

# WORKERS

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# BUILD THE NEW BRITAIN

**After Article 50** Take control

**Doctors** Brexit opportunity

**Manufacture** The challenge

**Fisheries** Fight for a future

**Prisons** Just profit centres?

**Scotland** No to break-up

**Rail** Safety first

**Trade** Market trap

*plus* News,

**Book Review**

**Historic Notes**

and more

# WORKERS



## Take control

IT'S TIME to look to the future. The decision to leave the European Union is in the past. It's done and dusted. Some mourn it. Some even hope to reverse it. But as *Workers* goes to press it looks clear that Article 50 announcing our departure will be triggered soon.

A new era is dawning for Britain. Workers must make sure it serves the interests of an independent country and brings progress.

The majority of British people who opted for Leave are accused, by those still resisting their decision, of nostalgia, of wanting to go back to the 1950s or to a rose-tinted era of managing by ourselves – with everything that goes with it in terms of industries, economic structures and social institutions.

Well, we should learn from history: that during World War 2 we survived alone against powerful odds; that we once had such a thing as planning for the needs of the nation; that our economy used not to be in hock to banks and hedge funds; and that we used to make our own decisions.

Yes, we do want independence and a thriving economy, and we want control. What's nostalgic about that? But we are living in the 21st century, and we must assess what we need as a modern nation, what it means now to be an independent Britain.

Our decision has not just overturned the status quo, it has blown it sky high. We must now deal with the results of our decision. Capitalism has suffered a heavy blow but it will seek to reassert itself by

fashioning a Britain which serves its needs. We must seize the moment.

Anyone under 50 has never known life outside the European “community” or “union”, with its increasing control over the taxes we pay it and its courts to enforce rules and diktats over what we are to be allowed to do in our own country. Harking back will mean little to those generations. We must look forward.

The “uncertainty” bemoaned by commentators blaming the Leave decision is a tremendous opportunity to throw the windows wide open and let fresh air in. Outside the EU everything is up for grabs. We can't leave it to government – talk of “we won't be allowed to do this” or “the EU will dictate the terms” will melt away if we decide to assert ourselves.

21st century Britain is a very different place from the 20th. The pace of change is rapid and all sorts of possibilities now open up to move forward. What are they? We who live and work here must define them – we have the knowledge and imagination to do it. Nobody else can, nobody should tell us what is good for us. Doctors, farmers and fishing communities have already begun to discuss what their industries should look like post-EU. What about the rest?

There is much to be done. The task is nothing less than building the new Britain, an independent Britain planning for a future that serves our interests. We the people have to take charge, take responsibility – take control. ■



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## Doctors seize Brexit opening

THE OPPORTUNITIES of Brexit expand daily basis. The General Medical Council (GMC), which regulates doctors in Britain, has made an astute move to rectify a dangerous situation which exists while we are in the EU.

Currently medical graduates from the European Economic Area (the EU, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein plus, provisionally, Croatia) are entitled to have their qualifications recognised here without any test of their competence. And in the last year 2,166 EEA graduates joined the UK medical register.

At the end of January the GMC, anticipating the freedom that Brexit will give to act outside those EU regulations, produced a national consultation entitled "Securing the licence to practise: introducing a Medical Licensing Assessment; a public consultation".

"This is surely the moment to look at how we can improve assurance for patients that the standards at entry are consistent," said Chair of the GMC Professor Terence Stephenson, when the initiative was launched on 31 January.

The GMC plans for a Medical Licensing Assessment that will provide a single route to the medical register for all doctors who wish to practise here. The assessment will include a test of prescribing safety – vital because prescribing differs from country to country, and the consequences of error can be serious. Unlike the USA, where licensing is done in individual states, a real strength of this proposal is that it would entail a national licensing system for the whole UK.

The proposals also set out their aim of addressing the current variation in arrangements for medical students across the UK. At present, every one of the UK's 32 medical schools has its own system. Although they share some written questions there is no UK-wide process to set a common standard to pass.

This consultation is also timely as it swiftly follows the government proposal to expand the number of places at UK medical schools.

On its website the GMC outlines its aspiration: "Depending on the UK's future relationship with the EU, it is possible that the [Medical Licensing Assessment] could be taken by doctors from the European Economic Area (EEA) alongside UK candidates and doctors from the rest of the world. The GMC has long argued that it should have the ability to check that doctors coming to practise in the UK from Europe meet the same standards as those who qualify in the UK and outside Europe. This would strengthen the protection of patients as well as ensure fairness in the way all doctors are assessed for entry to the register, regardless of where they qualified in the world."

The consultation can be downloaded at [gms.e-consultation.net](http://gms.e-consultation.net), and you have until 30 April to respond. You do not need to complete the whole consultation – so if you simply wish to comment on the public safety aspects you can. ■

## RAIL

### Shovelling money abroad

LAST YEAR more than £90 million was paid out in dividends to the Italian, French, Dutch and German rail companies running British rail franchises. Most of these companies are state owned – 20 out of 28 privatised rail franchises operating in Britain are actually state owned, from European governments to the Middle East and China.

Meanwhile Southern Rail, owned by Govia, whose major stakeholder is Keolis, in turn owned by the French state railway SNCF, is conniving with the Department of Transport to try to break both Aslef and the RMT unions in the ongoing Southern Rail dispute over guards, safety and staffing. ■

• See also feature article, page 6

## EUROPEAN UNION

### Propaganda war

DESPITE THE decision in June 2016 to leave the European Union, the European Commission is continuing to try and widen its network of propaganda outlets of European Documentation Centres and European Direct Information Centres. It is contacting Britain's libraries in major cities and trade unions like Unison that still campaign for a Remain position despite the voting by their members.

This insidious campaign by the EU is directly funding anti-leave propaganda and interfering in the internal affairs of Britain.

All local authorities should be requested to withdraw participation in these centres. It is political intervention and abuse of the role of public libraries. Likewise those in the trade unions should raise opposition to such hijacking of the democratic processes within their own organisations. ■

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



## ON THE WEB

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

### Court puts devolved governments in their place

In a significant judgement, the Supreme Court has rejected the claim by the devolved governments that their “legislative consent” was needed before triggering Article 50.

### Employment review gathers momentum

The government’s “independent” review into employment practices in the economy is now moving to a rolling roadshow – but it’s slanted in favour of the employers from day one.

### Brexit must mean the return of industry

The government launched consultation over its industrial strategy on Monday 23 January. HS2 will be a real test of its intentions.

### Hospital driven deep into debt

The Princess Royal University Hospital in Bromley, south London, has accumulated the largest hospital debt in the capital – a staggering £62.3 million.

### Contractor seeks cleaning redundancies at hospital hit by norovirus

A week after private provider ISS secured a contract at a Kent hospital, it proposed making 30 cleaners redundant – despite a history of norovirus outbreaks at the hospital.

### Plus: the e-newsletter

Visit [cpbml.org.uk](http://cpbml.org.uk) to sign up to your free regular copy of the CPBML’s newsletter, delivered to your email inbox.

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IT workers picketing Glasgow council offices, December 2016.

## Privatisation plans halted

SUCCESSFUL STRIKES by IT workers at Glasgow City Council in December and January have halted the attempt to privatise £400 million worth of services.

The privatisation deal was effectively stopped after the strikes by Unison members established that they would be employed directly by Glasgow City Council rather than by the private contract holder, Canadian CGI (Consultants to Governments and Industries).

CGI was due to begin a seven-year contract to fully run the services from this March. After Unison won the fight to maintain direct employment, SERCO, another global operator that had shared the operation of the services on a 50/50 basis with the council, has now challenged the legality of the deal.

Addressing a meeting of Glasgow Trade Union Council, the shop steward representing the workers explained how the city’s decision to go down the full privatisation route fitted in with the planned three-year roll-out of £135 million worth of cuts to council services.

In recognition of the consequences of IT privatisation for Glasgow, a protest was held outside the Glasgow City Council budget meeting on Thursday 16 February. Further action is now planned.

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

## CONTRACTING

### Cleaners take on Servest

UNISON MEMBERS working for cleaning contractor Servest at King’s College London have been offered higher staffing levels after they went on strike for two days on 26 and 27 January over excessive workload and a threat of reorganisation.

The walkout came after 98 per cent of the Unison members voted for strike action – and 90 per cent of the cleaning workers are union members. The picket line was a great success, with strikers dancing to Latin American music from 5 am till 3 pm over the two days. It was a great atmosphere with King’s College staff, students and others joining in solidarity.

The strikers, primarily workers who have come here from different Latin American countries but also from the Caribbean and Eastern Europe, are at the forefront of a campaign in the cleaning sector against unmanageable workload and low staffing levels.

The offer to increase staffing levels was received positively by the members. But the practical effects have yet to be seen and the threat of reorganisation, including splitting their shifts, is still in place.

But with 90 per cent membership density and a sound union structure, this is a fight the workers are more than equipped to win.

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

## BELL FOUNDRY

### Whitechapel death knell

ONE OF BRITAIN’S two surviving bell foundries is scheduled to close in May – Britain’s oldest, Church Bell Foundry, in Whitechapel, London.

The owner of the foundry, which has been in existence since 1570 and in Whitechapel since 1738, believes it is no longer viable. The US Philadelphia Liberty Bell was cast in 1752 by the foundry as

was Big Ben in 1858, weighing over 13.5 tons. Bell creation ranges from giant like these to church bells and tea services.

Britain’s metal trades are the core of all industry and even in a niche market such as in the creation, repair and retuning of bells the threat of extinction and closure should be resisted.

There remains a slender hope that the owners of the site in Whitechapel, now worth more due to property inflation in London, may relocate the business under new ownership to a new site.

## BANKING

### Another bailout?

IN A DEMONSTRATION of the failure of free market economics, the Co-op Bank has been put up for sale by its largely US hedge fund controllers. The hedge funds thought their vulture-like swoop on the poorly led and antiquated Co-op Bank, after the Co-op devoured the Britannia Building Society, would lead them to quick asset stripping riches.

But it has all come to nothing. The

proposal to massively expand the Co-op by buying 632 branches of Lloyds Bank foundered. The Co-op itself only has 107 branches, so it would have been devouring the elephant not the other way round.

Meanwhile, the Britannia was shown to have secret toxic debts of £600 million, the result of US mortgage-type swindles. A further accountancy sleight of hand in 2013 exposed a missing £1.5 billion in the Co-op's accounts. Losses in 2016 ran to £600+ million.

Is another Bank of England bailout on the way? ■



BillyBatty

Millwall and West Ham United shake hands at The Den, September 2011.

## Millwall land grab exposed

THE NATIONAL UNION of Journalists is holding a "Local News Matters" week from 24 March to 1 April, highlighting local news as "an essential component of society, democracy and citizenship". As part of the campaign, the union is looking for examples of where coverage of local news has made a real difference. It won't have to look far.

Less than five miles from the union's King's Cross headquarters lies Millwall Football Club, which has just managed to stall a compulsory purchase order from the local council on its land – thanks not to a local newspaper but, in part, to dedicated sports writers and fans writing for the local fanzine.

The story goes back to 2004, when the hidden figures behind offshore developer Renewal started stealth-purchasing land in Bermondsey. Fast forward to February 2017 and the shifty dealings of a Labour council seemingly subservient to private property developers have come to national prominence thanks to the concerted efforts of the Millwall Football Club, Association of Millwall Supporters Group, *Cold Blow Lane* fanzine and a sports writer for the *Guardian*, among others.

At the heart of the plan was a Compulsory Purchase Order to secure the land on which Millwall Football Club and its Community Trust currently sit, in addition to other businesses and homes in the area. Millwall FC was firmly opposed to the plan.

The companies and organisations involved in the attempted land grab have now been revealed to have conflicts of interest – and that includes Lewisham council. With the mayor having to resign his position as a trustee of one of the organisations, the situation became toxic. As *Workers* went to press, the entire scheme has been put on hold.

The council didn't like the objections of Millwall and its supporters, but on this occasion people did care enough. As the story gained national attention through the sports pages thanks to local resident and *Guardian* (and also former *When Saturday Comes*) journalist Barney Ronay, the crushing sense of inevitability has given way to a belief that this secretive land grab can be defeated. ■

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

## WHAT'S ON

### Coming soon

#### MAY

##### CPBML May Day Meetings

##### LONDON

Monday 1 May, 7.30pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,  
London WC1R 4RL

##### LEEDS

Monday 1 May, 1pm

Pullman Room, Golden Lion Hotel,  
Lower Briggate, Leeds LS1 4AE

##### GLASGOW

Monday 1 May, 7pm

Garnethill Room, Renfield  
Conference Centre, 260 Bath Street,  
Glasgow  
G2 4JP

##### "Build the New Britain"

The referendum decision changes everything. We are taking back the levers of power from Brussels, and hold our future in our own hands. We are a country rich in natural resources and above all rich in intellect.

A new era is dawning for Britain. We must grasp it and make sure it serves the interests of an independent country and progress for workers.

No one else can tell us what is good for us. Take control!



### STAY INFORMED

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## FANCY THAT

### Brexit bloomers

#### Call this advice?

"Britain will be plunged into a recession this year and be plagued with lower economic growth for another five years because of the shock decision for the UK to leave the EU, BlackRock analysts have said." (*The Independent*, 13 July 2016).

*It never happened. But the doomsayers' club sticks together. "The world's largest asset management company has hired former U.K. Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne as a part-time senior adviser. Osborne will be advising the BlackRock Investment Institute...which had \$5.1 trillion (€4.8 trillion) in assets under management as of the end of 2016"* (*Politico*, 20 January 2017)

#### Carney: oops...

"The Bank of England has given its starkest warning yet that a UK vote to leave the EU could hit the economy. Mark Carney, the Bank's governor, warned that the risks of leaving 'could possibly include a technical recession'". (*BBC News*, 12 May 2016)

*"After further signs that consumers and businesses have shrugged off the Brexit vote, the Bank used its latest outlook to predict the economy would grow 2% this year and unemployment would be much lower than previously thought."* (*Guardian*, 2 February 2017)

#### The City does a U-turn

"Up to 100,000 financial services jobs could be lost if Britain votes to leave the European Union, according to a report compiled for [CityUK] that will stir debate about the short-term impact of Brexit." (*Guardian*, 14 April 2016)

*"[CityUK] has performed a dramatic u-turn on Brexit, scrapping its previous campaign to remain in the EU and instead hailing the vote to leave as 'unprecedented opportunity' for the UK to develop a powerful new set of trade and investment policies."* (*Guardian*, 2 February 2017)

#### Plus: Brexit on the web

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

# Britain's railways have become a battle companies bent on profit look to cut co

## Safety first

ASLEF TRAIN DRIVERS employed by Southern have rejected a settlement of their dispute over the extension of driver controlled operation (DCO) of trains. This mode of operation requires only a driver to be on board a passenger train but no safety-trained guard. Out of 953 members balloted, 317 voted to accept the deal, but 374 voted to reject it.

Aslef officials had reached the rejected deal with Southern, part of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), on 2 February after 11 days of intensive negotiations. These talks were brokered by the TUC.

The RMT, the union which represents GTR guards standing to lose their jobs, was excluded from those talks – and strongly condemned the deal. It accused Aslef of leaving its members high and dry, and GTR of denying it access to discussions about a group of staff for which it has negotiating rights alongside Aslef. It also condemned the TUC for its role in excluding the RMT.

Shortly after concluding the deal, Simon Weller, Aslef assistant general secretary, tellingly stated that "...it is now clear that there are some serious misunderstandings about this deal." He went on to say that the union had achieved a second safety-critical person on every train, but then set out exceptions to this.

### Lack of trust

Most drivers clearly felt the employer would abuse the deal. This reflects the complete lack of trust that workers at all levels of the company have after what has been nearly a year of bitterly confrontational industrial relations.

GTR top brass had expected a different outcome. They arrogantly boasted to shareholders only hours before the result was known that DCO would soon be rolled out right across their network. One senior manager insulted the intelligence of the drivers stating that they should have done as they were told by Aslef national officials.

The RMT had announced further strike action by its guard members shortly before the Aslef ballot result, an outcome the RMT must have warmly greeted after such a protracted period of struggle. RMT general secretary Mick Cash followed the announcement of the ballot result by writing to the

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady demanding that the TUC reconvene talks with GTR, this time with RMT participation.

The RMT has now announced ballots of its guard members in both Merseyrail and Arriva Rail North where guards also face the introduction of DCO operation of trains.

In Merseyrail, the dispute was precipitated after the Merseyside combined authority said it was buying trains from Swiss train builder Stadler. The new trains are designed to be operated without a guard.

Arriva Rail North has refused to give the

**'Govia Thameslink top brass had expected a different outcome.'**

RMT a guarantee that a second person would be on all passenger services to retain full responsibility for train despatch, passenger safety as they board and alight, dealing with evacuation in any emergency, and protection of the train. So the union announced another dispute and ballot. The results will be announced on 28 February, along with those from the Merseyrail ballot.

The RMT is also watching developments in Northern Rail. The new franchise (ultimately owned by Deutsche Bahn, the German state railway) is committed to move to DCO on some routes.

### Systematic abolition

RMT is fighting these disputes partly because it realises that the rapidly accelerating and systematic abolition of the role of the guard will result in thousands of jobs being lost. Guards represent a powerful group within the union, which have had the ability to stop the trains.

Signallers are another powerful group in the union that are now facing extinction. New technology is resulting in the closure of signal boxes all over the network. The loss of both these groups of members would seriously weaken the RMT.

But the main reason for action by the

# ground as corners...

RMT, as well as Aslef, is the squeeze put on the railways' finances by a government that is deliberately encouraging passenger train operators to undermine the current high safety standards. This is something that passengers should be and indeed are very concerned about.

The Merseyside combined authority was quite open that it would prefer to have guards on the new trains, but couldn't afford them because of government cuts to its income. The RMT has rightly accused the authority of putting money before safety.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the rail industry's safety enforcer, said: "ORR's view is that with suitable equipment, procedures and competent staff in place the proposed form of train dispatch intended by GTR-Southern meets legal requirements for safe operation." In other words, the extension of DCO may be just about safe enough – and therefore legal! Both Aslef and the RMT have been critical of the equipment put in place to facilitate DCO, particularly the cameras on the most modern trains that are now being introduced.

Rail workers have recently been prosecuted in high-profile cases after safety incidents. In one instance the individual was exonerated by Merseyrail and ORR but was still prosecuted by British Transport Police! Drivers and guards are keen to ensure they do not face prison sentences in the future on being held responsible for deaths and injuries arising because systems and equipment are not fit for purpose. This has strongly influenced their view about whether or not to resist DCO.

It has also influenced the views of the managers that the rail companies are hoping to fashion into an army of strike breakers. Many managers are concerned about standing in for guards with a minimum of training, with the prospect of facing a judge and jury if anything goes wrong. They are also unenthusiastic about doing so in the face of picket lines and a future in which they will be expected to continue to manage guards. Some at least are refusing to do so, and their union, TSSA, has previously made it clear that it will support manager members who refuse to scab on colleagues.

The RMT has also pointed out that in the absence of a second person on the train,

Workers



**RMT protest outside parliament, 1 November.**

passengers with mobility difficulties will find it hard to get on and off trains safely or at all, as some wheelchair users have found out recently in GTR.

## Crucial

The union has pointed to a number of recent serious incidents where the guard played a crucial role in evacuating passengers and protecting the train. It has also highlighted incidents that probably would not have occurred had there been a guard on the train.

Advocates of DCO point out that many trains in Britain already operate without a guard. It may take a serious train crash and many deaths on a DCO train before the position of the unions is vindicated.

Many passengers and commuter organisations associated with GTR have seen through the lies and spin peddled by the

company and the government over the issues around DCO. Passengers travelling on GTR know from experience that even when the RMT and Aslef have not been taking industrial action, the company has run an appalling service. Trains are often cancelled, terminated early, or run with fewer coaches owing to mismanagement. Many passengers have joined the unions in calling for the government to remove GTR from the franchise, and many of those are supporting a return of the trains to public ownership.

The battle for safety and jobs is well and truly on. GTR drivers in Aslef have shown that they believe their private bosses are cutting costs at the expense of safety, and that the company can't be trusted. RMT guards across Britain are fighting for their futures.

They can be encouraged by victories already achieved. The RMT forced Scotrail to back down and keep guards in Scotland. The RMT and TSSA recently took strike action over safety concerns after London Underground closed ticket offices and cut so many staff that safety was seriously compromised. The settlement of that dispute has resulted in hundreds of station jobs being reinstated. ■

**'The battle for safety and jobs is well and truly on.'**

The era of taking instructions from the EU is over. With the and moving to create an industrial strategy, trade unions r

# Rising to the manufactu

IT'S NO COINCIDENCE that the Government's Industrial Strategy and the All Parliamentary Group report *Steel 2020* have been published within days of each other. Both represent a reversing of destructive free market ideology together with the requirement to return to a planned strategic response.

"Steel touches all the world," said Roland Junck, Chief Executive and Chair of the recently reconstituted British Steel. Ironically, the joint steel trade unions in the 1980s and 1990s had a similar slogan during their efforts to save from the Thatcher government the swathes of steel works and towns – Sheffield, Scunthorpe, Redcar, Middlesbrough, Corby, Consett, Motherwell, Port Talbot and South Wales, Shermess – the list goes on.

The strategy of that government was twofold: destroy industry and in the process destroy the collectivising nature of industry. Attacks on the trade unions and organised resistance of the British industrial working class enabled the "free" market, led by the steel producers of Germany masquerading as the European Union, to move in.

Dependency on foreign imports became the norm, dispensing with the need to be responsible to traditional centres of skill, innovation, production, community and trade union organisation. As steel is the backbone of the industrial world, the destructive results of the free market ideologues are becoming clear.

The All Parliamentary Group focuses on the opportunities of extracting the steel industry from the diktat of the EU. To be clear, it represents solely the views of those MPs with an interest in steel, their researchers and evidence collected from trade unions, local authorities and others.

**'Steel is the core of manufacturing production. It truly touches the whole world.'**

Nonetheless, the report lays down the strategic interweave of core and supply industries that the steel industry requires if it is to flourish.

The recommendations embrace investment in vocational skills and training, in employment, and in research, development and innovation. Two-thirds of steel products available on the world market did not exist 15 years ago, and most are of British invention.

## Funding

The report also calls for the creation of proper funding with a national investment bank for steel and related industries, for procurement policies to assist private business and for public bodies to buy British steel at preferential rates for construction and related rejuvenation. It calls for the blocking of imports, and says Britain's energy industries should be redesigned to support manufacturing – especially intense and higher energy users such as the steel industry.

If the present steel industry were to fail it would cost the Treasury nearly £5 billion. The additional loss of revenue from unemployment to business communities dependent on those employed in steel, from lost wages, would amount to another £3 billion.

Steel is the core of manufacturing production; it truly touches all the world. Compare Britain and Germany: German manufacture still makes up 25 per cent of the economy, which translates into higher productivity and higher skills. Higher production costs reflect the fact that wages and standards of living are higher.

There was a deliberate strategy to deindustrialise Britain to destroy the manufacturing working class. That strategy slashed through steel, mining, shipbuilding, engineering, textiles, fishing and dependent industries, supply chains and support – and is now exposed as an economic failure.

Services cannot replace manufacture for wealth creation. Just 10 per cent of Britain's economy is made up of manufacturing, but that industrial base still exports more than the 90 per cent of the economy represented by services.



Ben Ponsford (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

**Dying flames? Inside a blast furnace – the one at M**

The rejection of the EU by the people of Britain in the 2016 vote for independence indicated that a tipping point had been reached. A fundamental change in strategy was needed. And, indeed, one was indicated soon after Theresa May became prime minister: the words "industrial strategy" were inserted into the title of the Department for Business.

Government strategy on steel and the metal trades has long been fraught. The inefficiency and incompetency of the trades nearly lost the British capitalists the



the government reversing decades of free market ideology need to radically recalibrate their own thinking...

# uring challenge



Gamma Science Centre inside the Rotherham steelworks, disused since 1991.

First World War. This lesson was not lost on post-war governments, which swung between different strategies designed to ensure that the trades were always protected from foreign economic challenge. Sometimes this was by nationalisation or quasi-nationalisation, sometimes by protectionism, sometimes by preferred procurement policies.

## Diktat

Only when the British capitalist class finally succumbed to immersing them-

selves in the EU did the abandonment of steel and related industries become government diktat. And the first economic act of the EU had been to attempt to rationalise the iron, steel and coal industries of Europe by its founding treaty in Rome in 1957.

Edward Heath, conservative prime minister in 1971, called for the abandonment of “lame duck” industries – steel (British Steel) and those industries dependent on steel, such as car manufacture (British Leyland) and aerospace (such as

Rolls Royce). He was forced by trade union resistance to do one of many famous U-turns.

But things went from bad to worse with the election of Thatcher in 1979. That led to a resumption of the integrationist drive into Europe, the single market, the culling of “lame ducks” – and from there to the accelerated deindustrialisation we have seen over the past 40 years.

*Continued on page 10*

*Continued from page 9*

In 1971 Britain had 320,000 steel production jobs. By 2015 this had fallen to 21,000 and now this year already to 18,000 – though when you add in steel processing jobs it brings the figure back up to nearer 34,000 jobs. Despite the draconian reduction in numbers, steel productivity is still nearly half the 1971 figure.

And then came Tata, a smallish Indian company. Tata's purchase in 2007 of the remnants of British Steel from the Anglo-Dutch Corus steel maker was effectively the mouse eating the elephant. At the time Tata ranked 49th in world steel production, while Corus was in the top five.

The purchase was not about retaining steel production in Britain but about moving into the EU using British steelworks as a Trojan horse. Tata failed, offloading assets in 2015-16. This led to the deliberate recreation of British Steel – important in part because of the post-referendum choice of “brand” name but also because 60 per cent of Tata's products are sold to the EU.

The EU doesn't have the option of closing its markets to steel made in Britain. It has no alternative in terms of quality and innovation. It has to buy British steel. Those who bleat on about needing to retain “access” to the EU market are forgetting that it is the EU that needs access to our British steel.

The Steel 2020 report emphasises the

importance of ensuring that the core strategic industries are linked together – steel production, delivery of raw materials, docks, railways and transport links, distribution of products and the energy supply industry, all functioning at a level capable of supplying industry and not just getting through mild winters on a wing and a prayer.

When you ensure the supply and value chains of supportive industries – each job directly in manufacture creates an estimated seven jobs in the supply and value chains – it creates the opportunity for increased employment and beyond that the need to reassert trade union organisation and strength. The report shows a clear understanding that trade union organisation, representation and involvement are paramount.

### New Britain

Following on from the core strategic industries is the question of construction and the shaping of the new Britain. This will include resolving the power industry crisis through the building of new power stations, ensuring cheap power for energy-intensive industries such as steel, and upgrading Britain's infrastructure for the 21st century and beyond – and then providing the necessary health, housing, education, transport, merchant marine and aerospace required.

During the past 40 years *Workers* has consistently called for import controls to

## 'Tata's purchase was about moving into the EU using British steelworks as a Trojan horse.'

stop the dumping of foreign products. The industries and trade unions that took up a similar cry have been overcome by EU regulations and directives with British government compliance. Not only that, they have been howled down by those who see import controls as racist – and then finally silenced as the industries have been largely exterminated. Obvious examples of this are textiles, engineering products, such as machine tools, and steel.

Those who argued for free movement of goods without controls are the same free market ideologues arguing for free movement of labour. Here we see the libertarian right being the reverse coin of the libertarian left, working hand in glove to preserve capitalism.

### Connived

The EU connived with China to dump steel to further destroy the remnants of British produced steel. This was actively assisted by the government of Cameron and Osborne, with the pair of them wringing their hands in woe at their so-called inability to act because of EU directives and control. Well, that is now over.

The move to independence is about to change all the rules. The trade unions predominant in steel and metal production – Community (known as the Iron and Steel Trades Federation before it gave up faith in its industrial heritage), Unite and latterly the GMB – will all have to radically recalibrate their thinking.

The EU is over. New thinking is needed, new industrial organising for a new industrial strategy is required, to reconquer the workplace in a unified manner as the bastion of working class strength. ■

## 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 with the Party's annual May Day Rally on 1 May with the title “Build the new Britain” (see notice, page 19). This year there are also CPBML May Day meetings in Glasgow and Leeds – see page 19 for details.**

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

**The EU almost snuffed out Britain's fishing fleets. Now the industry is looking at a huge opportunity...**

# A future for fishing



**New Billingsgate Market, London**

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WE ARE AN island nation, sustained by fish in the seas around us since the earliest times as discovered in archaeological sites around our coasts. Traditionally we have always had fishermen. But over the past 40 years we have come perilously close to losing them, along with the fish they catch, as a direct result of our membership of the EU and the enforcement of its Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

When we voted for independence in June we, the British people, gave ourselves the opportunity to find new solutions to the problem of how we feed ourselves. We can take stock of what we need, where our food comes from, how we want to produce it and what should be the balance between food we produce ourselves and food we import from elsewhere.

But the EU has not given up hope of retaining its control over the waters around

Britain. A leaked memo cited in the *Guardian* newspaper on 15 February shows that the European Parliament wants Britain's "exit agreement" to stipulate that there will be "no increase to the UK's share of fishing opportunities for jointly fished stocks [maintaining the existing quota distribution in UK and EU waters]".

## Restore the stocks

Fish are an important part of our diet, fish and chips being a famous and favourite national dish. They are also generally considered a healthy food, a valuable source of protein and other nutrients. So as a working class we need to decide how we want to restore the badly depleted fish stocks in our territorial waters and how we are going to get the fish we need from them. We need to decide how to develop a sustainable fishing industry for the long-term future.

**'First of all we must get back control of our own waters.'**

People must listen to and support those in the industry, principally the fishermen. They understand how we have got to the current sorry state, have thought about how to transform it and have put forward some good ideas.

First of all of course we must get back control of our waters. That cannot be compromised, and only then we will be able to decide how to exercise it. Those in the

*Continued on page 12*

## We're not a bargaining chip, say fishermen



The "Brexiteer Flotilla" organised by Fishing for Leave that sailed up the Thames on 15 June 2016, a week before the referendum.

Workers

FISHING COMMUNITIES around Britain are looking for guarantees that their industry will not lose out again after Brexit, after a House of Lords report in December said that the UK may have to continue to allow EU boats to fish in our waters in return for a "deal" on access to EU markets.

Using fishing as a bargaining chip – as it was in 1973 – will not do, say the fishermen. It is estimated that 93 per cent in the fishing communities voted Leave, from Scotland to the coast of the south and south west of England.

Fishermen's Associations from Thanet and Whitstable in Kent to Scottish White Fish Producers in the north are demanding a complete repeal of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy and the re-establishing of British control over its 200-mile coastal waters.

Simon Collins, Executive Officer of the Shetland Fishermen's Association, reflecting the view of the entire Scottish fishing industry, says that Brexit creates a sea of opportunity for island and coastal communities throughout the UK. "Once out of Europe, the UK will have the right to manage its own waters as it sees fit and control access to them."

"We urge the UK and Scottish governments to use their strength in this area to restore pride and dynamism to an industry so cynically sacrificed upon EU entry all those years ago."

They want to see a revival of their harbours and livelihoods, says Ayrshire fisherman Aaron Brown, who organised the Vote Leave 35-strong flotilla which sailed up the Thames on 15 June last year. The communities themselves have the right to determine the industry's future. "We can define a proper fit for purpose policy", he said.

In 1973 prime minister Edward Heath handed over rights to fish British waters – with some of the richest fish stocks in the world – in return for being "allowed" to join the EU. Now, according to latest estimates, 59 per cent of all catches in UK waters are by EU vessels, with 63 per cent of total catches throughout the EU being caught in British waters.

A new 90-page report from Fishing For Leave ([ffl.org.uk](http://ffl.org.uk)), published in January, outlines the case for sovereignty for our fishing industry. ■

*Continued from page 11*

industry have concrete proposals (see box, "Take back the zone", p13).

The knowledge of what had happened to fisheries played a large part in the vote to Leave. All around the coast, communities who had seen what the EU did to our fisheries recorded some of the highest majorities for Leave in the referendum.

Joining the EU forced us to share access to fishing grounds between 12 miles and 200 miles from the coast. Even the inner

12 miles is up for grabs every 10 years. Politicians like Edward Heath simply lied about this.

The Common Fisheries Policy defined fish stocks as a common European resource to be shared out by all member states. It worked on the principle that landlocked countries like Austria or Hungary could determine policy for nations that had centuries old fishing industries. From that came a sustained, decades-long attack on our fishing that left many of our fishing ports as dead as mining or steel towns.

The EU also encouraged quota-hopping, under which foreign owned boats from big commercial fishing interests in Spain and Denmark could grab the stocks in our waters by using British registered ships, crewed by Spaniards, and landing their catches in Spain.

When the government passed legislation aiming to ensure that a boat had to be British-owned and crewed in order to use a British fishing quota it was overruled by the European Court of Justice.

The quota system favours big industrial

trawlers while penalising small, sustainable inshore fishing communities who are denied quotas. And, though the EU “reforms” the CFP from time to time, its aims remain the same.

In 2014 the case of a Dutch trawler focused our attention. The *Cornelis Vrolijk*, registered in Britain, took 23 per cent of the English quota. Greenpeace found that the five largest foreign-controlled vessels hold 32 per cent of the quota managed by English marine authorities, with 43 per cent held by foreign-controlled businesses.

We also saw discards: the CFP system forces fishermen to dump billions of dead fish because they are too small or the wrong species. A United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization study estimated discards in the North Atlantic at 13 per cent of the catch. By 2008 the European Commission itself estimated that, of the stocks of fish for which information was available, 80 per cent were being fished above the maximum sustainable yield, against a global average of 25 per cent.

## Mockery

Worse still, 30 per cent of these EU stocks being fished beyond the maximum sustainable yield were now outside safe biological limits, meaning that stocks might be unable to recover. This made a mockery of claims that the CFP was designed to conserve stocks.

The CFP also works to the detriment of fishing worldwide. The EU bullies and bribes poor countries into opening their waters to European factory ships. The EU fleet now takes around 40 per cent of its catch by weight from the waters of so-called “partner countries,” threatening the livelihoods of, for example, small fishermen on the West and East African coasts.

**‘The EU bullies and bribes countries into opening their waters.’**

## Take back the zone

A BOOKLET published last year by the Campaign for an Independent Britain, *The Betrayal of Britain’s Fishing to the European Union*, puts forward specific proposals for how we can now restore control over Britain’s fish.

Written by John Ashworth, who has worked in the industry since 1963, the booklet explains how to develop the industry anew once we take back control of our territorial waters.

The first priority has to be the UK’s fishing zone of 200 miles or the median line with other states.

The inshore industry could be built around the 0-12 mile limit, having benefits for coastal communities through tourism, recreational fishing, employment and other ancillary industries, all administered locally.

The offshore industry would be based on the 12 to 200 mile/median line, in which

you have the straddling stocks and reciprocal arrangements with other states. When another nation’s vessels fish in our waters they must do so under our rules.

The rules could be based on an existing document called FleXcit, produced by the Leave Alliance. Control of the catch should be based on the concept of days at sea, which removes the present incentives to cheat, inherent in the quota system, and avoids the terrible waste of discarded fish.

All fish move freely, and to protect juvenile fish we must close areas where they are abundant, often at short notice which is never possible when under control by Brussels.

Fishing gear must be designed specifically to allow the escape unharmed of everything below the Minimum Landing Size, and this will vary from one area to another and from time to time. ■

Despite all these depredations, the seas around Britain are irremovable and indestructible. You cannot relocate the North Sea to the Mediterranean, and even after the enormous damage done to it by over-fishing under the CFP, the North Sea can again be home to a healthy, sustainable population of fish providing food for us and for others in Europe and elsewhere.

## Free

In 2014 fishing contributed £426 million to the UK GDP and employed around 12,000 fishermen. We are now free to return to the standard in international law: exclusive national fishing rights up to 200 miles from the coast, the Exclusive Economic Zone, in the same way as Norway and Iceland. It would, of course, be open to us to negotiate, if we saw fit, for other countries’ fishing fleets to have access to parts of our waters.

We should be free to regulate fishing, with due regard to the science, so as to feed ourselves. What of conservation? The regulations that require nations to co-operate to preserve stocks are not EU-derived, but come from the United Nations – the UN

Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We would need to enforce the limits we decide on. In this context, it was significant that the Prime Minister said in Washington: “The days of Britain and America intervening in sovereign countries in an attempt to remake the world in our own image are over.” Certainly the British working class has no interest in being part of a world gendarmerie, whether recruited to that task by the EU or by the USA. It follows that we should rethink the role of the Royal Navy. We need an adequate, well-resourced fisheries protection fleet, and the marine capability to stop people smuggling, not ships designed for aggression overseas.

There is a great deal to be done. These are questions not only for those who work in the fishing industry but for the whole British working class – we share a common interest on what happens next in the industry. ■

- This article is largely based on the speech given at a CPBML public meeting in London in February.

When the EU invented the concept of the “single market”, much a market, more a mechanism for enforcing EU contr

# Real independence and



Wissano Sireapat/shutterstock.com

**Under the guise of the single market, the EU has enshrined the right of capital to move where it likes, slashing wages and eroding rights.**

WITH NEGOTIATIONS on Britain’s departure from the European Union set to start soon, it’s worth looking again at why the Single Market is such a danger to national sovereignty.

It all sounds so good: one single market to trade in. But the siren voices in parliament and elsewhere that say we must have “access” to the EU’s single market must be resisted.

The government’s recent White Paper on leaving the EU starts off with two priorities: to provide “certainty and clarity” and to “take control of our own statute book and bring an end to the jurisdiction of the [European] Court of Justice of the European Union in the UK”.

That’s an excellent start, because membership of the single market means the opposite of taking control of our own laws.

And the main reason for this is that the “single market” is not what most people think of as a market – a place where goods are bought and sold. It is a structure that governs almost everything relating to modern society.

Under the single market, the EU determines not only what can be sold, but also what can be produced. So when the EU banned the sale of vacuum cleaners with motors above 1,600 watts – as it did in 2014 – it also outlawed the manufacture of those cleaners, even for export.

## Far-reaching

In the single market, there is no room for national standards and preferences. And because it includes the free movement of capital, it can reach far into national life. One example: Greece has been forced to

abandon its practice of ensuring that pharmacies (chemists shops) are owned by pharmacists – because that’s a restriction on the free movement of companies and capital.

But Germany still has laws restricting who can operate a pharmacy. The difference between Germany and Greece is that one country does what it wants and the other is being run by the European Central Bank and the European Commission. It should come as no surprise that the fullest implementation of the single market has come in the “bail-out” countries – the ones that have no control over what happens to them.

The origin of the single market lies in the Treaty of Rome, which set up what is now the EU 60 years ago. That treaty did indeed talk about the elimination of restrictions on

it was playing fast and loose with language. It's not so  
 rol over national economies and national life...

# the single market trap

the import and export of goods.

But it went further, talking about the abolition of "obstacles to freedom of movement of persons, services and capital". Note that the word "persons" is not simply poor English for "people". It includes people, but covers "legal persons" and so means legal entities such as companies and partnerships.

But for decades the development of the single market languished, partly because any changes required unanimity among the Council of Ministers. Then along came the Single European Act of 1985 – enthusiastically supported by the prime minister of the day, Margaret Thatcher. She pushed through the act, then despatched former cabinet member Lord Cockfield to Brussels as commissioner for the single market, tasked with making sure it happened.

## Forced

That act wiped away the requirement for unanimity, allowing Brussels to force through changes to create its single market. Free movement took off. But of course, the most important freedom for the EU was the free movement of companies and of capital.

So when the European Court of Justice ruled in 2007 that the International Transport Workers Federation could not

back Finnish workers and stop Viking Line shifting operations to Estonia, the workers fell foul of the EU's fundamental commitment to the free movement of these legal persons (in this case, they called it a "right to establishment", that is, to set up a business anywhere in the EU).

This freedom is rather one-sided. It allows employers to shift operations – and stops workers from taking effective action against them. Actually, EU law will allow workers to take action against employers exercising their right to free movement, but only if unions can show that the action is going to be ineffective!

## Profits

Of course, the EU also allows workers to move from one country to another, as part of the single market. Across the EU, employers are raking in profits from the resultant downward pressure on wages.

But the EU does more than allow movement – it actively encourages it through an EU-wide jobs portal, EURES.

It is now EU law, currently applicable to Britain, that countries must make available to the portal "all job vacancies and job applications published at national level". So not only do we have to accept migrant labour lowering pay and professional stan-

**'The EU determines not only what can be sold, but what can be produced.'**

dards, we are compelled to advertise throughout the EU for migrants to come here.

Despite the wailing of the diehard remainers, there is life outside the single market. The USA and China both export more to the EU than Britain does, without having to accept citizens of EU countries living and working in their country. Neither of them has to submit to the authority of the European Court of Justice.

To its supporters, the EU's fifth column in Britain, the single market is an iconic essential. But what does the single market actually do? They don't know.

So the next time someone tells you we should stay in the single market, ask them which aspects of it we should adopt. You'll probably find they know nothing – and least of all that it was one of Margaret Thatcher's pet projects. ■

## Customs union – another unification ploy

THE SCOTTISH and Welsh regional administrations are urging the government to stay in the single market – predictably, since it effectively means staying in the EU and under the authority of its Court of Justice. But they are also calling for Britain to stay in the Customs Union.

Now, a customs union can be a handy thing. It means mutually accepted tariffs, and allows goods accepted in one country in the union to be transported without checks or proof of origin through or to any other country in the union.

As it happens, only one proper country has a customs union agreement with the EU – Turkey – and it's a partial agreement. (The statelets Andorra, Monaco and

San Marino are also part of the single market.) The deal was signed in 1995, and covers manufactured goods and processed agricultural products.

But for a Britain seeking independence from the EU it would be just another chain. Sinan Ülgen, a former Turkish diplomat and someone who helped negotiate its customs union with the EU, has pointed this out. The most important problem for Britain, he says is "the ensuing loss of independence in trade policy".

Specifically, he says, "A customs union member is held to follow the EU trade policy and cannot negotiate separate free trade agreements with third

countries independently of the EU."

So Turkey, with its partial access to the customs union, cannot negotiate trade agreements with other countries on manufactured goods and processed agricultural products.

A full customs union between Britain and the EU would mean handing all trade policy back to Brussels. Britain would not be able, then as now, to negotiate any trade agreements at all.

And since trade is at the heart of modern society, a lot of things flow from a customs union. Germany well understands this. Its own customs union (Zollverein), begun in 1834, was a precursor of the unification of Germany in 1871. ■

**The prison population is soaring. Meanwhile, conditions of committing suicide and self-harming. But never mind, the**

# They're turning prisons i

BRITAIN'S PRISON service has reached yet further landmarks of decline with the number of suicides, prisoners dying in custody and incidents of self-harming soaring along with the ballooning prison population.

Trouble is brewing, routinely. Last year saw more prison riots and disturbance – Bedford, Swaleside, Birmingham and so on – since the Strangeways riots of 1993. The only statistic heading downwards has been the number of prison staff – cut by 25 per cent since 2010. The Chief Inspector of Prisons describes prisons as “unacceptably violent and dangerous places”.

The facts speak for themselves. According to official figures released on 26 January by the Ministry of Justice, last year saw 119 suicides, 354 prisoners dying in custody, and assaults soaring to more than 25,000. Nearly half of prisoners self-harm – 37,784 prisoners last year. Meanwhile, the prison population rose to more than 85,000.

For its population, Britain has more people in prison than almost any country in the West. Despite year-on-year warnings that the system cannot cope, successive governments have continued to expand it. Whose interest is served by this situation? Step forward the privateers.

## Private prisons

The policy of building private prisons generates a business interest to continually expand the prison population for a handful of companies like G4S, Sodexo Serco.

Bigger, more modern prisons run by private companies are not about reform or rehabilitation but about increased company profits. Why bother to address the causes of crime, or to reform offenders, since an expanding prison population is good business for the privatised prison companies?

Look at the circumstances and backgrounds of most inmates, and you can see that the issue of prison is a class question (as are the crimes committed against

society by capitalism that go unpunished).

The prison system shows the genius of capitalism: it can generate a profit from the worst aspects of behaviour in society. But where is the dividing line between the criminal and those who benefit from the spoils of crime? What happened to the bankers who caused the financial crash of 2007 to 2008? Nothing.

The trend towards privatised prison building began in the 1990s. It naturally required defeating the unions to enable the companies to cut staff levels and cut wage and pension costs. Average basic pay rates for prison officers are 41 per cent higher in public than in private prisons.

Private prisons impose longer hours, and worse pension, overtime and leave arrangements, and they don't recognise the Prison Officers' Association. Staff turnover is 25 per cent a year, against 2.5 per cent in public prisons. And – no surprise – the most expensive prisons of all are those set up under the Private Finance Initiative, mainly by the last Labour government.

## Inhumane

Conditions in prisons can be inhumane, with many prisoners sitting out their sentences in overcrowded shared cells, eating, sleeping and using the toilet in the same small space as another person up to 23 hours a day.

The last Chief Inspector of Prisons said in 2016 that he was losing his capacity for disgust. His judgement on young offender institutions was that they were even worse than adult prisons, citing appalling levels of violence and self-harm, and that the custody model does not work. Feltham, the west London young offenders institution, has a shortfall of 67 officers according to official figures released on 16 February this year.

Educational and training opportunities in adult and youth prisons can be minimal or non-existent, often due to staff cuts, turnover or a lack of resources. When their sentences are over, ex-prisoners are turned out of prison with little help to restart their lives or get a job. Many of the rough sleepers on Britain's streets are ex-prisoners.

The evidence shows that education and employment are critical in reducing re-offending and therefore cutting crime – yet only around one in four prisoners enters



**Pentonville Prison, London, November 2016: an unofficial 24 hour walkout in protest at the dangerously low minimum number of staff.**

**‘More than half of prisoners self-harm.’**



of work suffer – and more prisoners than ever are  
re's profit to be made...

# into profit centres



able to legally strike, prison officers stage an  
dangerous state of a Prison Service with only the

Stefano Cagnoni/reportdigital.co.uk

employment on their release.

Just one in six leaves prison with an education or training placement. One in three leave with nowhere to live. 74 per cent of those with no work or accommodation on release reoffend, as against 43 per cent of those who have worked in prison. We need more support on release, more ability to earn and save for release.

Levels of mental illness among prisoners are very high. We should stop using prisons as asylums. The NHS and Primary Care Trusts must be funded adequately to provide court diversion schemes, whereby mentally ill offenders can be given appropriate health provision outside the criminal justice system.

For this to work, additional investment must be made in community mental health, medium secure healthcare places and halfway houses. Residential drug treatment places at £35,000 a year compared with more than £40,000 a year for a revolving door prison place will save millions.

There were 3,885 women in prison in 2015 – a small proportion of overall numbers, but many of them are mothers of young children, and their imprisonment often breaks up families. Yet the vast majority of women sent to prison have not committed serious or violent crimes.

Nearly two-thirds of women prisoners have been abused. Two-thirds of women entering prison do so on remand, very many for psychiatric assessment. It's time for government to deliver on its promise to develop women-only bail hostels.

## Harsh

Britain has the highest imprisonment rate in western Europe and the most rapidly rising prison population. We have more people serving life sentences and we lock up more children, from an earlier age, than most of the rest of the world's countries.

This is not because we have more crime, or more serious crime than other countries. It is because we send more offenders to custody for longer periods than any other country in Western Europe.

In 1993 Home Secretary Michael Howard claimed, "Prison works." He said of his proposals to toughen up the criminal justice system, "This may mean that more

**'Conditions of work  
in many prisons are  
becoming  
intolerable.'**

people will go to prison... We shall no longer judge the success of our system of justice by a fall in the prison population."

Since then Tory and Labour governments alike have forced numbers up. Yet the number of prison officers was cut by 5,200 between 2010 and 2016. The number of full-time prison officers dropped by 600 in the last year. Conditions of work are becoming intolerable in many prisons due to acute staff shortages, lack of training, and increasing numbers of prisoners.

According to the National Crime Survey crime rates are falling. But more people are going to prison. In 1991, 15 per cent of those found guilty of indictable offences were sent to prison – in 2011, 25 per cent.

And the number of men, women and children sent to prison has more than doubled in two decades, notes the Howard League for Penal Reform. All this comes at a terrible cost to taxpayers, society and communities. When costs fully are accounted for, each prison place costs an average of £40,000 a year. Adding to the problem, 12 per cent, 10,000, are foreign nationals.

Appallingly, children as young as 10 can be branded as criminals in Britain – the lowest age of criminal responsibility in Europe, and well below other countries such as France, Italy and Spain. The younger a person is imprisoned, the higher the likelihood of reoffending: 78 per cent of all offenders under 21 reoffend within two years, and more than 80 per cent of children aged between 15 and 18.

The overall reoffending rate after prison has risen from 51 per cent in 1992 to 67 per cent. The financial costs to society of reoffending have been estimated at up to £13 billion each year. Prison clearly isn't working. Under capitalism criminal justice is a business, generating misery for many and massive profits for the few. ■

**The SNP and the Yes campaign supporters have been the “Scotland in the EU”. Yet working class unity across Britain**

# No to the break-up of Britain

WHEN OVER 72 per cent of the British electorate turned out in the EU referendum – a higher figure than in the last five general elections – it was clear they were voting as a British voice. Regions, sections or “nations” were not determining their own futures in or out of the European Union. It was a vote for Britain as a whole with a result that applied to Britain as a whole.

The path to this clear democracy had already been established in 2014 with victory for the rejection of Scottish independence in the referendum by nearly 11 percentage points. That decision reaffirmed that we are one nation from the Scilly Isles to the Shetland Isles.

Such worker unity is essential if we are to defend ourselves against the capitalist club that is the EU, with its free flows of capital and labour, anti-worker judgements in the European Courts of Justice and attacks on sovereignty. The class that forged the nation voted as a nation to reject the EU.

The SNP and the “Yes” campaign fought and lost their attempt to break up Britain in September 2014. In desperation to recoup their losses, they denounce class unity and the integrity of Britain as a nation. They do not accept the majority British decision to leave the EU and seek to rerun that vote as well as the one in which they were roundly defeated in 2014.

Unfortunately for them the first rerun idea is a busted flush. As for a second independence referendum, polling ever since the month after they lost points to a steady majority in Scotland against holding one. The only successful “declaration of independence” has come from the British electorate as a whole voting to leave the European Union. The whole British electorate, the working class as a whole, should have a say if anyone wants to dismember their nation.

Who would want the EU’s free move-

ment of labour and capital anyway? The SNP and the “Yes” campaign supporters have been the cheerleaders for EU membership and the concept of “Scotland in the EU” – even though many of them, often trade union members, also campaign against impoverishment, zero-hours contracts, restrictions on collective bargaining and the privatisation of our national assets.

The EU and its directives have been the source of these miseries and depredations for decades. In February the EU itself acted as cheerleader for the SNP government, interfering in the internal affairs of Britain by directly offering them a separate deal to remain in the EU despite Brexit.

The Friends of Europe report (the name speaks for itself!) to the European Parliament’s Committee on Constitutional Affairs urged EU institutions that they “should be prepared to deal with Scotland”. It demands a different approach to Scotland saying “there are discussions in those territories (Scotland, Northern Ireland and Gibraltar) regarding the possibility of obtaining differentiated status as compared to the rest of the UK in the withdrawal process. This would point to a possible differentiated application of EU law. Moreover, there is a call from some sectors of those territories to listen and accommodate the will of the majority of citizens of those territories to remain in the EU.”

## Interference

Focusing on Scotland, the report points to “the different position of that devolved territory and of the UK Government regarding the participation in the single market as well as their approach to the free movement of citizens.” It insisted: “The questions on whether differentiations could be envisaged in the current constitutional and institutional set up of the Union should thus be addressed”. If this is not interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation, what is?

To its discredit, the Labour Party chimes in with support for the EU’s free movement of labour as an essential companion to the free movement of capital – and voted with the SNP in the Scottish parliament against the triggering of Article 50. Only three of their MSPs voted for it – Neil Findlay, Richard Leonard and Elaine Smith.



Scotland in Union

Two days after the referendum, Glasgow: asserting t

There has been no let-up in the volume of good reasons why the dismemberment of Britain should be opposed, particularly by organised workers. The important point is that capitalism wants to break up the potential great strength of a united British working class because in the struggle against capitalism class unity is essential.

The euro has failed the peoples of Greece, Portugal, Spain and France – why would we tolerate it in Britain? Equally intolerable would be to have as the Scottish central bank one that the British taxpayer is still bailing out or one that brings in overbearing US financial interests.

The break-up of nations is dangerous. Just look at the EU-inspired disintegration of Yugoslavia. The era of rich pickings from North Sea oil and gas is over; Scotland could not survive alone economically without subsidy from the Bank of England.

This economic debility is already coming home to roost for the SNP. Small businesses are in revolt against the Scottish government’s attempt to replenish its coffers by hiking business rates. Even the flagship international football ground, Hampden

**‘In February the EU itself acted as a cheerleader for the SNP government.’**

cheerleaders for EU membership and the concept of  
n is essential to our future...

# Britain!



the unity of Britain

Park, is threatened with closure by this hike. Pubs, restaurants and hotels, for example, face business rates rises of up to 400 per cent in the first revaluation since 2010.

For organised workers there is dismay at the steady rise in unemployment. In February a rise of 6,000 in the jobless total has taken the unemployment figure in Scotland to 135,000 while across Britain the figure fell by 7,000. The trade deficit in Scotland is now over £3 billion.

Severe cuts to council funding are cited by cities in Scotland as reasons for raising council tax by 3 per cent. £53 million worth of cuts have now been announced in Glasgow. The city's share of local government funding has decreased annually during the years of SNP government.

### 'Brexit bounce'

In contrast, significant sectors of Scotland's economy have benefited from a "Brexit bounce". A Business Trends report by consultants BDO found optimism among manufacturers at a 20-month high and at a 14 month peak in the service sector. BDO's head in Scotland, Martin Gill, added that the post Brexit circumstances "have provided a much-needed short-term boost for our economy, particularly our manufacturers".

There is guarded optimism in agriculture and fishing too. In January the conference of the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society urged the industry to start preparing now for the major changes that will happen

**'The separatists can only be seen as backward looking and destructive'**

when Britain fully exits the EU. The chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Bertie Armstrong, wrote an article in *The Scotsman* headlined "Fishermen must dive in and grab opportunity that Brexit presents". He emphasised "that with Brexit now looming, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to regain control of our fisheries and our 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone . For fishing and its associated industries, there is no doubt that these opportunities are immense. Indeed, this sea of opportunity is one that will domino down to everyone in the UK by putting our waters back under our own control."

With such hands-on and active creators of our post Brexit, independent Britain urging us on, the separatists can only be seen as backward looking and destructive – of both our national working class and our national unity. ■

## Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist

# MAY DAY MEETINGS 2017

## BUILD THE NEW BRITAIN

You are cordially invited to join us to celebrate May Day. We have meetings in Glasgow, Leeds and London.

The referendum decision changes everything. We are taking back the levers of power from Brussels, and hold our future in our own hands. We are a country rich in natural resources and above all rich in intellect. A new era is dawning for Britain. We must grasp it and make sure it serves the interests of an independent country and progress for workers.

No one else can tell us what is good for us. Take control!



**A journalist looks at the consequences – throughout the Middle East – of the 2003 invasion of Iraq...**

# The long shadow of war



US troops on patrol in Basra, Iraq, 2010.

*The Age of Jihad, Islamic State and the great war for the Middle East*, by Patrick Cockburn, hardback, 464 pages, ISBN 978-1784784492, Verso, 2016, £20 or less. Kindle & e-book editions available, paperback available October 2017.

THIS IS AN illuminating account of the disaster that the US-British attack on Iraq has visited upon the countries of the Middle East. Patrick Cockburn was Middle East correspondent for *The Independent*, and he uses many of his contemporary articles to demonstrate the consequences of that invasion.

Cockburn shows that “the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the earthquake whose aftershocks we still feel. It energised and expanded existing conflicts and confrontations such as those between Shia, Sunni and Kurds; Saudi Arabia and Iran; countries opposed to US policy and those favouring it.”

He notes that UN sanctions devastated Iraq in the 13 years between 1990 and 2003, over which time standards of living fell from the same level as Greece to those of Mali. The effect of sanctions was murderous. The World Health Organisation put it clearly in 1996: “the vast majority of the country’s population has been on a semi-starvation diet for years”. The UN

estimated that between six and seven thousand Iraqi children were dying every month as a result of sanctions.

Dennis Halliday, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, resigned in 1998 protesting against the UN sanctions. He warned, “What should be of concern is the possibility of more fundamentalist Islamic thinking developing ... It is not well understood as a spin-off of the sanctions regime. We are pushing people to take extreme positions.”

## Shattered

Ignored at the time, Halliday was right: the extreme Sunni sectarian Islamic State rules a third of Iraq, and Shia religious parties dominate Iraq’s government. The 2003 invasion destroyed the Iraqi state and army, but sanctions had already shattered the country’s society and economy. The British working class opposed the murderous, illegal aggression, but we were unable to stop our state from waging the war.

Cockburn argues that Labour prime minister Tony Blair was wrong to deny that hostility to the invasion of Iraq motivated suicide bombers. He says “The findings of an investigation, to be published soon, into three hundred young Saudis, caught and interrogated by Saudi

**‘The effect of sanctions on Iraq was murderous.’**

intelligence on their way to Iraq to fight or blow themselves up, shows that very few had any previous contact with al-Qa’ida or any other terrorist organisation previous to 2003. It was the invasion of Iraq which prompted their decision to die.”

And the Saudi rulers funded that terrorism. The then US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, wrote in 2009, “Saudi Arabia remains a critical financial support base for al-Qa’ida...and other terrorist groups.”

## Doing it again

On 17 March 2013, Cockburn warned, “We are going to do it again. The British effort to get the EU arms embargo amended so that it can supply weapons to the Syrian insurgents is justified by self-serving falsifications about the situation on the ground similar to those used to garner support for the invasion of Iraq 10 years ago. ... Giving more arms to the rebels is not the way to end the war ...”

Then the British and US governments and their allies Qatar and Saudi Arabia armed the Syrian rebels, who are run by ISIS and al-Qa’ida. There is no significant moderate opposition.

Cockburn wrote on 19 November 2015, “the massacre in Paris has exposed the bankruptcy of Western policy towards the so-called Islamic State and the war in Syria and Iraq. ... The US, Britain, France and their allies have refused to admit that the fall of Assad would create a power vacuum that would inevitably be filled by Islamic fundamentalists from ISIS or al-Qa’ida clones...”

Thankfully, the Syrian government, with the aid of its ally Russia, is defeating the Islamist fascists. The British working class successfully opposed open war on Syria in 2012, but is still letting the state intervene in Syria’s internal affairs. ■

We look at two struggles from the late 19th century that helped define our class, and what Britain means...

# Class struggle across a nation



Stevedores' float on East India Dock Road, London, during the 1889 dockers' strike.

SINCE THE BIRTH of industrial capitalism, a web of industrial sinews has held the constituent regions of Britain together. The recent dismembering of much of that web has brought not only economic collapse to regions but also threatened our national integrity. We recount struggles in London and North Wales that pursued essential class goals of improving wages and conditions of work.

## THE LONDON DOCKS

In the 1880s London was the greatest port in the world. Dock workers fell into two distinct groups. A relatively small number

**'A day without work meant being unable to find the necessities of life.'**

of workers had higher pay and some degree of job security. These included stevedores, more skilled loaders of cargo on ships, who were already unionised, and lightermen, loaders and pilots of the Thames barges that shuttled cargo around the docks. Alongside them worked large numbers of casual labourers who lifted and unloaded cargo from ships, or hauled and stacked goods into warehouses.

Usually men were too old at forty for the repetitive, hard, physical work of a casual labourer. Worse, most were hired day-to-day for a mere pittance of a wage. Foremen could take on casuals for as little as half an hour at a time. Pay was unpredictable as it depended on weather, tides, and cargoes. Even when work was regular, wages were not enough to stay out of poverty. Casuals would tramp the docks for hours, seeking work from foremen.

Men were herded into the "cage": an iron-barred shed, outside which a contractor or foreman would walk up and down with the air of a dealer in a cattle market.

They would pick and choose from a crowd of men, who, in their eagerness to obtain employment, might trample each other underfoot, and fight like beasts for the possession of a ticket for a day's or a few hours' work at no more than sixpence (2.5p) an hour.

Tens of thousands of casual labourers lived close-packed around the London docks in places like Poplar, East Ham and Rotherhithe. A day without work meant being unable to find the necessities of life. In 1887 the Medical Officer of Health for Bermondsey reported child deaths from many deficiency diseases including "want of breast milk", rickets (vitamin D deficiency), "atrophy, debility or wasting" (likely related to malnutrition) as well as starvation and severe malnutrition.

## Breaking point

In July 1888, matchworkers at Bryant & May in east London – mostly young women, similarly poorly-paid, similarly unskilled – struck for two weeks to draw attention to their appalling working conditions. Their noisy pickets and public marches were a success.

The newly formed Union of Women Matchworkers was the first female union in the country. Bryant & May's workers lived cheek-by-jowl with the dockers. Their success proved that unskilled workers could improve their working conditions by providing a determined, organised front to management.

By the summer of 1889, the dock labourers had reached breaking point. The Great Dock Strike started in West India Dock on 12 August 1889, after the gang and the dock superintendent clashed over the amount of bonus money due for unloading the *Lady Armstrong*. Never before had these casual workers stood together. The strikers demanded a base pay rise – the famous "Docker's Tanner" – overtime pay and a minimum employment period of four hours.

*Continued on page 22*

*Continued from page 21*

The employers were shocked by the strike and tried everything to impede the struggle. But on 16 August 10,000 men marched round the docks. Two days later the stevedores, who had no immediate grievance of their own, joined the strike followed by the lightermen and the men at Surrey Docks on 20 August. The struggle covered the whole port. At its height probably 100,000 workers were involved including 15,000 pickets and picket foremen who aimed to patrol the rivers, police the railway stations to deter blacklegs and control the docks.

There were almost daily marches. On 24 August, the largest procession, from Poplar Town Hall to the City of London, captured the sympathy of the capital – as well as much-needed funds for welfare relief. By the end of the month, *The Times* noted that London's overseas trade was totally paralysed.

The dock owners meant to starve the strikers into submission. But £30,000 relief sent from Australia at the prompting of the Australian dockworkers' union allowed the strike to continue into September.

Butler's Wharf in Bermondsey began independent negotiations with the strikers late in August and an overall agreement was reached on 14 September 1889. All the strikers' pay and time demands were met and the contract system was abolished. The Great Dock Strike showed what a united working-class community could achieve and stimulated union recruitment of dock labourers at other ports up and down the country.

## THE WELSH QUARRIES

In the 19th century around Gwynedd in north Wales, slate quarry workers endured harsh conditions and a short life expectancy. Yet quarry mining was a skilful occupation taking many years to learn, giving workers a large say in how they worked. Initially quarry workers haggled over the costing of extracting different qualities of slate, seeing themselves as independent contractors rather than employed workers on a wage.

In 1874 the North Wales Quarrymen's

Union was established and came under immediate attack from the employers. Workers at one mine after another were given the choice between repudiating the union or losing their jobs. This culminated in lock-outs at the two biggest quarries, Dinorwic and Bethesda, owned by landlord-capitalists including Lord Penrhyn.

In Dinorwic the lockout lasted five weeks. But at Bethesda the men drew up their own demands and won an increase in wages and the replacement of the quarry management. The union won further wage increases and decreases in hours over the next few years.

## Downturn

In 1879 an economic downturn ended 20 years of growth in quarry production. The union faced its first major test as management brought in wage cuts. The downturn led to a long depression. In 1885-86 management locked out the Dinorwic quarrymen until they accepted new conditions curtailing holidays, with wage cuts and redundancies.

A mass meeting of 3,000 men burned pro-Penrhyn newspapers and declared a strike. After trying to re-open the quarry several times without one of the locked-out men returning, management still managed to win a victory once the union ran out of funds and had to stop dispute pay.

A lock-out at Penrhyn Quarry in 1896-97 began over the men being refused leave to attend a Labour Day demonstration in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Over 2,500 stayed away from work anyway and were subsequently suspended for two days.

After this attack on their conditions, they drew up demands for time off and a wage increase, which management rejected. Although the quarry workers agreed to take strike action in the spring, management provoked an earlier strike in November by sacking 74 leading union members.

The strike-cum-lockout lasted until the following August, supported by contributions from trade unions across Britain. Like Dinorwic, there were several occasions when management tried to re-open the quarry. Again no workers went back, though many found work elsewhere. But

Image and caption information courtesy Wikipedia



**Splitting slate blocks with hammer and chisel to process was not mechanised until the second half of the 19th century. These quarrymen are working in the traditional way. These quarrymen are working in the traditional way.**

the union leadership negotiated a deal that effectively meant de-recognition of the workers' committee as the voice of workers at that quarry, without their knowledge. The main leaders of the quarry workers' committee then took over the union leadership at a special conference.

In November 1900 new tensions built at the Penrhyn Quarry over the extension of contracting out, which meant the quarrymen would work for a contractor instead

**'Management provoked an earlier strike by sacking leading union members.'**

of arranging their own bargains. This led to assaults on contractors seeking speedier production at the Ponc Ffridd bank. 26 quarrymen, prosecuted for attacking the contractors, were suspended from work for a fortnight. When the matter came to court in November, the Penrhyn quarrymen marched to Bangor to support the accused, 20 of whom were found not guilty of the charges.

The suspended quarrymen returned to work on 19 November, but eight banks had been closed, leaving 800 men without work. On 22 November, 2,000 quarrymen refused to work until the other 800 were able to do so too. Management issued an ultimatum: "Go on working or leave the quarry quietly". Every one of the 2,000 quarrymen left the quarry beginning the



To produce roofing slates requires great skill. The half of the 20th century, and some slate is still being made at the Dinorwic Quarry, Wales, about 1910.

Great Strike (or Lockout) of Penrhyn that lasted three years. On 22 December, new terms were offered to the quarrymen: 1,707 refused, 77 accepted.

As union funds for strike pay were inadequate, there was a great deal of hardship among the 2,800 workers. The quarry reopened in June 1901; about 500 men returned to work, castigated as "traitors" by the remainder. The names of those who had broken the strike were published in local newspapers.

Cards with "Nid oes Bradwr yn y ty hwn" ("No traitor in this house") appeared in strikers' windows in the Bethesda area. Taking a card from the window was a sign that a worker had returned to work. By June 1902, 700 men had returned to the quarry and another 2,000 moved from the area, most going to work in the coalfields of south Wales, where they helped develop the mineworkers' union – which later became the NUM.

In September 1903 the General Federation of Trade Unions, set up by the TUC to support affiliated unions in struggle, stopped strike pay in a period of economic recession. In November a mass meeting decided narrowly to return to work on management terms. Men considered to have been prominent in the union were not re-employed, and many who had left the area to seek work did not return.

The dispute left a legacy of bitterness and tensions for many decades. The Penrhyn quarry business, unwilling to allow dignity to its workers, never recovered either. Its earlier fortune, based on slave labour in Jamaica, had been used to build a mock castle.

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

# NO ADVANCE WITHOUT MARXISM

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
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# Their freedom, not ours

**'It's hard to kill a concept, that is at the heart of imperialism's plans to wipe out national resistance to its domination.'**

CAPITALISM HAS a peculiar way with words. It talks about freedom and choice – and who doesn't want freedom and choice? – but they only exist if you have the money. And now we're starting to hear a lot about "free trade". Workers should be wary.

Everyone seems to like this free trade. Its supporters range from the European Parliament – which has just approved CETA, the EU's free trade agreement with Canada – to the UK government, and include the clueless TUC. We should be very wary.

The push for these free trade agreements dates back over a decade. Capital in all its forms – financial, industrial, commercial – was looking to expand all over the world, but was being held back by developing countries seeking to protect their nascent industries.

So capital came up with a clever wheeze. It would use the World Trade Organization (WTO), to lower trade barriers and in particular regulatory barriers so that the corporations could operate unfettered.

The WTO began its campaign to "liberalise" global trade in 2001, in what became known as the Doha Round, after the first meeting in the capital of Qatar. It even got a clever name to appeal to developing countries: the Doha Development Agenda.

It rapidly became clear that developing countries weren't fooled. And since the WTO, inconveniently, requires unanimity for any policy change, nothing happened. Talks stalled. In 2008 they effectively stopped altogether (though the Doha Round continued rather like a zombie until 2015, when it was officially killed off).

Stymied on the Doha front, imperialism, in the shape of the US and the EU, came up with a way of bypassing the WTO: bilateral and multilateral "free trade agreements".

The most prominent of these has been TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Despite its name, it's not really concerned with trade or even with tariffs.

After all, tariffs, overall, add a mere 3 per cent to transatlantic business costs. No, TTIP is about allowing the multinationals to do what they want regardless of national regulations.

A free trade agreement with the US, for example, would be designed to force us to allow hormone-fed beef or GM food-fed chickens to go on sale in Britain. It would wipe out our egg industry alongside poultry, meat and pig producers. A similar deal with New Zealand could wipe out British lamb.

A year ago, a leak to the *Guardian* newspaper exposed how EU officials told oil giant ExxonMobil that TTIP would help it "free up" markets in developing countries. Specifically, it would be able to frack where it wanted. That's their kind of freedom, not ours.

TTIP is now dead. Well, nearly. "Firmly in the freezer," said EU trade commissioner Cecilia Malmström on 24 January this year. It's been put on ice by a combination of events: the referendum vote, which reduces the size of the EU market by 20 per cent; widespread opposition; and most importantly the election of Donald Trump (Hillary Clinton was an avid supporter of TTIP).

But it's hard to kill a concept, especially when that concept is at the heart of imperialism's plans to wipe out national resistance to its domination. Free trade agreements will be back – and with the full backing of those who hate the idea of an independent Britain and who hate the British working class (even if some hate the EU too).

When we decided on 23 June last year to leave the EU, it was an assertion of our wish for control – indeed, an implementation of control. Are we going to throw off the shackles of the EU just to hand them over to the multinational companies?

Since the referendum workers have retreated to the sidelines. The debate has been dominated by Westminster. If we truly are to take control of our country, workers must take centre stage. ■

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