ironically the influx of one million Polish workers and their families into Britain, while

helping to depress wages here, had the reverse effect in Poland – the resulting labour shortage forcing up real earnings by 23 per cent.

The Resolution Foundation think tank predicts that the current generation of new workers will be the first since records began to earn less than their parents during the course of their working lives. ■

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

## WHAT'S ON

### Coming soon

#### NOVEMBER

Tuesday 1 November, 12.30pm

Outside parliament, assemble Old Palace Yard

"Support Southern Conductors"

Protest and Rally

Keep the guard on the train. Protest outside parliament, followed by rally inside at 2pm. Organised by RMT. See [www.rmt.org.uk/campaigns/rail/keep-southern-trains-safe](http://www.rmt.org.uk/campaigns/rail/keep-southern-trains-safe)

Thursday 17 November, 7.30pm

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

"Brexit weakens the drive to war"

CPBML Public Meeting

The weakening of the EU bloc brings with it the opportunity to kill off some of the EU's military ambitions. Come and discuss. All welcome.

Saturday 19 November, 10am

Joint NUS and UCU national demonstration, central London

"United for Education"

Students and academics are calling on all who support free, accessible and quality further and higher education and an end to privatisation and cuts in universities and colleges to join them on the streets of the capital. For details, see [ucu.org.uk](http://ucu.org.uk) or [nus.org.uk](http://nus.org.uk), or sign up on Facebook.



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## With Brexit we can start to repair the damage caused by fees, the European Union and devolution...

# Reshape higher ed!

SOMETHING STRANGE happened at the start of August. Ahead of the publication of A-level results, a raft of “elite” universities put thousands of places into clearing – Leeds, for example, had a thousand course places on offer.

It was one of the first fruits of Brexit, allowing thousands more British students to study at the university of their choice. Essex University vice-chancellor Steve Smith summed up the reason: post-referendum, he said, “People are nervous and universities are being defensive.”

But the insecurity was all in the universities’ minds. Having worked themselves into hysteria during the referendum campaign, they had come to believe their own forecasts of doom.

Universities were also desperate to recruit new students after successfully lobbying the government to abolish the cap on student numbers. Having planned for expansion, they were now panicking.

With university finances now dependent on foreign students, some hugely so, the immediate hysteria was fed by insecurity stemming from the fact that the numbers of EU students had been static or falling for the past five years.

If you look at data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, you can see that the increase in fees in England has coincided with a drop in student numbers from the EU. In 2010–2011 there were 102,715 non-UK EU students. By 2014–2015 it had fallen to 95,620. In Wales the number slumped from 6,455 to 5,425, and in northern Ireland from 4,655 to 2,730.

That’s a total fall in England, Wales and northern Ireland of 10,050. In Scotland, meanwhile, without tuition fees, non-UK EU student numbers rose by 4,495.

Scandalously, while EU law demands that citizens of its member states get equal treatment with nationals of any one member

state, Scotland may offer free tuition to EU students yet charge full fees to English and Welsh ones – because that’s not discrimination between member states, just inside one.

Yet in the event, Brexit has confounded the universities. The fall in sterling which has given such a boost to British manufacturing has lowered the effective cost of fees (and living costs) for foreign students. As a result, according to the admissions service UCAS, applications to UK universities from the EU for the academic year 2016–2017 rose by 11 per cent over the previous year!

### Disappointment?

The immediate reaction of the NUS to the referendum was to talk about a “disappointing result” and express fears over the loss of EU funding. In this the NUS was simply parroting the whinges of the employers.

Now, with university students marching together with academics in London on 19 November “in defence of free, accessible, quality further and higher education” as well as for an end to privatisation and cuts, it’s time to cut the ideological strings that bind them to their greedy employers.

The scale of the problem is clear. Higher education is far from free and accessible – and it is getting more expensive as well as more inaccessible. Meanwhile, universities are seeking to hide behind Brexit in order to deny reasonable pay rises to their staff.

It’s a sign of the times that most of the discussion – so far – has been about how to maintain the flow of EU-based students into British universities. Those who see the issue as one of how to import EU students need to get real.

### End tuition fees!

At the heart of the problem is tuition fees, currently £9,000 a year for almost all courses and set to rise further. Many blame the Liberal Democrats for the big hike in 2010 to a £9,000 maximum, yet the whole history of university tuition fees is an object lesson in the Labour–Conservative parliamentary charade.

They began with John Major’s Conservative government commissioning the Dearing report into university funding, whose recommendations were implemented by Blair’s Labour government. In 2004

Labour raised the fee cap to £3,000 a year. In 2009 Labour commissioned another report into university funding (the Browne report), and it was the incoming coalition government which implemented its findings, raising the tuition cap (in effect, a minimum as well as a maximum) to £9,000.

While all this was happening, where were the universities? They were cheering on every hike in tuition fees, and asking for more. They are still doing it.

The rise to £9,000 announced in 2010 (to come in force in the academic year 2012–2013) was accompanied by a major shift in government support for undergraduate teaching. Government paid less but students paid much more, leaving universities with large surpluses overall.

Classroom-based courses lost all government support, for example. But where universities used to get fees and government grants totalling £5,700 a head for these courses, they could now charge £9,000. And they did. For laboratory-based subjects, maximum income of £8,269 rose to £10,483.

So forget the whinging: the fees rises have been shifting large amounts of money to the universities.

Along the way, they are failing to provide incentives for British students from poorer backgrounds. Loan or no loan, there’s a limit to how much money potential students from poorer families feel able to spend on a university course, and so the universities began scouring the EU for well qualified students.

The ninefold increase in fees from 2003 to now has not led to a massive boost in provision for students – an analysis by Which? in 2013 detected a mere 18 minutes a week more contact time, on average.

What increased fees have been used for is a big increase in the salaries of top university administrators – the same group who have been shouting loudest for higher fees. For example, the Times Higher Education pay survey 2016 found that almost one in five universities gave their vice-chancellors a 10 per cent increase in 2014–2015.

Universities have also been racking up huge surpluses – £1.8 billion in 2014–2015, the last year for which figures have been available (up from £1.1 billion in each of the previous two years). What they didn’t do was start paying academic staff properly.

**‘In the event, Brexit has confounded the universities.’**



Students from Royal Holloway protesting at the anti-fees demonstration in London in 2014.

What, exactly, is the purpose of all these reserves? We deserve to know, because although the universities try to run themselves like private companies, their newfound wealth comes from borrowed taxpayer-funded fees – and both students and taxpayers have been overcharged.

### They want more

But even with all this institutional wealth, even with all their salary hikes, those running our universities are not content. They want even more money from undergraduates, so much so that many of them successfully lobbied the government to remove the cap on the number of UK and EU students.

With the cap removed, there is the potential for a further 60,000 students to enter the university population, boosting university incomes by £450 million. Who will pay for this is unclear, as is the exact cost.

**‘Student blocks have become developers’ targets, with millions of pounds changing hands.’**

But the effects – good and bad – are starting to be felt already.

One effect was the large number of places in clearing this summer. The chaotic rise in student numbers as a result of lifting the cap is bound to lead to larger classes and less contact time for students, as well as increased pressure on academics. But you can be sure the vice-chancellors will use the rise as an excuse to pad their salaries even further.

Another effect is the pressure on student accommodation, already in short supply in university towns. In September, it was revealed that at Warwick University 120 undergraduates and 150 postgraduates were having to share rooms after the post-referendum surge in admissions from the EU swamped the available accommodation.

Newcastle University and Northumbria University now have 70 per cent and 114 per cent more students respectively than they did in 2000, according to local newspaper Newcastle Chronicle. One result is that student blocks have become property developers’ targets, with millions of pounds changing hands and student beds being valued at £90,000 each. No wonder rents are soaring.

It’s not just private developers. UCL in London runs its own student properties on a 45 per cent profit margin, say students there. Last year it was forced to pay back a total of £400,000 in rents to students who had been plagued by rats.

Rats or no rats, UCL is putting up student rents by about 5 per cent a year, taking advantage of students desperate for accommodation in London. Meanwhile, rent strikes are spreading like wildfire as students say enough is enough.

### An independent future

In this dire situation, what is to be done? First those in academia need to come to terms with the referendum result and plan for successful universities in an independent Britain. And all of us need to start thinking about how they can be changed to better serve the needs of our society.

British researchers have always been part of the global academic system – indeed, the Royal Society appointed its own Foreign Secretary in 1724, 59 years before the government created the post now occupied by Boris Johnson. That global integration won’t change.

Before Britain joined the EU’s forerunner, the EEC, students were spending years abroad in European (and other) universities. That isn’t going to change once we leave. Indeed, there’s no reason why we should leave the Erasmus programme – after all Turkey is a full member of the complete Erasmus scheme (Erasmus+, as it is called).

Yes, research funding certainly will change. No longer will British academics

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have to tailor chunks of their research according to what the EU wants to fund, so we should see an end to scanning endless “calls” emanating from Brussels. Instead, British researchers should demand funding for the research they feel needs to be done. Once we have left the EU, there should be plenty of money to fund that research.

### Open the books

Secondly, students and academics should unite to fight for full transparency about university finances. The accounting books

should be opened so that everyone can see where the money is going (or isn't).

Along with that, the fight is much more than one against rising fees. It should be one that asserts the value of accessible and affordable education for all. That means an end to the iniquitous fees system, along with a cancelling of all outstanding fees debt.

It is a scandal that our government's (taxpayers') money is spent on loans for EU students who choose to study here. That subsidy should be stopped, if possible even before we leave the EU.

Instead, money should be spent on helping young people from poorer back-

grounds to go to university. All the evidence suggests that the richer the parents, the more likely the children are to go to university, and to Russell Group universities in particular. So restore proper maintenance grants, instead of abolishing them altogether as the government has just done.

The combination of tuition fees, the European Union and Scottish devolution has been deeply damaging to Britain's higher education. In particular, it has encouraged universities to fill their places without concern for the education and financial welfare of Britain's young people. With Brexit, we can start to repair the damage. ■

## Why our universities are in global demand

THERE ARE two reasons why students from abroad want to study in Britain. The first is that British universities are, in general, far and away better than those in the EU.

The latest *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings list four British universities in the world's top 25. One Swiss university makes that list. But not a single EU university does. (One German university makes it into the top 40, along with seven British and two Swiss universities.) Quite simply, British universities are better.

Of course, university rankings are controversial creations, and the “top” universities are obsessed with them. But it's not just the *Times Higher Education* ranking – the other two established ranking systems, QS and Shanghai also show Britain outperforming other universities in the EU.

The second reason is that Britain funds EU students to study here. They are eligible for loans on the same basis as British students. The only difference is that fewer of them seem to think they need to repay their loans.

Astonishingly, the government announced on 11 October that this taxpayer largesse is now to be extended to EU students coming to Britain to study in further education colleges, with effect from the academic year 2017–2018 – as if the referendum had never happened! And as the

newspaper *FE Week* confirmed, the generosity also includes “advanced learner loans” for students aged over 24.

Overseas students – EU and non-EU – have become the principal obsession of universities. Now colleges are out to maximise their income, especially since the government removed the cap on student numbers, starting with the academic year 2015–2016.

As the Higher Education Policy Institute explained before the cap was lifted, with unlimited student numbers, “there will be

clearer incentives for institutions to recruit EU students: as a way of maintaining entry standards; increasing income; and mitigating the effect of demographic change.”

Some universities are virtually dependent on EU students. Figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency for 2014–15 show that London universities rely heavily on recruiting from EU countries, which account for 18 per cent of students at the LSE, and 16 per cent at Imperial College and SOAS.

In fact there has been an influx of EU students ahead of Brexit, fuelled by the fall in the value of sterling and by government promises that those who start courses before Britain leaves the EU can continue to get loans for fees even after Brexit.

Overall, eight universities have more than a third of undergraduates from abroad, including outside the EU: Buckingham (58.21 per cent), City (33.4 per cent), Essex (33.3 per cent), Imperial College (41 per cent), LSE (44.3 per cent), St Andrews (36.8 per cent), UCL (34.8 per cent), University of the Arts London (39.3 per cent). Another nine take over a quarter of their students from abroad.

Forget the fear-mongering: foreign students came to Britain before we joined the EU, and they will come after we have left. ■



**Left, the new Jubilee campus at Nottingham University.**

**We cannot care for people without planning, and we should stop robbing other nations of skilled workers...**

# Why self-sufficiency in health matters



Junior doctors on Westminster Bridge, London, during their strike on 6 April this year.

HOW MANY times in 2016 have we heard it said that “if it was not for immigration the NHS would not cope”? But have you heard it asked, “why did this come about?” and “what is this immigration doing to the countries the migrants leave?” Or “How much money is being made in the so-called ‘free’ movement of health care staff?” Or “How does a modest country like Cuba manage to produce sufficient health care staff of all grades when a country like Britain cannot?”

After several years of hostile attack on junior doctors, which has affected recruitment and retention, the Conservative party conference in September heard a proposal to increase the number of UK medical training places by 1,500 every year from 2018 with a view that the NHS would become self sufficient in doctors by 2025.

Given the recent attack on junior doctors it was no surprise that the BMA reacted with some suspicion to the proposal, while welcoming the proposed increase in student numbers. They are right to point out that this

proposal will take at least eight years to make a substantive difference. But some of the BMA response was not accurate. In its press statement it said with reference to free movement of health care staff:

“This model has served the UK and the NHS well for decades – moving away from that model is a major risk to the success of the NHS.”

So how exactly has denying places at medical school to suitably qualified UK applicants ever benefited the UK or the NHS? Unlike the BMA, the regulator, the General Medical Council (GMC), has been concerned about several aspects of free movement including the impact of lack of language competency on patient safety. But it is the adverse consequences on others which is the most unethical aspect of the process.

The “model” (if it can be dignified with the term) to date may have saved successive governments the cost of growing their own staff but the other side of the equation is that much poorer countries who have paid the

cost of training their own healthcare staff have been penalised by the “model”.

The other aspect of the government announcement on training places that the BMA objected to was the requirement that UK-qualified doctors work for the NHS for a minimum of four years. This objection is misplaced as the vast majority already do so and this requirement cuts both ways – it commits the employer to offering a post. If this was extended to all NHS healthcare professionals, we wouldn’t have the ridiculous situation arising recently where NHS nurses and allied health professionals qualified only to find “no jobs available” due to spending cuts.

There is a huge responsibility on the British people, but particularly trade unions in the healthcare field, to really understand the process of education and training of health care staff and the ethics of the international movement of health care workers.

*Continued on page 10*

Continued from page 9

The NHS does currently rely on overseas recruited staff. Those already here should be valued, and if committed to staying in Britain are part of the working class here. But the “model” of overseas recruitment is damaging to the UK and to the source country.

### International shortage

The World Health Organization says that the world needs another 2.4 million health workers. Poorer countries are in particular need. Of the 57 countries with a critical shortage, 36 are in sub-Saharan Africa. Africa has 11 per cent of the world’s people and 24 per cent of the world’s disease burden, but just 3 per cent of its health workers and 1 per cent of its health spending. Its countries need another million health workers.

In sub-Saharan Africa there is one doctor for every 8,000 people. More than half its countries do not meet the WHO standard of one doctor per 5,000 people.

In Europe countries are educating too few health workers even to replace those retiring. They will be a million short by 2020. But many wealthy countries, which educate fewer doctors than needed, depend on doctors from Africa to make up the shortfall. So these poorer countries pay to educate doctors who then support the health services of the richer countries. In 16 African countries more than half their nationally educated doctors have left to work abroad.

Britain, Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the USA actively and systematically recruit health workers from African countries. This is considered unethical under many national policies, leads to negative health outcomes, and undermines the right to health.

Edward Mills in a 2008 *Lancet* article even asked, “Should active recruitment of health workers from sub-Saharan Africa be viewed as a crime?” He concluded, “When the international community permits for-profit companies to actively entice over-worked and often underpaid workers away from the most vulnerable populations, it is contributing to the deterioration of essential health-care delivery.” This is no passive brain drain: this is exploitation.

African nations support medical educa-



Workers

tion, with more than half the medical schools in sub-Saharan Africa either offering free tuition or charging less than \$1,000 a year. But these good policies are under attack. International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies restrict the public spending allowed to poor countries, especially for health care and education. The recruitment of scarce, well-educated labour has cost poorer countries more than they have gained from investment and aid.

The 2010 OECD report on International Migration of Health Workers noted Britain was “the second largest destination country for foreign-trained doctors after the United States. ... around a third of all doctors were trained abroad...Part of the recent increases in migration can thus be explained by the fact that migration was used as a ‘quick fix’ for unanticipated health workforce needs, whereas training extra doctors and nurses takes many years to have an effect.”

In 2010 the WHO unanimously adopted the first Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel – a voluntary, non-legal instrument with no impact on state practice. All 193 WHO member states signed, but only 85 have designated a national authority to implement the Code and just 56 have reported to the WHO. No penalties are imposed on recruiters and employers who violate the Code, the private sector is excluded – and there is no mention of compensation for the source countries.

After the Code was adopted, a *Lancet* study found that there was an annual growth of 5.4 per cent among graduates from sub-Saharan African medical schools appearing among US doctors between 2011 and 2013. The average annual growth was 4.5 per cent between 2002 and 2011. The study concluded that the Code has not been “either relevant or effective”.

### Who profits?

Whenever free movement of labour is raised the emphasis is on healthcare staff who want to come to Britain to work and how happy we are that they wish to make good our lack of planning for a sustainable NHS workforce. This image of someone sitting in Europe or Africa thinking about moving to the UK could not be further from the truth. The movement of health care workers is actively arranged by multi-national agencies who in turn charge governments (read taxpayers) for the privilege. The recruitment of nurses from the European Union costs the NHS on average £10,000 a nurse.

The costs incurred to the UK (not to mention the source country) for recruitment from further afield are higher. Active recruitment from sub-Saharan Africa continues, despite the Code of Practice and despite pleas to end such efforts by local and international ministries of health. Western recruitment agencies, such as O’Grady Peyton International (USA and UK), have established



Trainee speech therapists protesting about the introduction of fees, London, January 2016.

offices in South Africa to facilitate recruitment. The Code is supposed to discourage active recruitment of health personnel from countries with critical shortages of health care workers. It has clearly failed.

Professor Sir David Metcalf, the outgoing chairman of the government's Migration Advisory Committee, recently warned that public spending constraints led to greater immigration, particularly of nurses, paramedics and care sector workers. If we reversed the public spending cuts in medical education, we could educate enough doctors and nurses to meet our needs – and not need to take from poorer countries their expensively educated health care workers.

Dr Terence Stephenson, the chairman of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, said he was "concerned" that we chose "to remain so dependent on doctors from overseas...Not just from former Commonwealth countries but also from the European Union ... I think we should become self-sufficient."

Despite the overseas recruitment there are still gaps on the rota, so British-based

agency nurses will also be required to cover – resulting in more agency fees. In addition some British nurses who need immediate cash in their pockets are choosing to work agency shifts rather than work in a permanent post. This means more immediate cash for the nurse but less holiday and sick pay and no pension.

Agencies, knowing that nurses are in short supply, charge fees way above NHS pay rates, £2,000 a shift. Foundation trust spending on agency staff by foundation trusts alone has risen by £540 million since 2010 to £1.4 billion in 2013-14. Put simply, real investment in education and training is being diverted to agency profits.

## Training

Currently the government is also claiming that it has expanded the number of training places for nurses and allied health professionals such as physiotherapists and speech therapists. It is true that from September there will be extra places. But it is saying rather less about the other major change to these professions, namely that students will need to pay full tuition fees and not be eligible for a bursary.

So a typical staff nurse qualifying in 2020 will have a debt of more than £50,000, and as their training entails more than 2000 practice hours they will have paid to work! Also although the government is allowing universities to expand places, the staff

shortages in the NHS mean that there are too few qualified staff available to train and support a larger number of students.

Hospitals hired 5,778 foreign nurses last year, up from 1,360 the year before, many from those EU countries particularly hard hit by the EU's destructive "austerity" (poverty) policies – Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece. Many of these staff are very skilful, and the aggressive tactics of the recruitment agencies has led to criticism from both the Spanish and Portuguese nursing regulators.

But there are fears that some managers are lowering the bar for recruits' English skills. Dr Peter Carter, former chief executive and general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said that it was "totally unacceptable" for hospitals not to give proper English tests. At a recruitment fair in Porto, Portugal, Bedford Hospital hired 25 nurses. They were offered contracts without any formal English tests and some were even given help to fill in the application form.

Educating more nursing graduates would reduce the NHS's dependency on overseas-educated and agency nurses. As Dr Peter Carter said, nurses from overseas had made an important contribution to the NHS. "However, the over-reliance on nurses from overseas demonstrates a complete lack of long-term planning. Instead of training the nurses we need to care for our sick and our old, we go from famine to feast every few years by trying to plug staffing gaps from abroad when care becomes unsafe. Then once things are under control, the NHS cuts back again and the cycle repeats. Proper workforce planning is the only way of meeting the extraordinary demands faced by care services..."

The campaign opposing the cut to nursing bursaries led to one small victory. Bursaries for those who already have a health-related degree and will therefore gain a professional postgraduate nursing qualification in two years have been extended for those starting in September 2017. There is an urgent need to advertise that opportunity and indeed to campaign to extend it.

Given the fact that many post graduate nurses work more years in the NHS than overseas recruits, the economics of funding such a student make more sense in pure financial terms than overseas recruitment. ■

**'Recruitment from the EU costs the NHS £10,000 per nurse.'**

In dispute for over a year, junior hospital doctors have had strikes against an unsafe contract. But it's a protracted st

# Junior doctors' dispute: t



Ms Jane Campbell/shutterstock.com

April 2016: Junior doctors protesting in London over the government's new contract.

JUNIOR DOCTORS have been struggling with the government about new contracts since 2013, and in open dispute for nearly a year. They have been tactically astute throughout. The decision to suspend their proposed rolling programme of five-day strikes up to Christmas shows care and common sense. There is a protracted struggle. This is a time to regroup and reflect.

At the end of May the doctors enjoyed support from patients, the public, and their own wider profession including NHS man-

agers. Pressure was mounting on Jeremy Hunt, the secretary of state, from all sides. Fourteen Medical Royal Colleges had each written to the prime minister asking him to personally intervene in the dispute.

The Commons Health Select Committee chaired by Sarah Wollaston, a Conservative and former general practitioner, wrote to him insisting that there had to be a negotiated settlement. This was quickly followed by authoritative statements from the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges and the

Confederation on behalf of all NHS chief executives that imposition of the contract was not in the interest of the service or its patients. Opposition to a cabinet minister on this level is unprecedented.

Hunt was eventually forced back to the negotiating table in July for talks that went on for almost two weeks. The BMA felt able to recommend the amended contract which emerged. It went some way to addressing outstanding issues related to working conditions, recruitment, workforce planning and

l to draw back from their planned series of five-day  
ruggle...

# the end of the beginning

maintenance of quality standards.

In spite of this, BMA members voted decisively to reject it with 58 per cent against on a turnout of 68 per cent. They continue to believe that the terms dictated by the government would be damaging for patient care and their working conditions. They rightly judged that 7-day working cannot be implemented without additional funding.

## No choice

The government declined the opportunity to respect the vote and to continue negotiations. That left the BMA no choice but to invoke their mandate for further action. It announced a full withdrawal of labour each month for five consecutive working days between 8 am and 5 pm.

Reservations quickly emerged about risks to patient safety and the integrity of the wider service once the series of rolling five day strikes was announced. Significant concerns also began to be expressed from within the ranks of junior doctors themselves. As a consequence a decision was taken at the end of September to suspend the planned action. The previous wide consensus has to be re-established if this dispute is to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

In the interim Justice for Health, an independent body established by nationwide subscription, went to the High Court. It challenged the secretary of state's assertions that he had the power to impose the proposed contract and that it was beneficial to the care of patients. The Department of Health said that the case presented was "without merit", and the Court agreed.

Workers are used to courts rejecting their arguments. But some of the conclusions reached by Mr Justice Green in this case are of interest. He said "This case concerns a challenge by a group of junior doctors who object to the manner in which a new set of terms and conditions of employment are to be rolled out across the NHS. The expression 'junior doctors' is a misnomer. It includes, in addition to doctors in training, hugely skilled clinicians and practitioners who routinely perform some of the most complex medical procedures, some of whom have many years of experience and are on the cusp of becoming consultants.

"The issue of the proposed new contract

generates strong feelings...Much of this sentiment is of a general nature and whilst undoubtedly heartfelt is not always of direct relevance to the quite specific legal issues that I have to decide."

Green emphasised that he was not drawing any conclusion on the competing arguments about the merits or otherwise of the new contract or expressing any view about the arguments over the seven-day NHS or weekend mortality rates.

Even so Green rejected the doctors' case that Hunt had exceeded his powers. He went on to say that "an important reason leading the junior doctors to embark upon this litigation was their concern that by virtue of the Minister's decision every possible negotiating avenue had been closed off. One significant consequence of this litigation therefore has been that the Secretary of State has...taken the opportunity to put his position beyond doubt."

## No power to compel

The judgement summarises Hunt's position as follows: he does not have the power to compel NHS employers to introduce the proposed terms and conditions – in principle they are free to negotiate different terms. Further, it said that Hunt considers the scope for individual negotiation is limited because he has achieved consensus with employers that the proposed new terms and conditions are a fair and workable basis upon which to proceed.

Dr Ellen McCourt, BMA junior doctor committee chair, said the concerns of junior doctors must still be addressed before the contract comes into effect. She said that the result should not be viewed as a win for the government, adding that "This ruling will do

nothing to address the fact that morale among junior doctors is at an all-time low. Nor will it quell junior doctors' concerns about the imminent introduction of a flawed contract they have rejected, or the deep sense of anger and mistrust that has built up towards the government over the last year."

It is not for the courts to determine whether the views of our junior doctors are with or without merit. Our class ought to decide that. If the better part of 50,000 front-line clinicians committed to the care of people who are ill and infirm say that their proposed new contract is unsafe for patients; then it's unsafe for patients. Skill and knowledge count – that's the way of our class.

Under Hunt's stewardship social services in Britain are effectively in a state of collapse. The elderly are kept in hospital without due cause. Waiting times are at record highs for patients needing joint replacement, cancer treatment, cataracts, other forms of elective surgery and mental health beds. Ambulance and A&E waiting times are at record highs too.

## Creaking at the seams

As things stand we have the lowest proportion per head of population in the developed world of medical and nursing staff and hospital beds. In pursuit of a manifesto commitment, Hunt seeks to deploy junior doctors over seven days in a service already creaking at the seams.

These young people have acted on behalf of us all. It is the hardest thing for a doctor to contemplate any form of industrial action. In doing so, they have shielded consultant and GP colleagues from similar contractual attack. They have protected those within the related professions too. It's a pity then that unions claiming to represent some NHS workers see machinations within the Labour Party as more important than defence of our health and social services.

Junior doctors are the consultants and medical educators of the future. Their memories are long and they are unlikely to forget how they have been treated. This dispute is not at an end or even at the beginning of the end. It's at the end of the beginning. The junior doctors in dispute will determine the future action necessary to secure the NHS and their place in it on our behalf. ■

**'It is not for the courts to determine whether the views of our junior doctors have merit.'**

Workers cannot let the momentum created by the referendum be left to the politicians. We must enforce our will: get on, get on.

# After the referendum, v



THE DECISION of the EU Referendum was momentous. It was the most seismic event in Britain since 1945, signalling a decisive shift in opinion on the most fundamental matter. Also, at 17.4 million the Leave vote was the biggest electoral mandate ever recorded in Britain.

Workers cannot let the precious momentum subside and give the Westminster establishment a free hand to administer the break from Brussels, because most of Westminster did not want Leave, and frankly that set are not to be trusted.

Our message must be – maintain our

**‘People want control over their lives. The country wants independence’**

interest, retain mass control of the issue and force recalcitrant MPs to obey the people’s will. Having started to take the initiative and be the sovereign force in the land, the working class can’t suddenly vanish from the scene, it must advance. A national debate needs to break out in workplaces and communities to establish and assert the best way forward for the rebuilding of Britain.

## Plan for independence

For the 41 years of Britain’s subservience to the EU, there was progressively less and less home-grown planning until the stage was reached when there was virtually none at all. People want a plan for rebuilding our country and more importantly to be involved in this planning to ensure we have a future.

The plan’s most crucial part must be a commitment to develop all of Britain. Our divided nation needs to be purposefully drawn together. When developing the economy, decisions should always increase the bonds, connections and ties between the parts of Britain to make a closer, intercon-

nected whole.

People want control over their lives. They don’t to be pawns in a game of market forces. The country wants independence. And politics is far too important to be left to the politicians.

Britain needs to produce more as well as trade with more areas and more countries. We want trade but not “free trade agreements”, which just bolster the interests of multinational corporations and finance capital that wish to move capital and labour as it suits them. Most of the UK’s GDP is internal, at some 70 per cent. Of the rest, only 10 per cent depends on trade with the EU. Looked at another way, EU trade represents just 20 per cent of global trade – we can trade with the other 80 per cent, and still trade with the EU outside it, as do Norway and Switzerland.

Our people are our most important asset: therefore we mustn’t skimp on investment to develop that key resource. We have to create a greater degree of self-reliance in our economy, across the board. We will

**...dum result subside. The issue is far too important to be  
t out!**

# what now?

advance but with sovereignty

In recent decades the EU has spoken for Britain on trade. Britain should assume its seat at the World Trade Organisation, directly furthering our own interests.

We should seek to develop and expand our trading prospects with as many countries in the wider world as possible, not just through treaties but through business exchanges and inter-governmental links.

Since the vote, many people for Leave and Remain are realising there is a world of possibilities opening up based on increasing self-reliance. In the journey ahead, those people who voted remain will need to be welcomed and brought in to the new campaign. Many voted for the EU reluctantly anyway, as they often had serious questions about its operation.

## Another industrial revolution

Britain needs another Industrial Revolution, a vast expansion of manufacturing based on a broadening of science and skill. To prosper as a country we must design, make and trade. Manufacturing has to be restored as the core of our economy. Currently finance and services comprise 80 per cent of our economy, which is dangerously lopsided. Government policies should embark on a long phase of re-industrialisation. There will have to be state direction of funds available at low or negligible rates of interest to build new industries, expand existing ones and update infrastructure. Free from the fetters of the EU, we can decide what industries we need.

The leave vote was clear – there must be an end to mass immigration and the free movement of labour, the antithesis of planning. This will enable us to plan for services instead of being at the mercy of “market forces”. For instance, the NHS at present relies excessively on imported labour, because of EU free movement rules. Government has reduced training here and poached from abroad. This must be phased out and replaced by a planned programme of training in Britain to produce a whole set of medical workers.

There is a massive skill shortage in Britain. We must develop proper apprenticeships again. There needs to be a discussion on who is going to provide the quality train-

**‘Workers rejected all the blackmail and pressure of the political establishment in Britain and the world.’**

ing and how. Alongside of this there needs to be an extensive framework of technical education that is highly valued and respected as much as parallel academic qualifications.

Leaving the EU has already benefited thousands of young British people looking for a place at university. Because they are no longer sure of being able to fill them with students from the EU, thousands of extra places even at the Russell Group of universities are being offered to our youngsters through clearing. We need to consider what should be the role of university and further education. It is another matter requiring rigorous debate. The core of funding for UK universities must emanate from British sources. Research must fit UK priorities not the EU’s.

## Independence of mind

The Leave decision was arrived at largely without trade union support. Some were viciously active for Remain, some pretended neutrality. Only a few, like the RMT, stuck to principle. Leave happened on the back of working class votes in the traditional industrial heartlands of Britain. Workers were steadfast in the opinion that Britain should leave the EU. They rejected all the blackmail and pressure of the political establishment in Britain and the world. They took responsibility.

They now need to take back control of their own unions, carrying into their own organisations the clarity shown by the vote to leave. Trade unions need to be stripped back to their real historical purpose.

When it comes to running the country, the workers in any industry or service know about it in a way a Westminster politician never can. That is why our input on independence is vital. The working class must push the establishment to really leave. We must take responsibility for our country’s future.

In the process we end the pursuit of what divides us. We should stop talking of separation and devolution. We must begin to weaken the institutions of devolution and consciously strengthen all-British institutions whilst restoring genuine, accountable local authorities that are not too remote.

## Britain in the world

An independent Britain can begin to refashion this country’s unhappy relationship with the world. We should not seek to control or interfere in other countries’ affairs. Recent interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria have been disastrous for victim countries and aggressors alike. We should develop proper relations with other countries. We should produce as a country but look outwards to the whole world, gaining a reputation for business and trustworthiness.

In the debate about the way forward, we need to discuss whether it is sensible to disperse foreign aid. It distorts the recipient countries very badly, shoring up anti-democratic tendencies, increasing corruption and slowing their economic growth. The purpose of foreign aid is control; it is not friendly largesse.

There should be an outburst of “What’s Next” meetings all across the country to consider the practical steps needed to be independent. They should be encouraged in workplaces, sectors of industry, unions, professional bodies, communities, wherever people congregate. Brexit is far too important to be left to a prime minister, or even three pro-Brexit ministers and their departments to decide. The people’s views cannot be ignored.

So wherever we are, we know what to do – Fulfil the Promise of Brexit, Make Britain Independent! ■

• This article is based on the speech given at a CPBML public meeting in London in September.

The opportunity of Brexit has to be about how the working class can take control of power generation which will serve the nation for at least 100 years.

# Bring back control over



Workers

IN THE CRUCIAL debate about how Britain should generate power post Brexit there is a multitude of voices. Engineers have many theories, press stories abound, and competing companies produce their blueprints. We need a national strategy, and action.

Despite government nods and winks about Hinkley Point and possible Bradwell nuclear developments, the reality is we are probably decades off construction and completion, which is an awfully long time in the political chum of the 21st century.

Britain faces a generating shortfall brought about by the consistent failure of all governments to have a plan for generation – since the privatisation of all component ele-

ments of the electricity supply industry in the early 1990s. It demonstrates beyond doubt the failure of market driven economies to deliver, as privateers only would build if the public purse paid. It also demonstrates the abject cowardice of politicians of all parliamentary parties who refused to take decisions because of their subservience to the privatised monopolies.

The reasons for Britain's generating shortfall for reasons go back a long time. Before the privatisation of the electricity supply industry began in 1989 the contradiction of running a state monopoly under capitalism made it impossible to plan, invest and guarantee supply – for example, guaranteeing the supply to every workplace and home in Britain versus a requirement to generate a profit for the government.

If Britain had not experienced the deliberate deindustrialisation during the 1980s-1990s, the generating industry would have failed today because it would not have been able to supply the demands of industry of the day coupled with the demands today.

Once privatised, the electricity generat-

ing industry was atomised, fragmented, sold off and largely brought under foreign ownership, with disastrous consequences.

That the most essential core infrastructure of the nation is owned abroad and in multiple centres poses great challenges to how the political will of the people of Britain is asserted. This removal overseas of control of this industrial infrastructure strikes at the very heart of sovereignty. Britain's subsequent following of the EU's diktat over power generation has ensured sovereign control over generation remains at zero.

The opportunity of Brexit has to be about how we the working class of Britain, the overwhelming majority of the population, grapple with, understand and determine a strategy for power generation which will serve the nation for at least the next 100 years. Only in that context can we judge companies that build small nuclear reactors, or specialise in fracking or other high tech generating schemes.

## Long term

Is it wrong to think in terms of a 100-year strategy when technology changes so rapidly? No. The planning and construction for a new power station takes approximately 10 years (minimum) based upon existing design and technology. Many new or replacement power stations will be required. Creating the capacity to build is not something which can be done overnight but will require investment, training, skills enhancement, the actual rebuilding of Britain.

Planning and systematic investment and replacement of generation for a fast-rising population must be based upon a high tech economy and the expectation of ever improving living standards. This will require a long term commitment and radical re-think about how resources (coal, shale, renewables, nuclear, gas and oil, and so on) are accessed.

The original idea of the national grid for distribution was an unauthorised experiment largely based on London immediately prior to the Second World War. Its success guaranteed power supplies across Britain during the war but that involved developing radical new technologies to be able to create the generation and transmission of supply. Once the value of such an infrastructure was

**'We are probably decades off construction of Hinkley Point.'**

# g class of Britain grapples with and determines a strategy st the next 100 years...

# power generation

recognised by capitalism and industry, then effectively Britain could be connected up, but that in itself took 60 years to complete.

In the 1950s, the combination of a mixed economy of fuel supplies (coal, nuclear etc) led to the dream of free electricity to the domestic market and such low prices for the industrial market as to make Britain untouchable in terms of cheap exports. Like many pipe dreams it evaporated under capitalist economics. Nevertheless these previous examples of long term planning demonstrate that with the correct political determination and control the world can be built and rebuilt.

## Strategy

What generating strategy should the workers of Britain demand as we move into the Brexit period? Obviously we want to develop British technology, guarantee the development of British industry and manufacturing in Britain, creating work, skill, and wealth. But a generating strategy has to be holistic – ensure primary production supported by alternatives to ensure all eggs aren't in one basket.

The Central Electricity Generating Board proffered a similar stance but in reality all its alternative sources were used to build an anti-miner coalition. Britain still has 1000 years of coal reserves. Clean coal technology has developed dramatically in the last 30 years, with Britain exporting such technology to the tune of over £1.3 billion annually, but with no proper application in Britain. Coal extraction, with new technologies and carbon capture, means coal still has to be a major energy resource we can call upon.

There is the whole question of shale fracking, which has to be developed safely to counter the scaremongering of the green lobby. Meanwhile the Scottish government is blocking fracking operations in Scotland but hypocritically accepting ethane shale gas imported from the USA.

There is the need for workers to grasp the reality that if you want clean energy you need industry. Modern clean industry, not wind farms, not wave technology, not solar panels, though the latter have a limited use, but industry to create industry. Fracking has a central role to play in future energy technologies, as it has contributed to the major

## Winter madness

NATIONAL GRID plc will pay £122 million to keep ten coal and gas power stations in reserve to ensure that Britain gets through the winter without power cuts. These stations have been deemed redundant, unfriendly to the environment and so on by those who dream that all power can come from windmills.

That price is only for keeping the stations in reserve but not fired up. If they are used, NG will have to pay these companies further unquantified sums, certainly running into millions of pounds. NG trumpets the 0.1 per cent increase in reserve spare margin capacity under this deal as a major success. That's the opposite of the truth.

NG's own analysis only three months ago showed that an increase from 1.1 to

1.2 per cent places them with the same margin it had last winter. Capacity has risen by this fraction because the Eggborough coal-fired station has been brought back on line and the export of electricity to Ireland by subsea cable is out of action.

It's madness that power generation in Britain is being run at crisis levels and yet electricity is exported. Is it acceptable that the privatised power industry can hold NG to ransom over spare capacity margins in Britain? Or that the unexpected re-directing of an export sale into the home market allows them to squeeze through yet another winter crisis? It might be tough on the Irish economy but very nice for the shareholders of the privatised utilities. ■

downward fluctuations in the price of oil and gas.

Britain's dependence on gas imports from Norway, Russia, North Africa and so on – the strategy of Blair and Brown to avoid having a strategy – still remains in force. Do we want to depend on the political uncertainties of other regions in the world?

## Unclean gas

The dash for gas burn has always been as carbon polluting as coal without clean coal technology. But it has generated obscene profits while disguising the gap between electricity supply and demand. Gas as a strategy for industrial generation, a strategy dependent on imports, has to be a minor part of future planning, a fallback.

The whole question of nuclear strategy and design has to be placed in the forefront of long term planning. Are the colossus Hinkley Point and similar technologies the answer or the more radical small modular reactors? Reactor design in Britain has been in abeyance in real terms for over 30 years, again a deliberate political decision.

The inability of nuclear engineers to develop relatively stable technologies is reflected in previous design – 10 Magnox stations, 9 differing designs; seven

advanced gas reactor stations, four differing designs; one pressurised water reactor station, one design. But since none has been built in over 40 years it poses many questions. Do we use proven technologies which have a life expectancy of 40 years? Do we develop new designs and technologies as replacements?

Within all these struggles to arrive at a coherent energy strategy, where are the trade unions? In the privatised companies the trade unions and numbers of workers generally have been pared to the bone. Automation, outsourcing, self-employment individualised contracts, shell companies and overseas investment control – all have reduced the workforce dramatically. A new coherent trade union strategy for energy must be created, one that rises above sectional interests.

Skill, training, long termism, strategic planning with a commitment to an industrial dream turned into an industrial reality must replace the failure of market energy policy witnessed over the last 30 years. But that energy strategy must also dovetail into the supportive industries – construction, transport, the metal industries, manufacture, higher education and all other productive processes required to rebuild Britain. ■

## FANCY THAT

### Brexit bloomers

#### Sunderland: still there

“Japan’s Nissan Motor has issued its bluntest warning yet that Britain must commit itself to joining the euro or lose further investment in its Sunderland plant.” (*London Evening Standard*, 2003).

“Nissan set to build new SUVs at their Sunderland car plant in post-Brexit boost.” (*The Sun*, 21 October 2016)

#### The City: still there, too

“If Brexit happens, transactions for firms across the EU in euro-denominated assets – a large and important part of the City’s operations – would move to the eurozone...” (French “expert” quoted on *BBC Online*, 21 June 2016)

“The Dutch bank ING is moving several dozen trading jobs into London as part of an overhaul of its European offices, saying that the capital remains a hub for financial trading in spite of the UK’s vote to leave the European Union. The Netherlands’ biggest financial firm said currency, derivatives and interest rate traders will move from Brussels to London...” (*Daily Telegraph*, 13 October 2016.)

#### Oh dear – the IMF got it wrong again

“[Brexit] could entail sharp drops in equity and house prices, increased borrowing costs for households and businesses, and even a sudden stop of investment inflows into key sectors such as commercial real estate and finance...” (IMF mission to UK, concluding statement, 13 May 2016)

“During the referendum campaign, someone said the real danger of Brexit is you’ll end up with higher interest rates, lower house prices and a lower exchange rate, and I thought: dream on. Because that’s what we’ve been trying to achieve for the past three years and now we have a chance of getting it.” (Lord King, former Governor of the Bank of England, speaking to *Sky News*, 11 October 2016.)

#### Plus: Brexit on the web

Want to read more? Visit [cpbml.org.uk/](http://cpbml.org.uk/) leave for Brexit news from the CPBML and links to other pieces with valuable information.

## Asked to rule about footballers’ freedom removed restrictions on EU players in na

# Build the team: p



Workers

Arsenal v Chelsea, Emirates Stadium, 24 September 2016. Out of 54 players in their combined first-tea

IN 1995 the European Court of Justice (ECJ) made a ruling with far-reaching consequences for football. Brexit is an opportunity to change that, at least in part.

The ECJ ruled in favour of a hitherto unknown Belgian footballer, Jean-Marc Bosman. Bosman’s contract had ended in 1990, but he had been denied a transfer from Belgium’s RFC Liège to French side Dunkerque because the clubs could not agree on the transfer fee – such fees were common practice at the time. (English clubs had introduced tribunals to resolve such disputes, which rarely caused big problems.)

### Free movement

Bosman argued that being denied a transfer contravened freedom of movement of workers under the EU Treaty. The ECJ agreed, ruling that any player could now move freely between clubs within EU Associations at the end of their contract, with no transfer fee. The ECJ went further, removing the rule then in force limiting the number of non-national players whereby European clubs were allowed only three such players in their match-day squad.

And so the Bosman ruling was created, and football’s wild west was born. The power had previously rested with clubs, but the balance had now shifted to the players. Their agents, previously middle-men, assumed ever greater importance, much to the chagrin of Alex Ferguson, Arsene Wenger and other managers.

The current impasse between Arsenal and its superstar German midfielder, Mesut Özil, derives from the Bosman ruling. Özil has less than two years to run on his contract and is handsomely rewarded. The club wants to keep him but must pay more or see him walk away in 18 months.

But Arsenal will know that over the years it benefited from the most acrimonious Bosman transfer. Notably, in 2001 Sol Campbell joined the Gunners from Tottenham, infuriating Spurs fans, for £100,000 a week, an incredible sum at the time. Just seven years earlier Chris Sutton had become Britain’s first £10,000 a week player when he joined Blackburn.

Bosman and the influx of new money caused chaos. With the potential of no transfer fee to pay (or receive), clubs began

to transfer to new clubs, the EU went further and national clubs. England haven't won a tournament since...

# promote British players



am squads, just 14 are British.

to outspend each other to attract and keep the best talent. Stars at mid-level teams knew they could run down their contract and negotiate a bumper deal elsewhere and pocket the unspent transfer fee.

In trying to keep up, many clubs spent more than they had, stoking the influx of overseas takeovers. Portsmouth FC won the FA Cup in 2008, but it now plays in the fourth tier of the English leagues after a succession of owners and financial crises. The club is currently owned by a supporters trust and debt free. Other clubs have been through similar events, although less dramatically in most cases.

## Where's the money gone?

Sky and others have poured billions into British football, paid for by subscribers, of course. Most has ended up in the hands of a handful of players and agents. "Super agents" like Mino Raiola (whose clients, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Paul Pogba, joined Manchester United this summer) and Jorge Mendes (who represents Cristiano Ronaldo and Jose Mourinho) would not exist without Bosman.

The freedom to move clubs under Bosman is now enshrined in FIFA's own rules and won't change with Brexit. But Bosman also removed any restriction on the number of EU players clubs could field. That has had a greater effect in the English and Scottish leagues than elsewhere in the EU. Once we are outside the EU, UK work permit regulations, currently enforced against non-EU players, could come into play for all non-British players.

English top flight football is forever altered by the influx of foreign players, billionaire owners from all corners, worshipping at the altar of satellite television. But greater control over player eligibility would be a step in the right direction.

The last all-English XI lined up for Aston Villa in February 1999. The first ever all-foreign starting XI in English football lined up for Chelsea on Boxing Day 1999. Only 31 per cent of players who started matches in last season's Premier League were eligible to play for England.

The Premier League sees itself as a global brand based in England; it has no interest in regulating the make-up of its competing clubs. Nothing will change while subscription money rolls in. And clubs do not invest that bounty. Instead, they stifle the progress of young British players in favour of those from the EU – seen as cheaper and disposable.

**'Clubs are stifling the progress of young British players.'**

The England team has not made the semi-finals of a major football championship since 1996. That's no surprise since so few English players now play Premier League football. And arguably the Scottish league and national team have been affected to an even greater extent than England.

Will the FA, the English Football Association, take the opportunity offered by Brexit to improve the England team? The FA is resistant to change, beholden as it is to the Premier League and Sky.

The national team was sold down the river in 1992 with the creation of the Premier League under the false pretence that new money would enhance the Three Lions' chances at international tournaments. Given how badly that has worked out, the chance to arrest the decline and develop a real plan for the future success of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should be seized with both hands. ■

## Meet the Party

**The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's series of London public meetings in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1R 4RL, continues on 17 November with the title "Brexit weakens the drive to war". Other meetings are held around Britain. Meeting details will be published on What's On, page 5, and on [www.cpbml.org.uk/events](http://www.cpbml.org.uk/events).**

**M The Party's annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays. There are also CPBML May Day meetings in Edinburgh and Leeds.**

**M As well as our regular public meetings we hold informal discussions with interested workers and study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further. If you are interested we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or send an email to [info@cpbml.org.uk](mailto:info@cpbml.org.uk)**

This month we review two books – one showing clearly the other giving the inside story of the Mossack Fonseca leak

# Why the euro was bound

RKL Foto/shutterstock.com



Euro statue outside the European Central Bank, Frankfurt.

*Europe Isn't Working*, by Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, hardback, 312 pages, ISBN 978-0-300-22192-3, Yale University Press, 2016, £14.99.

ECONOMIC JOURNALISTS Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson explain why the EU is failing. Their central claim is that the single currency was not a progressive project and never could be. As Adair Turner, former director-general of the CBI observed, "EMU ... seemed justified as an impeccably free-market project, driving forward completion of the single market and supporting...the free flow of capital."

The authors show how austerity policies are a direct consequence of the euro, reinforced by EU treaties and pacts. This has pushed down investment, productivity and living standards, and forced up unemployment, debt levels and inequality. The eurozone economy was no bigger in 2015 than in 2008.

Britain's jobless rate is 5.1 per cent, the USA's is 5.5 per cent, and Japan's is 3.3 per cent. Eurozone unemployment averaged 11 per cent, double the rate of those EU countries that kept their own currency. The authors explain the cause: unlike Britain, USA or Japan, the eurozone

adopted a multi-national single currency with a single interest rate.

The authors compare how Ireland and Iceland, similar in many ways, coped with the 2008 crisis. But the huge difference was Ireland's membership of the eurozone; Iceland was not even a member of the European Union. As a result, Iceland had a free hand in letting its banks go bust, inflating its currency, effecting a steep devaluation of the exchange rate and imposing capital controls.

### Bail out banks, or else

Ireland, by contrast, felt obliged to guarantee its banks' assets and apply austerity measures. The Dublin government said meekly the banks should accept at least some of the losses resulting from their wild speculation. The European Central Bank response was blunt: it would cut off support unless Irish taxpayers footed the bill for the banks – that initially amounted to 64 billion euros or one-third of the Republic's GDP. Ireland now has 11.1 per cent unemployed, Iceland 4.9 per cent.

**"A kinder, gentler Europe was never going to happen."**

Claude Truong-Ngoc/Wikimedia Commons



Eurocorps members parade in Strasbourg.

## CPBML/Workers

### Public Meeting, London

Thursday 17 November, 7.30 pm

**"Brexit weakens the drive to war"**

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

Already, by voting Leave, we have weakened the EU bloc. Brexit brings the opportunity to kill off some of the EU's military ambitions and enhance peace in Europe and the world. Come and discuss. All welcome.

# at the euro is a machine for destroying jobs, and the

...

# d to fail

The authors observe, “For many on the left, Greece in 2015 was the moment they finally realized that this Keynesian vision of a kinder, gentler Europe was never going to happen. ... The interests of bankers have been given a higher priority than those of workers. Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus and Spain have been the laboratory mice in a continent-wide neoliberal experiment that ...has failed.”

Some indeed demand even more powers for the EU. For example, the bank UBS wants a new treaty decreeing “more sovereignty sharing through a central treasury and fiscal ministry, debt mutualisation, provisions for government default among members, more authority for the European Parliament and increased power for the high representative for foreign affairs.” By voting to leave the EU, the British people have shown the peoples of Europe the only way forward out of this trap.

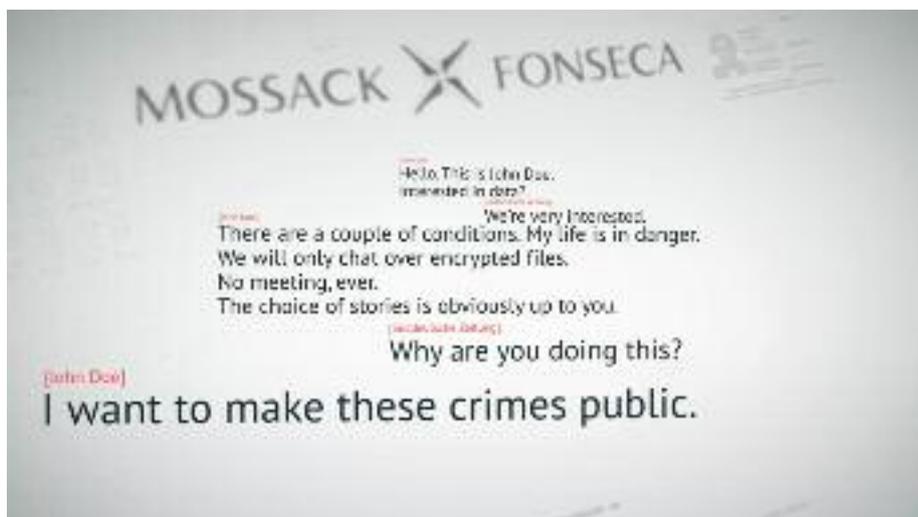
Elliott and Atkinson sum up, “The euro has proved to be exactly the job-destroying, recession-creating, undemocratic monster the doubters always warned it would be. ... [It is] supercharged monetarism – Thatcherism with knobs on”.

***The Panama Papers: breaking the story of how the rich and powerful hide their money*, by Frederik Obermaier and Bastian Obermayer, paperback, 366 pages, ISBN 978-1-78807-047-0, Oneworld, 2016, £12.99.**

FREDERIK OBERMAIER and Bastian Obermayer work for the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In early 2015 Obermayer received a message, “Hello. This is John Doe. Interested in data?” This book is the story of what happened next.

The anonymous source had the entire internal database of a major Panamanian law firm, Mossack Fonseca, one of several specialising in setting up offshore shell companies.

More than 500 banks and over 200,000 offshore companies across the world have used Mossack Fonseca. There were links to 35 heads of state. Now 400 journalists from 80 countries are working



**The (translated) conversation between the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and “John Doe”**

on it, many as part of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

In February 2015, public prosecutors and tax investigators arrived at Commerzbank in Frankfurt, Germany’s second largest bank. The bank had apparently been routinely and systematically helping German clients to evade taxes; Mossack Fonseca was one of its accomplices.

Commerzbank’s Luxembourg subsidiary set up companies based outside the EU for its clients to avoid the EU Savings Tax Directive. That orders all Luxembourg and (through a related agreement) Swiss banks to deduct a flat rate of up to 35 per cent tax on all gains in unregistered accounts belonging to EU citizens.

## Tax evasion

The authors conclude that Commerzbank and numerous other German banks “...were evidently actively and systematically involved in helping clients evade tax.” EU member states lose a thousand billion euros a year through this kind of tax evasion. Commerzbank agreed to pay 17 million euros in fines for their dealings with Mossack Fonseca, so that legal proceedings against the banks are closed.

The authors comment, “While billions were spent bailing out banks, and nearly all those responsible got away without being investigated, let alone charged, the

victims, the people conned into taking out enormous loans, were abandoned often without a job, a house or any prospect of ever being able to live debt-free again.” Merkel’s government gave Commerzbank 18 billion euros during the 2008-09 crisis.

Governments have failed to deal with these scoundrel states. International institutions have failed. Parliaments, courts, the legal profession, the media have all failed. When whistleblowers are necessary, the whole system has failed.

For example, a Luxembourg court found Antoine Deltour, a former employee of PricewaterhouseCoopers, guilty of theft because he brought to light hundreds of “sweetheart” tax deals between Luxembourg and multinational companies.

The current president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker was previously the prime minister of Luxembourg. He of course defends Luxembourg’s actions as legal, but even the Commission as a whole took the view that Luxembourg had granted illegal tax benefits to multinational companies.

The authors also point out that Britain’s island territories are “unquestionably the cornerstone of international corruption worldwide”. As a tax expert told the House of Commons Treasury Committee, “it would have been impossible for the current credit crunch to have happened if offshore had not existed.” ■

## During the reign of Henry VII, England broke from Rome and Reformation – fundamentally changing England's outlook and

# England's break from Rome

THE ENGLISH Reformation evolved from something lesser in scale and scope, the need of Henry VIII to divorce and marry someone else. Such a relatively trivial episode in the Tudor soap opera spiralled into a process that ultimately brought the total reconstruction of political power and social attitudes in England. The solving of Henry's marriage problem catapulted English society in an unexpected direction.

A few months after his accession as king in 1509, Henry married Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon, his elder brother Arthur's widow. Arthur had died young in 1502. For the marriage to proceed, the contracting parties had to obtain a dispensation from Pope Julius II. There were concerns that it contravened canon law and in particular Leviticus 20:21, which said the marriage of a man who marries his brother's widow shall be childless. However, the papal dispensation was given and the marriage went ahead.

### Female heir

Although Catherine produced a female heir, Princess Mary, in 1516, the marriage was blighted with a series of miscarriages, stillbirths or infant deaths occurring within a few days of birth. The Wars of the Roses were fresh in mind; the Tudor rule that followed had been established less than 30 years beforehand. The establishment also remembered with anxiety Matilda's unsettling rule in the twelfth century, the sole precedent of a female sovereign.

By 1525 Catherine was forty; there had been no pregnancy for seven years and Henry began to consider ending the marriage so as to strengthen the dynasty with a male heir. At some point between 1525

and 1527 Henry became attracted to Anne Boleyn. Preparations to annul the marriage began in May 1527 with the expectation it would be confirmed by the pope.

But in late May the situation drastically changed when troops of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, sacked Rome. They took the pope prisoner, making it impossible for him to grant Henry's annulment to Catherine of Aragon without offending Charles, as Catherine was his aunt. For four years Henry tried everything to win over the pope but to no avail.

### Desperate

Getting older and more desperate, in 1532 Henry elevated a new type of minister able to sort out the problem. He found someone ready to work out a national solution, someone unafraid to politically reconstruct England. This skilful exponent of statecraft was Thomas Cromwell. He proposed a way to end the king's difficulties with an ambitious plan that went far beyond Henry's vague claims to supremacy. Cromwell set out to actually evict the pope from England, thus making supremacy real.

The king would not only get his divorce but a lot more besides – a huge transfer of wealth and a politically reconstructed country. Though he owed his chance to the king, Cromwell was to express sovereignty in terms of laws and institutions rather than merely through the sphere of an overriding monarch.

In the parliamentary session of 1532 a new temper to government was evident. The uncertainties of the previous four years were gone. The English church and the papacy were attacked with real weapons instead of innocuous verbal threats. Cromwell devised a series of parliamentary Acts over a number of years that transformed the state and country.

In turn these Acts destroyed the constitutional and legislative independence of the English Church, made the Church submit to the King as supreme legislator of ecclesiastical matters, evicted papal powers in England, abolished all church payments to Rome, designated England as a sovereign state, ended matrimonial



Left: Elizabethan picture showing Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. Right: Thomas Cromwell, w

appeals to Rome, stopped papal bulls having sway in England, assigned to the Crown the right to organise visitations of church institutions, gave the power to set church doctrine to the King-in-Parliament and ordered the dissolution of the monasteries.

Henry had secretly married Anne Boleyn in January 1533, as she was pregnant. He was safe in the knowledge that Cromwell's policies would ensure a legal marriage and a legitimate heir. Cromwell's ministry ended with his arrest and death in 1540; a result of aristocratic plotting. But the changes he brought about endured.

### Culture

These changes were not just political or financial but affected the culture of the nation too. Vice-regent Cromwell was a committed patron of bibles in English: Miles Coverdale's *Bible* (the first complete Bible to be published in English), John Rogers' *Matthew Bible* and Coverdale's *The Great Bible*.

All these developments clinched the government's victory over papal authority and the saint cults. John Hilsey, Bishop of Rochester, exposed the Blood of Hailles, the Rood of Boxley and other time-honoured religious frauds. Superstition was under attack with the banning of charges

**'The sale of monastic lands ensured there was no way back for papal power.'**

embarked on the  
behaviour...

ome



...giving over power to Edward VI, while the pope  
who transformed the country.

to view relics, chantries and pilgrimages.

After Cromwell's demise, Henry squandered much of the new streams of income on the war against Scotland and France (1542-46). The Crown had to sell the monastic lands between May 1543 and 1547. Most of the land purchasers were established local gentry, not necessarily the richest in the land.

This development ensured the survival of the protestant reformation in England. There was no way back for restoring papal powers. Dissolution of the monasteries meant a decline of clerical wealth and territorial influence together with a corresponding rise of large elements among the gentry. This had far-reaching developments that were to feed the demands of the House of Commons for political and constitutional change and ultimately determining the tensions that spilled over in the Civil War of the seventeenth century.

The Reformation freed England from following the papal bulls of *mare clausum* that allocated certain oceans and areas to the Spanish and Portuguese empires. British trade with the Americas could never have occurred without the break from Rome. ■

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

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

# NO ADVANCE WITHOUT MARXISM

Britain has entered a new epoch, with all the opportunities and dangers that implies for our British working class. Internationally, the working class suffers from real and threatened war. At the end of 2015 this Party, the Communist Party of Britain Marxist Leninist, held its 17th Congress to consider these challenges. The published Congress documents are at [www.cpbml.org.uk](http://www.cpbml.org.uk). The tasks facing the working class and Party are:

**Develop an industrial strategy** for the rebuilding of Britain's industrial manufacturing base and public services to provide for the needs of the working class.

**Rebuild Britain's trade unions** to embrace all industry and workplaces. The trade unions to become a true class force not an appendage to the Labour Party or business trade unionism. Reassert the need to fight for pay.

**Preserve national class unity** in the face of the European Union and internal separatists working on their behalf. Assert workers' nationalism to ensure workers' control and unity. Resist the free flow of capital and the free movement of labour.

**Oppose the EU and NATO (USA) militarisation** of Britain and Europe and the drive towards war on a global scale. Identify and promote all forces and countries for peace against the USA drive for world domination by economic aggression, war and intervention. Promote mutual respect and economic ties between sovereign nations on the principles of non-interference and independence.

**Disseminate Marxist theory and practice** within the working class and wider labour movement. There is no advance without Marxism. Develop again our heritage of thinking to advance our practice in the workplace.

**Re-assert that there are only two classes in Britain** – those who exploit the labour of others (the capitalist class) and those who are exploited (the working class). Recruit to and build the party of the working class, the Communist Party of Britain Marxist Leninist.

### Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
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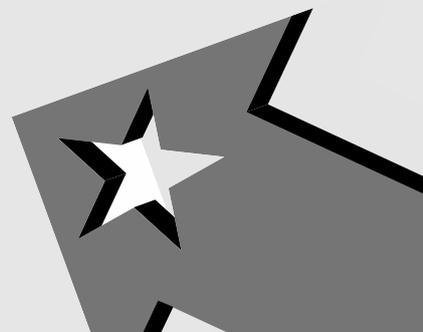
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# Defence begins at home

**'Only the Russians are providing support to the Syrian government to defeat Islamic fascism.'**

WHO CARES if Russia sails its only aircraft carrier through the English Channel (or La Manche if you sit on the other coast)? Who cares if the only way the Russian navy can visit certain parts of the world is by using this international seaway?

Apparently the barnacles in the Admiralty and their gung-ho chums in NATO do. They seem determined to re-enact the dramatics of sabre-rattling and tub-thumping from a past age. The Russian sailing is described as posturing and inflaming tensions. How is using an international seaway inflaming tensions?

The call for demonstrations at the Russian Embassy by foreign secretary Boris Johnson during the emergency Commons debate in October was inflammatory. In the event one man turned up with a placard. And Johnson's attempt to call yet another conference over Syria in London flopped immediately.

Only the Russians are providing support to the Syrian government to defeat Islamic fascism. The attempt to turn the clock back to the nineteenth century and whip up an anti-Russian alliance is warmongering pure and simple. And it does nothing to settle the disaster created by ISIS and its overseas backers.

In fact, this all smacks of desperation. The Syrian government is winning the fight against ISIS, and Western hopes of toppling Assad are melting away, along with the fake "rebel" forces they have been so assiduously arming.

Placing British troops in Poland and other countries bordering Russia to train offensive ground units is warmongering, too, like placing NATO tanks and missiles on Russia's borders.

The irony is that the British Army is now the smallest it has been since the Napoleonic Wars over 200 years ago. It cannot provide the manpower deemed by the Chiefs of Staff to meet even their plan B defence of Britain. Johnson surrounds himself with retired naval and army figures, but is living a fantasy.

The Royal Navy, despite whatever delusions still exist in the Admiralty, consists of 19 surface ships (yet 40 admirals and 260 captains!). These are provided on a privatised lease system and hardly make the grade for gunboat diplomacy.

Our wilful dependence on foreign suppliers is weakening our own industrial base as well as damaging the independence of the armed forces. The new Trident submarines will actually be built with hulls of French steel – Tata was running tests to check that it could be produced in Britain when the company was told that the contract had gone to France's Industeel.

Even the tinned beef on Britain's submarines patrolling the Falklands is bought from Argentina!

The road back from warmongering is to bring all British armed forces of whichever service home. Britain is part of the world not in charge of the world.

And we need them here, too. Without a sufficient naval force how are we going to patrol our seas to ensure EU trawlers don't continue to Hoover up our fish? How do we stop the people smugglers without ships?

The EU was trying to coopt our foreign policy, and our armed forces too. We should demand that free from the EU we pursue a defence policy that is precisely that: defence. Our armed forces should be protecting Britain, not attacking the world. ■

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