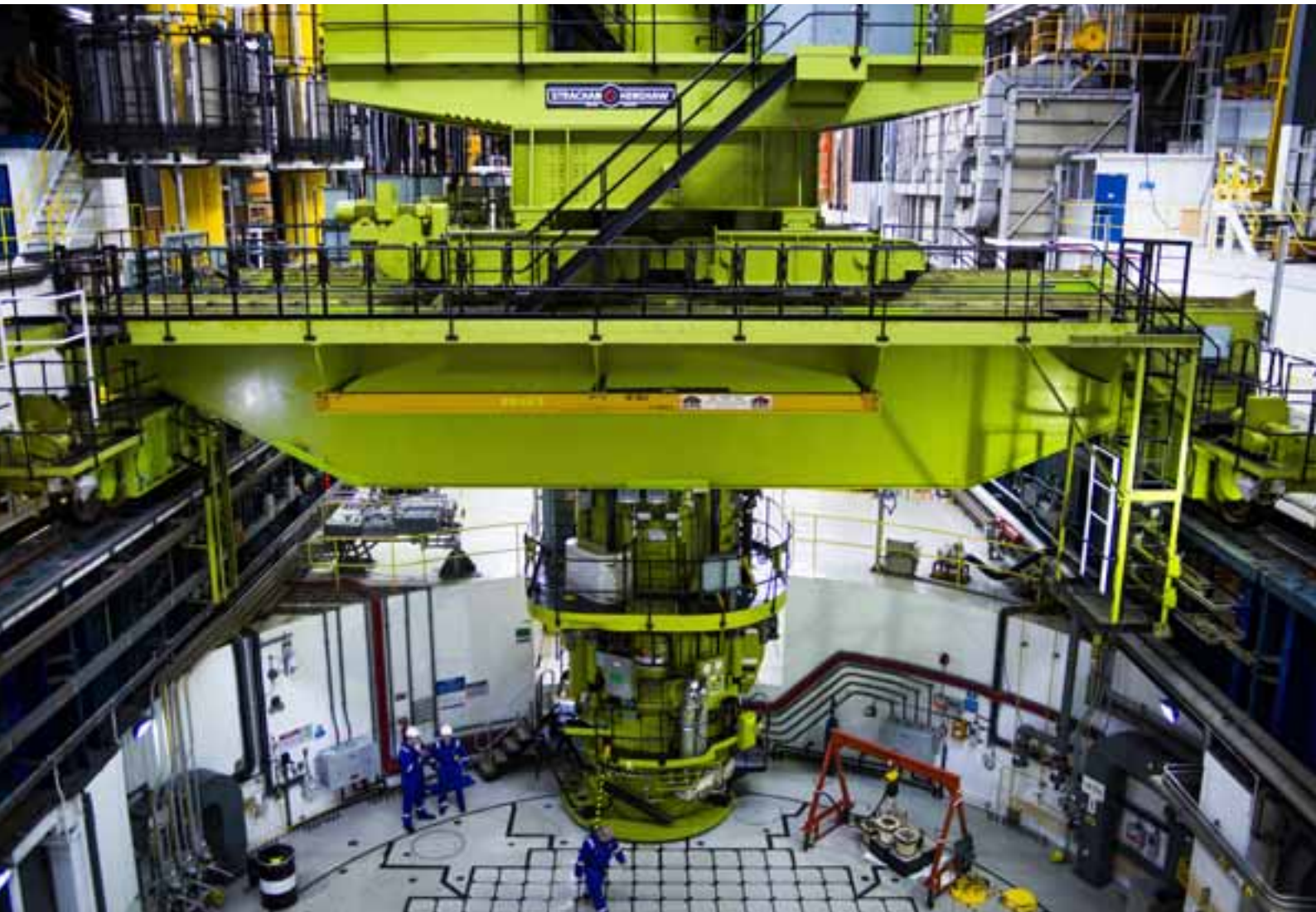


WORKERS

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Let's get on with it!

IT'S TIME to be blunt about the government's approach to leaving the European Union. It set out its policy in July after the infamous Chequers cabinet meeting, publishing what it called a White Paper. But it's more like a white flag.

It talks about "no direct" jurisdiction of the European Court, but it means almost total indirect jurisdiction (and, it turns out, probably some direct, too). It talks about ending free movement of labour, but introduces the weasel wording of a "mobility framework".

It talks about a "common rulebook" for trade, but it turns out that there's nothing common about it at all: it's the EU's rulebook, and the government is seeking to tie Britain to it, permanently.

It talks about leaving the EU but it means staying under the EU's thumb. Call that Brexit? It's not.

As if the EU needed any encouragement to play tough! Now they think they can get Britain to abandon the idea of Brexit altogether.

But Brussels cannot be appeased. Its short-lived empire is crumbling, with open enmity between its members and its weapon of the free movement of labour under attack even in its heartland of Germany.

The EU's desire to punish Britain is born out of weakness, not strength. It dare not make concessions to Britain, for fear it will have to do the same for border nations like Switzerland and even for its own members. It dare not make it easy for other members to leave.

It's starting to look as though this government's entire approach to Brexit has been a deception – from Theresa May's declaration during her campaign for the Conservative leadership that "Brexit means Brexit", through the "red lines" of Lancaster House speech in January 2017 and on to the Chequers statement.

It looked so promising. She even set up a Department for Exiting the European Union, with David Davis, a Brexiteer, in charge. But then she neutered Davis and his department by handing negotiations over to a pet Civil Service mandarin – a Remainer – even allowing Davis to prepare a White Paper while all along developing her own in secret.

One thing is clear: a whole summer – actually a whole year at least – has been wasted. There have been no real negotiations, just manoeuvring inside the Conservative Party to seize the initiative back from those seeking to implement the referendum vote.

If they think the people of Britain will quail at the prospect of "no deal" – when actually the country voted to leave as soon as possible – they have another think coming. But now is the time for the people to make that clear, to show their anger. It's time to force the government to do what it said it would do, in the teeth of the Remain majority in parliament and indeed the cabinet.

The Brexit process can no longer be a spectator sport. All must be involved if we are to put Brexit back on track. ■

Cover image of fuelling machine at Hinkley B from EDF



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King's Church of England Secondary School in Tettenhall, Wolverhampton.

Carillion's £5m school bill

A SCHOOL which cost £18.6 million to rebuild six years ago needs to spend £5 million on repairs – including fixing some 300 holes in its roof. The disgraced and collapsed construction firm Carillion rebuilt King's Church of England Secondary School in Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, in 2012. But when the company went into liquidation in January this year, it left the bill for the repairs with the Church of England diocese.

Meanwhile, the Carillion, or rather the privatisation, scandal rumbles on. The Commons Public Administration Select Committee has warned that the collapse of Carillion has exposed "fundamental flaws" in public sector contracting.

MPs said the debacle had revealed that the government had fixated on spending as little money as possible, with companies taking unacceptable levels of financial risk as a result. The committee has urged the government to be more transparent, warning that while the Carillion crisis "was well managed... it could happen again unless lessons are learned about risk and contract management."

The government's spend on outsourcing contracts actually hit £3 billion in the same quarter which saw Carillion collapse, according to public tenders researcher Tussell, with Capita winning the largest number (59) of contracts.

Building firm Wates was the biggest winner however, helped by an £800 million housing contract win in Havering, while housebuilder Taylor Wimpey scored £202 million in contracts and Kier £163 million. City & County Healthcare was the top Health & Social Care supplier, winning £136 million of awards, while IBM was the leading IT supplier at £94 million. ■

LOCAL GOVT

The age of bankruptcy

THE NOTION that local government could go bankrupt is a novel one, but one we're going to have to get used to. The onslaught first of all on the independence of local councils, and secondly their finances, launched by Thatcher decades ago, is now coming to a head.

County councils in England have told ministers the "worst is yet to come" over "truly unpalatable" cuts to services and that several authorities risk going bust. The County Councils Network said an emergency injection of funds is needed next year to counter a growing financial "black hole". A survey carried out by the County Councils Network found that a third of local authorities would struggle to balance their budgets for 2019/20 without extra funding, rising to two-thirds by 2020/21. ■

CHILD POVERTY

Even worse than thought

THE RESOLUTION Foundation's annual audit of living standards, published at the end of July, warns that child poverty in Britain has been rising twice as fast since 2011 (when "austerity" began).

Using official data, the think-tank described "general stagnation" in household income in 2017/18, with high employment and a minimum wage increase offset by inflation and low wage growth.

Once reporting inconsistencies in benefit spending and income had been accounted for, the rate of child poverty may have grown by 21 per cent between 2011 and 2016, nearly double the official reported increase of 11 per cent. ■

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



ON THE WEB

A selection of additional stories at cpbml.org.uk...

EU drifts into budget crisis

The ailing bloc faces an overall £18 billion budget shortfall, most of it due to Brexit. But it still plans to spend more.

UCU leadership schemes for second referendum

Despite a recent annual congress with no motion on a second Brexit referendum, academics' union leader Sally Hunt has started a consultation on the question.

Swiss battle EU over new treaty terms

Unnoticed in the British media, a fierce battle is raging as the European Union tries to force Switzerland to agree to wide-ranging changes in its relationship with the bloc.

Treat us like Morocco, says May

So now we know. The Prime Minister wants from the EU an agreement based on the kind of agreement the EU has with...Morocco.

Brexit boost as JCB invests £50 million

In a vote of confidence in Brexit, construction equipment maker JCB is to invest more than £50 million in a new factory in Staffordshire.

Plus: the e-newsletter

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Workers



Student nurses marching in 2016 against the introduction of bursaries. Predictions at the time that this would put off potential students have been shown to be right.

Fall in nursing applications

A FURTHER shortage of nurses in the NHS is looming, fuelled by an unfulfilled need to plan for and train staff. That's due to high fees and the loss of the student bursary in England, not Brexit. In the spring of 2016 Unison's then Head of Health, Christina McAnea, predicted that "Replacing the bursary system with loans will put off many potential students, not encourage more people into our caring professions." And so it has proved for the nursing profession, according to recently released figures.

Data from the Universities and Colleges Admission Services show that the number of people in England applying to begin nursing degrees fell from 51,840 in 2016 to 35,260 in 2018 – a decline of over 30 per cent.

From August 2017 students have had to take out loans to cover tuition fees of £9,000 a year, and even more for subsistence. Nurses and midwives will pay the entire bill for their training, even though they spend half their training time working for the NHS on clinical placement.

Earlier in the year there were signs of recognition that planning the NHS workforce – especially for nursing – needs to be rethought. The NHS in England published a draft workforce strategy, for the first time in 25 years, which stated that there had been historical failings in NHS workforce planning.

Currently you could be forgiven for thinking that all NHS workforce problems were due to Brexit. But the draft strategy said "...maximising the self-supply of our workforce is critical. It cannot be right for the NHS to draw staff from other countries in large numbers just because we have failed to plan and invest." Brexit had done a marvellous thing: it had made the NHS think seriously about workforce planning for the first time in decades.

The finalised workforce strategy was due to be published in July to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the NHS. What better birthday present could the NHS have had than a proper plan for, and investment in, the workforce? However, July and August have come and gone, with no sign of the new strategy. The latest figures for nursing applications make publication and action even more urgent.

John Worth, a first-year student nurse, recently started a petition calling for students to be paid whilst on clinical placement. It has already attracted over 50,000 signatures, but the nursing profession can't rely on first-year students to do the fighting as that is a kind of exploitation too. As things stand, student nurses in England are paying to work. That deterrent is the most significant factor affecting the long-term supply of nurses. ■

THATCHER

The unwanted statue

THE QUEST to find a home for a statue of former prime minister Margaret Thatcher continues. After Westminster council said no to a plan to site it in Parliament Square, the 3.2 metre-high bronze statue could be erected in her home town of Grantham.

South Kesteven District Council is

working with Grantham Community Heritage Association, which runs the Grantham Museum, on a draft outline agreement with the Public Memorials Appeal, a charity which commissions statues of public figures. Formal proposals expected to be submitted to the council later this year.

Now is the time for the good people of Grantham to repudiate their widely hated townswoman. ■

TRANSPORT

Bus support slashed

ENGLISH AND Welsh local authorities have cut £182 million from supported bus services over the last decade, with more than 3,000 routes affected, according to new research from the group Campaign for Better Transport.

Its report, *Buses in Crisis*, released in July, found that budgets to subsidise

routes were cut by £20 million last year, with 188 services cut.

The group's spokesman, Steve Chambers, said the research pointed to "the slow death of the supported bus," with implications for jobs, education, local economies, health and pollution.

"The government must wake up to the crisis. We want to see a proper national strategy for buses backed up by funding, like those that already exist for all other modes of transport," he added. ■



Workers

Mount Cook, New Zealand. Scenic beauty has attracted rich overseas investors.

NZ says no to foreign buy-ups

NEW ZEALAND IS acting against foreign buy-ups of property. The country's previous government, which fell at the 2017 election, was happy to allow rich foreigners to snap up land and property in some of the country's wildest and most beautiful areas. These have become particularly desirable for ultra wealthy Americans who seem to think a cataclysm is on its way in the US, a disaster which will apparently leave New Zealand untouched.

Well known US radio talk show host Matt Lauer last year paid the equivalent of £6.7 million for the lease on the 10,000-hectare Hunter Valley Station on South Island. Now he's refusing hikers and climbers access across his land to the adjoining Mount Aspiring National Park, a world heritage area.

So New Zealanders have had enough. Parliament has voted to declare the nation's land and houses as "sensitive assets", which can be sold only to citizens or residents of New Zealand. As housing minister David Parker said, "New Zealanders should not be outbid for homes by wealthy foreign buyers".

There are lessons here for Britain. Not content with buying swathes of expensive real estate in London and other large cities such as Manchester, foreign buyers are snaffling up thousands of homes suitable for first-time buyers. Hardly surprising when they are being marketed in sales brochures as "better than...the FTSE 100 and gold" in terms of financial returns for overseas landlords.

One new development on the site of the former Heygate council estate in Southwark, London, was bought up in its entirety by foreign investors. The 51 new apartments in the Elephant and Castle South Gardens development were all sold abroad. Over half of London properties valued at less than £500,000 sell overseas.

It seems in Britain anything goes if you have the money. London mayors Boris Johnson and Sadiq Khan have both protested about this sell off of essential assets, but so far nothing has been done.

Another lesson for Britain is that Australia and Singapore will be exempt from the New Zealand legislation. Why? Because New Zealand has a Free Trade Agreement with them! Restrictions on domestic control over "investment" are central to these agreements. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 2 September, 11am to 5pm

Burston School Strike Festival, Burston, Near Diss, Norfolk

Annual rally to celebrate the longest strike in history. Organised by Unite with assistance from the South East Region of the TUC, The Burston Strike School Trustees and Thompson Solicitors. See burstonstrikeschool.co.uk/rally2018/



Photo courtesy RMT

OCTOBER

Wednesday 17 October, 7.30pm

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

"Brexit: The road to freedom"

CPBML Public Meeting

Britain has a skilled and literate workforce, an exceptional research base and abundant energy resources. Free from the shackles of the EU, what can we not achieve? Come and discuss. All welcome.



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Britain's trade unions will meet this year in Manchester, where the TUC was first instituted 150 years ago. But there's little to celebrate...

TUC: drifting away from

THE TUC CLAIMS on its website to have “established itself as the voice of trade unions in the UK”. While this may be true, a glance at the agenda for Congress confirms that the TUC seems to be more distant from the class that it ostensibly exists to represent than at any time in its 150-year history.

The TUC and the majority of its affiliated unions are at odds with the views of the working class over Brexit, and that is reflected in the motions tabled for this year's Congress. Ignoring the clear will of the people, the TUC and most trade unions continue to cling to the notion that leaving the EU is a “bad thing”.

The Communication Workers Union's motion repeats the oft-used mealy-mouthed phrase about “respecting the referendum result”. Yet it continues to peddle the line that workers' interests can only be served by committing Britain to a customs union with the EU and remaining in the single market, a position which effectively negates the decision it claims to respect. Its underlying position is given away in the motion, which also seeks a “reform of the EU” to “promote the interests of workers across Europe”.

Pandering to big business

Unite's motion on Brexit is straight out of “Project Fear”, with the heading “Avoiding a Cliff Edge Brexit”. Pandering to big business interests to exaggerate the economic effects (on big business) of leaving the EU, the motion calls for mobilisation against anything that looks like a clean break, and tentatively supports a second referendum being held, presumably in the hope that the original decision could be reversed.

The motion from the Royal College of Midwives continues in much the same vein. Its focus is on the false assertion that workers' rights will be worsened by leaving the EU, ignoring the fact that much of existing employment legislation has not emanated from EU Directives, and much of what has been transposed into British law has been improved upon here.

Then there is the motion from the TSSA transport union, one that has effectively sold its soul to the EU. The union's General Secretary Manuel Cortes has been touring the country calling for the Brexit decision to be reversed, accusing trade unionists in

favour of Brexit of class collaboration. The motion tabled at the TUC is of course less strident in its content to make it more palatable to those less enthusiastic about the EU, but it unashamedly also calls for a second referendum.

The irony is that Cortes is President of the Greece Solidarity Campaign, and he should know full well the extent to which the EU has compromised the sovereignty of Greece, intervened against collective bargaining, reduced the role of unions in setting the minimum wage, and forced a reduction in the minimum wage itself. Yet the experience of Greece has failed to dent Cortes's enthusiasm for the EU.

While Cortes and Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey, supposedly politically close to Corbyn, take a pro-EU stance, the extent of the confusion in the Labour Party is underlined by Corbyn's apparent strengthening of the line that Brexit is a done deal. He recently visited the Bombardier railway train manufacturing plant in Derby to urge taking full advantage of Brexit to provide state aid to manufacturing, and nationalise key services such as the railways and water – none of which is possible while Britain remains in the EU.

Membership

Aside from Brexit, one might have expected the Congress agenda to address the woeful state of trade unionism in Britain. Statistics published this May for 2017 show that union membership increased in the private sector by 70,000 – but tellingly only by 19,000 overall due to the loss of 51,000 members in the public sector.

But set against rising (recorded) numbers in employment, it represents a fall in the proportion of workers in unions. And this follows the previous year's dramatic overall fall in union membership.

There are now around 6.2 million trade union members in Britain and the north of Ireland, 3.5 million in the public sector and 2.7 million in the private sector.

But you would search in vain for any motions from trade unions that advance real solutions to this state of affairs. The TUC Young Workers Conference has at least submitted a motion which calls upon unions to raise the profile of young workers and



Andrew Ward/www.andrew-ward.com

All those in favour? Delegates at last year's TUC Congress

young trade unionists through recruitment, organising and campaigning work, pointing out that while workers under the age of 25 make up 14 per cent of the workforce, only 4.7 per cent are members of trade unions. Failure to address these uncomfortable facts will mean extinction for many unions in the next few years.

The “mega-unions” like Unite and Unison have grown more and more remote from the everyday experiences of the members in the workplace as they have increased in size through mergers rather than recruitment. They, and a good many other unions, now have overblown

‘Unite's motion on Brexit is straight out of “Project Fear”.’

here the TUC was founded at the city's Mechanics

the working class



Congress, held in Brighton.

bureaucracies that are focused more on the machinations of the Labour Party than building stronger organisation.

'Shell' organisations

The unions in general are failing to tackle the real issues of poverty pay and zero hours contracts faced by large numbers of workers in areas where trade unions are nowhere to be seen. And in areas, particularly in the public sector, where workers are covered by collective bargaining and represent (or should represent) the organised core of the unions, the actual union organisation is rapidly becoming a mere shell, hollowed out by mass desertions of workers who no longer see union membership as a collective tool to fight for better pay and conditions.

Twenty years ago, the TUC was at least talking about organising and recruitment, even if it was somewhat half-hearted. It had launched the New Unionism initiative along

with the Organising Academy, and talked about building power in the workplace. A look at the Congress agenda would reveal that unions seem to have put that in the "too difficult" box, and the TUC has returned to its old approach of debating a list of asks from the next Labour Government, coupled of course with a blind faith that if that doesn't work, the EU will provide.

The remains of the steelworkers and knitwear unions, now a shrunken shadow of an organisation named Community, has tabled a motion on automation, an area that will be a massive challenge for unions and workers over the next decade. It identifies the problem, but is very short on solutions. It concludes by asking the General Council to "explore what government policy change is required to ensure workers can realise the benefits of automation and prosper in a rapidly changing advanced economy".

It is not government policy that needs to

'The "mega-unions" are more and more remote from the everyday experiences of the members in the workplace...'

change, nor even the government that needs to change. The capitalist system itself must be changed if we are to avoid technology and automation being used to destroy more and more jobs, while wages continue to be driven down. Leaving the EU will be a good first step in challenging that system.

Community's other motion is entitled "Save Our Steel". Confused about why the steel industry is suffering through global overcapacity, it condemns the US for its recent imposition of tariffs designed to protect the US steel industry, without drawing the logical conclusion that this is perhaps a means by which Britain may protect its steel industry. There is more than enough demand within Britain for the steel produced in the country. But membership of the EU means that we currently have no power to take any real steps to protect British steel.

The RMT union's motion refers to the collapse of Carillion, the failure of the Virgin/Stagecoach East Coast franchise, and the recent timetable fiasco, and calls for renationalisation of the railways. But it fails to note this will be impossible while Britain remains in the EU, surprising perhaps given the fact that the union has a policy supporting Brexit.

Interestingly, not one of the few unions in favour of Brexit has tabled a motion on the subject, or referred to their position in their motions. The suspicion is that their leaderships, from whom precious little has been heard on the subject since the referendum, are at odds with their unions' policy position. So don't expect anything other than a very one-sided debate on Brexit at Congress! ■

After the Brexit vote we should be declaring our independence and negotiating on its knees. This is sabotage by the majority of p

Brexit: stop the sabotage

IMAGINE THAT as a trade union negotiator you go in to see the employer and the first thing you do is kneel down in front of him. Next you tell him that you don't want to be doing this; you voted against doing this, but the members made you do it. And you tell him that you will accept whatever he says, whenever he wants. Would you do that?

Yet that's what Theresa May is doing. She told the German Chancellor about the Chequers proposals before she told the Cabinet. She blocks any practical "no-deal" planning. She gave the EU an unconditional security guarantee and signed us up to join nearly every part of the EU defence union.

Or imagine that when selling your house, you tell potential buyers you must sell by the end of the day, you tell them that you have no alternative, you offer them a fee to buy it, and let them decide how much money you give them. And you then offer to let their lawyers draw up the agreement. Would you do that?

Up-front payment

Yet this is what May is doing – paying billions up-front for the privilege of leaving the EU, letting their Court run the whole process. She offered the EU £39 billion and did not even tie this to any condition.

Two years ago Poland's foreign minister set out what the EU wants – "Brexit may never happen and Britain should stay in the European Union for as long as possible. Poland's interest [is] that Britain remains a member of the EU and pays into the bloc's budget for as long as possible." He said that all the EU members agreed on one thing: that Britain should pay as much as possible for as long as possible.

Let's just walk away from the negotiations and tell the EU "no money". That would hit them where it hurts.

May talks Brexit but this is Brexit in name only. It is a strategy of deception. She even created a shadow department, run by an unelected bureaucrat to undermine the Brexit department.

May's letter to Tory MPs in early July spelt it out: "We are proposing that the

• This article is an edited version of a speech given at a CPBML meeting in London.



Alexandros Michailidis/shutterstock.com

Who's telling whom? Brexit minister Dominic Raab with European Commission negotiator Michel Barnier

framework for our relationship with the European Union should be an Association Agreement." One model is the EU's Association Agreement with Morocco. It used to be France's colony and is now an EU colony. Another model is the EU's Association Agreement with Moldova. It says, "The ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union shall be binding." That agreement is full of specific obligations to match EU directives and regulations covering all the areas subject to ECJ rulings.

The government has already conceded European Court rulings in citizens' rights cases initiated up to eight years after 31 December 2020. That gives us no control

over our laws.

The government wants "a comprehensive free trade and customs agreement" with the EU, a free trade area with a common rulebook for all goods. This is a TTIP-style arrangement between us and the EU. If we do not pass the relevant EU law, the EU could cut us off.

Nothing common at all

It is wrong to call this a common rulebook; it is an EU rulebook. The White Paper says, "The UK would make an upfront choice to commit by treaty to ongoing harmonisation with the relevant EU rules." Ongoing means now and forever into the future.

ce, not asking for favours. Instead the government has been politicians from all parties who want to remain in the EU...

e



...rrier in Brussels, 21 July.

This would mean permanently obeying and applying all EU laws about goods; testing, packaging, everything. All goods made in Britain would be permanently subject to these laws, without our having any say on them. It locks us into the EU's single market for goods.

The government tells us this will be ok because it will be allowed to "share its views with the EU as those EU rules are developed". And if we dared to disagree on anything, the government accepts that the EU can demand "financial compensation", can "impose non-compliance measures" and "reductions in market access" on us. That's just taking our money and handing out pun-

ishment too for wanting to be independent. It is also the Remainers getting their revenge and doing everything they can to make Brexit appear untenable.

It locks us into "a common rulebook on state aid", banning any state aid to industry. Even Jeremy Corbyn said, "The Prime Minister's only clear priority seems to be to tie the UK permanently to EU rules that have been used to enforce privatisation and block support for industry."

Weak

In response David Davis, who was the minister for Brexit, wrote to May, "...the general direction of policy will leave us in at best a weak negotiating position, and possibly an inescapable one. The Cabinet decision... crystallised this problem. In my view the inevitable consequence of the proposed policies will be to make the supposed control by Parliament illusory rather than real... the 'common rule book' policy hands control of large swathes of our economy to the EU and is certainly not returning control of our laws in any real sense." The London *Evening Standard*, that is George Osborne, gloated that David Davis was right on every point.

We didn't vote for a common rulebook with the EU, we voted for independence. This is not a White Paper, it is a white flag. We did not vote to surrender. We are declaring our independence, not begging for favours.

The White Paper says, "The UK's proposal is to agree a new Facilitated Customs Agreement with the EU. As if in a combined customs territory with the EU, the UK would apply the EU's tariffs and trade policy for goods intended for the EU." There is no "as if" – this would be a customs union with the EU.

May says we will not be in a single market but we will be in "a comprehensive free trade and customs agreement". We will not be in a customs union but we will be in a "Facilitated Customs Arrangement". This is just playing with words, changing the language but not the reality

We did not vote to stay in the EU's single market, we did not vote to stay in the EU's customs union, we voted for independence.

In an interview last year, the BBC's

'We didn't vote for a common rulebook with the EU, we voted for independence.'

Andrew Marr said to Nicola Sturgeon, "You have made it very clear that what you mean by a 'soft' Brexit or an 'acceptable' Brexit involves staying inside the single market and the customs union. The problem is that people were told all the way through the referendum that leaving the EU meant leaving those things."

Sturgeon said, "I'm not sure...I don't think that's the case." Marr rebutted that, "It is the case, if I may say so. I interviewed David Cameron, George Osborne, Michael Gove, Boris Johnson and I asked all of them, and they all said yes, it means leaving the single market."

We are supposed to love the market and to love and desire free trade agreements. But free trade agreements are not free, not about trade and not about agreement. In reality they are investor protection rackets.

Trade agreements are created to protect multinational corporations and their ability to impose their terms everywhere. The government embraces the four EU key freedoms; free movement of capital, labour, goods and services. The proposed EU-UK deal is just another free trade agreement.

Free movement of capital means the right of establishment anywhere, anyhow, free from all controls. For example, US giant retailer Walmart wants the freedom to build its supermarkets anywhere in the world, wherever it chooses, heedless of the interests of the people of the countries or regions where it seeks to operate. That's why most people in Britain opposed TTIP and other free trade agreements.

Industries don't need deals by politicians to enable them to trade, they just trade.

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

That's what Lord Bamford says and he knows something about exporting. His firm JCB exports diggers to 140 countries, without trade agreements.

We stand for protection, not of capital or foreign investors, but protection of nations, of peoples, of the working class. We must control and protect, stop the sabotage.

Our referendum decision has for now stopped the government openly embracing free movement of labour. But May wants "a mobility framework" and her ministers talk of "freedom of mobility". And the City of London wants to keep grabbing what it self-flatteringly calls "the brightest and the best". That gives us no control over our borders.

All the government offers is delay and procrastination. We could have left the EU straight away after we decided to do so. But Cameron didn't invoke Article 50 at once as he had promised. May didn't invoke it until nearly a year later.

Transition?

Now we're supposed to have a nearly two-year transition period. This has huge costs. For example the EU is using the transition to enforce a discard ban on all our fishermen. A fisherman with quotas for haddock, cod, hake and herring must return to port as soon as he has caught the quota for any one of these fish. He is not allowed to catch other

"What kind of organisation forbids you to leave? A mafia."

quotas and will make a huge loss on the trip.

Few of our fishermen could survive this transition period. The government admits it will bankrupt 60 per cent of our fishing fleet. So why accept it? We didn't vote to destroy our fishing fleet, we voted to save it.

This transition traps us in a legal minefield. The European Commission said, "Union law shall be binding upon and applicable in the United Kingdom during the transition period." It went on, "For the purposes of the Treaties, during the transition period, the parliament of the United Kingdom shall not be considered to be a national parliament." It is for us, not the EU, to judge whether parliament is a national parliament.

EU leaders like Guy Verhofstadt want us never to leave. He said in June that the EU would not ratify Brexit until 2038. We didn't vote to stay in for another 20 years, we voted to leave now.

And Michel Barnier said, "It will be crystal clear at the end of this negotiation that the best situation will be to remain a member

of the EU." What kind of organisation forbids you to leave? A mafia.

The *Sunday Telegraph* editorial of 8 July, appearing immediately following the publication of the disastrous Chequers proposal, said, "Millions of people have indeed been betrayed, let down by a political class that had promised to implement the referendum...Last Friday felt like a political coup by the establishment."

'Soft coup'?

In the 21st century, not all coups are military coups. Some are now nice parliamentary coups, supposedly carried out in the name of "democracy". Such "soft coups" have been called friendly fascism.

Commentator and journalist Robert Peston acknowledged "It was the official position of the British state to remain in the EU, and the people said no. That cannot be brushed aside as just one of those things. ... it is to patronise our countrymen in a disgusting way to say they did not know what they were voting for." He concluded, "...it makes sense for most of us to attempt to make Brexit a success, in good faith...".

It is not legitimate for MPs to defy the referendum result and deny Britain independence. Most MPs voted against independence by backing Remain: only a small minority voted with the Leave majority in the referendum. No wonder most people think MPs should get the hell out of the way. ■



CPBML/Workers

Public Meeting, London

Wednesday 17 October, 7.30 pm

"Brexit: The road to freedom"

**Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square,
London WC1R 4RL**

Britain has a skilled and literate workforce, an exceptional research base and abundant energy resources. Free from the shackles of the EU, what can we not achieve? Come and discuss. All welcome.

The BBC has been marginalising pro-Brexit views. No wonder its listener numbers are plummeting...

BBC pays for its bias

A REPORT in August by RAJAR (Radio Joint Audience Research) suggests that BBC news programmes are losing listeners at an accelerating rate. The current affairs *Today* programme has lost 800,000 during the past year. Although it retains a significant audience of around 7 million, as Britain moves into the final stages of Brexit it is vital now more than ever that accurate information and in-depth analysis replace “project fear”.

Why is it that listening figures are down at this crucial juncture? The British public has shown sustained interest in the issue of independence, as manifested by the high volume tuning in to debates during the lead-up to the referendum, and by the Leave vote itself.

The BBC points to a “quieter news agenda” in the second quarter of 2018, compared with this time last year. But the news of Brexit betrayal from Chequers, with Theresa May's true motives exposed, with two Cabinet resignations including the Brexit secretary, and the nationwide resumption of campaigning by Leave, can hardly be said to be quiet. LBC meanwhile, with its Farage show *Leading Britain's Conversation*, has raised its figures by 18 per cent to over two million.

Turning audiences away

RAJAR offers no explanation, but two other surveys during 2018, by the independent think tank Civitas and by the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), point to two factors conceivably turning audiences away.

In its paper “The Brussels Broadcasting Corporation?” Civitas details the findings of the media monitoring service News-watch that pro-Brexit views have been marginalised in the BBC's news coverage: the occasional Brexiteer is permitted on *Today* or *Newsnight*, but is far outnumbered by a small diehard group of Remainers.

Over the two years 2016-2017 two-thirds of invited panellists on *Question Time* and

‘Systemic bias continues to the present day.’



BBC HQ, London.

Any Answers were pro-Remain. Analysis by the IEA confirms the findings of Civitas: between 2005 and 2015 only 132 out of 4,275 invited speakers were pro-Leave.

Systemic bias continues to the present day despite the referendum result – perhaps even because of it. Using tracking software throughout June and July as the Chequers showdown unfolded News-watch found 700 examples of bias, such as Brexiteers bracketed with extremism, described as “hard-line”, whereas Remainers were merely “stubborn”.

Deliberate

This is deliberate editorial policy: during the referendum campaign the BBC ran ads for the organisation Britain Stronger in Europe featuring Osborne's dishonest claim that Brexit would cost each household £4,300. These ads were visible only to 2 million expats on the BBC's international websites.

A subsidiary factor is the BBC's “impartiality” rule under the terms of its broadcasting Charter. Although spectacularly in breach of this on the issue of Brexit, in other respects the BBC likes to claim that for every point of view a countervailing opinion is offered.

This results in “false equivalence”, treat-

ing opinion as equal to fact on many issues. It lets false statements pass unchallenged, such as “We do control our borders” or “Parliament has remained sovereign throughout our membership of the EU”.

Pessimism is encouraged to percolate throughout the network. Radio 1's *Breakfast Show* has lost 600,000 listeners already this year. Even the soaps refer to “these tough Brexit times”.

There is unremitting negativity regarding the material outcome of Brexit: when questioned by a cross-party group of MPs the BBC was unable to identify a single programme examining the positive opportunities presented by a Britain independent in trade and industry.

Instead we have scaremongering on anything from the return of terror to northern Ireland to the sale of the NHS to America. This is not what people want to hear. The Edelman Trust Barometer found that a fifth of people surveyed avoid news completely as being too depressing and biased.

As we enter the last six months of the battle for Britain, however, it is not too late for the Beeb to redeem itself, exert some Reithian intellectual rigour and integrity, and stand up for a forward-looking national plan of action. ■

Independence from the EU will usher in a new era of opportunity and
demands debate wherever people work, interact or socialise.

Let's get scientific about

ENERGY IS AN essential of modern life, without which there would be neither heat nor light nor the power to run machines. If we are to be truly self-reliant, our energy supply should be reliable, affordable, safe and clean.

Reliable:

The present electrical energy generation mix in Britain includes fossil fuels, renewables and nuclear. We are not overly reliant on one source, but the picture is constantly changing. Coal is disappearing. And although natural gas still supplies 40 per cent of our electricity, less than half comes from the declining North Sea and Irish Sea fields. The rest is imported through pipelines from Europe or as liquefied natural gas from around the world.

The use of renewable sources is becoming more assured, particularly with developments in the offshore wind turbine industry. The government has moved away from rewarding wealthy landowners to site inefficient wind turbines in some of our most beautiful and remote locations. However, the long term effects of offshore wind turbines on marine life is still unknown.

Britain is a world leader in the technology and construction of offshore wind power. The government is investing jointly with science and industry to bring down the costs of this emerging energy source. For example a £7.6 million research programme was launched last year partnering the Universities of Sheffield, Durham and Hull with industry leaders Siemens and Dong Energy.

Wind and solar power are by nature intermittent. That's a big drawback because we need power day in, day out. Biomass (burning wood pellets or other plant material) can't replace fossil fuels in the long term. Supply is limited; it takes time for trees to grow and most biomass is imported, notably from the USA at present.

Nuclear generation compares favourably with gas and other fossil fuels on availability, known as the "capacity factor". Nuclear plants are typically available at full load over 90 per cent of the time, although those in Britain have been at around 75 per cent recently. In contrast gas-fired stations have a factor of just over 30 per cent.



Work in progress at the new reactor site at Hinkley Point, Somerset. Photo EDF.

Because of the capacity factor, we would need two or three times the nominal generating capacity relying on gas rather than nuclear power. Yet development of nuclear power in this country has languished for decades because of political hostility and indifference.

There are 15 nuclear power stations operational in Britain, producing on average over 20 per cent of our electricity. One of them, Sizewell B, is expected to continue for another 17 years. Two, at Dungeness, have a lifespan of around 10 years. The rest without exception will cease generating within 5 years.

Ten sites were identified in 2010 for new nuclear reactors, later reduced to eight. The only one where construction has begun is Hinkley Point in Somerset, where two French-owned reactors are planned to come on stream in 2025. This is perverse, given

that nuclear power is the only significant form of generation currently available that doesn't either create CO₂ or rely on intermittent sun or wind.

Affordable:

We are assailed daily with claim and counterclaim about the price of electricity from different sources. The cost of production is less for wind power when the wind blows, as it is for solar power when the sun shines. But it's not as simple as that, because the price paid by households and businesses depends on the energy market, subsidies and taxes, all influenced by government.

The government carried out a detailed comparison of the total whole-life cost of each generating technology in 2016. The table accompanying this article online (see www.cpbml.org.uk/energyscience) summarises some of the key figures. Coal is the

portunity for Britain. What do we want for our country? This
 issue – and an essential topic is energy production...

at energy



most expensive. Once solar and wind power are discounted as unreliable for continuous supply, nuclear, natural gas and biomass emerge as the only serious options on grounds of cost.

Gas and biomass have to be continuously imported in high volume. Such limitations do not apply to the radioactive material needed to run a nuclear power station. The conclusion is that nuclear offers the best prospect of continuously affordable energy, supplemented by modern gas turbines.

Cost estimates for nuclear depend on assumptions about capital spending. But those costs can reduce as more nuclear plants are built – as long as the government plans to do so.

The guaranteed strike price set for Hinkley Point was widely questioned as it was double the market price of electricity at the time. But that price was influenced by

government policy and can't be used to compare costs for the future.

Safe:

The World Health Organization and others carried out a study in 2010 into the safety of different forms of power generation. Coal was least safe; that's to be expected given the air pollution it causes and the number of workers involved in its extraction worldwide, often in conditions no British miner would tolerate.

Surprisingly, though, nuclear was found to be the safest, 40 per cent better than wind! But there is a widely held perception that nuclear power is a disaster waiting to happen, based on three notable incidents; Three Mile Island in the US in 1979, Chernobyl (now in Ukraine) in 1986 and Fukushima (Japan) in 2011.

It's worth looking at the facts. There have been no detectable deaths due to radiation from the meltdowns at either Three Mile Island or Fukushima. In the Japanese case about 1,000 people died in the panic and chaos of a precautionary evacuation. And around 16,000 died as a result of the earthquake and tsunami which led to the reactor meltdown.

The explosion at Chernobyl in 1986 was far more serious, releasing between 5 and 10 times as much radioactive material as Fukushima. Two workers were killed outright and 28 died of acute radiation sickness within weeks. Since then 19 further deaths have been directly attributed to the accident. A UN report in 2005 estimated that 4,000 premature cancer deaths may occur over 80 years as a result of contamination from Chernobyl.

The British nuclear industry is required to operate in a much safer way than prevailed at Chernobyl and that must continue to be rigorously enforced. But disposal of nuclear waste remains a valid concern. Research will be needed into technological solutions for the long-term disposal of existing and future waste.

Clean:

We want our power generation to be as clean as possible. Nuclear power scores highly as a clean energy source, as even its detractors are forced to admit.

'Huge strides in nuclear safety and efficiency have been made.'

Unlike fossil fuels and biomass, nuclear energy produces no carbon while generating electricity. Carbon is produced during the construction, mining and decommissioning stages of a power station's life; that's true for all sources of energy, whether "clean" or not.

Power for Britain

Nuclear power should be the principal source of energy in Britain because it is affordable, reliable, safe (within the provisos outlined above) and clean. It should be the chief component of our energy generation mix, alongside gas and renewables.

Huge strides in nuclear safety and efficiency have been made in recent years. And there are also innovative designs such as the modular model (see *Workers* May/June 2018). The future doesn't have to be like the past, but it does have to be planned for.

There are grounds for optimism. Britain was at the forefront of the development of nuclear power. We still have repositories of skill and research such as the Dalton Institute at the University of Manchester.

Earlier this year the National College for Nuclear opened a "Southern Hub" to promote the skills needed in the building and operation of Hinkley Point C. Its Northern Hub, based near Sellafield in Cumbria, will play a role in planned developments there. But these innovations are piecemeal and need to be strengthened.

There are still those who argue that so-called green energy is the future, by which they mean renewables. The National Infrastructure Committee, set up by George Osborne, recently called on the government to plan for 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030 and to halt any further nuclear expansion. But planning on this basis is utterly illusory. It is important that we speak up for the place of nuclear in our energy plan. Let's have science in place of prejudice! ■

With Brexit there should come an Exclusive Economic Zone for Britain. But government concessions suggest that won't be

The great betrayal? Don't

THE SHABBY TREATMENT of Britain's fishing industry and fishermen was one of the issues at the heart of the debates leading up to the historic 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU, not only for fishing and other coastal areas of Britain, but for people across the country. The Common Fisheries Policy is one of the clearest examples of how the EEC, later EU membership, failed Britain.

Fishing community demonstrations were regular occurrences on the Thames over decades, covered by *Workers* and its predecessor *The Worker*, and their struggle captured the public imagination. Fishing and agriculture have become topics of public debate, as we consider how independence must be backed by food security. Two years on, and with Brexit a few months away, where do we stand?

We should have, as the international laws and agreements governing fishing stipulate, an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This, according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, is either 200 nautical miles off the coast, or the median line where, as across the English Channel, for example, another country's coast abuts the same sea.

Concessions

Yet government and the civil service have made concession after concession on fish. In the spring, fishing towns saw widespread mass demonstrations when it became clear that the government had sold out fishing in a transition deal, under which we would remain at the mercy of the Common Fisheries Policy until January 2021, with quotas imposed by unelected commissioners, influenced by lobbyists for every country with its eyes on our fish stocks.

Michael Gove is reported by the *Financial Times* to have assured the Danish fishing industry that Britain would not stick to its guns over coastal limits, as we did not have the capacity to exploit our stocks on our own, in effect welcoming them to come and take as much as they wished. The Danish fishing industry is notorious after a 2017 scandal in which, after their national audit office found widespread quota fraud, two senior civil servants resigned and the minister was "relieved of his position".

Our fisheries are a major asset, for all the

spin that tries to portray them as of little economic import. Our fishing grounds have been described as the best in Europe, and EU member states see access to them as something they will fight to keep. In 2016 we exported £1.17 billion worth of fish and fish products to the EU, importing £1.04 billion.

In terms of catch, boats from other EU countries landed around 760,000 tonnes of fish worth £540 million per year from UK waters between 2012 and 2016, against 90,000 tonnes of fish worth £110 million landed by UK boats fishing from other EU countries in the same period. The EU's strategy is to secure continued access to our stocks, by fair means or, more probably, foul. For them, fish are defined as a "common resource", to which all members states, even the land-locked ones, should have access.

After a gestation longer than an elephant's pregnancy, and months of leaks and rumours, in June of this year the government issued a White Paper, *Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations*, consultation on which closes in September. Much of the White Paper is couched in Whitehall-speak which when decoded pays only lip-service to ideas of taking control of our fisheries, and does not go nearly far enough.

We say every fish caught in British waters must be caught by a British registered boat. And every British registered boat must be owned, skippered and crewed by British fishermen. At present, three companies take 61 per cent of quotas for England and Wales. As Greenpeace showed, it was possible (and still will be if the transition agreement were to continue) for a single Dutch-owned vessel to have 23 per cent of

'Our fisheries are a major asset, for all the spin that seeks to portray them as of little economic significance...'



Newlyn Harbour, Cornwall, the largest fishing port

the entire English quota. The historical disadvantages which beset the owners of smaller vessels (under 10 metres) must be removed. These owners make up 78 per cent of the UK fleet.

Moreover, the question of fisheries clearly shows the need for a truly national approach. The White Paper, unsurprisingly, makes repeated reference to a role for the "devolved administrations". Separatists should have no say in the future of our national industry, defined by our single coastline. Fishing towns, whether in Scotland or the West Country, Wales or Yorkshire, have one united interest, as do those who consume the catch.

A genuinely national fisheries policy will

...ne to bring control of our marine resources back to
...e until at least 2021 – if at all...

...t let the EU steal our fish



...t in England.

stimulate the regeneration of coastal towns and cities. The fishing workforce of the future needs training and education. The number of fishermen fell by around 43 per cent between 1994 and 2014, so more will be needed.

Existing boats and equipment need quayside services, supplies, repairs and maintenance. But more than this, the fleet needs to be built up to meet the challenge. Sixty per cent of our fishing fleet has been scrapped over the years, while EU member states used grants, paid for by taxpayers, to build up theirs. At the end of 1948 the number of fishing vessels in Britain stood at 13,300, it is now 6,383.

Fish processing, for a perishable com-

modity, needs to take place where fish are landed, with consequent implications for new factories and equipment. The industry needs research, monitoring of stocks, and the technology to support fishermen, all of which provide opportunities for universities and colleges in and near coastal areas.

The navy too, has a role. Fisheries protection will be necessary and cannot be enforced with aircraft carriers. The contempt skippers from EU member states show even for EU rules has been demonstrated again and again. So it is probable that they would not at first respect international maritime law, and it would be foolish not to prepare for the necessity.

The EU quota system, for all the outcry

‘A genuinely national fisheries policy will stimulate the regeneration of coastal towns and cities.’

against the practice, still encourages discards, the system under which fish are thrown back in the sea when a boat has reached its quota. Further, because quotas are applied on a species basis, a boat that reach its quota of one species is forced to put back in to port, and even though its quota might permit it to catch more of other species.

Ignorance – or design?

Fishermen have no way of stopping the wrong species entering their nets, a fact that has eluded, by ignorance or design, EU policy-makers over decades. Discards are unacceptable. We can now, guided by the science, manage our fish stocks ourselves.

We are not Norway, nor the Faroes, nor Iceland. We have to plan a future for British fisheries that works for our particular circumstances. This must involve those who work in the industry, of course, first and foremost. It would be encouraging if the trade unions that organise in the industry were to spend less time on the internal affairs of a dying and irrelevant Labour Party, and more on the interests of the members. If they wished, they too could be part of determining our future.

The importance of fishing is clear to the class, though not to Westminster (still less Holyrood). As the National Federation of Fishing Organisations says in its response to the White Paper, when Britain becomes an independent coastal state, “everything else flows from that”. The Common Fisheries Policy, over decades, showed the world the failure of the EEC, then the EU. A no-deal Brexit would give us the freedom to set a sensible course for the future. ■

It's been bruised and battered by cuts, reorganisations and... that the integrated service is being put back together and...

The NHS at 70: all to pl



THE NATIONAL Health Service was founded on 5 July 1948. Two days earlier, the Health Minister Aneurin Bevan explained in the *British Medical Journal* that it would spread the cost of health care "...over the whole of the community so that those who are fortunate enough to remain in good health may help those who temporarily fall out of the ranks."

The biggest NHS union, Unison, organised an event held to celebrate that 70th anniversary. Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, quoted Bevan (as portrayed in a 1997 BBC TV drama): "The NHS will last as long as there are folk with faith to fight for it". Khan went on to say that Unison were the fighters for the NHS. The fighters? This may have flattered the event's organisers, but if it's true that the only fighters are in one union the NHS will be lost.

Bevan is the person most often given credit for establishing the NHS. Or if not, people usually mention William Beveridge, whose wartime report is cited as laying the foundations of the modern welfare state, whatever that may mean. In truth the NHS did indeed emerge from the Second World War – from the million men and women under arms who returned to Britain from it.

Forced

They would in no way have tolerated a return to the hated pre-war means-tested dole or being forced to pay to see a doctor. Together with the families to whom they returned, they forced the NHS on a temporarily pliable Labour Government. There was no backsliding or lengthy transition period.

The NHS is one of three great achievements that Britain has contributed to civilisation. One other is the industrial

Left: placard held up on the march celebrating the 70th anniversary of the NHS and supporting its continued existence, London, 30 June. The march, which drew tens of thousands of participants, took place five days ahead of the actual anniversary of the NHS's founding on 5 July 1948.

John Gomez/shutterstock.com

d privatisations. But little by little workers are ensuring there is a real prospect that it can be rebuilt...

lay for

revolution, the fruits of which make all modernity possible. The last is the invention of trade unions, more necessary now than ever even with all their flaws.

Among those troops were the Royal Army Medical Corps. Their contribution to the treatment of battle casualties, and its commonwealth of care laid the organisational foundation upon which Beveridge and Bevan acted.

Soon after its inception, the problems facing the service were demonstrated with the introduction first of prescription charges and then dental charges, and then charges for ever more NHS services. Many years later these gaps in the system's armoury gave Thatcher her cue to introduce widespread privatisation.

Unceasing change

Clinical care has developed beyond all recognition in 70 years. Less beneficially, there has been unceasing organisational change in the service. Too frequently there's the appearance of change when lack of resources makes useful change less likely.

There have been elements of the service run by Local Government, by District Health Authorities, Regional Health Authorities and Health Boards. Then there were NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts, not forgetting the ill-starred Independent Sector Treatment Centres. All the while hospitals have remained hospitals, doctors remain doctors and nurses remain nurses.

But in many ways much has changed. In Britain there are hospitals without peer internationally, but many which should be demolished. Britain has some of the best doctors in the world, yet steals far too many from countries who need them more than we do. The same theft is true of nurses, whose clinical duties have burgeoned. Also new professions have emerged – paramedics, physiotherapists, radiographers. The list is lengthy, and growing.

There is much about the NHS of which we can be immensely proud, as many of the celebrants have sermonised. And we are told that the NHS is the thing that makes most people in this country proud

'It was the pressure of workers that led to the formation of the NHS, and it is to workers generally we must look for its sustenance.'

to be British. But we cannot be complacent at all.

We must be ever vigilant about the twin dangers of continued penetration of private capital – simply privatisation – and underfunding. There are signs that the British people's choice of independence in the Brexit referendum will force on to the NHS the need for self-sufficiency, lacking until now. There are also signs that Thatcher's most potent Trojan horse, the "purchaser-provider split", will be tackled. She aimed to sound the death knell for the NHS; it outlived her.

Which brings us back to the celebrations. If Unison and its membership of more than half a million health workers are the only ones expected to fight for the NHS then it will not last for the next 70 years. It was the pressure of workers that led to the formation of the NHS, and it is to workers generally we must look for its sustenance.

Fragmentation

The loathed Health & Social Care Act of 2012 (HSCA) is the most significant recent development. It is now widely accepted this law was an attempt to institutionalise fragmentation. For too long only some NHS unions took that view. They will be vindicated.

Recently a prominent NHS manager said that Andrew Lansley, at the time the

secretary of state for health and author of the HSCA, should be put up against a wall and shot. The service, including its most senior staff, have found ways in which to undermine the insidiousness of the act's provisions.

It's one of those under-the-radar examples of how workers can fight for what is right. First of all many workers displaced from the organisations the HSCA abolished (Strategic Health Authorities & Primary Care Trusts) found work in the new ones created (Health Education England and NHS England among them). They brought with them the service's own ethos, explicitly counter to fragmentation.

Little-by-little, the integrated service is being put back together. Clinical Commissioning Groups, Lansley's much-vaunted "GP commissioning", are being clustered into the same configuration that the abolished PCTs were in. Moves are afoot to bring together NHS England (the Commissioning Board) and NHS Improvement, itself a merger of the Trust Development Authority & Monitor.

Significant

These may seem innocuous developments, but they are significant and real change is gradually under way. And NHS England chief executive Simon Stephens stated that the internal market, the purchaser-provider split, may end.

These will be limited by existing legislation. But creating new structures in practice, to then be confirmed in law, would be both effective and the polar opposite of Lansley's "smash everything to pieces with new legislation" approach.

Brexit, as everywhere else, is having an effect. The prospect of having to train our own health workers as opposed to stealing them from abroad, has forced Health Education England to come up with the service's first workforce strategy for a generation. The aim of self-sufficiency is central to that. There's a long way to go, but the direction is positive.

That the NHS has survived these seventy years is an achievement. That it can be rebuilt is a real prospect. That just leaves us with industry and the unions to sort out! ■

While the separatists pledge their continued devotion to the EU – and an independent Britain needs to ditch it...

Devolution – a failed idea



Workers

Separatists on the march in Inverness on 28 July show their true colours: not independence but dependence on the EU. Note the presence of Union flags on the left, part of a counter-demonstration by supporters of British unity.

THE SCOTTISH separatists' agenda cannot succeed politically. Their rallies are shrinking despite inflated claims of numbers. At the 2017 general election the pro-EU Scottish National Party dominance was rocked by a significant loss of seats. The party won only

35 of the 59 Scottish constituencies – a fall of 21 seats from the 56 it took in 2015.

The anti-EU Conservatives, on the other hand, secured 13 seats in Scotland – the party's best performance in the country since 1983.

So now the Scottish government has resorted to the "legal" route to undermine Brexit and thwart the fight to achieve a united and independent Britain. Behind this desperate move is the hope that the quest for a second Scottish independence referendum can be revived.

An unprecedented legal battle is under way at the Supreme Court in London in which the British government is challenging

the Scottish parliament's right to pass Brexit-related legislation. It is one that the devolved parliament in Edinburgh could clearly see coming when they voted (by 94 to 30) – against the advice of their Presiding Officer that the bill was outside its competence – to pass the EU Continuity Bill.

This bill was an attempt to have a slate of 24 administrative powers handed to the Scottish parliament after Britain regains them back from the EU after Brexit. That Britain as a united whole deals with these issues (such as fisheries, agriculture, food labelling and public procurement) is seen to be essential by the British government in order to safeguard the integrity of the UK's

'An unprecedented battle is under way at the Supreme Court in London.'

dependence on Brussels, devolution belongs in the era of sea from a failed era

own internal single market.

Seven Supreme Court judges are hearing the case, which opened in July. The Court resumes in October, when judgement will be reached. The opening statement by Lord Keen QC was clear: “The principal point is really a very simple one – the Scottish Parliament has sought through design to overcome the clear and expressed limitation placed upon it by the United Kingdom Parliament under the Scotland Act itself. The sovereign (UK) Parliament is untrammelled by the statutory legislative restraints imposed on the Scottish Parliament. The UK Parliament is sovereign, the Scottish Parliament is not.”

Restriction

The written submission from the British government insisted: “The Scottish bill purports to adopt powers to continue to give effect to EU law, requires the Scottish Ministers to have regard to EU law in certain areas after withdrawal including subsequent changes in that law, and to restrict the ability of UK ministers to legislate.

“In simple terms: legislation addressing the effect of withdrawal from the EU, in particular making provision for the continued application of established law in areas currently within the competence of the EU, is a matter for Parliament and not the devolved legislatures.”

Lord Keen QC pointed out that such a bill would create “dual and inconsistent regimes” within Britain and was designed to “directly frustrate the purpose” of the Withdrawal Act which was aiming to create a cohesive body of laws after Brexit.

He said the Scottish bill would create “a separate and novel body of law” which would “fundamentally undermine” the Withdrawal Act. He said he was clear that the Scottish bill was “inconsistent with the UK Act at the most basic of levels” and that “the two simply cannot stand together.”

It is worth spelling out these points as they could not more clearly demonstrate the pinnacle of folly that devolution has become. Its architects – and the Blair government that ushered it in – must have been aware of such ultimate contradictions.

The concept of devolved legislatures, developed during the decades of our dal-

liance with the European Union (and its attempt to construct a United States of Europe) rested on the EU idea of compliant “regions” – just like Scotland and Wales. The people of the north of England stood firm against the devolutionists and rejected the ideas of regional or federal parliaments – and so began the decades of successful struggle to break free from the EU and gain independence.

But it will be a hard task to reverse the embedded ideas of separatism, regionalisation or federalism. Six industrial trade unions took a robust stand for unity and against the break up of Britain in the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence; and the RMT was the splendid example of a trade union voice pitted against the EU and its privatisations and migration of labour and capital, in the 2016 referendum on the EU.

We must revive such voices of workers now – especially in the upcoming battle for independence and success for a whole, united Britain. Of relevance to organised workers is the history of the journey to devolution and separatism: look at how the industrial militancy of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Scotland was channelled down the path of separatist thought in movements led by the Scottish TUC, such as the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly.

Rejected

The same process was seen in Wales as early as 1950 in the “Parliament for Wales” campaign. The National Union of Mineworkers in South Wales resisted taking part. Yet the separatists did not give up, even after the rejection of the devolution idea in the 1979 referendum on forming a Welsh Assembly.

In northern Ireland, there is the farce of legislators idling on large salaries while their assembly has lain closed for over a year and a half. Although DUP support for Brexit is welcome, in the Supreme Court case under discussion, the leading law officers of both the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly have given active support to the Scottish government.

If “direct rule” works in northern Ireland – life goes on almost as normal – why not apply the same to Scotland and Wales and be rid of expensive and futile layers of

‘The adherents of separatism are becoming increasingly embittered.’

bureaucracy that are at odds with achieving the best for Britain following Brexit?

But with the growing realisation that the separatist project has failed and is going nowhere, its adherents are becoming increasingly embittered. This may result in a period of social stress and turbulence in the areas of the country affected. A good example was the 28 July separatist march and rally in Inverness where many EU flags were on show alongside saltire flags and other “yes to independence” banners.

As usual the number of marchers was inflated: the whole march was videoed, and careful counting revealed no more than 3,500 against the claimed number of 14,000. But the vehemence of the abuse shouted at people on the pavements opposing them was quite startling. The local supporters of the pro-British unity and anti-separatist campaign A Force for Good were particularly targeted by a sinister phalanx of black-clad, saltire-waving motorcyclists.

Those opposed to the separatist marchers included trade unionists from the RMT and Musicians’ Union. A schedule of further rallies is planned, but already leading SNP members – like Kenny MacAskill – have warned of the futility of holding them, given such opposition in the streets and the danger of turning the public against their project.

Still, the vision of breaking up Britain is not going away any time soon. A kind of gradualism is being employed. Accumulating powers through a raft of minor legislation and acquiring economic control over a long period of time could eventually result in quasi-independent entities within Britain, all the more fit to break away and

Continued on page 20

Continued from page 19

return to the embrace of the EU.

The concept of “full fiscal autonomy” is a demand that falls easily from the lips of both SNP and Scottish Labour, with weak opposing ideas from Conservatives and Liberals. The call for federalism – which may mean to some a pathway to separation, to others a cover for regionalisation – became a catch phrase as the defeat of separatism became obvious in the 2014 referendum.

Gordon Brown vowed to gift it to the whole of Britain, the Cameron government toyed with it, and on the “left” it was dressed up as Progressive Federalism.

The Scottish government will still have several cards to play. In an article in *The Scotsman* in August 2013 headed “SNP abuse machinery of government”, former Labour MP Brian Wilson wrote: “It is improper for civil servants to be used to churn out Nationalist propaganda and pronouncements.”

That was during the course of the referendum on Scottish independence when the full force of Holyrood and its funded bodies was brought to bear to boost the separatist cause. Likewise, the Cameron government it spent over £9 million on the side of the EU the 2016 referendum. In both cases the people won through, despite the odds stacked against them.

Taking a stand

The SNP, severely diminished by the electorate at the last general election, still has 35 MPs in Westminster. This rump has gained much succour from the Labour Party’s decision to back staying in the EU’s single market and customs union. (Let’s not bother with whether it’s “a” customs union or “the” customs union.)

As *Daily Telegraph* Scottish Editor Alan Cochrane put it, “SNP call the tune and Labour are happy to play along.” What’s on the cards is a so-called “progressive” alliance aimed at dealing a mortal blow to a real Brexit.

If this attempt to retain the essential elements of the EU leads to a long transition out of the EU, the SNP would take the opportunity to engineer a long transition

back into the Brussels net, trying to gain its support for Scottish independence en route. That’s another reason why the Brexit process must be much more speedy and decisive.

Meanwhile, unions and industry are taking a more robust stance against the Scottish government. Education unions and educationalists are seething about falling standards, NHS staff decry the lack of investment, the powerful whisky industry opposes the policy on the single market, and National Farmers’ Union speakers have called for a united front with the whole UK to take advantage of opportunities post-Brexit.

‘Austerity’ drive

Workers from several trade unions have condemned the pro-austerity policies in the Scottish government’s recent Growth Commission Report (widely seen as a blueprint for future Scottish independence). They find that growing youth unemployment remains untackled, and that this is related to the upsurge in drug-related problems in cities like Glasgow and Dundee.

Opposition to the merger of British Transport Police with Police Scotland under devolved powers continues unabated, despite being given the go ahead by the Scottish Government. All three rail unions, RMT, TSSA and Aslef have united in opposition to it and demand its reversal.

Mike Hogg, speaking for the RMT on BBC Radio Scotland news on 24 July, said the forced merger was a result of “an ideological obsession” on the part of the Scottish

‘Unions and industry are taking a much more robust stance against the Scottish government...’

government, and that it was “a recipe for disaster” and that “was not working”.

Citing the railway network as “a magnet for anti-social behaviour” he insisted that the specialist skills of the British Transport Police were needed and that the general police force was preoccupied with many other pressing problems and lacked the skills base required to deal with the railway.

The overwhelming economic case for workers and the country, Britain, to remain united and to develop and enhance that unity is a powerful one.

As an integrated part of the United Kingdom, Scotland will be best placed to pursue the current revival of naval architecture and shipbuilding, the continued development in exploration for oil and gas in the North Sea, the fledgling aerospace industry and spaceport plan for Sutherland, the specialist products in fishing, farming and whisky, as well as plans for the revival of a new technology steel industry. All of this, of course, requires Britain-wide investment, support and national planning. ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist’s regular series of London public meetings in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1R 4RL, will continue on Wednesday 17 October (see notice, page 10). And you can find us distributing Workers and leaflets at Burston – see page 5 for details.

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. Send an email to info@cpbml.org.uk or call us on 020 8801 9543.

IMF critic Joseph Stiglitz is back with a new book about how globalisation harms workers everywhere...

Capital vs. workers

Globalization and its discontents revisited: anti-globalization in the era of Trump, by Joseph Stiglitz, paperback, 528 pages, ISBN 978-0141986661, Penguin, £9.99. Kindle & e-book editions available.

THIS BOOK by the 2001 Nobel economics prize winner expands and updates his best-selling *Globalization and its discontents*. That critique of the role of the International Monetary Fund is supplemented by a study of globalisation's increasingly harmful effect on the working classes of the USA and Europe.

Stiglitz notes, "Globalization has become a race to the bottom, where corporations are the only winners and the rest of society...is the loser." He continues: "Those at the top got more than 100 percent of the gains, meaning that the rest – and unskilled workers in particular – were worse off."

"The conflict is not so much between workers in developing countries and those in developed countries, but between workers around the world and corporate interests... on one side, workers and consumers – the 99 percent – in both developed and developing countries, versus corporate interests on the other."

He says of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and similar deals, "The trade agreements were unfair, but they were unfair in favor of America and other advanced countries – the developing countries were justified in their complaints. But the agreements were also unfair in favor of corporations, and against workers whether in the advanced countries or the poorer ones."

So the workers in America "were also right to complain". The Trans-Pacific Partnership, typically, "was an agreement

'They claimed, falsely, that the only way to save ordinary citizens was to save the bankers...'



Anti-TTIP protest, Glasgow, July 2014.

that served corporate interests, with negligible benefits for the U.S. economy as a whole." This is a common feature, as he explains.

Pension funds and sovereign wealth funds hold huge funds for investment, and there are massive needs for long-term investment. Stiglitz points out the obstacle to using one to solve the other, "But standing between the two were short-term financial markets, which paid little attention even to the most pressing global problems..."

After the crash...

After the 2008 crash, the US government and those of other countries too "...appointed the very people who were responsible for the crisis to sort it out. Not surprisingly, they put the bankers' interests ahead of the rest of society – ahead of those losing their jobs and homes. They claimed, falsely, that the only way to save ordinary citizens was to save the bankers. The 'recovery' was focused on the bankers, not on ordinary citizens..."

"The private sector, on its own, created many of the central problems facing national economies and global society: inequality,

environmental degradation, and instability. The private sector, on its own, won't solve these problems." The market, the private sector, the corporations, in a word, capitalism, is the problem, not the solution.

Stiglitz explains "why it's so difficult to make changes, to make the changes that would enable globalization to work: the corporate forces that have created a globalization that works for them, but not for the rest, are not going to easily and willingly give up their power."

When he writes of reforming globalisation, the giant corporations – the cause of globalisation's failure to benefit us all – miraculously vanish. Later he pleads, "...if the 1 percent must pursue its own self-interest, it should at least be an enlightened self-interest." He relies on them to make the changes society needs, but seems to know his quest to reform globalisation will fail.

Stiglitz's most likely scenario is that corporations will continue to reap a disproportionate share of the gains. Yet he acknowledges "the more remote possibility that domestic political forces in the United States and Europe circumscribe market power." This is the future that we must make. ■

A war unique in our history: a remaking of our country was on the field of war but also in people's hearts and minds..

The English Civil War (1642-1651)

THERE HAVE been power struggles before and since among rich elites or between rival aristocratic houses. The English Civil War was entirely different, actively involving whole swathes of society normally excluded from control.

In England, Charles I's reign witnessed rising discontent almost from his succession in 1625. Costly, failed wars led to inflation and taxation. Religious reforms were unpopular and seen as taking the country towards Catholicism. And there was an underlying sense that the country was not being ruled in the best interests of its people.

Bankrupt

In 1640 Charles summoned parliament. He was bankrupt, but wanted to raise an army to suppress opposition in Scotland, where he was equally unpopular. The House of Commons in the Long Parliament (as it became known) represented a cross-section of the ruling class establishment: gentry, merchants, lawyers. But almost for the first time in English history, elections were contested on political issues.

The real strength of those opposed to the king in the House of Commons came from outside parliament, across a wide cross-section of society. Generally support for parliament came from the economically advanced south and east of England, whereas the king's support came from the economically backward areas of the north and west. In Yorkshire, Lancashire and Sussex, there was a clear division between parliamentarian, rebellious industrial areas and royalist agricultural areas.

There is no simple reason why opposition to the king and his ministers moved from protest to armed revolt in the First Civil War (1642-46). It is likely that popular discontent over a range of different political and religious issues produced such a heady and powerful mix that trust in the king and his government totally collapsed. The "humble respect and awful reverence which is usually given to nobility, gentry and clergy", as Edward Chamberlayne put it in 1672, crumbled in these tumultuous times.

In November 1641 parliament passed

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

the "Grand Remonstrance" setting out their many grievances against Charles. The king's next move was disastrous and prompted open revolt. He went to parliament with a body of soldiers intending to arrest the five leading members of the parliamentary opposition. Warned beforehand, they had left the Commons by the time Charles arrived. The king's bungled attempt at a coup made them heroes.

King Charles left London and shortly began to raise an army against the rebellious parliament. In turn, parliament decreed that they did not require Royal Assent to make laws, taking control of local militias and a growing volunteer army. And so in 1642 war began.

Dissatisfaction about the conduct of the war led Oliver Cromwell setting up the New Model Army in 1645. Its composition was unusual, including a broad cross-section of society in contrast to armies elsewhere at that time. The broader social origins of its soldiers provided literate, argumentative soldiers with easy links to friends in civilian political movements.

The first armies of both sides had been formed largely of volunteers. Although diluted by conscription from the second year of the war, this sense of fighting for a cause they believed in remained a strong factor amongst parliamentary armies, and was transferred to the New Model Army.

Organised

The New Model Army was disciplined and well organised, averse to looting. Quite soon promotions to officer rank were on merit rather than social rank. It took a major political battle in parliament to ensure acceptance of these forms of military organisation.

Parliamentarian forces eventually gained the upper hand and in May 1646 Charles surrendered to the Scottish army. He was handed over to parliament when the Scots withdrew from England in January 1647.

In April 1647 parliament tried to disband the New Model Army but failed. Soldiers refused to disband. After months of dispute with parliament, they declared, "We were not a mere mercenary army" and would not disband without settlement of both their own grievances (including arrears of pay) and the people's political and religious liberties.



Loz Pycok (CC-BY-SA 2.0)

Detail from the statue of Oliver Cromwell by Sir W. B. Richmond, unveiled in the House of Commons on 31 October 1899. Photo: Loz Pycok

In June 1647 a troop of 500 cavalry seized the king and brought him to Newmarket where the rest of the army was. In August the army occupied London. That October the Council of the Army, with representatives of the rank and file as well as officers, debated the settlement of the kingdom, known as the Putney Debates. They even discussed An Agreement of the People, a manifesto produced by radical Levellers.

The escape of Charles from detention brought the debates to an end and opened the Second Civil War. The New Model Army

'The office of king was formally abolished on 17 March 1649.'

s fought not only

42-1649)



William Hamo Thornycroft RA, unveiled outside the Pycock (CC-BY-SA 2.0).

had to put down scattered mutinies and then fight a Scots army enlisted to support Charles. That was defeated in August 1648, ending the war.

Tyrant, traitor

Charles I was put on trial in January 1649. Condemned as a “tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy to the good people of this nation”, he was executed on 30 January. The office of king was formally abolished on 17 March.

After the Putney debates the heyday was over for the Leveller cause. The momentum of the republican side veered towards the wealthy, anxious to protect the interests of property. Gradually the New Model Army became ever more a professional body and the days of sermons, lectures, leaflets, agitators and citizens in uniform passed.

The Levellers, Diggers and Ranters disappeared from view and lost their impact on the public arena. But the English people’s view of the world had changed forever. ■

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

NO ADVANCE WITHOUT INDEPENDENCE

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist held its 17th Congress in 2015. The published Congress documents are available at www.cpbml.org.uk. At that time the need to leave the EU was urgent, and on 23 June 2016 the working class of Britain took the vital step to eject the EU from Britain and entered a new epoch. The tasks identified at the 17th Congress remain as relevant as ever, and the decision to leave the EU makes the question of Britain’s independence immediate and practical. The tasks facing the working class and Party are:

Develop a working class industrial strategy for the building of an independent industrial manufacturing base for Britain, including the development of our energy industry. Our capacity to produce is the basis for providing the public services the working class needs.

Rebuild Britain’s trade unions to embrace all industries and workplaces. The trade unions must 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 to socialism without Marxism. Develop again our heritage of thinking to advance our work in and outside 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.

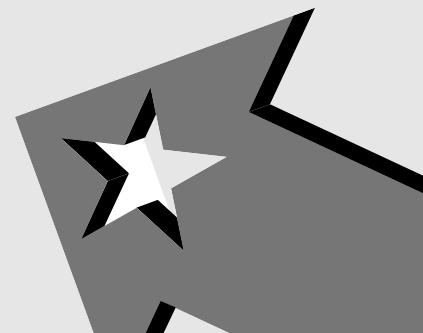
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Proxy wars

‘Hardly any political act in Britain now can be viewed without taking into account how the protagonists think about Brexit. Yet about Brexit itself there is too little political debate.’

THE PARLIAMENTARY parties and the media are currently embroiled in proxy wars about religion and race. These furores are artificial, they confuse and distract people, as they are designed to do.

The media storms are in fact proxies for the conflict between the ruling class that wants Britain to stay in the EU and the democratic majority who voted to leave.

The establishment is doing its worst to delegitimise our vote to leave, with false accusations of Russian influence, and fake news. Fake news? Politicians lie. They always have – that’s not news.

There’s a story being built here, a big lie in the process of construction. It’s that the idea of Brexit itself is the creation of an older generation riddled with racism and prejudice of all kinds. So find any instances of racism or anti-immigrant activity, and pin it onto Brexit.

In reality there is no justification whatsoever for unhistorical, insulting – and patently untrue – generalisations about Britain being an intolerant society, or for vapid forecasts that we are in the Weimar republic phase or in a pre-Trump era.

But the proxy warriors will not accept that the desire to control immigration is about wanting to control borders, not about hating individuals from other countries. They will not accept what is clear to most people in this country, that there is a massive difference between being anti-immigrant and being against uncontrolled immigration.

Sometimes the beneficiaries of this immigration come out into the open, like the multimillionaire founder of Superdry, whose shops are staffed on the minimum wage and whose jackets were found in 2015 to be made in India by workers on 28p an hour.

Yet some deranged tweets aside, where’s the evidence for a headlong descent into right-wing extremism? The European Commission’s latest Eurobarometer survey found that British people are behind only Swedes and the Dutch in the EU in being comfortable with having an immigrant as a neighbour, friend, family member or doctor. Far more so than the

average European – or the average German, for that matter.

The establishment smears as racist those who back independence – if not openly racist, then as guilty of “dog-whistle” racism, of encouraging it in others. This is an accusation impossible to refute, because it presumes the guilt of the accused. Nothing else matters, nothing else is considered.

Why is it that thousands of people were prepared to go onto the streets of London to protest against Donald Trump, but not against Barack Obama, who initiated US bombing of Syria (and Yemen) without even the fig leaf of UN authorisation? But in the world of proxy politics, someone’s attitude to Brexit is more important than how many wars they start.

Hardly any political act in Britain now can be viewed without taking into account how the protagonists think about Brexit. Yet about Brexit itself there is too little political debate.

Labour either can’t or won’t talk about it. Instead it is fighting its own internal proxy wars. The government certainly doesn’t want to talk about Brexit. It has issued its Chequers White Paper, and now wants everyone to forget about it. Except that it wants to nail pro-Brexit MPs for any offence at all, real or imagined.

Even the talk about not having a hard Brexit is a proxy itself – those who say they don’t want a hard Brexit (whatever that is) don’t actually want any kind of Brexit. They want to stay in the EU and to hell with democracy.

Without doubt the world is full of oppression and injustice. Military and other dictatorships flourish. Human rights are routinely abused around the world. But the fighters of proxy wars choose their targets carefully: anyone who talks about independence, anyone who stands up to the EU, and in particular anyone in Britain who is fighting to implement the democratic result of the EU referendum.

In everyone’s interest, the sooner we leave the EU the better. Perhaps then at least some people will stop pretending and say what they mean. ■

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