

WORKERS

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026 £1



INDEPENDENCE, IMMIGRATION AND COMMUNITY

Defence plan Plain wrong

Research Cuts loom

Net zero Dangerous targets

Brexit Ten years on

Maternity care It must change *plus* Historic Notes,

Museums Staff on strike

News, Reviews

North Sea oil Vital for Britain

and more

WORKERS



Back to basics in Brighton!

SEPTEMBER SEES an increased focus on Britain's trade unions as the TUC holds its annual meeting in Brighton.

Only around one worker in seven is a trade union member. This perhaps shows the lack of faith that people have that unions will help them to confront their everyday challenges. That is also reflected in the lack of participation of those in membership.

Britain's two largest unions have elected general secretaries during the past year. Fewer than 10 per cent of Unite's 1.1 million members voted in the recent election. And just 7 per cent of Unison's 1.4 million members voted in last year's election.

And the gap between the concerns of the five million plus members of the TUC's 47 unions and those of their leaderships has never been greater.

The priorities for Britain's workers are many, including pay and conditions, jobs, housing, energy security and costs, immigration, and the threat of war. But will the debates at the TUC reflect them? The preliminary agenda suggests otherwise.

A motion at the TUC condemns the new Equality & Human Rights Commission Code of Practice clarifying that "sex" under the Equality Act 2010 means biological sex. It calls for a "campaign to introduce a process of gender self-declaration".

This posturing is unlikely to find much support outside a small bubble of activists. Most workers have been unimpressed by Unison's abandonment of the Darlington nurses who complained about

sharing changing rooms with biological men.

And workers will be unimpressed with calls to defend teachers from Reform-run Councils and "the far right", when there is still a deafening silence about, and a complete lack of trade union support for, teachers threatened by religious bigots.

Rail union RMT wants the TUC to avoid taking the country into divisive debates on the EU/single market membership, and to respect the democratic will expressed in our 2016 vote to leave the EU. But Prospect seems to have little time for workers' views: it wants the TUC to "develop and implement a strategy to persuade the government to negotiate the deepest possible partnership with the EU".

This summer has seen workers being more willing to involve themselves in actions to address deeply held and widely felt issues in their workplaces. Transport workers and others have dealt with excessive heat. Others have tackled understaffing and its consequences. Perhaps as a result, the TUC agenda does cover some of these matters.

But unions need to do more to properly engage with their members, and far more to reflect members' concerns. They need to rediscover their enthusiasm for organising the many workers who are not in membership, many of them in workplaces with existing collective bargaining agreements.

Workers taking more responsibility and involving themselves in their unions is a crucial early step towards taking political control.



WORKERS is published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB.
ISSN 0266-8580

www.cpbml.org.uk x@cpbml
Issue 256, September/October 2026

Contents – September/October 2026

News Digest

Museum staff in walkouts, p3; Bus drivers act over conditions, p4; Biomedical workers strike over pay, p5

03

Features

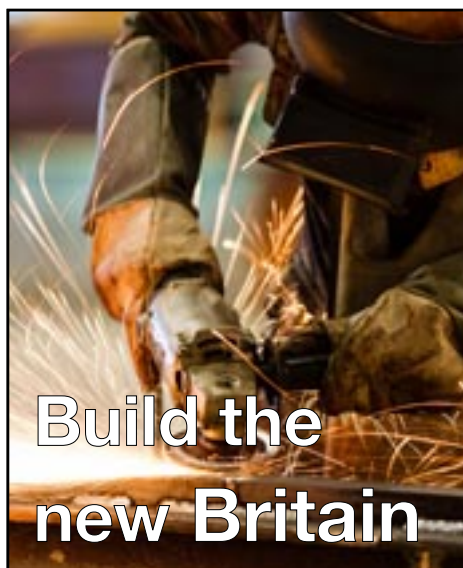
Independence, immigration and community, p6; Cold winds are blowing through Britain's research, p8; New defence plan is not what Britain needs, p10; Brexit 10 years on: the fight for independence, p12; North Sea oil is vital, p15; Climate change and net zero policy, p16; Maternity care in the NHS must change, p18

06

End Notes

Book Review: The answer is nuclear, p20; Historic Notes: Slavery and industrial revolution, p22

20

**MUSEUMS****MIGRATION****BUSES****MOTOR INDUSTRY****MERGERS****BIOMEDICINE****FACTS MATTER****E-NEWSLETTER****ON THE WEB****WHAT'S ON**

Staff in walkouts

Residents progress

Action over conditions

Good news for Sunderland

Workers paying the price

Pay fights spread

References online

How to subscribe

More news online

Coming soon



The V&A Storehouse at Stratford, east London.

Museum staff in walkouts

WORKERS HAVE not been lying down during the summer heat. Across the country they have been taking action against employers where working conditions are not good enough.

Trade union Prospect, representing workers at major national and regional museums and galleries, has won a dispute with the V&A Museum over toilet and hydration breaks. The union reported that members working as Collections Access Officers at the new V&A Storehouse museum in Stratford East London had unanimously voted to strike, on a turnout of 88 per cent, over what they called “Amazon-style” conditions – referring the giant employer, not necessarily the rain forest!

The Storehouse introduced an innovation whereby members of the public can make an appointment to view up to five objects from the collection, facilitated by the access officers. This is manual labour, involving handling heavy objects such as wall tapestries and carpets. These workers were not paid during toilet and hydration breaks or lunch hours.

In a separate “heatwave” ballot over access to drinking water, pay and conditions, members of Prospect and sister union PCS have been voting on strike action at the four V&A sites in London. PCS is calling for management to close public areas when temperatures exceed 30 °C and for other steps.

V&A workers are also balloting for potential action over pay. They want a rise of at least 4 per cent and for its outsourced contractors to receive the living wage in line with other staff. The offer on the table is for 3.6 per cent increase and 6.9 per cent for the lowest paid.

• Elsewhere in London, at the Royal Museums Greenwich, Prospect members, having recently agreed a two-year pay settlement, voted overwhelmingly on a turnout of 90 per cent to strike in August for further negotiations on improving a wide range of conditions. ■

MIGRATION

Residents protest

VILLAGERS AT Barnham in Suffolk and at Piddington in Oxfordshire are defending the tranquillity of their tiny communities against the mass settlement of migrants in their midst – 1,250 at RAF Barnham and 1,200 at Piddington.

The government, forced to abandon the policy of housing new migrants in hotels, has turned to military camps and HMOs (houses of multiple occupation). But people still oppose the forced settlement.

“Barnham says no. Protect our community” read the placards, supported by West Suffolk Council and by local police citing risk to their specialist training at the site.

As of March 2026 there were 93,653 people in “asylum” accommodation. With too few available military sites or HMOs, 22 per cent of these (20,885) remain in hotels. Labour’s “one in, one out” deal has resulted in only 4 per cent being returned to France.

On 15 August, the Evening Standard estimated that over 3,000 migrants had arrived in Britain across the Channel on “small” boats. ■

FACTS MATTER

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

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

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



ON THE WEB

A selection of additional stories at cpbml.org.uk

Consultants prepare for action

NHS consultants in England have voted for strike action over pay and conditions. The vote comes shortly after resident doctors settled their own dispute.

Menwith Hill call for independence

On 4 July, US Independence Day, protesters gathered at RAF Menwith Hill to highlight and object to the presence of US bases in Britain. Echoing the Declaration of Independence, they called for freedom from outside interference.

Skilled rail jobs threatened

Balfour Beatty rail engineers are threatened with redundancy, which will deprive the industry of their essential skills. Their union says publicly owned Network Rail should mitigate this by allocating alternative work.

NHS workers in action

Strikes over pay have been taking place all over the country. Those involved include health visitors, operating theatre staff and pathology staff.

Dollars and debt

Worried about its own currency, the US has been forced to provide an emergency loan to Japan – to stop it selling dollars to prop up the yen.

Plus: the e-newsletter

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

Workers



Arriva bus, London, on one of the routes affected by strikes.

Bus drivers act over conditions

OVER 1,500 Arriva North London bus drivers took strike action during August over hot weather working. Drivers at the garages at Barking, Edmonton, Enfield, Grays, Palmers Green, Stamford Hill, Tottenham and Wood Green walked out on 14 and 18 August in protest at their working conditions, and also against the company's bullying of Unite members and representatives.

London was experiencing its fifth heatwave of the summer with ambient temperatures of over 35 degrees: inside the drivers' cabs it would have been closer to 40 degrees.

As the drivers point out, their action is essential to ensure both their own health and the safety of their passengers. Driving an Arriva bus is like working in a moving greenhouse. One driver said, "The buses don't have air conditioning. They think by putting a little fan in the cab helps – it doesn't." Working in those conditions can cause fatigue and dehydration, heatstroke and dizziness. A driver fainting at the wheel is dangerous for passengers, other road users and people in the street.

This action is a last resort. For several years, the drivers' union Unite has highlighted that most buses operated by Arriva North London have air cooling systems rather than the more effective air conditioning.

On 18 August, Unite announced the suspension of strikes to allow members to be balloted on new proposals on conditions from Arriva. The offer was narrowly rejected, and strikes were set to restart as *Workers* went to press.

CAR INDUSTRY

Good news for Sunderland

UNITE HAS welcomed Nissan's plans for joint car production with China's part state-owned Chery at its Sunderland plant. It says the joint venture safeguards some 6,000 jobs in Britain.

Steve Bush, Unite national officer, said, "This is very good news for Nissan's Sunderland workers and the UK's automotive industry in general at a time of uncertainty for the sector. Chinese vehicles are increasingly visible on British roads so it makes sense for UK workers to build them here as well."

This is something of a turnaround by Unite. Members had previously voiced fears of a Chinese takeover and potential dependence on China, which is able to undercut European manufacturers with its state subsidies and dominance in the EV

battery industry.

Sunderland is Britain's largest car factory and it is also Nissan's sole European plant. It would mean beginning mass-market Chinese car production in Britain for the first time in 2027.

A plug-in hybrid EV – the Jaecoo 7 built in China – became the top-selling model in Britain last March. The EU Commission proposes a "Made in Europe" label designed to lock out imports. It remains to be seen whether that would impact British car production as well.

Nissan has already been affected by the downturn in EV sales in Europe since the pandemic, which led to reduced production at Sunderland. In a show of commitment, Chery has opened an R&D European HQ for commercial vehicles in Liverpool.

This could pave the way for Jaguar Land Rover, weakened by a cyber attack, to build its EVs. The Labour government has chosen to downplay the proposal.

MERGERS

Workers paying the price

MORRISONS, THE supermarket company, was bought by US private equity company Clayton Dubilier & Rice in 2021 in a deal that saddled Morrisons with £6.6 billion of debt. Over the past year, the company has cut 4,912 jobs, despite its revenues growing by 2.8 per cent to £15.7 billion.

In January, staff in Morrisons' convenience stores were asked to be more

“flexible” – with changed hours, being required to work in different stores to their usual workplace, or take on different duties.

In 2023 the company changed the employees' pension scheme. Instead of the employer paying 5 per cent and employees 3 per cent, the company switched the rates of contributions to 3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively.

When a private equity firm borrows money to “save” a company, the debt is almost always carried by the acquired company itself. That is, by the workers. ■



Institute of Cancer Research, London.

Biomedical workers' pay fight

HUNDREDS OF Unite members at a number of biomedical establishments have been on strike after derisory pay offers. The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) is one such body. It has refused to negotiate a pay rise reflecting the cost of living after making a succession of below-inflation pay offers over recent years.

Those working for the ICR across scientific research, laboratory support, and site management have had a 3.75 per cent offer imposed on them, along with a refusal to implement an increment-based pay policy. Unite points out that the ICR has a “development fund” of over £100 million and has costed a 16 per cent restoration pay rise for all staff at just £9 million. So there should be enough in the kitty, including the CEO's £400,000 a year.

Unite says that anger among the staff has been mounting since the ICR brought in illegal, untrained agency staff to break the strike. Regional officer Will Searby warned that the ICR was “potentially putting people and equipment at risk through unsafe handling”. The strike is set to be “continuous and indefinite” until management are prepared to talk.

Meanwhile at two teaching hospitals in Lancashire – Blackburn and Burnley – bio-medicine staff who were on strike during June and July have escalated their strikes over the refusal by Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to pay the holiday pay to which they are entitled.

The trust lost at tribunal in a case concerning one employee several years ago, but it has refused to settle for the rest of the staff, who are now owed thousands of pounds.

The union says that the trust has given conflicting reasons why it cannot resolve the dispute. First it falsely claimed that the findings of the tribunal did not apply to other workers. Then it blamed the Department of Health and Social Care for the delay before switching to blaming NHS Employers, and now to blaming NHS England.

Anger has been further exacerbated by the trust's failure to honour derogations agreed with the strikers to provide life and limb cover during the strikes. Instead of providing critical cover, the trust drafted in unqualified staff. Fresh action is taking place every Monday to Friday in August through September or until the dispute is resolved. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 15 September, 7pm

Online CPBML Discussion Meeting (via Zoom)

“Unity not devolution”

The new prime minister says he aims to devolve more power to regions. He also wants Britain to rejoin the EU.

Devolution in whatever guise aims to break up Britain, letting multinational corporations operate more freely – as would membership of the EU.

Workers need a united independent Britain coupled with industrial self-reliance if we are to provide for our needs. How do workers turn the government away from its course of breaking up Britain?

Email info@cpbml.org.uk if you would like to participate in the discussion – all welcome!

OCTOBER

Wednesday 7 October 7.30pm

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

In person CPBML Public Meeting

“Why is capitalism so keen on net zero?”



Workers

The facts about climate change should not be in dispute. But what should the working class be doing about it? And why is the capitalist class so wedded to the policy of achieving net zero, whatever the costs in soaring energy prices for households and industries?

Come and discuss, all welcome.

From an unequal agreement with the EU on youth mobility governments are relentlessly encouraging more immigration

Independence, immigration



1000 Words/shutterstock.com

Sign at border control, Heathrow Airport, July 2025.

IMMIGRATION AND its impact on Britain is the issue that will not go away. Whether it's people arriving across the Channel or legally recruited to fill jobs that could be done by workers already here, the result is the same – undermining British workers.

Spurious justifications abound – “British workers are lazy”, “these are families escaping persecution”. No: British workers want decent pay; employers prefer to bring people from abroad and don't want to pay for skills training. And most illegal arrivals are young men seeking work.

At heart, opposition to migration is about independence and the future for Britain. It's not about those seeking work here, rather it's because workers have different views from our own capitalist class

about what matters for our future.

Independence is at root an attitude of mind, as we said in a 2024 CPBML political statement, “Taking Charge – Tasks To Be Done”. That may seem imprecise for a party claiming to be materialist. But it is founded on experience.

Our interests

Britain has a strong history of independence. We don't want popes telling us what to do. Workers here have a healthy scepticism towards all religions and politicians. And we know that employers, capitalists, don't have our interests at heart.

Despite the struggle for better wages and conditions and campaigning for social improvements, workers are still ruled and

capitalists still make the decisions. Challenging that world order would be a sign of independence.

An independent attitude of mind, a tone of informed optimism is our antidote to the “learned helplessness” that the ruling class wants to generate.

Learned helplessness is a psychological state where people repeatedly faces uncontrollable stressors and eventually stop trying to change their circumstances. It leads to passivity and a deep belief that your own actions do not matter. An apt description of our political climate.

The most notable and dramatic recent manifestation of asserting independence and casting off helplessness was the vote to leave the EU a decade ago (see page

...to low thresholds for wages in shortage occupations,
...on to Britain. That is bad for the working class...

ion and community

12). Yet what followed was not what many workers hoped for, especially on controlling immigration.

The strength of the Brexit vote was that it showed an understanding in the class that free movement of labour drives down wages. Which of course pro-EU politicians and timid trade unionists deny.

The weakness was that workers allowed a failure to fully implement Brexit and properly extract ourselves from the EU. What are the lessons to be learned?

In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels analysed the development of emerging capitalism, predicting that it would create its own gravediggers – the working class. And ruling class capitalists through instinct or understanding believe that's the case.

How else to explain the capitalist class's effort to unmake the working class? Look at their actions: anti trade union legislation, from the outset; unemployment; attacks on industry, with the complete eradication of some. With this, the suppression of wages, especially after economic crises and migration as a means of achieving that.

Scale

Those elements have been present from the beginning of capitalism, but the scale and pace of the attacks has stepped up over the past two decades.

All of this disrupts community, the community of British workers. Coal miners, from the very beginning of their 1984-85 dispute, articulated that the attack was on their community as well as their industry. But above all, the ruling class uses migration as a weapon to unmake our class.

And migration frequently unmakes the countries from which migrants depart – also not a new thing. British workers, with their many connections to Ireland, should remember what forced migration did to that country from the mid-19th century on.

Earlier still, parts of Britain were subject to the same forces with the Highland Clearances. Recent statistics show net migration figures coming down, but this masks an increase in emigration combined with still high inward migration. That's a cause for concern, not a reason for the government to pat itself on the back.

Labour's EU reset includes an unequal agreement on the EU youth mobility scheme: expect even more traffic from the EU into Britain. But employers will be just as pleased to see young British people leave. Breaking shared generational links in the workplace and within families is another way of undermining class consciousness. It will wreck industries and communities just as much as Thatcher wrecked mining villages and towns.

Free movement of labour was a big concern among workers leading up to the Leave vote. Yet what followed was a huge surge in legal migration. The result is that one in five in the workplace is foreign born, known disparagingly as the "Boriswave". Subsequent Conservative and Labour governments followed that same path.

This is not unplanned, and it impacts the cohesion of the British working class in several different ways. Legal migration undermines jobs and opportunities. It reduces pressure on employers to train and develop workers – and does not encourage further and higher education institutes to think of Britain's needs either.

Legal migration is further encouraged. The Shortage Occupation List, replaced by the Immigration Salary List since April 2024, includes a lower salary threshold and reduced visa application fees. And in direct contradiction to those who say wages are not undermined, the minimum salary for a specific "shortage" occupation is set at 80 per cent of the standard rate.

Legal and illegal

Legal migration far outweighs illegal migration, though that has its impact too. And it is meeting opposition (see News page 3), which is lazily described as racist scare-mongering or "nimbysism".

Andy Burnham made his position clear with the threat to spread these new arrivals to every area of the country. The government still insists on calling all these undocumented young men "asylum seekers". It decries the inevitable criminality that feeds on illegal migration, but dare not confront it.

On 11 August the newly reinstated Angela Rayner on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme described them as "desperate, vulnerable people", implying there were many women and children included. She

'The Brexit vote showed an understanding that free movement drives down wages...'

ignored Nick Robinson's inconvenient question about the communities in her care, "Do you understand, as well as sympathise with, the rage people are feeling?"

By making long term-plans and contracts for illegal arrivals, the government accepts that this is now normal. The cost is enormous and growing. It undercuts councils trying to house those on the waiting list and wrecks their housing budgets.

The Home Office outbids local authorities for accommodation. Landlords who house asylum seekers benefit from guaranteed rent agreements. Increasingly, local councils are having to house their homeless families in hotels.

And yet many trade unions and the TUC are happy to welcome anyone to Britain. Under the cloak of advocating equal rights for indigenous or migrant workers, the TUC has for many years failed to oppose the attack on British workers through mass immigration.

Such an approach conflates opposition to open borders with racism. That is a disastrous error, now compounded with raising the spectre of fascism as the likely result of controlling immigration.

This party says our defence lies in independence – an attitude of mind that learns from mistakes, sets a strategy, has innovative tactics and involves collective learning.

This means recognition that mass migration helps only capitalists and that the fight for a future begins at home, not Gaza or anywhere else. It means defending jobs, conditions and communities and not being afraid to assert these things in the face of those who would undermine them. ■

Another government, another change in the way research is being dismantling of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

Cold winds are blowing through the research community

BRITAIN'S RESEARCHERS will be anxiously awaiting the Burnham government's first budget, scheduled for 28 October. It should give a glimpse of what to expect under the new regime. The signs are not encouraging.

One of Andy Burnham's first acts when he slid into power in July was to axe the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and move it back into a new Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade. Whether the move is positive for British science remains to be seen.

Uncertainty

What is sure is that it piles uncertainty upon uncertainty, which cannot be good for anyone involved in research. And it marks the fourth government department to be responsible for science and research in the past ten years.

The DSIT itself was formed just three years ago by Rishi Sunak's government, to general applause from the research community. The Royal Society was delighted, noting that it had been calling for years for a dedicated department and secretary of state with a seat in the cabinet. That dedicated seat has now gone to a new minister for artificial intelligence.

The DSIT's abolition has elicited cagey responses from researchers, mindful of where their next grant might be coming from. The current president of the Royal Society, Nobel prizewinner Paul Nurse, warned that it was "essential" that science is not a junior partner in the new department – whose prime focus is bound to be industry and trade.

Chi Onwurah, Labour chair of the House of Commons Science, Innovation



Mike Peel (www.mikepeel.net) (CC BY-SA 4.0)

The Lowell Telescope and the smaller 42-foot telescope at Jodrell Bank, with the much newer h

and Technology Committee, has written of "concerns expressed by many in the sector" about the move, and suggested that in the autumn the committee will look into the impact of shutting the DSIT.

Onwurah also pointed out that the "machinery of government change" in July 2024 which transferred digital and artificial intelligence away from the Cabinet Office and handed them to the DSIT was already causing "operational delays" and hamstringing the implementation of new policies. Expect more operational delays from the latest tinkering.

And all the while there is the looming threat of budget cuts. Indeed, in some areas they have already started.

The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) agency and the associated Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)

have decided – after a "prioritisation" exercise – to remove funding for the e-MERLIN network, including the Jodrell Bank radio telescopes and other radio telescopes.

The decision has been described as "heartbreaking" and "scientifically misguided". Funding is also being reduced at CERN as well as at various optical telescopes elsewhere such as Hawaii.

The STFC says, "The decision to withdraw funding from e-MERLIN at the end of its current funding agreement is the result of a comprehensive, evidence-based prioritisation process. As part of this, STFC is focusing investment on the areas that will deliver the greatest long-term scientific capability and value, including the next generation of world-leading radio astronomy facilities".

A "comprehensive, evidence-based

'And all the while there is the looming threat of budget cuts...'

is funded. The Burnham regime has already seen the
d Technology...

through Britain's research



headquarters of the Square Kilometre Array.

prioritisation" sounds like a typical glib phrase for a quick decision with little sense of real needs. Yet what exactly is meant by "the next generation of world-leading radio astronomy facilities"?

The STFC says it will continue to invest in Jodrell Bank's future through its support for the UK's hosting of the headquarters of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory, which it claims is already delivering significant benefits to the University of Manchester and the north-west.

But the headquarters is just that. The Square Kilometre Array Observatory operates two huge arrays in South Africa and Australia, not Britain.

Beneath all the guff about "continuing to invest", the bald fact is that Jodrell Bank's 76-metre Lovell telescope and others will close unless the STFC reverses its

Constant change

IN BRITAIN, uniquely, responsibility for scientific research has shuffled regularly between a variety of ministries, and the Cabinet Office. After a long period of stability with the Department of Industrial and Scientific Research since 1916, research was moved to the Department of Education and Science in 1964, to the Cabinet Office in 1992, then to Trade and Industry (1995), and Business, Innovation and Skills (2009).

The DSIT, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, was formed in 2023. It united the science funding of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and

digital aspects from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Cabinet Office. With the DSIT's abolition, digital aspects return to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Cabinet Office. Confused about what's going on and why? You're not alone.

The contrast with other countries is remarkable. The French Ministry for Higher Education and Research, for example, has been responsible for science since 1954. Germany's science ministry has essentially been in existence since 1962. Japan has had just two ministries responsible for science since 1871. No such stability in Britain. ■

decision or alternative funding is found. In other words, British radio telescopes are to lose funding to support radio telescope arrays elsewhere.

Professor Simon Garrington, associate director of the Jodrell Bank Observatory, said that everyone at Jodrell Bank was "devastated" by the decision to withdraw funding.

"It's not just because of the fantastic science that we do, but Jodrell Bank and its telescope network have been a national capability for nearly 70 years and a beacon for science in the north-west attracting young people into science and engineering careers," he said.

Short-sighted

That's no exaggeration. Around 150,000 people visit Jodrell Bank each year, including 21,000 schoolchildren. At a time when inspiring children to do science is a national priority, closing Jodrell Bank seems short-sighted, to say the least.

Overall the STFC is cutting £162 million from its budget to cope with soaring electricity costs and the rising cost of subscriptions to international organisations. Apart from the radio telescopes, big cuts have been announced for the Diamond Light Source and ISIS Neutron and Muon Source at the Daresbury Laboratory in Oxfordshire.

Speaking for the trade union Prospect, Sue Ferns said, "The cuts...are the product of a political choice. UK government investment in R&D is well behind its historic peak and also other leading scientific nations. This is forcing damaging competition between the science that's ready to commercialise today, and that which keeps us at the experimental leading-edge of international research communities. We cannot afford to lose either."

Indeed, radio astronomy is a classic example of how seemingly obscure basic science can lead to practical advances. Modern Wi-Fi technology was developed by Australian scientists seeking to deal with the problem that radio waves bounce off all kinds of surfaces and get broken up or distorted.

Having worked out how to clean up radio waves coming in from space, it was a short step to apply that process to lower-power radio waves, such as local Wi-Fi networks.

The political choice to withdraw funding is in line with other political choices, most notably the constant shifting of responsibility for science funding (see Box). It reflects the unwillingness of British finance capital – to which government answers – to invest in anything that isn't likely to show a return in the current financial year. ■

The Defence Investment Plan was Keir Starmer's parting gift, part ineffective, part downright dangerous...

This new defence plan is

THE GOVERNMENT'S Defence Investment Plan (DIP) was published in June while Keir Starmer was seeing out his time before being replaced as prime minister. His successor appeared to endorse it, even though he doesn't know how to pay for it.

There was quite a build-up to publication, the general tenor being that we don't spend nearly as much as we need to on defence (more accurately titled "military expenditure").

But according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Britain's expenditure on defence in 2025 was the sixth highest in the world – being the world's fifth largest economy, measured by nominal GDP. That doesn't mean that all this is spent wisely – or in the interests of the British people. But shows that the expenditure is in proportion to our wealth as a country.

The DIP states that £298 billion will be invested in defence over the next four years to provide British armed forces with "war readiness" and to "increase lethality...in a period of all-domain warfare". It is a War Investment Plan and not a plan for the defence of Britain. It is planning, at great expense, for the wars that NATO and other warmongers hope for.

Surrendered

In truth Britain has not had an independent defence plan or foreign policy since 1945. Every government has surrendered our sovereignty on defence since then. The new plan heightens that betrayal.

It declares that the government's commitment to NATO is absolute and that the UK will contribute two divisions and a corps HQ to NATO's strategic reserve corps. These forces will be held at readiness to be deployed anywhere, when required, by NATO's military commander, always a US officer.

The plan also states that Britain will join NATO's Dual Capable Aircraft nuclear mission – and as a result must buy at least 12 US nuclear-capable F-35A planes to be deployed under NATO's command. They carry either conventional weapons or US-owned nuclear bombs, currently stored in NATO bases across Europe including RAF



Workers

Blockade of RAF Lakenheath (in reality solely used by the United States Air Force) in June 2025.

Lakenheath, Suffolk.

The risk is that the warplanes will be flown by the RAF during a NATO-controlled nuclear strike. This is not news. The government announced these plans in June 2025 claiming it would deliver greater security for working people and support 20,000 jobs across Britain, with over 100 UK-based suppliers contributing to the F35 programme. But it kept quiet on the fact that the planes would be bought from US company Lockheed Martin.

In total the DIP commits Britain to spending £64 billion over the next four years on nuclear weapons, over which we will have no control. This equates to a fifth

of the total DIP expenditure (not including the cost of the F-35 planes or a possible 138 non-nuclear capable F-35B planes also to be bought from Lockheed Martin.)

According to a report from the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, out of the nine nuclear weapon owning states, Britain was the third-highest spender in 2025 at \$12.6 billion. China was second at \$13.5 billion. And the USA spent the most by far (\$69 billion), more than the total spent by the other eight countries together.

Not surprisingly, trade unions such as Unite and GMB representing defence industry workers want to see how the

gift to his successor. And like everything Starmer did, it is

s not what Britain needs



spending of £298 billion across four years will translate into jobs in Britain and support for industry here.

The DIP talks about “Backing British” and boosting British industry. But it’s far from credible that the proposed defence spending will prioritise British jobs and skills. For years politicians of all hues have trashed British industry, in particular acquiescing in the sale of British defence companies to foreign owners, mainly in the USA. The result is that Britain lacks the industrial capacity to fulfil this plan.

On 22 June the UK government gained EU approval to participate in its loan framework for selling arms to Ukraine. This

means that British defence companies will join the EU’s procurement framework as a third country participant.

The UK government will underwrite the borrowing costs of the loans of the contracts that British companies win. It has agreed that we will pay to join the EU scheme, when British companies could have traded with Ukraine directly.

Compared with other industries, defence receives significant state investment including in research and development, exports support and public procurement. That reduces risk for owners and makes it particularly attractive to multinational asset management and private investment companies.

US investment

A Common Wealth report from 2023 found that the top investors in apparently British defence companies were the US investment companies BlackRock, Vanguard and State Street. Their wealthy international clients, not the British public, benefit from the public investment in defence. And there’s always a risk that the work is shifted overseas.

The DIP places great emphasis on transforming British forces, endorsing the adoption of “recce-strike” (being able to find, target and strike enemy forces with precision and speed), autonomous vessels and vehicles, uncrewed sub-surface vessels, a hybrid navy, and drones. It claims (without any data) that the lethality of the army alone will increase by ten times as a result.

But is all this going to make Britain safer? Will it defend us, or will it make us less safe?

The government recently allowed the USA to use RAF Fairford to launch its bombing of Iran. Iran subsequently declared that “any base used for aggression against Iranian territory constitutes a legitimate target for our forces”. Iran specifically identified RAF Fairford as one such base, making it clear that it did not rule out mounting a direct retaliatory attack, which is possibly within range of its ballistic missiles.

In response, a government statement said, “Our armed forces are ready to

‘Is all this going to make Britain safer? Will it defend us, or will it make us less safe?’

keep the United Kingdom safe from any kind of attacks, whether it’s on our soil or from abroad.” Another view comes from political commentator and blogger Richard North, who argues forcefully that the UK simply does not have the ability to prevent such missiles reaching their UK targets.

And the DIP blithely says that £790 million will be spent over the next four years “to enhance protection of the UK homeland and overseas bases from air, drone and missile threats.” £790 million is less than 0.3 per cent of the planned expenditure and since it will cover overseas bases, the land to air defence of Britain will be a fraction of that.

But Iran, or any other country attacked by bombs launched from an air base in Britain, may not have to launch an expensive missile should it decide to retaliate. It could be using very different methods. As the government-appointed Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Jonathan Hall KC, has said, “If you look at state threats and people who have been willing to act as proxies or carry out attacks on behalf of Iran... I’m interested in the question of whether or not foreign nationality, particularly recent migrants, is becoming more relevant to the overall national security picture.”

The DIP is based on Britain’s continued membership of NATO, an aggressive, US-dominated alliance for war. It is not about defence. Workers should demand that our money is not spent on supporting US military aims and US corporations, but is invested in Britain to advance our national interests and to meet our genuine defence needs. ■

A decade after the epic vote to leave the European Union, continuing attempts by government and the establishment

Brexit 10 years on: the f



Did Brexit really happen? Yes. But not the full independence people voted for. Image Alterov/shutterstock.com

IT'S NOW ten years since the Brexit vote. It was poetic justice that Starmer resigned on the tenth anniversary, almost to the day, of the democratic vote that he did all he could to overturn.

On becoming prime minister he wasted no time in meeting the president of the EU Commission to achieve his aim of rejoining the EU under the guise of "closer relations" with the EU.

The next EU-UK summit was due to take place in July, now postponed until October or November. Nothing in these talks is ever put to the British people for their approval.

Who supported the Brexit vote? We're told it was the "left-behind", those nostalgic for empire, the less educated, Northerners and so on. But never the truth – that it was

the majority of the working class.

Some who still oppose Britain's independence now lump Brexit in with what they like to call far-right populism and with support for President Trump. They paint voting to leave the EU as intrinsically right-wing, by which they mean backward – along with all the arguments about sovereignty and democracy and the right to national self-determination. This mindset displays complete contempt for the British working class.

Fascism

Similarly, terms like right wing and fascism are bandied about, attempting to discredit those who voted Leave. When it comes to fascism, we should not forget that the self-proclaimed fascist Oswald Mosley, the

founder and leader of the British Union of Fascists, was one of the first British politicians to speak up in favour of a United States of Europe.

Detractors of Brexit often reduce Leave voters' motives to emotions – anger, hate, fear, and resentment – rather than a rational choice. Or else they diagnose Brexit as an

'Who supported the Brexit vote? The majority of the working class...'

the fight for independence continues – in the face of
t to ignore or overturn the referendum...

fight for independence

What has the EU ever done for us ?

EUROPE IS paying higher energy prices than the US or Canada. Energy use in Britain has fallen, and British businesses pay twice as much as their French counterparts. Yet the UK government, no matter the party, is more pro-EU than member states themselves. And the new energy secretary wants to outdo the Green Party agenda.

Brexit provided the opportunity to end the Common Fisheries Policy and give British fishermen the ability to fish in their

waters. Instead, Starmer signed over our waters for an outrageous 12 years, in exchange for signing up to EU regulations for agriculture.

After Brexit, Britain was free of the restrictive EU approach to biotechnology, due largely to Green opposition. The result was a leap forward in precision breeding. The EU is partially catching up, but the Labour reset threatens Britain's progress.

Fishermen lost the waters they were promised, and farmers are left to compete

against subsidised European farmers. At the same time, the government tries to push farmers into exchanging green fields for solar panels, and threatens their land with inheritance taxes.

Many pieces of former EU legislation remain active on the UK statute book – more (up to 4,500 pieces) than have been substantially amended, replaced with domestic law or had their policy intent altered (about 1,600). Over 2,000 pieces have been scrapped entirely. ■

act of collective pathology. Days after the vote psychotherapist Philippa Perry suggested in the *Guardian* that Europe would not even have been the issue, "If we had... listened to fears, found a way of framing them, and taken action to include people who feel like an older child being pushed aside."

Her husband, the artist Grayson Perry, explained to the Political Science Association's 2016 conference that "the liberal academic elite...let us down because they are not emotionally literate enough to understand what 52 per cent of the electorate was thinking – or feeling, should I say..." That tune has not changed in the 10 years since.

Did Brexit achieve anything? One recent book points to 75 Brexit benefits: tangible benefits from Britain having left the European Union, by Gully Foyle (a pseudonym), including animal welfare protections, ending our annual donations to the EU (£14 billion in 2020), deciding our own farming, fishing and environmental policies – and the cheapest bananas in Europe.

From 2016 to 2026, the UK GDP is up by 57 per cent – more than Germany, France or Italy. Britain's total exports have risen from £583 billion in 2016 to £947 billion in the 12 months to May 2026, a rise of 62 per cent, again ahead of Germany, France and Italy. So clearly being in the EU doesn't automatically produce greater growth.

There was one previous referendum

after which Britain's economic performance did get worse: GDP per head fell, the share of world trade fell, productivity and investment were weaker, and the balance of payments got worse. But that was after the 1975 referendum which endorsed our joining the EEC in 1973.

Britain has continued significant trade with Europe under the 2020 EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, negotiated without tariffs or quotas – higher levels of trade than when Britain was in the EU.

The promise on the bus

Most of us remember the famous referendum promise on the bus – £350 million a week to the NHS. But we don't all remember that this promise was actually kept. The NHS got the £350 million a week – and more.

The NHS budget rose in real terms (at 2022-23 prices) from £144 billion in 2016-17 to £182 billion in 2022-23. That is an extra £723 million a week – more than twice the promised extra £350 million a week.

The then prime minister, Theresa May, kept this quiet. Why? Because she knew that if she publicised this extra money for the NHS, she would be publicising the fact that the Leave campaign had not lied about the extra investment in the NHS. She would be telling everybody that the Leave campaign's promise had been carried out.

The reason Britain's economy has not grown more is not down to Brexit. One key reason is that energy prices are very high,

which is bad not just for households but for all our industries. Why are they so high? Because Green policies result directly in higher energy prices. The countries with the cheapest electricity are those which have high shares of that reliable trio: gas, coal and nuclear.

May, Johnson and Starmer all implemented the EU policy of net zero. The European Climate Law of 30 June 2021 imposed net zero on all EU member states. They did not have to do this, because we are not in the EU. The Theresa May government chose to do it.

On 24 June 2019, the government increased the 2008 Climate Change Act's 2050 decarbonisation target from an 80 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, against 1990 levels, to a 100 per cent reduction. It did so with a statutory instrument, which reduces parliamentary scrutiny. They did not need to worry – the only response from Labour was that they thought of it first!

Migration

Most people assumed that net migration would fall after Brexit. It didn't. That is not a failing of Brexit. Successive governments wanted to increase the supply of labour to keep wages down. They wanted to undermine trade union pressure to invest in training the skilled workers that Britain really needs, and investing in the apprenticeships that Britain's young people really need.

Continued on page 14



Continued from page 13

As prime minister, Boris Johnson implemented the EU policy of mass immigration by opening the door to 3.9 million immigrants. Again it was not necessary and against Britain's interests – that is to say, the interests of British workers.

The number of non-EU workers under 25 employed here is more than three-and-a-half times greater than it was in 2020. The number of British workers under 25 has risen by a minuscule amount over that time – by just 0.5 per cent.

If we had a referendum on controlling migration or on dumping net zero, workers would win. But the ruling class would thwart those votes, as it did Brexit.

But we must ask why many did vote to stay in the undemocratic, austerity-enforcing EU? Some may have voted not on the issue, but against the Leave campaign, its claims and its leaders. They missed the point. The referendum was not about the merits – or otherwise – of the campaign but on the matter of sovereignty.

Independence from the EU should have meant that Britain controlled its borders and defended its waters. Our 2016

vote was a vote for self-reliance, our democratic assertion that decisions about Britain should be made in Britain, not in Brussels, not in Washington. Our vote against the EU was also a vote against its accomplice, NATO.

The EU boasts that it is a force for peace. Its supporters claim it has saved Europe from wars. But examination of the EU's intimate relationship with the aggressive NATO alliance exposes that view as idealist fantasy. A key change came when NATO, at its Strasbourg summit of 4 April 2009, committed itself "to improve the NATO-EU strategic partnership".

EU members in total spend more on the military than Russia, more than China. For two years Starmer told us that the way to avoid war is to prepare for war. But preparing for war is necessary if you want to wage war.

People want independence

The ruling class tells us that we have now rejected Brexit, rejected independence. A YouGov poll last year showed a different picture. It asked people if they preferred 20 policy areas to be decided at national level or supranational level. The most popular answer for all 20 policy areas was – "UK government alone". Preference for national responsibility for policymaking spanned the

Brexit divide.

Many EU policies are not in Britain's interests. But, whatever we think our decisions should be, the British people voted in 2016 that decisions about Britain should be made in Britain. Ten years on British people still believe that decisions about Britain should be made in Britain.

Did Brexit really happen? Well yes – we took a necessary, indispensable step forward. But we did not achieve the full independence that we voted for. Ten years on, we must accept that the key policies of net zero and open borders will not end until the working class, the vast majority of the country, takes responsibility for running Britain.

Independence is a necessary condition for progress. So is national unity, but that's another topic.

The British people want independence and industry and borders, but we still allow the ruling class to have a veto on our progress in all these matters. The ruling class is the sole obstacle to getting what we need and want. For independence, industry, borders, our class needs to remove that ruling class from power.

Without revolution, we will never have independence. Without revolution, we will never be able to rebuild Britain on an industrial base. ■

'Ten years on the British people still believe that decisions about Britain should be made in Britain...'



BRITAIN'S ECONOMY

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New pamphlet

The dire state of Britain's economy has become a common talking point. British workers are being assailed on all fronts. We are left with two choices: either continue as we are, or strike out in a new direction. This pamphlet contains ideas that can be discussed at the workplace, at home, in the pub or with friends.

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Measures to authorise new investment in North Sea oil and gas are becoming increasingly urgent...

North Sea oil is vital

NEW PRIME minister Andy Burnham is considering a reverse of previous policy preventing the exploitation of North Sea oil and gas. That would be a positive move and widely supported, but he may need more encouragement.

Reports suggest that decisions on the Rosebank and Jackdaw fields may be deferred until later in the year. But Burnham had better move quickly – because the estimated costs of closure are rising too.

A report from the North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) published on 13 August estimated current decommissioning costs at £54 billion, up from £36 billion in 2022. Closing down exhausted or abandoned rigs is an expensive process in itself. A shortage of the ships and rigs needed to carry out this work is driving up prices.

Backlog

The NSTA report identifies a growing backlog of 500 wells which need to be plugged, and forecasts there will be more than 1,000 additional wells in need of decommissioning in the next five years.

These huge costs would be met by the taxpayer. They are driven by the Labour government's determination to decarbonise the North Sea with a punitive tax regime which compels more and more companies to quit the area altogether.

BP, for instance, has already confirmed its intention to cease operating in the North Sea – it has set its sights on operations in other parts of the world. Added to this, the withholding of new licences is prompting already active operators to leave early, with valuable reserves unextracted.

A strategic shift and change in energy policy is needed – far more than approval of two fields already exploited under political pressure. Industry trade union Unite was clear on this after the Aberdeen by election, as are the workers running the Keep Grangemouth Working campaign.

The NSTA, formerly the Oil and Gas Authority, was created in April 2015 to regulate the extraction of oil and gas from the North Sea. But its remit to ensure economic extraction was fatally undermined in 2021 when the duty to ensure net zero by 2052 became embedded as a target. This effectively ensured that its primary focus



Gary Bembridge via Wikipedia (CC BY 2.0)

Drilling rig, North Sea.

became decommissioning.

And the true extra costs to Britain go beyond cleaning up abandoned wells. A shortfall in domestic energy supply means paying to import it or paying excessive market prices to meet high demand. For example to prevent a power shortage during the eclipse on 12 August, the electricity grid operator NESO was prepared to pay millions to guarantee supply. One gas plant (at Connahs Quay in Flint, but German owned) had a deal for more than four times the market price.

Cost

Another example of the impact and cost of net zero policy is the failure to exploit other opportunities. The Rough gas field off the Yorkshire coast could be used to store up to 30 days gas supplies, trebling gas reserves – ensuring continuity of supply

and mitigating against market price spikes.

Rough owners Centrica ended storage in 2017 because of high maintenance costs and government refusal to give financial support. It is partially open again, but will completely close next year unless the government takes action. Over to the new energy secretary Miatta Fahnbulleh...but her views on net zero seem to echo those of her predecessor.

Increasingly, Britain will be forced to turn to avaricious power companies unless the North Sea reserves are reclaimed for Britain. The assault on North Sea production, we are told, is part of the decarbonising process.

It is nothing of the sort. It is merely moving carbon release elsewhere. Global emissions will be unaffected, but we in Britain will be further impoverished unless this policy is reversed. ■

Can Britain move away from fossil fuels and adapt to climate aims. But government net zero policy targets won't help...

Climate change and net

Unclimatechange via Flickr (CC BY 2.0)



Paris climate change summit, 2015 – smug self-satisfaction was the order of the day. Now workers are paying the price.

THE ISSUE of climate change is one that – regardless of your views on the subject – now exerts a massive influence on political thinking. It has become something that we simply can't ignore.

Obviously there are direct effects, but possibly more important is the impact on our daily lives of political decisions taken in the name of combating climate change.

Burning of fossil carbon-based fuels – coal, oil and gas – produces carbon dioxide (CO₂). Along with other gases like methane and nitrous oxide, CO₂ is known as a “greenhouse gas”. They trap energy in the atmosphere in a way similar to the way that a greenhouse glass traps heat.

Since preindustrial times, the atmospheric concentration of CO₂ has increased by nearly 50 per cent. Over half this increase has happened since 1970. The level of methane has increased by more than 150 per cent, nitrous oxide by roughly 20 per cent.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – the United Nations cli-

mate body – believes these increases have raised the planet's average surface temperature by 1 °C since the start of the industrial revolution. It forecasts this will climb to 1.5 °C between 2030 and 2050.

In response, nearly 200 countries signed up to the 2015 Paris Agreement, which aimed to arrest the increase in CO₂ in the planet's atmosphere.

The government's 2021 Net Zero Strategy set a target of stopping the increase in CO₂ concentrations by 2050; this is what is meant by “net zero”. Why 2050? It is the point at which global warming is forecast to exceed 1.5 degrees.

Notably, and often ignored, is that reaching net zero does not mean ending all CO₂ emissions. It means reducing those emissions as far as practicable, and actively removing some of them from the atmosphere, on top of those that are removed or break down naturally.

The working class is generally being kept out of the debate about climate change, instead being fed a great deal of

misleading information. But workers are to be forced to sacrifice their living standards, their jobs, indeed whole industries, to deal with global warming and, of course, to maintain the profits of energy corporations.

Modern civilisation – starting at the industrial revolution – was only possible because humans harnessed energy sources and learned how to change energy from one form to another. The application of that energy underpins every aspect of our lives.

We need energy

Energy drives manufacturing and transport; it lights, heats (and cools) our homes. We need energy for the computer systems that we now depend upon – and if the use of artificial intelligence grows as predicted, the rise in energy demand will be massive.

Modern life requires that energy is readily available, reliable, and affordable. Electricity can be generated by means other than burning fossil-fuels. The simple question is what's the best alternative?

ate change? Yes, to a degree, and these would be good

zero policy

Renewable energy sounds great, but there are practical pitfalls. Hydro-electricity generation is proven technology but hard to scale up further in Britain. Wind and solar – the major renewable contributors to electricity generation – do not produce a steady supply of electricity. Surplus power is wasted unless it can be stored.

Battery storage technology has advanced, but not yet to the extent needed for reliance on renewables. Huge amounts of energy are still needed to make batteries and later safely to dispose of them.

Nuclear fission for power generation has great potential as a clean alternative to burning fossil fuels. Prospect – a trade union representing many nuclear energy workers – calls for nuclear power to be at the heart of a secure and carbon-free energy future.

Yet the share of Britain's electricity supplied by nuclear power is diminishing as old plants go offline. The lifespan of two existing stations, Heysham 1 and Hartlepool, has been extended by two years to 2030. Then only Sizewell B will remain – recently given a 20 year extension to 2055.

Prospect supported extending the life of existing plants, but it says that's not enough. Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C are under construction and there are plans for small modular reactors at Wylfa. It argues for a comprehensive skills and workforce plan, and government backing for the nuclear supply chain.

Despite the growth in renewables, the

gap between global electricity demand and supply has widened. Global demand almost doubled between 2000 and 2022 – met mostly by fossil fuels. The government can't isolate the atmosphere above Britain and keep it free from CO2.

A rational energy policy requires a long-term and consistent view of the nation's need. Instead we have short-term decisions framed against hitting net zero targets without assessing what is achievable.

Refused

The 2024 Labour government refused to support further oil and gas exploration – and so far nothing has changed with the Burnham regime. This is not a rational approach, as Unite and other unions point out; they want to keep the North Sea working. And Labour's policy is not popular, as the recent Aberdeen by-election showed.

In Britain, workers have to confront the government and others who use net zero as a cloak to decimate manufacturing industry here. Our class should not accept sacrificing our jobs and living standards to maintain capitalism's energy markets.

Capitalism and market forces will not bring about changes necessary to cope with climate change – to live with and adapt to it. And at present there's no rational debate about how that can happen.

Don't expect help from a Labour government – it is committed to both capitalism and markets and has seamlessly continued the arbitrary and short term policy of

'Labour is predisposed towards anything that undermines Britain's independence...'

previous governments – dressed up as saving the world.

Labour is predisposed towards anything that attacks or undermines Britain's independence and self reliance. How else can you explain the wasting of essential industries, coupled with a disregard for agricultural production?

To counter this, the working class will have to demand and insist that investments be made in research and technology aimed at reducing our reliance on fossil fuels – and to move away from economic measures that penalise long term investment.

But short-term thinking is at the core of capitalist decision-making. Planning is anathema to them. Capitalism is the obstacle to the energy security that we need. We may not be able to change the climate, but policies – and governments – can be moved. ■

CPBML public meeting

Wednesday 7 October, 7:30 pm

"Why is capitalism so keen on net zero?"

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

The facts about climate change should not be in dispute. But what should the working class be doing about it? Why is the capitalist class so wedded to the policy of achieving net zero, whatever the costs in soaring energy prices for households and industries? Come and discuss, all welcome.



The standard of maternity care remains a dire concern. The evidence points to problems in maternity care across Britain.

Maternity care in the NHS



Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, where a report identified hundreds of maternity cases where avoidable harm occurred.

JUNE 2026 saw the publication of another major report detailing unsafe practice in maternity care: The Ockenden report on Nottingham University hospital. And then in July the National Maternity and Neonatal Investigation under Baroness Amos was published. These follow similar reports on the Telford hospital in 2022 and Morecambe in 2015.

The Amos report was not truly national – it only covered about 12 hospitals in England. However there is currently a review of maternity care in Scotland following a critical review of maternity care in Edinburgh. Likewise, a review of maternity services in Wales was announced in July 2025.

There are clear themes in the published reports: all describe a cycle of chronic understaffing and overwork. The report on Nottingham provides a striking description of how an unresolved situation can lead to appalling behaviour by workers towards each other and towards those in their care.

It described staff literally trying to push their workload of pregnant mothers away

from the unit when they needed critical care. It is a painful reminder that where there is no effective collective response to safety issues in any workplace, workers can turn on each other and make a bad situation worse.

The outcomes in Nottingham were catastrophic. The report detailed systemic failings during the period 2012 to 2025: it highlighted 444 maternity cases and 76 neonatal cases where avoidable harm resulted. Failures in care may have substantially impacted on the outcome in six maternal deaths.

Deaths

The report identified 31 babies who died due to poor care and many more who suffered avoidable harm. Quite understandably it was those statistics which made the national headlines. On listening to those headlines workers will have asked why was there no collective response at Nottingham? Well, there was an attempt but it was not adequate and it is worth examining.

The attempt at a collective response was made in 2018 (nearly nine years ago!) and it is documented in the Ockenden report on Nottingham. Senior midwife Sue Brydon wrote a letter signed by 50 midwives and sent it to management detailing their concerns. It included this paragraph:

“The most important factor threatening the wellbeing of families and midwives and the cause of a potential disaster is inadequate staffing. There has been a serious and ongoing failure of workforce planning, leading to a chronic shortage of clinical midwives.”

Many Workers readers will recognise how difficult it must have been to arrange for 50 people to sign that letter. Rarely does attendance at a union branch reach that number. Many would have been reluctant to stick their neck out and many would have felt cynical about the management response.

But they were proved correct: the “potential disaster” mentioned in their letter became an actuality. The management were able to ignore and bury that letter. The

**The new prime minister sees solutions in devolution but the
main regardless of funding models...**

NHS must change

signatories, seemingly without the umbrella of taking that action as trade unionists, did not have the machinery to follow through on their concern.

Management preferred to address issues raised by staff by internal reviews. There were six such reviews in the period covered by the report. Yet the situation deteriorated after each one.

The report goes on to detail how the trust was failing to properly calculate the staffing numbers – precisely the “ongoing failure of workforce planning” mentioned in the letter. Understaffing also meant that staff were not attending essential training. That contributed to the ongoing harm documented in the report.

Trade unionists, especially health and safety reps, know that persistence is essential in such situations. Often a concern has to be raised with an employer several times before action is taken. And improvement may not happen until workers down tools and strike.

If the letter signed by 50 Nottingham midwives had been part of trade union action which was persistent over time, lives could have been saved. Direct union action by front line staff is the key to safety rather than internal or external reviews.

Care avoids compensation

As well as describing the failed collective attempt to rectify the situation in Nottingham, the Ockenden report contains another critical piece of information – mentioned in the covering letter as background but not followed up and not included in any recommendation.

This is what Donna Ockenden calls the “startling statistic” that clinical negligence for maternity care is costing the NHS almost the same in legal compensation as it spends on the delivery of maternity care itself!

That is startling: it means that as a nation we pay for maternity care twice over.

According to the NHS Resolution annual report 2024/25, over half (£2.5 billion) of the total negligence cost of harm in the NHS (£4.9 billion) relates to maternity. And that’s an increase of 49 per cent over 2023/24. Ockenden also points out that fighting these legal claims has a financial,

physical, emotional and psychological cost on the families affected.

Someone has to end this madness. It cannot be right to spend as much on compensation for negligence as on care itself. Historically, the NHS has always addressed negligence claims through the adversarial court system. Other countries do this differently with no fault compensation schemes in Japan, parts of Scandinavia and Italy.

These schemes reduce the time that is spent putting families through lengthy court processes, which can take 2-3 years due to the challenge and complexity of establishing negligence in court.

No fault schemes involve a clear investigation, sincere reflection and apology, learning and prevention, and monetary compensation. But because they do not involve an adversarial legal process, the cost to the health service is much lower and the chances of accurate acceptance of causes is greater.

The case for considering something similar for the NHS is overwhelming. Inevitably there will be vested interests keen to keep the status quo; they must be challenged.

The oft-repeated claim that British workers are reluctant to fill health care roles misrepresents the position. It is a different story: we have had a recent history of training midwives and failing to employ them due to “funding shortfalls”. A Catch-22 that affects other health professions too.

The Royal College of Midwives recently

‘It cannot be right to spend as much on compensation for negligence as on care itself...’

publicised data which showed one in three newly qualified midwives hadn’t secured a position in the last academic year. Who would have thought that newly qualified midwives were part of the numbers for unemployed young people?

Student midwives formed an organisation with mothers called Fund Future Midwives. They have been demonstrating all year to demand jobs on qualification. They are also fighting for fair bursaries, funded tuition and debt forgiveness for midwives who qualified after 2017.

Following the Ockenden report and the national investigation, newly qualified midwives in England will have access to an extra 1,000 new roles by the end of 2026. Unfortunately the fine print says that the funding for these posts has been identified by – cutting the funding for maternity care assistant posts! Clearly, lessons have yet to be learned. ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist’s series of public, in-person meetings will continue in London in October. All meeting details will be published on What’s On, as well as in our eNewsletter, and at cpbml.org.uk/events.

As well as our in-person meetings, we hold regular Zoom discussion meetings – the next one, on the dangers of devolution, is on Tuesday 15 September at 7pm. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for an invitation. We also run study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further.

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

Look closely at the environmental and other costs of renewable technologies, and they can't hold a candle to nuclear power.

The answer is nuclear

John Fielding via Flickr (CC BY 2.0)



Sizewell B nuclear power station, Suffolk.

The Poverty of Green Philosophy: A Marxist Case for Nuclear Energy in a Cooperative World, by Bill Sacks & Greg Myerson, paperback, 400 pages, ISBN 978-1637700679, Chicago: Open Universe, 2025, £21.99. Kindle edition also available.

THIS BOOK makes the case for nuclear energy based on its efficiency compared with other sources of energy such as wind, solar and fossil fuels. And it sets out the problems for a globalist approach to energy.

Efficiency is measured as a ratio between energy returned and energy invested (EROI). For wind and solar this is a factor of between 2 and 4 to 1, for fossil fuels it's 30 to 40, and for nuclear 100 to 1,000. Wind and solar power cannot possibly replace fossil fuels. Low EROI and intermittency make them the most inefficient and costly sources of energy. Nuclear power is the most efficient energy source.

A society which tried to depend on renewables alone would swiftly fail. The Greens' low-EROI aims would doom societies to insufficient energy for a modern industrial economy, and so to real and widespread poverty.

Low EROI guarantees low productivity, low-paying, labour-intensive jobs that are insecure, tedious, and fatiguing. It prevents the development of the more interesting and skilled range of jobs characteristic of modern society. Without a high-EROI economy, the working class can never win high wages.

Building renewable generating plants and the necessary grid and storage to get the electricity produced to consumers takes huge quantities of materials, land, time, labour, and energy. These soak up world supplies and deplete resources.

Waste

Because of their relatively swift obsolescence, renewables (mainly wind and solar) produce vast amounts of non-recyclable toxic waste, dwarfing nuclear waste in bulk and dangerousness. They also incur huge maintenance and replacement costs. In all, renewables are destructive to our common environment.

Continuing to build wind and solar farms diverts huge amounts of public resources that could go into building an all-nuclear electrical system and into electrifying virtually all energy applications, except for some forms of direct heating.

A disinformation campaign funded by rival energy companies, foreign governments and NGOs promotes what the authors call "nucleophobia". This propaganda conflates nuclear energy with nuclear weapons, distorts the truth about nuclear waste, and lies about nuclear accidents.

The authors sum up the relationship between the peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, "Historically, possession of nuclear reactors for electricity has never led to, and is almost never followed by, the acquisition and/or development of nuclear weapons. Of the 33 nations which have either nuclear weapons or nuclear reactors, or both, the rulers of India and Pakistan are the only two who developed nuclear weapons after, but not because, they already had nuclear electricity."

India and Pakistan developed weapons because of their political rivalry, not their possession of nuclear reactors. Five of the remaining 31 nations – the US, UK, France, China and Russia – developed weapons first, followed by reactors for electricity. Two, Israel and North Korea, have weapons without reactors for electricity. The other 24 have reactors for electricity without weapons.

The authors point to the safe, decades-long production of clean electricity by around 440 nuclear reactors around the world. The 1986 Chernobyl accident has been the only one associated with a primarily commercial reactor that directly caused any deaths in the 82-year history of nuclear energy. It resulted from basic design flaws combined with poor supervision and training, not the way the industry runs today.

Anti-nuclear campaigners like to describe nuclear power stations as equivalent to unexploded nuclear bombs. But a bomb-like nuclear explosion cannot occur in a nuclear reactor. The authors explain "The conditions required for detonation of a fission bomb are no closer to being met in a reactor than in an ice cream parlor."

Highly radioactive nuclear waste fission products decay away to near natural background intensity in a few centuries, not the hundreds of thousands of years claimed by anti-nuclear fear-mongers. And the more radioactive a force, the faster the rate of

ble energy

‘Renewables are not the solution. They can’t halt global warming by themselves...’

heating and radioactivity drops off.

After a tsunami hit Fukushima in 2011, Germany had a policy of closing its nuclear plants but this has inevitably increased greenhouse gas emissions, despite the growth of wind and solar. And in addition the policy has increased the cost of electricity to the consumer.

Blackouts

Renewables also increase the risk of blackouts. If wind plus storage alone had supplied all Germany’s electricity, there would have been a blackout or brownout (drop in the voltage of a power grid) lasting from 31 August to 22 December 2016. Any country, such as Denmark or Spain, aiming to rely on renewables is vulnerable too.

Renewables are not the solution to any problem. In particular, they can’t halt global warming by themselves. They are infeasible, unsustainable, and would lead to resource exhaustion and energy poverty.

By contrast, nuclear power is safe and practical while uranium supplies are available. Fast breeder reactors can, with repeated fuel recycling, extract almost 100 per cent of the energy in the uranium. And there’s the potential to use spent plutonium waste too, but the government wants to bury it instead.

The authors argue that a globalist approach to energy can’t succeed because it ignores the reality that the world is dominated by rival imperialisms. There can be no global solution to any problem, so long as we allow capitalism to persist.

Countries can’t rely on global approaches. Every country has to resolve its own problems, using the skills and ingenuity of its people. ■

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**Revolutions are made from within countries, not imposed
goes for Britain's industrial revolution, too...**

Slavery and industrial re

THE BRITISH working class made Britain's pioneering industrial revolution. It was not gifted from outside. In particular, their efforts were not born of profits from the Empire or from the slave trade.

The workers who built Britain's industrial revolution never benefited directly or indirectly from slavery or the slave trade. Exploited as they were, they were the creators, the inventors, the pioneers, who created the world's first industrial revolution.

Some refuse to accept this. Actor Lenny Henry, for example, claims that "Britain was the country that led the world in the [slave] trade." No, Britain was not the first. Slaves had been traded from Africa for centuries before any European power did so.

Historian Justin Marozzi noted in his book *Captives and Companions* that the Islamic slave trade centred on North Africa and the Middle East dates back to the seventh century – and continues today. It took men, women and children overwhelmingly from sub-Saharan Africa, as well as parts of Europe and the Caucasus during the Ottoman period.

He says, "According to one study of human trafficking in North Africa, the Middle East and India, the Arab slave trade from AD650 to 1905 enslaved an estimated 17 million. It transformed societies and terrorized lives across huge tracts of the continent, especially in West, East, North and sub-Saharan Africa."

Britain was not even the first European power to trade in slaves. Portugal was the first, and the leading Atlantic slave trader: between 1525 and 1866 it shipped 46 per cent of the total of African slave exports of

12.5 million people.

Next came the English – or, from 1707 the British – exporting 3.3 million slaves (26 per cent of the total), mostly between 1640 and 1807.

Portugal poured the wealth from this inhuman trade into building richly decorated, sumptuously ornate churches and palaces. If the slave trade somehow automatically produced an industrial revolution, why didn't that happen in Portugal?

Historians have patiently pointed out that profits from slavery and the slave trade did not fund Britain's industrial revolution. The capital that went into Britain's industrial revolution came from small provincial entrepreneurs who developed local industrial enterprises based on their own capital networks.

For much of the eighteenth century, investments in industry were made almost entirely through family, social and faith networks. The only other sources of major capital financing were fellow industrialists. Historian David Richardson estimated that around 1790 profits from the slave trade probably contributed under one per cent of total domestic investment.

Finance

Finance capital was – then as now – separate from, even hostile to, industrial capital. Finance capital focused on landholding, banking and trading, including slave trading. It was finance capital that profited from slavery and the slave trade.

The slave-owners of the West Indies argued that the slave trade contributed to British wealth. Ironically, today's self-styled "anti-imperialists" are making the same argument. They prettify slavers by claiming that they played a progressive role of investing in industry – and denigrate industry by implying that it has rotten roots in slavery.

Lenny Henry also claims that Europeans are to blame for racism. He wrongly asserts, "The concept of race is a relatively modern construct, with its origins deeply intertwined with European colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade."

Not so. Marozzi points out racism directed at Africans emerged very early in the Islamic world as a result of its involve-



William Clark, digitised by British Library (public domain)

Enslaved plantation workers, Antigua, 1823.

ment in slavery and the slave trade. Centuries later, Arabs, and afterwards Europeans and Americans would adopt it. And such attitudes were not confined to Africans either.

Criminal

Perversely, there are claims that modern illegal people-trafficking has a good effect, because Britain's economy depends on cheap foreign labour. The claim is that this modern slavery, and mass immigration generally, provides a necessary economic boost. This wrong-headed view assigns progressive roles to criminals profiting from people-trafficking, and to those being trafficked.

But this reborn slavery is not necessary for Britain. It is a system of the grossest exploitation, a criminal enterprise from first to last. From gang masters in Africa organising and profiting from those desperate to leave their own countries, to landlords and employers who profit from exploiting the illegal labour of those sleeping twelve to a room in slums.

Those so vocal about historic injustice celebrate its modern equivalent. They claim

**'Profits from slavery
and the slave trade
did not fund Britain's
industrial
revolution...'**

from without. That revolution



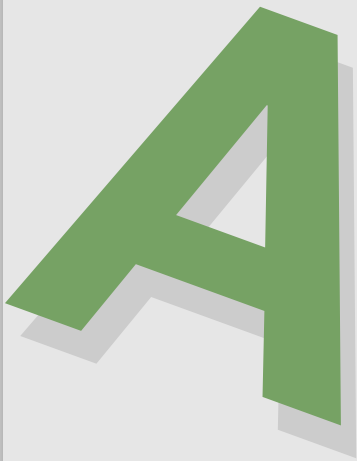
to be extending the hand of welcome to those fleeing oppression, but in reality they are conniving at their exploitation here. In effect, they are crying, “slaves welcome here”.

According to the 2023 Brattle Report by US and Caribbean academics, Britain’s share of reparations comes in at US\$26 trillion (£20 trillion), fifteen times the government’s annual budget in March 2025.

Those who are supposed to pay this are the huge majority of British people. Their ancestors barely owned the clothes they wore, far less owned slaves overseas. And our working class now includes the descendants of slaves too. How could it be just for any of them to pay trillions of pounds of reparations to governments abroad?

The British people today are the descendants of that majority of the British people who in the nineteenth century organised and supported the successful campaigns to end slavery and the slave trade. They have no obligation whatsoever to pay vast sums to the capitalist governments of those countries now freed from the bonds of empire. ■

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.



ABOUT US

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

All our members are thinkers and doers. We work together to advance our class’s interests. Every member can contribute to developing our understanding of what we need to do and how to do it.

What do we do? Rooted in our workplaces, communities and trade unions, we use every opportunity to encourage our fellow workers and friends to explore how Marxism can be applied to Britain now. Marx’s understanding of capitalism is a powerful tool – the Communist Manifesto of 1848 explains the financial crash of 2007/8.

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

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

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

We hold regular public meetings around Britain as well as online meetings, study groups and less formal discussions. Talking to people, face to face, is where we have the greatest impact and – just as importantly – learn from other workers’ experience.

So why join the Communist Party? What distinguishes Party members is this: we accept that only Marxist thinking and the organised work that flows from it can transform the working class and Britain. We learn from each other. The real teacher is the fight itself, and in particular the development of ideas and confidence that comes from collective action.

Want to know more? Interested in joining or just in taking part? Get in touch by phone or email. If you want to know more, visit cpbml.org.uk/foundations, come along to our next online or in-person discussion group, or join a study group.

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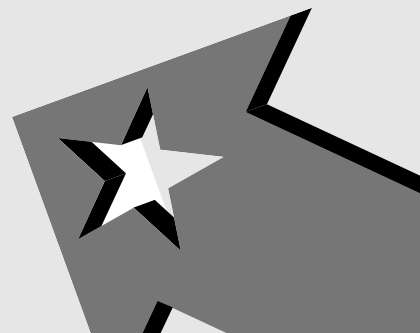
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A united Britain for progress

‘Further devolution within Britain and sneaking back into the orbit of the EU are not change, they are ruling class continuity. Yet all that Burnham offers is more of the same, more devolution, more devotion to the EU...’

THE RULING class drive to dissolve and divide Britain is a decades-long, never-ending enterprise. And yet they have not succeeded. It's time for workers to push back.

The new prime minister, the seventh in a decade, shows all the signs that he wants to continue and accelerate this attack and to peddle the same snake oil on both devolution and the relationship with the EU.

Workers are not getting a say in any of these decisions. Since the Leave vote the ruling class have learned the lesson that they can't afford for workers to have their say. Instead they pursue their plans by stealth and deception.

Workers who want an independent future for Britain, not as a US puppet or an EU appendage, have to learn lessons from the past decade too.

We have to find ways of forcing working class needs and wishes to the fore. And that means more than embarrassing the parliamentary incumbents occasionally at the ballot box, satisfying as that is.

Further devolution within Britain and sneaking back into the orbit of the EU are not change, they are ruling class continuity. Yet all that Burnham offers is more of the same, more devolution, more devotion to the EU.

Promising local mayors a slice of income tax receipts offers nothing for the future of Britain. Whenever more devolution is offered – as to Scotland in 2012 – it's a political calculation by the government of the day to remain in power.

Devolution – to English mayors or would-be parliaments for Wales and Scotland – tries to create an image of local power, more responsive to people's needs. They don't create any more resources to tackle local issues, and arguably eat up resources with the overhead cost of yet another layer of government.

The weight of debt facing local councils and the lack of funds for essential services are real and urgent issues. They won't be solved with vanity projects and grandiose plans, which tend to be the hallmark of devolved government. Frequently changing structures, with token consultation, mitigate against any effective local influence.

The strategy on getting closer to the EU is to hold talks and make legislation with little scrutiny – trying to walk around Brexit. The strategy for the internal government of Britain is to split responsibility so there's no effective point of political leverage.

And when Britain's many needs demand a long-term strategic approach – not least on energy, manufacturing, health, education and food – localism offers short term and partial solutions at best.

And localism is in many cases an illusion. Angela Rayner, before and after her political reincarnation, continued the policy of her Conservative predecessor on planning – making it much harder for local objections to housing or wind and solar power plants to be effective. The SNP-led Holyrood government has done much the same with Scottish local authorities.

This makes the task of asserting and securing an independent Britain all the harder and more urgent.

Every time the working class makes progress, as with the referendums on Scottish independence and leaving the EU, the ruling class makes a counterattack. Sometimes it's overt, at other times more subtle, but always persistent and unrelenting.

Local control might sound positive. But in reality it's the opposite, a means of putting distance between the rulers and the ruled.

The lamentable track record of the devolved administrations in Cardiff and Edinburgh is only the symptom. The failure of devolved government is structural. And the same political weakness that buys into localism also claims subservience to the EU as progress.

Just as devolution within England was imposed, and the 2014 Unity vote in Scotland was undermined, the EU and its advocates never accepted the Leave vote.

Real power isn't devolved. Devolution just makes it harder for people to challenge and change what's happening. Progress for Britain doesn't come as the gift of the EU.

Fight for the unity of Britain! Fight against the dissolution of our nation from within or without! That's the way to progress. ■

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