



NO ADVANCE WITHOUT MARXISM

**Political statement from the Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist,
17th Congress, London, November 2015.**

Fight for unity

We have now entered an epoch of fragmentation and chaos, with all the consequences and dangers that implies for our British working class. Over three centuries our class created British society and the nation by a thousand threads and by combining to struggle in the face of exploitation by capitalism. Separatists, Scottish or others, forget this industrial revolution when they hark back to feudal enclaves and regions of a “golden age” that is only myth.

If the struggle against Scottish separatism had been lost in the 2014 referendum, we would surely now be at the forefront of a reunification campaign and be prepared for a long haul. With the onslaught of fragmentation and separatist ideology assailing us from all directions – and being felt throughout Britain – re-unification must still be fought for. Again we can and must be at the forefront.

By far the most important aspect of this is to re-establish – and where it didn't exist before, create – a solid sense of working class unity. In the face of bolstered Welsh assembly and Scottish parliament, the resurfacing of regionalism, the imposition of city economic zones, the overthrow of referenda which had rejected city mayors, and the spread of “federalism” across the whole political spectrum, we have to act swiftly and decisively. The Scottish National Party and the Tories collaborate on breaking up Britain in a process of slow independence resulting from their Scotland Bill. Being rushed through Parliament, it destabilises the cohesion of the nation.

These ideas must be pulled apart and in their place the necessity of class unity established. To allow fragmentation to occur is to allow capitalism to win and subject us to increasingly intensive exploitation.

EU, TTIP and NATO

We now pose the key question – what is the origin of this onslaught?

What we have seen over recent decades is the coming together of the interests of capitalism to create a “free-fire zone” across Europe to intensify such exploitation. The free flow of capital and labour on a massive scale is intended to beat down wages and standards of living, to establish legal case history that binds workers and impedes their resistance. A decade of intense migration with approaching a million from the new European Union states coming to look for work in Britain has had a debilitating effect on schools, housing and medical services. Now anybody who manages to migrate into the EU from outside is added to this reserve army of labour.

The workers at Lindsey oil refinery in 2009 were absolutely right to refuse to accept the dilution of their wages and conditions resulting from an influx of workers on lower rates from Europe. They were also right to use the phrase “British jobs for British workers”. They established a precedent. The existence of nation states like Britain – the threads of its nationhood and society united by its growing working class over centuries – is a clear threat to an EU that is envisaged to develop into a state built in the interests of capitalism.

And this is an international capitalism, with the International Monetary Fund behind it and NATO as enforcer, that owes loyalty to no nation. The existence of a strong resistance force – such as our working class has been in part and could be an exemplar – is anathema to the powers of the EU. So fragmentation, federalism and separatism are aided and abetted by the goading, funding and encouragement of the EU.

On top of that we see looming the advent of the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). This would hand over to capitalism the ability to legally attack nation states and is part of the agenda of a strengthened imperialism, a dangerous bloc which would wage war on nations refusing to join or obey its demands. In the face of this, to regain unity, self-respect and self-reliance, a spirit of workers' nationalism is the correct robust response.

Tasks

In the years up to our 50th anniversary in 2018, we are faced with some strenuous tasks: fighting separatism and bursting its recent “bubble”; winning the referendum in order to free us from the EU; fighting the TTIP treaty; opposing the drive to war by escalating class struggle; putting the struggle for wages back on top of the agenda and convincing and recruiting workers with our clear Marxist analysis. (The best consequence of the economic crisis of capitalism in recent years is without doubt Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* becoming a best-seller in Britain). Early gains include the unions Unite, RMT and others signing up to fully oppose TTIP – and the RMT agreeing to campaign to leave the EU in the referendum.

Working class role

The only force capable of thoroughly winning these struggles and of resisting and eventually breaking free from capitalism is our united working class. And to carry out such a task we must at all costs avoid being divided – “unity is strength” is an old and straightforward adage that remains valid for all workers. The solidarity shown by the miners of England, Wales and Scotland three decades ago, the Britain-wide support for the Musicians' Union orchestra strike of 1980, the all-Britain support for the Upper Clyde Shipyard work-in in the 1970s, and more recently the united campaign conducted in England, Scotland and Wales by the University and College Union against the attack on further education, are some of many examples of unity in action.

One negative example too: as the concept of work-ins and occupations spread with its threat to capitalism, all the energies of the UCS work-in leaders were channelled into “the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly” – which they foolishly lionised as a possible “workers parliament” – foreshadowing the anti-working class, divisive, separatist “independence” movement of recent years. The years of negativity for our working class that followed included the “love-in” with the EU launched at the 1988 Trades Union Congress by Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission. The illusion that salvation for workers could be handed over on a silver platter served up by Brussels bureaucrats was fostered.

The repatriation of legal powers back to Britain is essential. We should be able to get our own house in order – and that includes a much more vigorous fight against anti-trade union legislation enacted against us over decades by both Tory and Labour governments. The new legal shackles proposed to prevent workers struggling against wage cuts and impoverishment are more akin to the fascist corporate states that workers defeated and discredited in the past.

Nationally, trade unions are more and more ceasing to exist in practice. Getting our own house in order also means revitalising our working class to restore the health of our trade unions and their fighting spirit. It is wrong for isolated “activists” to get elected in major unions on participation of fewer than 10 per cent. The mass of workers must get involved in the democratic structures of their unions. Fortunately recent examples of more than 90 per cent of

union members voting in the ferry wages and privatisation dispute, and the junior doctors' massive majority for industrial action give some hope for a revival.

The fight to ditch the EU

This is a decisive confrontation that will be fought out in 2016–2017. Our Party will fight to win and in that we will not be separate from the working class of Britain – we arise from their ranks.

The vast majority of our nation is this working class – that's what gives Britain its unique trade unions, its secular attitude, its collective spirit, its thoughtfulness of contribution, its valuing of redistribution according to need, its independent-minded determination. These characteristics typify the true British values which Cameron now wishes to redefine. These values should be asserted as a source of pride, along with "Never say die" and "Do it yourself". They also sum up what capitalists hate about us – so fragmentation, shackles and chaos for us, while they hope to remain united. United to exploit more intensively in their clubs of EU, TTIP, NATO and IMF, they constitute a war bloc. That's why we say vote to leave the EU in the coming referendum.

Our goals to rebuild Britain, re-industrialise, stop war – let alone starting to create a fresh socialist society – cannot be achieved with these dead hands upon us. We can decide to rebuild Britain and reconstruct a fresh industrial economy – and prosper, as we and many writers have proven, outside the EU. A new world is waiting.

The British people's consistent opposition to joining the euro did not emerge just because that disastrous currency would have had destructive economic consequences for us. No – our independent-mindedness as a class created a deep reluctance to abandon all control over our national economy.

However, it was our own parliamentarians and civil servants who played major roles in drawing up the treaties that lie at the heart of the EU project. The provisions of these treaties – Maastricht, Nice and Lisbon – continue to be applied here more vigorously than elsewhere in Europe. Yes, the British people thoroughly distrusted the euro. But the separatists in Scotland used the smokescreen of "currency union" with sterling to disguise their desire to adopt the euro. In that they undermine Britain – all the more reason that their current "bubble" should be burst, and soon.

The SNP-Tory carve up of Britain is matched now by their uniting to plead for the EU. Some, jumping out of the floundering Labour Party ship, are flocking to their side. And now Sir Richard Branson is enlisted too – his "wisdom" extended to advocating we should join the euro twelve years ago. At least it's clear who opposes us.

Workers in England must rise up against being carved up into regional pockets – shove resurrected kings back into their graves and "Yorkshire First" types back into the mists of time. Already we see regional identities being manufactured by such events as the Institute of Welsh Affairs' Constitutional Convention and the founding meeting of the Northern Citizens' Convention in Huddersfield (which met with no local interest).

Imposing devolution on Manchester was just the start. All appearance of democracy is dead. Where people voted against elected mayors they will be imposed. The idea that if you vote for a policy they will carry it out is now laughably old-fashioned.

The so-called Citizens' movement, borrowed from Chicago by London with the present attempt to spread it around Britain, is just another futile attempt to say "citizens" can take the place of the working class in opposing capitalism.

Oppose the dangerous concept of internal "fiscal autonomy" within Britain – for Scotland, Wales and "regions". We have been

pointing out for years that this means de facto separation. Under Gorbachev when his "perestroika" started disintegrating the Soviet Union, Estonia acquired "economic devolution" (i.e., fiscal autonomy). Foreign currency flowed in. Estonian currency was first tied to the Deutschmark, then the euro was adopted – and the EU had Estonia under its control.

The attack here in Britain

Mass migration provides a potentially limitless reserve army of the unemployed to undermine workers' organisation, pay and conditions built up over centuries by the working class here. Our resistance to this begins with the fight to leave the EU.

We face mass unemployment, underemployment, privatisation, worsening conditions, attacks on pensions, general impoverishment, and assaults on the National Health Service, state education and culture. The fragmentation we have outlined weakens our response while false ideas of "diversity" and "multiculturalism" have led to the fracturing of our social cohesion.

Fighting for jobs, working together, organisation in trade unions, the insistence on using our shared English language, are all ways to unite a working class. Everything that unites us is positive; everything which divides us is negative and must be fought. One success noted earlier this year was the overturning of the Law Society's guidance favouring sharia law following an intense campaign. Workers' unity means one law for all. These key ideas of workers' unity and revitalising our trade unions are essential for countering the attacks on us.

Workers need to become fully conscious of their power and ability as a class. For over a decade the doling out of credit covered up crises while weakening the resolve of workers in the essential struggle for wages.

We need to radically change and refresh thinking – to come to realise that we can rejoin class struggle and change all of the above. We need to possess a willingness to end a failing system, a willingness to start constructing a socialist society that meets the need and ambitions of its people.

In the meantime we must bring back real wealth creation. Such industrial wealth creation has collapsed over the last 30 years. Instead, we see more than £1400 billion worth of pensions assets, for example, being used to cover the government's own debt. (See articles on the pensions scam in *Workers*.) Enforcing a national policy for industrial development and setting up an Industrial Investment Bank to restore manufacturing are two examples of what can be done.

Our journal *Workers* – itself a good example of an upgraded and refreshed project – has thoroughly documented and argued for such industries as coal mining, nuclear energy, shipbuilding, vehicle manufacture and transport infrastructure. This must continue; we must highlight what we need to restore and what new and innovative works we need to undertake. The dominance of finance capital in our economy must be challenged.

There would also have to be state direction of funds made available at low rates of interest to rebuild and expand existing industries, create new ones and modernise infrastructure. And for future reference we have begun analysing the banking system of the Bolsheviks that was at the root of their transforming industrial revolution in the 1920s and 1930s while unemployment and hyperinflation ravaged the rest of the world.

There are some hopeful moves coming from unions and industry – for example, the "Made in Britain" strategy for manufacturing from the Unite union and the push for the revival of British shipbuilding led by the north west of England-based "Keep Our Futures Afloat Campaign".

But it is an uphill struggle as control of industries and infrastructure is lost to foreign interests. The long run-down then sell-off of our essential steel industry is a well-documented case – with Tata Steel of India taking control. The Chemical Industries Association seems proud of the fact that 70 per cent of its members are “overseas headquartered”. Other examples are Deutsche Bahn and the French SNCF taking over in rail, the London to Scotland route having the sleeper coaches manufactured in Spain, and the SNP selling off ScotRail to the Dutch government’s Abellio. The continued privatisation of Scotland’s railways has been bulldozed through with the SNP colluding with the Tories to deny the opportunity for this franchise to be brought back into public ownership.

The traditional textile industry all but perished in recent decades but a small glimmer of light has come from an unexpected corner. A successful revival of tweed manufacture with a distinctly British perspective has established itself through Harris Tweed in the Outer Hebrides. Meanwhile, out at sea the EU’s Common Fisheries Policy wreaks havoc with our fishing industry; there is enforced discard of vast amounts of fish; there’s the giveaway of fishing rights in our territorial waters – and it costs us more than £2.8 billion every year.

We are seeing a deliberate attack on our young people, central to capitalism’s attack on our class as a whole. The generation born in the 1940s and 1950s are seeing their children and grandchildren facing much worse living standards, in terms of pensions, privatisation of the NHS and dismemberment of education provision, housing, skills, jobs, pay and conditions of work. The ruling class attacks working class unity by setting generations against each other, wanting us to blame anything other than capitalism.

Let there be light

Before the lights go out due to refusal to plan and to ill-considered politically expedient “green” policies, we must establish a fully independent energy policy. The EU “free” market in energy has left us with virtually no control over generation and supply. It is urgent to restore British ownership of the nuclear industry with most of its facilities close to the end of their working lives – its future is currently lying in the hands of France, Austria, China and the EU. The dead hand of Thatcher is felt as the last deep coal mine closes. With new research and development of carbon capture and clean coal technology it is time to remember the 500 years’ worth of reserves we have. The NUM research and campaigning was featured in *Workers*.

We need a long-term plan for the prospecting and use of our oil and gas reserves too – with the latest science brought to bear on making hydraulic fracturing work safely. Stop the EU dictating how we plan our energy industries for the future.

The same problems afflict our national science in terms of research, application and understanding. Britain’s achievements in scientific discovery are being put in jeopardy by parasitic capitalism, the drain of talent overseas and the rise of superstition and false science. Again the EU is a malign influence, incorporating universities and research institutes into being its tame clients.

We should also be proud of our defence industries. Aerospace and naval industries are cutting-edge. The armed forces and defence industries should serve the people and we must curtail the nineteenth-century quest for overseas adventures. A tremendous example of Britain-wide opinion at work was the blocking in 2013 of armed intervention against Syria, a policy now shamefully overthrown. Leaving the EU and NATO would ensure the independence of our armed forces. However, it is intolerable that a US finger is on

the trigger of our so-called “independent” nuclear forces. Free of NATO and the EU we can reach a considered verdict on these weapons.

No “faith” in schools

At our last Congress in 2012 we noted that “the wilful fragmentation wrought by the chopping up of schools into academies and “free schools” run by private and sectarian interests places the education of coming generations in great jeopardy”. This disintegration of a national, planned, local authority-administered collective education system continues apace.

Seeds of destruction were sown by Labour’s Blair and his “faith schools” project. This has allowed the proliferation of centres of ideologies and superstition that are anathema to British workers; anti-scientific and anti-secular attitudes are allowed to flourish. It is right that the teaching unions focus on wages – but upping the struggle against such decline is essential and they are the only ones who can take the lead.

In university and college education a generation of indebtedness has hit students, affecting ability to study properly and forcing many to seek poorly paid jobs to supplement income. Also iniquitous is the practice of Scottish universities charging students from other parts of Britain top rates while subsidising local students. Nothing is more important than nurturing and educating our future generations to the highest standards. What prevents us achieving this is fracturing and privatisation to be enforced by the EU and TTIP. Leave them behind, assert our independence of mind, and fight the coming cuts and decline.

Conclusion

To equip us to cope with the problems and tasks outlined we continue to analyse and understand what is happening and why. We retain our focus on where we work and discuss with our fellow workers. We encourage the class itself to act and not allow trade unions to be manipulated by isolated “activists”. Industry and workplaces are where the significant struggles will take place not in the cesspit of corrupt, chattering and squabbling parliamentarians. Parliament’s handing over of our country’s sovereignty to the EU and the concentration of power, in practice and via changes in law such as the Trade Union Bill (Act), embody creeping fascism.

There can be no advance without Marxism, because Marx showed that only the eventual victory of the exploited class, the working class, represents a real future. Capitalism means only destruction and war. Here in Britain, we need our own unique vision of a working class future in order to fight and win in the present.

Unity and organisation have to be the watchwords of this period. Guerrilla struggle is the key to our class’s survival. We must understand that no battle, combat or skirmish is to be fought unless it can be won. Hit and run, but no suicidal positional warfare which the capitalists will seek in an attempt to destroy us.

This Party will remain embedded in the working class and our numbers and resources will grow from the class struggle and forging correct ideas. We welcome our fellow workers to study the problems and tasks with us. This Party with such historic ambitions for the future of our country must continually reinvigorate itself.

In its current revitalisation, a great start has been made – with a fresh *Workers* journal in print and online.

We look forward confidently to our 50th anniversary in 2018.