

WORKERS

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Book Reviews

Historic Notes

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WORKERS



Britain shakes the world

HISTORY HAS been made. Forty-one years after the disastrous decision to remain in what was then the European Economic Community, the people of Britain have reasserted this country's independence.

The question on the ballot paper was whether to remain or leave, but actually Britain hasn't gone anywhere. It is the European Union that is being expelled from Britain, recognised for the occupying force that it always was.

That decision was taken despite the unanimous instruction of the establishment. Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, the SNP, Plaid Cymru, the Greens – they all told us what was good for us.

Add to that the august institutions of imperialism, from the World Bank and the IMF to the US President, backed up by the chief executives of the monopolies that are draining the world of its assets.

The rulers of continents, the masters of war and exploitation, thought they had told us enough. They thought they had issued sufficient threats and bullying. They were wrong.

It wasn't just because people didn't believe a word they said, it was because across the country people know what is going on in their own lives.

Workers see and know the decline, the neglect, the rigged labour market, the growth of agencies that recruit exclusively (and legally) abroad.

We said in our pamphlet "Out of the EU" that if you cannot control the supply of labour, you cannot hope to control the price. Faced with opposition to

the "free" movement of labour, the establishment could only resort to ridiculous accusations of racism.

But credit where it is due: Jeremy Corbyn was the only leading Remain campaigner to tell the truth about the movement of labour: "It's intrinsic to the European Union that there has to be free movement of people." No wonder many in his own party want to ditch him – he gave the game away.

After the polling booths closed, there were reports on the television of large turnouts from council estates. That wasn't in the pollsters' scripts. A number of assumptions had been made, all coming down to the general approach that workers were less likely to be bothered to vote. Well, all kinds of assumptions were wrong.

The principal incorrect assumption was that normal rules of politics would apply. In fact, the referendum was nothing like normal politics.

In normal bourgeois politics, voters get presented with parliamentary parties whose leaders agree that the EU is a thoroughly good thing, who tell us that the free movement of labour is part of the modern world. But voters had contempt for politicians in both camps.

The referendum was different. There was a simple question, and it got a simple answer – one that has rocked the capitalist world and plunged the plans of the plutocrats into disarray.

The working class has asserted its power, and shaken the world. ■



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University pay fight continues



Andrew Wlard/www.andrew-wlard.com

ACADEMIC STAFF in higher education are in dispute with university employers over their pay, which has fallen 14.5 per cent in real terms since 2009. This is the most challenging time of year for action in the sector as in most subjects the formal teaching year has ended. Thus the question was – what tactics to adopt after the well supported two-day strike in May?

Their union, the UCU, has signalled it is in this dispute for the long haul. Plans are in place to start a marking ban in the autumn to coincide with marking of dissertations on Masters programmes which are submitted at the end of the summer period. In the meantime all branches are striking for one day in June or July, each choosing a date that makes maximum impact locally. Meanwhile what began as a small “additional tactic” of academics resigning as external examiners has continued to build – again the impact of this will be felt at the start of the autumn term. Many external examinations expire at the end of an academic year, and it is now vital to ensure that no one applies to fill those vacancies.

Union members at many universities such as Warwick and Liverpool have already taken action that has hit student Open Days, while other institutions have coincided their strike day with graduation events. At Middlesex University in London the local strike day coincides with the University Teaching and Learning conference, so staff are holding a “Teach Out” on the picket line with speakers explaining the government’s attack on Higher Education and the student union speaking about the NUS campaign against the White Paper. ■

• For more on this dispute, see cpbml.org.uk/ucu_action_spreads

TRIBUNALS

Government condemned

SINCE THE government’s reforms of employment tribunal legislation curbing employment rights in 2013, the trade unions have challenged them through a series of judicial reviews. These reviews have either been dismissed or parked due to lack of evidence or being too early to comment.

The government’s own review of court and tribunal fees was concluded in 2015 but publication has been delayed, deliberately slowed up.

Now the House of Commons Justice Committee has published its own report on court and tribunal fees – and it is scathing in its analysis of the government’s position.

The report finds that the TUC and Unison presented accurate evidence showing how the introduction of fees has cut the number of cases by around 70 per cent. It says the government’s argument that cases have declined because of the ACAS early conciliation service is “even on the most favourable construction, superficial”.

Fees “have had a significant adverse impact on access to justice for meritorious claims”, according to the report, and the level of fees should be “substantially reduced”. The fees system has also discriminated against pregnant women, as employment tribunals arising from pregnancy have dropped by 40 per cent.

Evidence taken from senior judiciary figures commenting on the Ministry of Justice research into the impact of fees described them as “lamentable” (Master of the Rolls); “insignificant” (Chair of the Bar Council); and “poor” (President of the Law Society). ■

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



ON THE WEB

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

NATO's Polish war games

In a blatant show of aggression on the Russian border, NATO and friends are staging in Poland what are described as the largest military exercises in decades.

'Trusted' Khan breaks key election pledge

A poll found London Mayor Sadiq Khan more trusted to make accurate claims about the EU than any other politician. That may change now he has broken his election pledge to freeze fares.

London cabbies make a stand against Uber

With protests continuing, CPBML News has been speaking to a black cab driver about the controversial app-based transportation network.

CalMac to remain in public ownership

Operation of the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services is to remain in public ownership for at least the next eight years. This victory follows an RMT campaign against a possible takeover by Serco.

Action spreads in universities

University academic staff in the University and College Union began their campaign of industrial action with a two-day strike on 25 and 26 May. More action will follow.

Plus: the e-newsletter

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Andrew W Ward/www.andrew-wward.com



11 May, High Court, London. Blacklisted workers celebrate winning compensation for loss of earnings over decades from construction firms subscribing to the Consulting Association's secret and illegal database.

VW scandal deepens

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION was told six years ago that VW was cheating on emissions tests, but it kept the knowledge secret, according to a report in the *Guardian* on 20 June which has seen papers revealed to an EU inquiry into the scandal.

In 2010 the Commission's own research scientists told its enterprise department that they had found a suspected "defeat device" used by a maker of diesel cars, which could detect when cars being driven in test conditions and adjust emissions to safer levels. Nothing was done. Last year US authorities caught VW using a similar device, which dropped outputs of poisonous nitrogen oxide pollution (NOx) during tests. Under normal road conditions diesel cars emitted far higher levels of NOx – up to 20 times as much, and way above what is considered safe.

The US revelations have forced the EU into holding a "dieselgate" enquiry, and the "not me guv" game has begun. Daniel Calleja Crespo, director of the EU's enterprise department at the time, stated it had been unaware of cheating actually going on, even though they knew that real-world emissions of NOx were much higher than those shown in tests. When in 2014 Crespo received a plea to investigate from the head of the EU's environmental department, he simply stated that such practices were illegal under European law. Again, nothing happened, member states were not informed, and cars continued to poison people's lungs. In another twist, Crespo is now director of the Commission's environmental department, the most powerful EU environment post after the commissioner.

In his book *The EU: an obituary**, John Gillingham writes: "The motor industry is joined at the hip with its purported regulator, the EU". He points out that a pact was made in 1998 between the Commission and the car industry to promote diesel in Europe. Diesel was praised as efficient on CO2 emissions, whereas the much more serious health hazard of NOx was ignored, in spite of expert warnings. So diesel became "environmentally friendly". Now the Commission will allow manufacturers to exceed legal limits by 110 per cent until 2020, and by 50 per cent thereafter. ■

* *The EU: an obituary*, by John Gillingham, paperback, 281 pages, Verso 2016, £12.99

INDUSTRY

Dagenham's end

THE SALE for housing of the 42-acre Ford stamping site in Dagenham for brings to an end the 90-year history of vehicle manufacturing. Production ceased in 2013 but hope remained that production could be revitalised.

The purchase of the site for £26 million by Europa Capital and St Congar Land spells the death knell for future manufacturing. Another expensive housing

estate, with 2650 units, will spring up.

The Ford Dagenham site has speculators licking their lips at the prospect of vast new housing within 20 minutes of central London; of course the housing will be unaffordable to local people. The demise of industry to be replaced with likely buy to let foreign investment epitomises the dilemma of how to rebuild industry.

Once the industrial base goes, once the actual land goes, then all that remains of Ford Dagenham and its vital role in trade union organisation and history is likely to be a tourist plaque on a street corner. ■

ENERGY

Grid turns to the NHS

BRITAIN'S ENERGY crisis has taken a bizarre turn. National Grid, the company responsible for balancing supply and demand, is recruiting cash-starved NHS hospitals to fire up their emergency generators and turn down their air conditioning systems when power supplies are scarce. National Grid is making more use of "demand-side response" schemes in which energy users are paid to temporarily reduce the amount of power they draw from the grid.

Several hospitals are already taking part and the Grid has held talks with the Crown Commercial Service, which manages NHS

energy procurement, to sign up more. It is believed that the NHS could cut its demand by up to 400 megawatts, enough electricity to power homes in a fairly large city.

As maintenance is often carried out at this time of year, maybe the National Grid is running close to the wire and is worried about power cuts.

Rather than building extra power plants to meet any peak that our country demands in terms of energy, ailing capitalism fiddles around at the edges hoping to forestall power rationing as energy supplies dwindle. Rather than doling out unproductive money into "demand-side responses", we should develop our energy potential, which is the only true palliative.

Rebuilding Britain requires expanding our energy supply with new power plants. ■

Teachers strike for education

ON TUESDAY 5 July, members of the National Union of Teachers will be walking out of schools across England and Wales to draw attention to a worsening crisis in the education service.

Teachers have long railed against their growing workload, whose bureaucratic nature, ironically, means less time in the classroom. Coupled with imposed pay restraint, and a delayed retirement age, they now face greater uncertainty than at any time in recent history, because of the proposals in the government's White Paper, with its enforced academisation, sidelining of parent governors and dilution of teacher training qualifications.

But the immediate crisis facing schools today is the failure to recruit, or retain, enough teachers to meet the needs of a growing school population. Evidence submitted to the parliamentary education select committee has identified a "woeful" lack of recruits in key secondary school subjects.

There is an 85 per cent shortfall in recruits to social science and business studies courses. Design and Technology courses are a third below what is required, and IT is 10 per cent short. Unsurprisingly, 40 per cent of all vacancies are in London and the South East, where the gap between wages and prices, particularly house prices, is most stark.

To add fuel to the fire, Osborne's March budget added an effective 5 per cent surcharge on the cost of teachers through additional national insurance and pension payments, whilst at the same time freezing the money that schools receive per pupil.

Of course the NUT cannot think for a moment that the government will immediately roll over at the news of the annual teacher walkout (over 90 per cent voted in favour of striking but on a 25 per cent return). A general walkout is in danger of becoming as traditional as the school outing and the sports day at this time of year. Teachers will need to become more tactically astute and transform days of isolated protest into a programme of flexible activity where parents and education workers speak with one voice. ■

PENSIONS

Progress at Rolls-Royce

IN THE MIDST of the growing number of major employers in Britain – such as John Lewis – closing their once-traditional final salary pension schemes in the last year or so, the major aero engine and power generation company Rolls-Royce bucks the trend and has taken the brave decision to support its British workforce and maintain its final salary pension scheme.

Management of the scheme has been quite prudent, according to local union

officials. During the major re-structuring of the company's operations the pension scheme was reconfigured, resulting in the potential for the scheme to remain in place for at least the next five years.

Unite members are due to ballot on the latest proposals to re-structure certain sections of the scheme.

While the company used a voluntary severance scheme to lose a significant quantity of experienced engineers during previous re-structuring in 2015, it also needs to retain a skilled workforce in Britain. Union officials suspect this might be the reason for the pension offer. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

JULY

Saturday 9 July

Durham Miners' Gala

For details, see www.durhamminers.org/gala

Friday 15 July to Sunday 17 July

Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival, Tolpuddle, Dorset

The annual festival commemorating the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Music, speeches. One highlight this year should be the appearance of one or more members of the Miami Five. For more detail, see www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 4 September, 11 am to 5 pm

Burston School Strike Festival, Burston, Near Diss, Norfolk

Annual rally to celebrate the longest strike in history. For details, see burstonstrikeschool.wordpress.com

Thursday 15 September, 7.30pm

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

"After the Vote: What Next?"

CPBML Public Meeting

We've given the EU its marching orders. Now we need to take the debate on the future of Britain that flared up during the referendum and turn it into a strategy for the working class. All welcome.



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As the year-on-year call for more resources to train engineers, the pressure is building for more consolidated action and a re

Engineering training: back



Rolls-Royce fitter checks instrumentation on a Trent 900 engine.

ENGINEERING AND manufacturing even in their current state are important to Britain and are likely to become more so as we import less and export more following the referendum decision. Producing useful items creates value for our nation and items we can trade with the rest of the world.

There has been a steady movement of employment from the heavy industries of coal, steel, ship building and machine tools to “high technology” in the past 50 years. What does this mean in reality for workers?

On countless occasions we have seen the destruction of companies in Britain while investment is made by the very same companies in other countries of the world – their seemingly relentless deployment of low cost countries (LCC) strategies. The result is more redundancies and loss of skills and experience from Britain’s engineering workforce. Trade unions continue in their failure to

attract new members from the under-30s age group within the engineering sector, especially in these smaller companies.

At the time when many growing economies were setting up the capability to train engineers, Britain almost completely abandoned ours, with an all-time low during the 1990s. This has resulted in a skills shortage despite some attempts to start apprenticeship schemes. Britain now cannot train for the future because much of the once established infrastructure to fulfil training requirements has gone. Colleges closed engineering departments that once trained craft and technician apprentices. Engineers were to come from universities!

This strategy was flawed. You need engineers to “turn wheels” – to operate machinery, collect data and analyse it. Graduates are not trained for these jobs. Industry shed the labour that could do this

work and now there is a skill shortage at the craft and technician level. Hence the call in the last twenty years for more apprentices. It has been left to the larger companies to keep some training going.

We need a national strategy

To meet the numbers of engineers needed now another approach – dare we call it a “national strategy” – is necessary. There has been pressure for a more cohesive, properly

‘Unions continue in their failure to attract new members from the under-30s.’

...ers for Britain's future manufacturing industry increases, return to previous approaches to training...

Back to the future

funded programme for many years. But the various new government programmes to encourage the 'apprenticeship route' have been heavily criticised.

Dr Martin Allen and Professor Patrick Ainley from the University of Greenwich in their book *Another Great Training Robbery* found that "Apprenticeships are failing to help young people find work and improve their skills" and that "rather than helping to boost young people's economic prospects, the majority of apprenticeships are low skilled and dead end".

According to Allen and Ainley too many people are taking an apprenticeship at intermediate level (equivalent to GCSEs). Figures from the Skills Funding Agency showed that in the first half of the 2013-14 financial years 70 per cent of those on the programme were at intermediate level. They note that with 80 per cent of the population already qualified at this level, including most school leavers, it's questionable whether apprenticeships are helping to upskill the workforce and make the economy more competitive. Of the 891,600 apprentices in 2012-13, just 12,900 were training at the higher level.

There are examples of companies investing in the training of apprentices. One such company is Rolls-Royce. Its scheme has been described by Ofsted as "outstanding". But this is to meet its own needs, and the costs are offset by the training facility being also used to train other parts of the workforce and the company's customers in maintenance techniques.

Workers who are dumped out of large engineering companies rarely get re-trained in the new engineering companies. New younger workers get taken on at lower wage levels and lower pension commitment in smaller engineering companies that offer sub-contract services to the larger companies (a bit like outsourcing or agency working in the health service sector).

Ability to grow

An annual report by the government organisation EngineeringUK was published recently, analysing the engineering industry's capacity and capability for growth. For every new job in engineering, two more are created outside of the sector and every £1 Gross Value Added (GVA) generated in engi-

neering generates £1.45 elsewhere.

But the gap between supply and demand for people with engineering skills is still big enough to trigger widespread concern for the long term. The report shows that this resilient sector also has a positive impact on other areas of the economy.

Over 27 per cent of Britain's total GDP is generated by engineering, amounting to £445.6 billion. Turnover for engineering rose by 3.4 per cent to £1.21 trillion in the year to March 2014, while employment has grown to over 5.5 million and the industry now supports 14.5 million jobs overall.

Paul Jackson, Chief Executive of EngineeringUK, says: "Engineering is a growth industry that has the potential to continue to drive productivity in the UK. This is a great opportunity, tempered only by concern about the need to train many more engineers, if we are not to be left behind by countries like South Korea and Germany."

Nick Boles MP, Minister of State for Skills, says: "These shortages are compounded by insufficient numbers of young people, especially girls, choosing a career in engineering. I am convinced we will only overcome these challenges if all those with an interest in UK engineering commit to greater collaboration and partnership."

Chairman of Crossrail Terry Morgan says: "In the past ten years, engineering-

related apprenticeships have generated £12 billion for the UK economy. Having started my career as an apprentice and seen first-hand what apprenticeships can deliver, I'm delighted that their very significant contribution has been recognised. If we are to double the number of apprentices in engineering, more needs to be done to highlight the opportunities apprenticeships can offer young people."

Through the Tomorrow's Engineers programme and organisations such as STEM Net (the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network), the engineering community is working to inspire the next generation by helping young people from all backgrounds to understand the variety, excitement and opportunities presented by a career in engineering.

On behalf of the engineering community EngineeringUK is calling for collaborative action across government, engineering businesses, the education sector and the wider engineering community to realise these recommendations. Note they do not call on trade unions for advice!

It is calling for: a doubling of the number of young people studying GCSE physics as part of triple sciences; a two-fold increase in the number of Advanced Apprenticeship

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Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's series of London public meetings in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1R 4RL, continues on 15 September with the title "After 'the Vote: What Next?'. Other meetings are held around Britain. Meeting details will be published on What's On, page 5, and on www.cpbml.org.uk/events.

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

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

Protect our defence industry!

ONE OF THE reasons for the need for more apprentices is Britain's need to maintain its defence capability. For obvious reasons, safety is critical in the maintenance of defence facilities, and that means well trained engineers.

The development and maintenance of Britain's Trident nuclear weapon system is a huge operation. The system comprises three elements: Vanguard-class submarines, Trident missiles and nuclear warheads.

Although the SNP constantly complains about the siting of nuclear weapons in Scotland, the nuclear deterrent is British and highly skilled work involved in it is spread across Britain, mostly in England.

Sites include Aldermaston, where Trident warheads are designed, manufactured and maintained; Devonport, where submarines have their nuclear reactors

refuelled and refurbished; Rosyth, where nuclear subs are decommissioned; Barrow, Raynesway (Derby), Sellafield, Faslane, Coulport and the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield.

At the last Scottish Trades Union Congress conference GMB Scotland told the STUC that the labour movement was in no position to play "fast and loose" with the jobs of defence sector workers at Faslane, Coulport and Rosyth.

The GMB union moved Motion 113 in support of the Trident successor programme which will provide for thousands of highly skilled manufacturing and maintenance jobs across the Scottish economy – a point that needs to be made in the resistance to the call for another referendum on Scottish separation. Disgracefully, the GMB's call for support for some of Britain's most highly skilled workers fell. ■

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achievements; a doubling of the number of engineering and technology and other related graduates who are known to enter engineering occupations; provision of careers inspiration for all 11-14 year olds; and support for teachers and careers advisors delivering careers information.

What should be done?

Most of the demands stated in the EngineeringUK document are exactly right and should be acted upon. But the premise is still on the government's terms of low investment and not wanting to exert control over multinationals. There is a national plan but it only relies on large companies driving their own need, not on a national need.

Recent analysis from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) supports the case for the creation of a rebalanced economy built on a growing engineering base. The current apprenticeship schemes are not capable of meeting the needs of a growing engineering base.

Some sectors where more apprentices

are needed are aerospace, nuclear, rail, and car manufacture, to name but a few. The latest government initiative, "Get In Go Far", claims apprenticeships are available in 1,500 occupations across 170 industries of all sizes with durations varying between 12 months and five years. These apprenticeships need to equip the young workers with all the skills necessary in the increasingly complicated work environment.

Do we need a return to the Engineering Industry Training Board (EITB) of the past?

The government is framing the future on an increase in productivity. Its plan for raising productivity focuses on encouraging long-term investment in boosting infrastructure, skills and knowledge and in promoting a dynamic economy that encourages innovation and helps resources flow to their most

'Nothing will change until we make it change.'

productive use. Could this mean poorer terms and conditions and lower wages for the engineers of the future?

Maybe that's why the industry is making no effort to retrain engineers thrown out of work in the heavy engineering sector. These experienced and often highly trained workers are more likely to be unionised. With the lack of capacity to train engineers and time lag to train the engineers of the future in Britain there may be an increase in demand for immigrants to fill positions similar to the situation in the health sector.

We need to grow our own engineers here. The Leave vote must be used to make this happen.

Trade unions need to be involved in the training of engineers for Britain's future manufacturing industry. The TUC is currently developing policy on apprenticeships (see "Apprenticeships are Union Business" on the TUC website) and supporting unions' work on apprenticeships across the country.

But as Allen and Ainley point out, apprenticeships in themselves don't boost the economy: "The idea that simply creating more apprenticeships will rebuild the economy is highly questionable...Without policies for creating real, secure employment opportunities, it isn't clear if employers will really want to spend time and money training more apprentices, especially when there continue to be huge numbers of graduates to choose from – surveys show up to a third of university leavers end up in jobs for which they are overqualified."

Is the call from the TUC for real, secure employment opportunities loud and clear?

With construction employers paying a statutory levy to the Construction Industry Training Board, it has been subject to industry criticism over its funding of training. In June 2016, for example, the Board was criticised for not supporting an industry charity, Building Lives, while providing grants to organisations to train sales and marketing staff!

In the immediate aftermath of the referendum not much will change in engineering either way – except the fluctuating share prices – until we make it change. Britain will need its solid engineering base and its defence industry. We need strong industry via quality training in a strong Britain. ■

During the referendum campaign some tried to blunt the Leave attack by claiming TTIP is dead and buried...

TTIP – it's still there



Anandoart (CC-BY-SA 2.0)

Demonstration in Berlin against the EU's free trade agreements.

THE REFERENDUM campaign saw the development of a malicious myth. That myth sought to give the impression that TTIP – the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership – is on its last legs. Or at least that if the treaty as a whole is not doomed, then the contentious parts of it are.

In a desperate attempt to sway voters, Green politicians argued that staying in the EU is the best way to defeat TTIP. “The fight against TTIP is working,” said Green MEP Jean Lambert in a message during the campaign designed to talk not about TTIP but to argue for Remain.

A message sent to people who had emailed her as an MEP calling on her to oppose the EU/US trade agreement

‘Despite all the opposition, the negotiations go on.’

repeated a whole series of dubious assertions, including saying that “even if the UK does leave the EU, that doesn’t mean the end of TTIP”.

The TUC stepped in too. “It seems the growing coalition of EU opponents is starting to have a real impact on this bad deal,” it said in a briefing issued during the referendum campaign. The pressure is paying off, it said. “While David Cameron and the TTIP’s other main backers had hoped to push a hyper neoliberal version of the deal through by now, trade unions and civil society pressure uniting across Europe has put paid to that.”

Put paid to it? It’s an extraordinary statement, backed up by nothing but wishful thinking and a desire to negate the impact of TTIP in the referendum campaign.

And Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn went out of his way to say that if he were leading a government he would veto TTIP. Even if he were elected before TTIP is enacted (and there are a lot of ifs involved in that), the EU is trying to ensure that there will be no

national vetoes (see Box 1).

The truth is that despite all the opposition, the negotiations are proceeding. While the referendum campaign was in full swing, the US and the EU blithely carried on with their TTIP plans. The next negotiating round – each round takes about a week – is set to take place in early July in Brussels.

The exact date is – like most of the negotiations – a secret. After all, no one taking part wants the uncomfortable spectacle of citizens protesting outside the talks.

And with all the worries about the UK referendum, and a rising tide of criticism, there have even been calls to accelerate the TTIP talks.

Under pressure

Pressure from the US is intense. According to a report in the Financial Times on 31 May, Michael Froman, US President Barack Obama’s trade tsar, warned that there was no “Plan B” if talks were not concluded this

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year. “We either work together to help set the rules of the world or we leave that role to others.”

That’s why European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called on the EU’s member states to reaffirm their commitment to TTIP at the summit they conveniently scheduled for the week after the referendum.

There’s been no mention of this by the Greens, nor any mention by the TUC of the revelation by WikiLeaks on 25 May that the parallel talks on a Trade in Services Agreement – known as TiSA – now include a previously secret annex to the section on

state-owned enterprises (SOEs) which it says “imposes unprecedented restrictions on SOEs and will force majority owned SOEs to operate like private sector businesses...This corporatisation of public services – to nearly the same extent as demanded by the recently signed TPP – is a next step to privatisation of SOEs.”

It concludes, “The TiSA provisions in their current form will establish a wide range of new grounds for domestic regulations to be challenged by corporations – even those without a local presence in that country.”

There’s a reason why the backers of free trade have their eye on health services: healthcare accounts for more money than any other sector of activity – about \$8 trillion

(thousand billion) of global spending each year, and it is set to grow at 6 per cent a year. To put that into context, the combined revenues of the world’s automobile industries, including commercial vehicles, is around a quarter of this, some \$2 trillion.

‘Unique’ capital destination

No wonder asset management group Carlyle said in a report in 2015 that, “Needless to say, such rapid growth makes the health care sector a unique destination for capital in the current economic environment.”

A big chunk of the money spent on healthcare is in pharmaceuticals. So it’s no surprise that pharma companies spend more on EU lobbying than any other industry – and hugely more than organisations such as trade unions and non-profit bodies.

A report by Corporate Europe in October last year revealed that the industry spends nearly €40 million a year lobbying Brussels, 15 times the expenditure of groups working on public health or access to medicines. What are they trying to get out of it? Market access.

In theory, the EU treaties should mean that healthcare is a “national competence”, and that accordingly the EU cannot dictate anything. In practice, it’s not so clear.

The European Union has been assiduously eating away at aspects of healthcare. It has assumed competence for cross-border healthcare, so it has a great deal to say about whether the health services of one country have to pay for treatments carried out in other countries.

And in 2001 it assumed responsibility for the testing and licensing of new drugs and medical devices, with disastrous consequences. Its Clinical Trials Directive led to a drop of around 50 per cent in the number of clinical trials carried out in Britain, mainly through the imposition of bureaucratic rules that academics had neither the time nor the money to meet (companies, with their dedicated compliance staff, were less troubled).

In a policy statement in 2010, Cancer Research UK talked about the difficulties placed in the path of multinational clinical trials, of a “greater administrative burden (and increased costs and unnecessary delays)” as well as “impractical” requirements. It added, “We have no evidence that patient

Is there really a national veto on trade deals?

REPORTS FROM Germany suggest that the European Commission is trying to find a way to block any national veto by the UK or any other member state of its free trade agreements – even as Jeremy Corbyn was promising he would veto it in government.

The respected daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on 10 June that the European Commission is gearing up for an argument with member states over ratification of the EU’s free trade deal with Canada, known as CETA.

Most controversially, the CETA agreement contains a version of the Investor State Dispute Settlement clause that TTIP is also planned to include.

In a move with clear implications for TTIP – and the trade in services deal TiSA – the Commission is trying to establish that the CETA deal is wholly within the EU’s “competence”. If that happens, national parliaments cannot have a veto. Instead, the agreement would only be subject to a qualified majority vote in the European Council, which means that no individual country could veto it.

And here’s the killer: if the Commission proposes formally that the trade agreement should be treated as wholly within its

“competence”, it would take a majority vote of the European Council to overturn it.

And the Commission has taken steps to grab more powers on these broad trade agreements. It has already made a move in relation to the little-publicised EU–Singapore free trade agreement. At the end of October 2014 it lodged a formal request for a ruling from the European Court of Justice on whether it had the competence to sign the deal with Singapore and conclude it “alone”. The Court has yet to rule on the question, which stems from differences of interpretation over the extent of the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009.

Whatever applies to the Singapore deal will apply to CETA, TTIP and TiSA.

Implementation of the deal with Singapore is now on hold pending the Court’s ruling, even though the text has been agreed and signed. Negotiations on CETA were concluded in August 2014, at which point it was sent to lawyers for Canada and the EU to produce a definitive and watertight text. ■

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



The assault on developing countries

AFRICAN TRADE unionists are calling on their countries to reject the European Commission's latest attempt to impose free trade deals on the continent. Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, general secretary of the African regional organisation of the International Confederation of Trade Unions, said that the EU's proposed Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) would allow European big business to continue to exploit the continent.

Adu-Amankwah's call highlights the inherent problem with free trade deals generally – namely, that they prevent countries from developing their own resources.

In a statement issued in Lomé, Senegal, on 8 June the African union leader said that the colonial economic structure set up to export raw materials and import

manufactures remained – and he called on Africa to reject “the latest scramble” by European powers.

Trade Unionists Against the EU spokesman Brian Denny said that the continuing imperialist behaviour and attitude towards the third world exposed the moral bankruptcy of the EU.

Denny said, “The Common Agricultural Policy, which eats up half the EU budget, has destroyed Africa's ability to feed itself by dumping heavily-subsidised food onto some of the most fragile economies in the world.”

Kwasi Adu-Amankwah exposed the reality behind these deals, saying: “These EPAs are designed to open up the markets of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries for EU exports, exposing third world pro-

ducers to overwhelming competition from the world's most powerful and rapacious transnationals.

“Structural Adjustment foisted on Africa with the active involvement of the European Union has killed off the little industrial capabilities countries mastered immediately after independence.”

Adu-Amankwah warned that the terms of the agreements would only make it harder for Africa to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. He pointed out, “As the tariffs came down on African raw materials, they went up for manufactures. It is highly disingenuous to conceive of a free trade between the poorest continent on earth and the world's most powerful trading bloc as the solution.” ■

safety has increased since the introduction of the [Directive]...”

From 2001 to 2006, the proportion of the world's clinical trials conducted in Britain fell from 6 per cent to 2 per cent. The Directive has since been superseded by a Regulation in which the EU determines the law directly.

Another mechanism for interference in health policies is the European Semester, the strange name adopted by the EU for the process that requires member states, particularly in the Eurozone, to gain approval for their national budgets (for a fuller explanation, see cpbml.org.uk/troika).

‘The EU has been eating away at aspects of healthcare.’

As a result, the Commission can seek to interfere in just about anything. “The health system is no longer viewed in exclusively national terms,” said Paola Testori Coggi, Health and Consumers Director General at the Commission, whose tentacles now reach into every health ministry in Europe.

Against this background, the statements by trade union Unison that the NHS would be safer inside the EU ring rather hollow.

‘Free’ trade

Yet with all the discussion of TTIP's affect on the NHS – not to mention its hotly disputed Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanism – there has been curiously little attention on the issue at the heart of it: free trade.

Trading freely is one thing. It's when one country sells goods to another country. Free trade agreements are quite another. In these, countries “agree” that there will be little if any restrictions on how goods or services may be sold or companies set up.

Specifically, the agreements seek to ban any protection for national industries, opening them up to the cheapest competition the world can provide. The European Union has been persistently trying to force these free trade agreements – under the name of “partnerships” – on developing countries, in particular in Africa (see Box above).

With the referendum over, the task of rebuilding Britain is urgent. How can we rebuild our country if we cannot use public money and regulations to protect established industries under threat from foreign dumping, or nurture new industries?

Or to put it another way, how can multinational corporations raid the whole world without free trade agreements to clear the path for them?

The consequences had we voted to stay in the EU are clear: TTIP, TiSA, the domination of global corporations, and the subordination of nations. Brexit must mean having no part of these agreements. ■



BRITAIN IN THE WORLD

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

It is 38 years since our Party published *Britain in the World 1977*. We asserted, as Marxist-Leninists, that we live in one world divided by class, and not a world divided into first, second and third worlds. That is still true today but the balance of class forces in the world has changed significantly.

The threat of war is real. The Soviet Union has gone, as have the socialist economies of Eastern Europe. Today's Russia is not the Soviet Union and China is now the biggest capitalist economy in the world. Capitalism even seeks to destroy the concept of the sovereign nation state it originally championed, through agency of the EU and of Free Trade Agreements. Cuba survives as a nation in which the working class holds state power.

Our world is in flames, not just in the Middle East, but also in Africa, Asia, Europe and potentially, the Pacific. How do workers begin to comprehend these new dynamics and contradictions that are at work?

Who is for war?

We are constantly told that the existence of the EU has prevented war in Europe. This myth was destroyed by the fact that war broke out in Europe the minute the Soviet Union collapsed and continues to this day. It was the Soviet Union that kept the peace in Europe after World War 2, not the EU.

Today, the EU is inseparable from NATO as all applicants (perhaps supplicants is a better term) to the former must first join the latter. Together with the USA they are a force for war; the Soviet Union was a force for peace. Had the Soviet Union continued to exist, there would have been no invasion of Iraq or Afghanistan, no bombing of Libya and the chaos that followed, no ISIS and no war against Syria.

The Soviet victory over German fascism saved not only Europe, but the whole world, while Soviet ideology and military hardware assisted liberation struggles that brought an end to most of colonialism. The EU and NATO were to be capitalism's bulwark against the Marxism of the Soviet Union.

Because Russia refuses to bend the knee to US world domination, we see the USA placing the most sophisticated military hardware on the Russian border ready for a repeat of Hitler's Operation Barbarossa, and in breach of promises designed to prevent just that. The US military has drawn up a new strategy, which clearly identifies what it calls "revisionist Russia" as its enemy, along with Iran and North Korea. Putin is described as "Hitler" and Russia compared with Nazi Germany.

So who are the allies of the US/NATO/EU war machine? Its proposed Free Trade Agreements are being built on and are reinforcing its military alliances across Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf despots, Asia and the Pacific. Its objective is to create, by economic means or war, a US empire across the whole world. But

they are clumsy, lack tactical nous and are very dangerous for workers. They funded and encouraged Islamists from around the world to fight Marxism in Afghanistan, those same Islamists who have now turned their suicide bombers on their original creators.

Their disastrous invasion of Iraq had the opposite end game to that proclaimed, by putting Iranian-allied Shia militia in power to fight the ISIS monster that the invaders had created. The bombing of Libya resulted in anarchy, rival Islamist militias including ISIS and a deliberately created mobilisation of migrants heading for the EU (witness Merkel's call for over one million migrants in the summer of 2015). This is in line with the EU/NATO strategy of destroying national borders and nation states, while making a tidy profit for the war-mongering Turkish government and associated gangsters en route.

Their support for Jihadi fighters in Syria has all but destroyed a secular nation that was the cradle of human civilisation, and has also created a new breed of young terrorists from our own cities, trained by ISIS in Syria. Whole Muslim families from Britain go to live in the "Islamic caliphate" just as Zionist Jews from the USA migrate to Israel. And our government increases its military attacks on Iraq and Syria in the name of fighting ISIS, when the obvious way forward is to support those in the region leading the fight against it, Syria and Iran.

And now they look to start a war with a nuclear-armed Russia.

Who is for peace?

Where are those for peace or those who will fight and resist this new empire? There is an area of the world that has resisted. Led by the Marxism of Cuba, and by Venezuela and Argentina, Latin America and the Caribbean destroyed the US attempt to impose the Free Trade Area of the Americas on their continent. As that continent built new alternative structures, they paid a price with US-backed and funded coups and attempted coups in Venezuela, Honduras, Paraguay, Bolivia and Ecuador.

But now those nations have constructed the Community of Caribbean and Latin American States (CELAC), which has declared itself a Peace Zone and established some important principles at its second summit in Havana. They declared that their relations will be based on international law, self-determination and sovereign equality; that every state has the right to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system as an essential condition to secure peaceful coexistence between nations; that all differences between nations should be resolved peacefully, through dialogue and negotiation and other ways consistent with international law.

They also agreed on the obligation not to interfere, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any other state. It is worth noting that the USA and Canada plus the remaining colonial outposts on the continent were excluded from CELAC as their membership was seen as incompatible with these principles.

On the other hand, Communists can readily accept these principles and recognise that they have always been the principles that countries led by Marxists have adhered to. They are enshrined in the United Nations charter and perhaps represent the high watermark of the victory over fascism by the USSR. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was only a matter of time before these principles were first ignored and then dropped altogether.

They are also diametrically opposite to the principles of the British state in conducting its international relations. So when Argentina criticises Britain because it is drilling for oil around the Malvinas/Falklands without negotiating with Argentina, Britain responds by increasing its military presence on the islands. How foolish this must look to the other countries of that continent.

When the USA offered to improve relations with Cuba if it changed its political system, Raul Castro simply read these principles off to Obama at the Summit of the Americas. The USA was forced by its growing isolation from Latin America and the Caribbean to seek diplomatic relations with Cuba, but the blockade of the island continues.

What of the working class?

But what of our working class and its response to the threat of war now being ramped up against Russia, or against China in the Pacific Ocean? Two million of us marched through London against the Iraq invasion in 2003. It did not stop the Iraq war but it did stop Cameron from bombing Syria in 2013.

But where were the protests against the bombing of Libya? Did we think that as it didn't work for Iraq, there was no point? Or did we fall for their lies about the 'evil' Gaddafi?

Invented concepts like the inappropriately named Arab Spring and the EU anti-austerity movements in countries like Greece and Spain were doomed to failure because of the absence of Marxist thought from their inception. They were not based on the working class, they didn't challenge capitalism, and in the case of the anti-austerity campaigns, they didn't even challenge the EU or the euro.

During the eurozone debt crisis, we saw EU leaders show their teeth, their vicious anti-working class rhetoric, and their arrogance, telling Greece that no country is allowed to leave the eurozone, unless of course they're forcibly expelled from it by the EU.

We also saw the cowardice and dishonesty of the Greek electorate reflected in the so-called "radical" Tsipras, who pretended that Greece could escape the consequences of euro membership while staying in the euro. As a result Greece became effectively a German protectorate, opened up to bailiffs and asset-strippers.

The Greek working class had the opportunity to back the call of the Greek Communist Party to leave the eurozone and the EU, but it failed to do so. It could not shed its love of the euro and seemed to prefer enslavement to a return to the drachma, which would have returned sovereignty to the Greek nation. The absence of Marxism in the 'anti-austerity' movement led to another Greek tragedy.

The ideological decline, the retreat from Marxism amongst workers across the world, began in earnest around the late 1970s and early 1980s and followed a confluence of events perhaps more connected than has been credited. Deng Xiaoping came to power in China in 1978, Thatcher in 1979 and Reagan in 1981. War was being waged against what was perceived to be "Marxism" across Africa and Latin America. Thatcher, Reagan and Deng were to launch ideological

attacks on their own populations and on the USSR.

By 1991, Marxism was declared "dead" after the collapse and break-up of the Soviet Union. Things went downhill from there as every form of collectivism was destroyed or attacked through privatisation and fragmentation. The ideological decline in Britain is obvious to us, but not to our working class. Hence, our task remains that which we set ourselves when we were established as a Party, namely, to change the ideology of our class.

The ideological decline is not confined to Britain and has occurred across the world. Why did the Soviet working class stand by and allow collapse there? Why would Greek workers vote no to austerity but love the EU? Ideology abhors a vacuum, and the collapse of Marxism created the space for a pre-feudal religion from a tribal society based on slavery becoming what some term the strongest ideology in the world; how has that happened?

We the British working class must always remember that our task is not only to march against war but to destroy the very beast that is making the war. War is inherent to that beast, capitalism, and it is impossible to have capitalism without war. But without a Marxist understanding of our situation, capitalism will not be destroyed.

If a tiny bourgeois state like Greece can set alarm bells ringing throughout the EU by the possibility of its leaving only the eurozone, think what would happen if Britain, the world's 5th biggest economy, were to leave the EU. The war machine would be seriously weakened, maybe even fatally. If Britain were to march out of NATO and send US bases, military personnel and hardware home, bringing all British military abroad home, that would be devastating for the war machine. It would produce qualitative change for the EU, and would derail capitalism's plans for its world order.

Since 1945 Britain has followed the orders of the USA, but Cuba, a founder member of CELAC, has shown us how to stand up to the Empire, as they rightly call the US. But there will be no advance against the beast without an organised working class leading that fight, led by the ideas of Marxism. In short, there will be no advance anywhere in the world without Marxism.

We as a Party, and the workers who constitute Britain's majority must take hold of the opportunity of a referendum on the EU. Leaving the EU opens the way to rebuild sovereign nation states. We can use that referendum weapon to drive a stake through the heart of the EU/NATO war alliance. If we do not, war will follow.

And as Britain – England, Wales and Scotland – must reassert its sovereignty as a nation by leaving the EU, we must reiterate our Party's call for the British state to cease its rule in Ireland.

China and Russia may be potential counterbalances for peace in a war-threatened, and war-ravaged world. The extraordinary histories of China and the Soviet Union cannot be discounted, for something of their achievements must remain, with some there remembering what was achieved. But it is precisely the departure from Marxism in those trail-blazing countries that has made the threat of war more real. The creation of capitalism in those countries has threatened the peace of the world.

The British people's internationalist duty lies in Britain. We effect change in the world through changing Britain, and that cannot be done unless our Marxist-Leninist Party grows and is successful in changing the ideology of our working class. A Communist is a Marxist who doesn't get lost, and the world's workers need the clarity of Marxism to light the way now as never before.



The rail unions are fighting running battles across Britain to dispense with guards...

Guards sacrificed on the

RAIL UNION RMT is now engaged in a struggle for jobs and safety across Britain as strikes have taken place in Scotland and Southern England. The main issue has been the attempts by Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and Abellio Scotrail to dispense with their guards and run all trains with drivers only. And other rail companies look set to follow suit.

An increasingly bitter headline-grabbing dispute over GTR's Southern subsidiary's drive to get rid of all of its remaining guards has continued over many months. Commuters trying to get to work in London from Sussex, Surrey and Kent are spending hours travelling each day, and not just on strike days.

And the government is behind these disputes, having previously made clear its intention to abolish guards right across the British rail system.

Govia is jointly owned by Go-Ahead and French national railway SNCF. In September 2014, despite its much criticised stewardship of Southern, Southeastern and London Midland, Govia was awarded what is now Britain's biggest passenger rail franchise. This added the services previously run by First Capital Connect to those of Southern and Gatwick Express to form a new super franchise that encompassed services from Peterborough and Bedford through London to Brighton and Southampton.

No-risk contract

Significantly, unlike other franchises, this one was a "management contract", with the government taking the commercial risks rather than the private operator. Govia will be paid £8.9 billion over the seven years of the franchise and expects to make £200 million profit.

The RMT and drivers' union ASLEF held a protest on the first day that Govia took over, expressing their anger that the govern-

'GTR has tried to turn the public against guards and their union.'



Leadinglights/Stockphoto.com

Endangered species? Guard at Kendal station waiting for the all clear to safely dispatch a passenger train.

ment had awarded the franchise on the basis of extending driver-only operation, cutting station staffing and closing ticket offices. RMT General Secretary Mick Cash then stated: "Monday's protest marks the beginning of a rolling campaign opposing the new franchise's proposals for driver-only operation and the sacking, and reducing of the role of, train guards and conductors, station de-staffing and the closure of ticket offices."

GTR's takeover of many of London's commuter services was accompanied by a nose dive in reliability as cancellations rocketed. It didn't take long for Govia, backed by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin, to launch an all-out war on its staff. The company announced that it was to do away with guards on the trains and close over 80 of its ticket offices; the remaining ticket offices would have much reduced opening hours. Its confrontational approach to rail unions ASLEF, RMT and TSSA has been one of

"take it or leave it".

RMT guards have taken strike action on 26 April, 18 May, and most recently on 21 June. The company's brutal response has been to withdraw the guards' free travel facilities and threaten to sack them all. Widespread bullying has brought a massive increase in guards calling in sick, and a huge increase in train cancellations.

Blame

GTR has sought to exploit the high levels of guard sickness by trying to turn the public against guards and their union. They issued letters to passengers publicly blaming the high levels of cancellations (over 80 a day) on guards, implying that the guards were taking unofficial industrial action. And not only did they cancel trains for which guards weren't available, but then cynically started cancelling trains on an arbitrary basis even when crews were available.

over safety, with one rail company after the other looking at the altar of profit



Train to Windermere.

RMT blamed many cancellations on staff shortages caused by a failure by GTR to recruit enough workers to fill new rosters. It also pointed out that large numbers of cancellations had occurred on GTR Thameslink services that were already driver only operated (DOO) and required no guards!

The union also angrily accused GTR of putting their staff and its members at risk of assault. The union pointed out that it only takes one person to fall for GTR's spin and to take matters into their own hands, and a major incident could follow.

The tactic has backfired spectacularly, with massive levels of support from commuters for the guards, and demonstrations have taken place calling for Govia to be stripped of the franchise. Unison delegates at their conference in Brighton showed solidarity with RMT by joining the picket lines, led by Unison General Secretary Dave Prentis.

RMT issued a statement that said: "Luckily, the vast majority of passengers don't believe a word that this company says. They know full well what this failing franchise is all about as they seek to milk their customers for every penny that they can."

This view has even been vociferously supported by a number of Tory MPs. The response of rail minister Claire Perry was to feign empathy with the passengers, describing meetings with GTR as "frustrating".

The Campaign for Better Transport has written to Perry urging her to take action over what the organisation called "the failing Southern Rail franchise".

"The ongoing problems with Govia... need to be urgently addressed. Passengers have now endured many months of cancellations and delays, so it is an outrage that the Government recently amended their franchise agreement to allow even more cancellations."

Collusion

However, the RMT has exposed the extent to which the government and the Department for Transport has been orchestrating the response to its action.

The union revealed a leaked document that showed conclusively that GTR had been seeking Department for Transport guidance and approval for alternative plans for train cancellations.

The leaked document raises questions as to how the government can impartially impose penalties for poor performance when it is providing authorisation on the day to day running of rail services, and comes days after it was revealed that GTR have only been fined £2 million by the government for poor performance since the start of the franchise.

RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said, "The government are up to their necks in the chaos on Southern and not only are they turning a blind eye to the abysmal service being offered to the public, this leaked correspondence shows that they are directly orchestrating it. That can only be because they have a wider agenda to force confrontation and chaos on these routes as part of some scam to blame the staff, bulldoze through cuts to jobs and safety and break the unions. Passengers are caught in the

"The government are up to their necks in the chaos."

middle of this scandal and there needs to be a full parliamentary inquiry."

Recognising the crucial safety role of the guard and the coming onslaught from government, ASLEF recently agreed to put an end to its previous agnosticism about driver-only operation (DOO). It signed an agreement with RMT to oppose any extension of DOO, and this was soon put to the test when new longer trains were put into service on the Gatwick Express route, part of the GTR franchise. A London Victoria driver on the first day of operation of the new trains hit the headlines after refusing to let any passengers board the train without a guard, and ended up making an empty trip to Gatwick and back!

ASLEF then balloted their members for industrial action over the issue. GTR's response was to drag the judiciary into the fray; the High Court granted GTR an injunction preventing ASLEF from taking industrial action until a full trial on 27 June.

In all 95.8 per cent of ASLEF members voted to take part in industrial action short of a strike and 84.4 per cent to take strike action, on a turnout of just over 82 per cent. That didn't impress the judge, who banned ASLEF from taking action after bosses alleged that ASLEF had wrongly balloted drivers already driving trains without guards, and had unlawfully already induced its members to take 'unlawful' industrial action.

Significantly in the wake of the Trade Union Act, the judge said that if GTR was successful at any trial a damages award would not be enough to compensate the company for the harm caused by industrial action. "I am satisfied that damages would not be an adequate remedy," he said. "The balance of convenience falls in favour of granting an interim injunction."

ASLEF had said the imposition of an injunction barring industrial action in the wake of a ballot would be "oppressive". The

Continued on page 16

Continued from page 15

judge rejected the union's complaint, saying "the potential disruption and inconvenience to the general public and damage likely to be caused by the industrial action significantly outweighs the suggested harm to the union."

RMT and TSSA have also launched a public campaign against GTR's proposals for ticket office closures, and Tory MPs from Lewes to Croydon have been forced to wade in after a campaign mobilised thousands of passengers against axing guards and closing ticket offices.

A similar campaign of industrial action by RMT guards has greeted Abellio Scotrail's attempts to do away with guards on some of its services. The first strike took place on 21 June, and major disruption has taken place on Sundays as trains were cancelled or altered because of staff shortages. Further one and two day strikes are planned, as well as an overtime ban.

Abellio Scotrail, owned by Dutch state rail operator NS, relies on staff doing voluntary overtime on Sundays, and many staff have decided not to work.

Following the company's accidental revelation of their plans, RMT has accused Abellio Scotrail of having a hidden agenda of union busting, de-staffing and de-skilling. The union stated that "in light of these extraordinary revelations it is time for the

Scottish Parliament to step in and call a halt to the cloak-and-dagger attacks on jobs, services and safety and force Scotrail to come to the table and start talking with us openly and honestly."

After the 21 June strike, Mick Cash described the strike action as "solid as a rock this morning with our members united and determined in the fight for jobs and safety on Scotland's railways."

The rail companies and the government have tried to portray the disputes as being merely about who opens the doors to let passengers board and alight. This has also backfired, with passengers asking why this is so important to the employers that they are provoking such industrial unrest!

Injuries

But the unions insist that the guard is essential to the safe operation of passenger trains. A recent incident at East Dumbarton, where a passenger suffered life-changing injuries, showed how unsafe DOO can be. In this incident a group of teenagers had to raise the alarm to alert oncoming trains. In May, a taxi driver was forced to assist a wheelchair passenger off a DOO service at Livingston North as there was only a driver on the train and no second person. Both incidents could have been avoided if there had been a guard on the train.

A dossier has been published by RMT setting out the case for retaining the guard

'The unions insist that the guard is essential to the safe operation of passenger trains.'

on passenger trains, and highlighting the consequences of not having a guard – it can be found on the RMT website.

The dossier sets out numerous incidents that support the need for a guard on trains, and states that the rail industry has identified the "platform/train interface" as the highest area of risk, with surging demand and a lack of increase in capacity leading to overcrowded trains and platforms.

A number of other rail companies have already stated that they wish to abolish guards, including Merseyrail, Great Western, and Virgin Trains East Coast. They will be watching the outcome of the struggles in GTR and Abellio Scotrail with great interest.

There is no doubt that rail workers and their unions face an onslaught from private operators that will attempt to smash the trade unions that stand in their way in their pursuit of profits. The bosses will no doubt gain confidence from the recent passing into law of the anti-union Trade Union Act. ■



CPBML/Workers Public Meeting, London Thursday 15 September, 7.30 pm "After the Vote: What Next?"

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

We've given the EU its marching orders. Now we need to take the national debate on the future of Britain that flared into life during the referendum and transform it into a strategy for the working class. All welcome.

The government is trying to turn academia into a machine for facilitating personal gain...

What's a university for?

AT THIS CRITICAL point in Britain's history there are two competing visions of what a university is for. One vision says it is about a collective good for society and the other vision says it is about individual gain. And as a people – not just students and academics – we need to decide which side we are on.

The government has already set out its vision for the individual option in the Higher Education White Paper called "Success as a knowledge economy" and the associated legislative programme for the next session of parliament. Despite many universities in this country having been originally funded by public subscription, and whose Charters uphold the defence of public education, there is no real opposition to this White Paper coming from vice chancellors or university managements.

Alternative

Opposition is coming from the University and College Union, the National Union of Students, the Council for the Defence of British Universities and a range of other organisations who have set down the wider societal benefits in a booklet they are calling The Alternative White Paper. They summarise these by saying that the role of universities is:

- Educating the next generation of the population
- Carrying out research to address social and scientific challenges
- Maintaining an independent platform for research into society and science to facilitate democratic debate.

The final bullet point is very important as in recent years the term "academic freedom" has been degraded to mean allowing individual academics to state an opinion. It is much more. It is about the independence of scientific inquiry, commentary and teaching,

'The term "academic freedom" has been degraded.'



edella/Stockphoto.com

Graduation ceremony at Portsmouth University.

all of which can be threatened by the state and corporate interests.

In contrast the government puts the market at the heart of the system and relegates the student to an individual consumer of higher education with loans functioning as a voucher to present at a university of choice (if the student has the grades required).

Mis-selling

In 2015 the government retrospectively altered the interest rates for students who took out loans after 2012. There is finally a growing awareness of this mis-selling scandal and the impact of imposing a debt culture on young people. The National Union of Students has declared its opposition to the White Paper and the start of the autumn term will see growing action from students.

The White Paper proposes new measures to increase competition within the higher education sector and facilitates the entry of private providers. The big change from the Green Paper is that these providers will be able to offer their own degrees from day one, albeit on a probationary basis, and apply for full university title after only three years.

The government is also proposing to reduce the current minimum number of students threshold of 1,000 required when a provider applies for a university title. In short, the government is seeking to re-define the "university" so that it no longer has to cater for a range of subjects or combine teaching with research.

Moreover these new for-profit providers will be able to charge tuition fees of up to £9,000 (i.e. a direct transfer of our taxes to a private provider) and the precedent already set means that whoever is managing the student loan book will have the powers to change interest rates at will and reclaim that loan by any means.

To entice students into debt, the government has said that student loans are wiped off after 30 years – but this could easily change. New Zealand has just passed legislation to recover student debt from your estate after death! ■

- The alternative White Paper called "In defence of Public Higher Education: Knowledge for a Successful Society" is available from <https://heconvention2.wordpress.com/alternative/>

After the Referendum we must now do something about the devastating impact of the EU and how to revive the industry.

Time to take back control



Photos Workers

Kent fishermen and their families demonstrating near old Billingsgate, London, in support of their Leave flotilla on 15 June. Right: one of the boats allowed

AN ISLAND surrounded by sea, at a latitude and with sea conditions that offer optimal conditions for the reproduction and management of fish should have a thriving fishing industry, able to feed its own people and to trade with the rest of the world.

Instead we are a net importer of fish. EU commissioners, influenced by the lobbyists maintained in Brussels by the large aquaculture capitalists, have fixed the size of quotas under the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Trawlermen and inshore fishermen have lost out to the behemoths like Marine Harvest, the Norwegian-owned giant that dominates Scotland's £630 million salmon farming industry.

When Edward Heath signed Britain up to the Common Market in 1973, he surrendered the 200-mile or median point fishing limit enshrined in international law, and misled parliament about transitional arrangements. In fact, though Heath was careful to avoid mentioning it, Brussels had already

arrived at a position on fisheries – that they were a “common resource” to which all member states should have access, even, absurdly, those with no coastline. Heath settled for exclusive fishing rights inside a six-mile limit and partial control of a six- to twelve-mile limit but only for ten years, which could only be renewed by unanimous agreement of every member state.

Catastrophe

The effect on our fishing fleet was catastrophic. House of Commons Library figures show that the home fishing fleet, from a high point in 1948 of about 13,300 vessels, now consists of 6,383. In 1973 we were landing a million tonnes of fish; since then, landings have been in steady decline, and in 2009 were around 0.4 million tonnes, the lowest in any years outside the two world wars.

In 1984 we went from being a net exporter to a net importer of fish. The number of fishermen fell by around 43 per cent

between 1994 and 2014. Boats were scrapped or turned into leisure craft. By contrast, the EU provided grants to subsidise boat-building in other countries.

After the ten years had elapsed, there was a free-for-all in British waters. Fish stocks were badly damaged by rapacious over-fishing by foreign fleets, especially the Spanish. Some Spanish skippers bought British boats in order to bypass any attempts at regulation.

The government, forced by a vigorous campaign by fishermen, passed the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, which required all ships landing catches in British ports to be at least 75 per cent British owned. Then a Spanish company, Factortame Ltd, brought a case against Britain claiming that this was contrary to EU law.

After the usual legal to-ing and fro-ing the European Court of Justice backed the company. The British government had to pay damages of over £100 million. The

what remains of our fishing industry. It's time to reflect on industry along with fishing stocks...

Control of our fish



...ed upstream to demonstrate outside Parliament.

House of Lords then ruled that British legislation was subordinate to EU law.

Each year the EU Council of Ministers sets a Total Allowable Catch for each fish stock and fishing area based on guidance from the Advisory Committee of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. This is then allocated as quotas to member states in accordance with fixed percentages based on historic fishing rights.

Greenpeace says the government of the day significantly underestimated the contribution made by small fishing vessels – less than 10 metres long – to the industry and so allocated them a tiny proportion of the quota. As the quota each year is based on

'Hardest hit have been the small fishermen.'

previous allocations, the smaller fishermen have been unable to increase their share and find themselves harder up each year.

Now nearly half of the total English fishing quota is controlled by companies from overseas, according to an investigation by Greenpeace. One Dutch vessel, the *Cornelis Vrolijk*, accounts for almost a quarter of the entire English catch and about 6 per cent of the total UK quota. The 370-foot trawler may operate out of Hull under a British flag, but its entire catch is landed in Holland.

Quota-grabbers

The five largest foreign-controlled vessels take 32 per cent of the English quota. In total, nearly half of the total English fishing quota is controlled by companies from overseas. And the Dutch and Danish want an even greater share of fish in British waters.

Norway's refusal – twice – to join the EEC and then EU, in 1972 and 1994, and Iceland's 2013 decision not to pursue a

membership application, were driven in no small part by a determination to protect their fishing industries. And their position is vindicated by the statistics. In 2014 Norway landed 2.027 million tonnes in its domestic ports, double that of Spain, which landed half that (1,109 million tonnes), while Britain landed 0.406 million tonnes in 2013 (the last year for which comparable figures from the UN are available).

Probably hardest hit have been the small fishermen, the 5,000-strong small scale fleet which fish in the UK inshore waters. Increasingly marginalised, they hold just 4 per cent of the UK quota between them. They fish sustainably and seasonally and benefit local communities by selling their catch to local fishmongers and restaurants. They provide work for others, such as net makers, boat builders and engineering companies and often diversify into tourism, offering trips for recreational anglers and tourists.

Jobs

The hinterland of our port cities and towns has suffered along with the fishermen themselves. Small-scale fishing provides 65 per cent of the jobs at sea in England and Wales, and evidence from the New Economics Foundation in 2012 suggested that if fish stocks were restored, the UK would gain €469.8 million in revenue, and increase the number of fishing jobs by 3,000.

The CFP has been "reformed" multiple times over the years, each time with worse results for Britain. In particular, the stick of conservation has been used to beat the fishermen, though small fishermen have no interest in over-fishing or in throwing catch back into the sea. By contrast the large shellfish and salmon farms have become breeding grounds for disease.

The working class's historic decision to vote Leave on 23 June creates the conditions under which our fisheries can be revived. Workers in the industry, and outside, must give serious thought to the action needed to develop this resource. What do fishermen need, now and in the future? What training and apprenticeships do we need to bring young people into the industry? Where will we build the boats? How will we manage the stocks? At last we can start to answer these questions. ■

This issue we review two books that look back on the Spanish civil war that the CIA has been waging in Syria...

A scrapbook of the civil

A nurse's recollection

A Spanish civil war scrapbook: Elizabeth Pearl Bickerstaffe's newspaper cuttings of the wars in Spain and China from August 1937 to May 1939, edited by Jim Jump, paperback, 204 pages, ISBN 978-1-909831-98-8, International Brigade Memorial Trust and Lawrence & Wishart, 2015, £19.96.

THIS INTERESTING BOOK is taken from the Spanish civil war scrapbook kept by Pearl Bickerstaffe. It has an introduction by Paul Preston, Professor of Spanish History at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a foreword by Rodney Bickerstaffe, Pearl's son and a former general secretary of Unison.

Pearl Bickerstaffe kept her scrapbook from 1937 to 1939 while she was a children's nurse in south Yorkshire. She took these cuttings mostly from the *Daily Worker*, the newspaper produced by the Communist Party of Great Britain. Other cuttings come from the *News Chronicle*, *Tribune*, the *Daily Sketch*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Picture Post* and from Pearl's local paper the *Doncaster Gazette*.

The collection includes many reports from the war in Spain detailing the heroic struggles of the Spanish people and recording many of the atrocities committed by the invading Nazi and Fascist forces. There are details of the actions of British workers, members of the International Brigade, engineers, miners, dockers and others in support of the Spanish Republic. For example, in January 1939 London engineers walked out of work and marched to Downing Street to demand arms for Spain.

The British and French governments adopted a policy of non-intervention which let Hitler and Mussolini continue their armed

'The Soviet Union alone armed and backed the Spanish Republic.'



Children being evacuated from Spain giving the Republican clenched fist salute.

interventions. It was indeed "Murder – by British consent" as the *Daily Worker* reported of an air raid on Barcelona in January 1938 which killed 300 civilians. It continued, "Franco's blood guilt is shared by others...The peace policy of the gentlemen in Whitehall, of Chamberlain, Eden, the policy of 'non-intervention' did not stop them any more than it has stopped the shells which rain on Madrid, the bombs 'made in Germany' that shattered Guernica. That is how 'non-intervention' works, that is the 'peace' policy of Messrs. Chamberlain and Eden, whose blood guilt is equal with Franco and Mussolini."

The Soviet Union alone armed and backed the Spanish Republic against the interventions by Hitler and Mussolini. But the lies abound.

As George Preston writes of George Orwell's 1938 book *Homage to Catalonia*, this "memoir of his brief time in Spain has given much succour to those who wish to claim, whether from the far left or the far right, that the defeat of the Spanish Republic was somehow more the responsibility of Stalin than of Franco, Hitler, Mussolini or Neville Chamberlain." ■

Through observers' eyes

Hell and good company: the Spanish civil war and the world it made, by Richard Rhodes, hardback, 302 pages, ISBN 978-1-4711-2617-8, Simon & Schuster, 2015, £20, Kindle and e-book editions available, paperback available soon.

AMERICAN AUTHOR Richard Rhodes has written a fascinating study of the Spanish civil war. He presents it through the eyes of poets, artists, doctors, nurses, reporters and writers who experienced it.

After the Spanish people voted for democracy in February 1936, rebel generals, led by General Francisco Franco, rallied Moroccan mercenaries and Spanish Foreign Legionaries to overthrow the legitimate elected government.

Hitler and Mussolini openly backed Franco's coup attempt. The British National government led by Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin supported Franco, but more covertly. So too did the French social-democratic government led by Leon Blum. As Rhodes writes, "Under pressure from the English, who favoured Franco,

Spanish Civil War, and one on a more modern conflict – the war in Spain

Blum decided that non-intervention was the better part of valor.”

Rhodes describes how the fascists brought innovations like the terror-bombing of civilians. Franco’s bombing of Madrid, the Basque country and Barcelona killed 54,000 men, women and children.

In contrast, the Republicans brought medical progress, an aspect of the conflict not widely known. Rhodes explains, “Spanish and foreign volunteer doctors made medical advances in blood collection, preservation, and storage; in field surgery; in the efficient sorting of casualties. Fortuitously, these innovations came just in time to save lives not only in Spain but worldwide, among combatants and civilians alike, in the larger war that followed.”

An innovative Catalan surgeon Josep Trueta introduced a method of cleaning, packing, and then protectively casting large wounds in plaster. Another Catalan doctor, Frederic Duran Jordà, developed the world’s first frontline blood transfusion service.

Trueta’s treatment of compound fractures was a major, lifesaving innovation. His results were extraordinary. Less than 1 per cent of the casualties died. About 9 per cent were disabled and the rest healed satisfactorily. By comparison, a shocking 46 per cent of American soldiers who suffered such fractures during the First World War were permanently disabled and 12 per cent died.

Trueta’s idea was recently independently rediscovered. In its new incarnation, as vacuum-assisted wound therapy, it is preserving limbs that organisms resistant to antibiotics might otherwise destroy. ■

Imperialist meddling

The dirty war on Syria: Washington, regime change and resistance, by Tim Anderson, Global Research Publishers, 123 pages, ISBN 978-0-9737147-7-7, Global Research Publishers, 2016, downloadable, \$9.45.

TIM ANDERSON is a Senior Lecturer in Political Economy at the University of Sydney. His deeply researched, thoroughly referenced account of the war in Syria shows that it is not the war that our media tells us.

Syria and Iran are the only countries in



The scene of the October 2012 Aleppo bombings: al-Nusra Front claimed responsibility.

the Middle East without US military bases. This helps to account for NATO’s longstanding hostility to Syria and action against it.

In 1982 the Syrian government crushed a Muslim Brotherhood insurrection in Hama, an insurrection backed by US allies Saudi Arabia, Saddam Hussein and Jordan. A former French Foreign Minister has testified that in 2009 the British government was organising an invasion of rebels into Syria. And the Saudi government sent arms to Islamists before the Islamist insurrection in Daraa in March 2011 using the political reform movement as cover.

Vice-President Joe Biden admitted, as did the head of the US Armed Forces and the Chair of the US Armed Services Committee, that US allies Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar funded all the extremist groups including ISIS.

In 2012 the US Defense Intelligence Agency reported, “The Salafists, the Muslim Brotherhood and AQI [Al Qaeda in Iraq, later ISIS] are the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria....There is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in eastern Syria (Hasaka and Der Zor), and this is exactly what the

supporting powers [the West, Gulf monarchies and Turkey] to the [Syrian] opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime.”

The Islamists blame the government for the Islamists’ own atrocities and pretend that their own casualties are innocent civilians killed by government forces. They lie that the Syrian government and now the Russian government are deliberately killing civilians. And Anderson shows how Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch give support to these claims, acting as propagandists for war.

Syria’s government is independent, pluralist, secular and popular. When US ally the fascist Qatari regime, which funds al-Nusra (al-Qaeda in Syria), hired a polling firm in 2012 to survey Syrians, it found that 55 per cent of Syrians wanted Assad to remain as President. A 2013 internal NATO report admitted that President Assad has 70 per cent support.

In the 2014 Presidential elections, 65 per cent supported Assad, 88.7 per cent of the vote from 73.4 per cent participating. July 2015 polls from a British firm that has ties to Gallup found, “Polls Show Syrians Overwhelmingly Blame U.S. for ISIS.” ■

As we await the long-delayed publication of Chilcot's inquiry here's a reminder of the costs of medieval invasions of the M

Paying for the Crusades

THINKING ABOUT the enormous cost of the Iraq war to Britain's workers, it is interesting to look back at how the cost of the Crusades led to sustained and effective opposition. It actually contributed to the defeat of the papal system, which was using the wars in an attempt to gain universal dominion over all nations and all classes at that time.

The First Crusade was started in 1095 by Pope Urban II on a wave of religious hysteria after the Byzantine Emperor pleaded for help to free the "Christian" lands of Syria and Palestine from the Muslims living there. Later crusades relied less on voluntary donation and more on extortion – and Henry II's tithe for the crusades laid the foundations for income tax.

Ralph Niger, the historian and theologian, warned that God would not favour a crusade financed by the spoliation of the poor. Henry later exiled him for his efforts. Many of the clergy preached the crusades but refused to be taxed for them. The church exploited crusader-vow redemptions, whereby you could buy back your promise to crusade.

Poll tax

In Scotland, opposition to the tithe made it impossible to collect. The government therefore, more sensible than Thatcher's in handling her poll tax, withdrew it. In 1222, Henry III authorised a compulsory poll tax for the crusade. Opposition was so strong that he had to change it into a voluntary

'During the Fourth Crusade the crusaders attacked their ally, the Byzantine empire and sacked their capital, Constantinople.'

tax. The papacy also taxed England more than anywhere else, levying crusade taxes every six years in the 13th century.

The stated aim of the First Crusade was to take Jerusalem, which the Count of Blois predicted could be done in five weeks. Two years later they finally reached the Holy City, and sacked it. All the Muslims and Jews of the city – men, women and children – were killed, 70,000 altogether. The Jews fled to the chief synagogue: it was burned and them with it.

Disaster

Jerusalem's capture and sacking marked the zenith of crusading, followed by a long decline, of bloodletting and disaster. Its capture was to the Arabs conclusive proof of the bloodthirsty fanaticism of the invading Christians: if the Arabs were to survive, the Christians had to be driven out and sent back to their own lands.

During the Fourth Crusade, 1201-4, the crusaders attacked their ally, the Byzantine Empire, and sacked its capital Constantinople. This outrageous action, which Steven Runciman in his three-volume study *A History of the Crusades* called one of the greatest of all crimes against humanity, showed how completely the crusades had become campaigns of pillage not pilgrimage.

A contemporary wrote of the wealth of Constantinople: "No one could imagine its amount or value. It included gold and silver, table services and precious stones, samite and silk, mantles of squirrel fur, ermine and miniver. So much booty had never been gained in any city since the creation of the world." The slaughter and destruction weakened the Empire, a bulwark against Islam, and so strengthened the crusaders' enemy. In 1262 the Greeks retook the city from its Christian defilers.

The crusading spirit was also cynically invoked against the pope's enemies in Europe, leading to massacres of the Albigensians, the Beziers and Cathars, for example. In Britain it led to massacres in London and York.

The Ninth Crusade, 1365-66, was launched against Egypt, which had been at peace for the previous fifty years. It ended in the holocaust of Alexandria.



Captain Blood/de.wikipedia

A map – in French – of the First Crusade.

Runciman summed up: "The Crusades were launched to save Eastern Christendom from the Moslems. When they ended the whole of Eastern Christendom was under Moslem rule." By 1291 the crusaders had been expelled from Syria and Palestine. "The whole crusading movement was a vast fiasco."

The papacy, which had initiated this movement at the height of its powers, had been defeated too. Saving the Holy Land had been one of its greatest ambitions, part of the pope's claim to universal dominion. But by the late 13th century the crusading movement, offspring of the papal theocratic movement, had been defeated. The Arab defeat of the crusades assisted the defeat of the papacy.

Opposition

Popular opposition in Europe, especially in Britain, also helped to defeat the Papacy and its crusading warmongering. In 1187-9 Anglo-French theologian Ralph Niger

into the Iraq War, Middle East...



opposed the crusade, saying against the pope's "Deus vult" (God wishes it) that "Deus non vult". More than a hint there of an attack on papal authority! The Lollards spoke up for peace. In 1268 Roger Bacon wrote against crusading, as did the poets Langland and John Gower a century later. Wycliffe did also, and criticised those who used the Old Testament to justify wars.

As late as the 14th century princes and nobles were still eager to crusade, but other classes — merchants, peasants — opposed them. It became too difficult to finance these expeditions in view of popular resistance to the waste involved. Henry IV, as recounted by Shakespeare, was unable to bring off his own crusade and had to make do with dying in a room called "Jerusalem".

The brawling nobles of England and Germany, full of greed, cruelty, hatred and vicious self-righteousness had, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, led the Crusades to oblivion. ■

NO ADVANCE WITHOUT MARXISM

Worried about the future of
Britain? Join the CPBML.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
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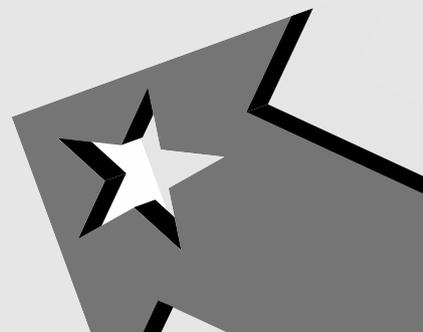
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Take responsibility, take charge

'The working class has created a momentous opportunity. We must grasp it with both hands.'

BRITAIN HAS served the EU with notice to quit and the world has changed. It was a brave declaration, born of clarity and determination. When it counted the working class stood up and shouted. The fiercely independent spirit of British workers at its best. We'll need more of that in the coming months and years.

The working class has created a momentous opportunity. We must grasp it with both hands.

Already the parliamentary rabble is doing its best to change the outcome of the referendum. Jostling for position, talking down the meaning of the vote, putting off the leaving process, it looks and feels that after the turmoil of the referendum and the stunning night of the count, we have entered a period of phoney war.

Leave means leave. The sooner we do, the sooner we can get on with rebuilding Britain. Stop the phoney war! Get on, get out!

That means rebuilding our tottering industry and our disappearing energy generation capacity. It means reversing the cuts to training so that we can, for example, produce our own nurses instead of luring nurses from countries where they are desperately needed.

It also means rebuilding the organisations of the working class. With honourable exceptions, the trade unions – ignoring their own memberships, and in turn being ignored by them – played a shameful role in the referendum. Now the members must enforce their will on their own organisations.

If you are an optimist, you might point to signs that some in the union hierarchies have learnt their lesson. Frances O'Grady, TUC general secretary, said that although she had voted Remain, it was time to listen to workers. Let's see – we've heard it all before. The problem for her was that workers didn't listen to her, nor to the Great and Good preaching to them about what they should think.

Workers cannot afford to wait and see whether they will be listened to. They must act to impose their will.

And talk of "a divided country", young versus old, educated outvoted by the uneducated, whites versus migrant families (how could they know any of this?), Scotland and London against Wales and the rest of England – Project Sneer is well under way to set us against each other. The insult "racist" is being thrown around to explain the outcome. So it was dim old white racists who voted Leave – over 17 million of them? Rubbish.

In Scotland there is a new push to separate from Britain, rejoin the EU, adopt the euro, and sail off into the sunset. Yet again it seems this battle may have to be fought.

For years our rulers have told us that anti-EU feeling was a fringe obsession, that when it comes to it people are more concerned about issues closer to home. The referendum proved them wrong. People realised that the EU was very much connected to what goes on closer to home.

Realising that there could be rocky times ahead did not deter them from seeing the big picture. So much so, that during the campaign complete strangers were eager to talk to leafleters to discuss politics. In the streets, outside stations, on the doorstep, in the pubs, young and old, men and women, all skin colours and ethnic origins, Britain became a nation where politics was no longer a dirty word. There was universal disdain for politicians on both sides who claimed to speak for workers. Now that discussion must continue, and feed into practical action. What kind of Britain do we need to build?

We have seen the power of the people. A single, simple vote threw the world of finance capital into turmoil. That power, that determination, must now be turned to the rebuilding of Britain. Like putting a cross on a referendum ballot, that's not something that should be ignored or left to someone else. ■

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