

WORKERS

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FOR AN INDEPENDENT BRITAIN! FOR PEACE!

Scotland Workers' resistance

Arctic War plans

Inflation War on workers

Brexit Ten years on

North Sea Energy for Britain

Teachers Ready to fight

Social care A class question

plus Historic Notes,

Steel Power and survival

News, Reviews

Middle East Stop meddling

and more

WORKERS



Ten years on

JUNE MARKS ten years since the referendum, the glorious referendum, which saw the British people vote to leave the European Union. If nothing else, it was a salutary reminder that London is not Britain, that many more people live outside the great cities than inside them. And the vote was clear – if not overwhelming.

But when David Dimbleby called the result on the BBC early in the morning of 23 June 2016 with the words, “We’re out”, he was getting ahead of events. It took years to get out, not until 31 January 2020. Why so long? Because the people in power never wanted to leave. Faced with a vote they never expected, their first impulse was to find ways to frustrate it.

And ever since, they’ve been working on ways of getting Britain back into the EU. Now our rulers and Brussels have found an ingenious solution: they are trying to get Britain back in the EU without actually rejoining.

It suits Westminster because they can say they’re not rejoining the EU. It suits Brussels because Britain isn’t sitting on decision-making committees with the risk that it might occasionally be disruptive. Britain pays the money, and abides by rules that Brussels sets.

The truth is that Brexit is a job not started properly and definitely not finished. The Withdrawal Agreement came into full effect on 31 January 2020, celebrated as Independence Day. But what with the

Northern Ireland Agreement and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (free movement between Britain and the EU didn’t actually end until 1 January 2021) it was an incomplete kind of independence.

How many in Britain see that truth? Too many – to judge by the polls – think Brexit hasn’t worked. So far, we in this party, and others, have failed to impress on the country as a whole that Brexit hasn’t properly happened. And that’s the failure.

Most people assumed that following Brexit net migration would fall. It didn’t. That is not a failing of Brexit. It’s the result of the determination of successive governments to increase the labour pool to decrease pressure on employers to raise wages and spend money training the skilled workers Britain needs.

The number of people known to have crossed the Channel in small boats in 2018 was 299. Last year it was 41,472. Just imagine how workers would be thinking about Brexit if governments had put a stop to net immigration. And to the small boats. Or supported fishing and British farming.

The mistake the working class made was in assuming that the political system would respect the vote. Yet the warnings were there after the 2014 Scottish referendum.

Ten years on, the working class must accept that nothing will change until it stops delegating politics to establishment politicians and takes responsibility for running Britain.



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

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

www.cpbml.org.uk [@cpbml](https://twitter.com/cpbml)
Issue 254, May/June 2026



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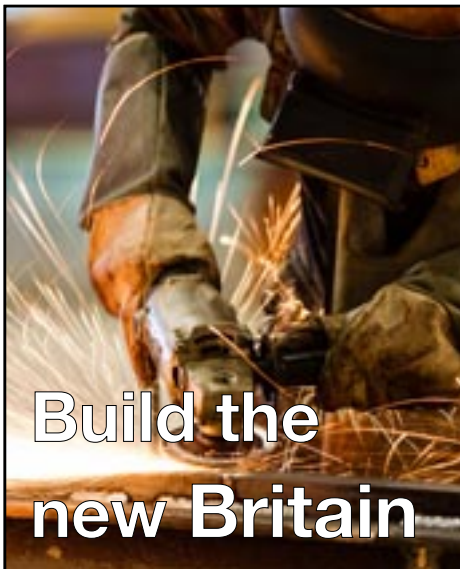
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Workers

University workers marching in defence of education, May 2025.

University academics in action

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE Union members across the country continue their fight for jobs. This is taking place separately in each institution, as part of a united campaign.

Members at Glasgow Caledonian University are balloting over industrial action against job cuts. The employer wants to lose up to 100 posts through a targeted voluntary redundancy scheme. This is supposedly in response to a predicted deficit of £10 million, although the university is not currently in deficit.

University of Edinburgh UCU members have voted to strike against the proposals to make over £140 million of cuts and axe up to 1,800 jobs. Action could include working to contract, not covering for absent colleagues, and a marking and assessment boycott. NUS Scotland has issued a statement of support for university staff across Scotland.

UCU members at London Metropolitan University continue their fight against job cuts and redundancies. Action short of a strike started on 6 April, with six days of strikes planned for later that month.

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

ENERGY

Good land buried

ENERGY SECRETARY Ed Miliband has approved yet another massive solar farm, to be built on prime food-producing land. The Springwell Solar Farm in Lincolnshire is to be the largest solar farm yet, to cover seven square miles of good agricultural land.

Springwell is the twenty-fifth large solar farm that Miliband has approved since July 2024. When it came to power in 2024, the Labour government scrapped the rules that blocked building solar farms on food-producing land.

Miliband is using planning powers that allow ministers to overrule all local people's objections to new solar and wind farms, if the minister deems the project is "nationally significant". They are then approved by default.

Starmer is no innocent bystander. He encourages Miliband's vandalism: he has pledged to "bulldoze the blockers". The Labour Party is waging war on our farmers, and the Labour Infrastructure Forum pressure group demands "take on the Nimbys".

FACTS MATTER

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

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

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



ON THE WEB

A selection of additional stories at cpbml.org.uk

EU prepares for war

The EU has long been preparing for war, pushing increased military spending by member states – and also increasing its central control. Not everyone is happy, but Keir Starmer wants to tag along.

Teachers strike for safety

Teachers at a school in Gloucestershire are taking action to resolve what they say are unsafe working conditions. So far the school and the academy trust of which it is a member are not listening...

Cuts in surgeons' training

Senior surgeons have written to the government expressing alarm that funding for highly specialised training is being cut. The letter, seen by *Workers*, is signed by surgeons working right across the NHS.

Starmer and Reeves enabling EU control

The prime minister is planning to include a measure in forthcoming legislation to allow the government to adopt EU single market rules without a parliamentary vote.

Threat to salt supply

Salt is vital, but British production is under threat. There are huge reserves, but one of the two production plants is closing and the other is foreign owned.

Plus: the e-newsletter

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

Ajit Wick/shutterstock.com



Teachers marching in London during their 2023 campaign. Now the National Education Union is to hold a ballot on new action.

Teachers ready to fight

TEACHERS IN England may soon take action over their pay and conditions. The first step was an indicative ballot of members, which closed on 17 April. The result was overwhelming, with 96 per cent voting to reject the current government offer, and 90.5 per cent ready to take industrial action. Turnout was 48.6 per cent.

In the indicative ballot, the National Education Union asked members whether they would be willing to strike over school funding, teacher pay and workload. The union's rules stipulate that before a formal ballot for industrial action, they must undertake "an indicative survey of members showing that such a ballot is likely to be successful".

As yet teachers have not been in dispute with this Labour government over pay. But depending on the follow up to the indicative ballot, teachers could soon be joining other workers in industrial action to demand a pay rise.

Currently the government proposes a 6.5 per cent pay rise for teachers spread over three years. Even before the recent jump in oil prices, this offer was unlikely to match the rate of inflation over the period. And it did nothing to redress the average 20 per cent loss in real-terms pay for teachers since 2010. School support staff have suffered a greater fall, of around 26 per cent in that time.

There are wider concerns for schools. Any award will not be funded but will come from existing school budgets. This will make even more reductions in school funding inevitable – leading to fewer staff, more work and poorer quality education. And if that was not enough, the government is also proposing to get rid of the limit of 1,265 hours each year when teachers can be directed to be at work – known as directed time. ■

HELICOPTERS

Yeovil firm saved

LEONARDO HELICOPTERS has won the government contract to build the MoD's New Medium Helicopter in February. The Italian-owned company's factory in Yeovil will manufacture 23 of its AW149 airframes.

Trade union Unite says that the government's decision to award the contract follows more than a year's campaigning by its defence members to ensure that the contract was placed. "The awarding of the contract secures over 10,000 highly skilled jobs at Leonardo, its supply chain and the surrounding community," the union said.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham

said, "The Leonardo contract is a tremendous victory for Unite members in Yeovil and across the aerospace sector. Without their commitment, hard work and dedication, it would not be being signed today.

"Of course, we are pleased that Rachel Reeves has now listened to Unite on this issue. However, it took way too long to get this done, and we still have to question why workers were left in the dark until the 11th hour."

The company had threatened to close the plant if the government failed to award the contract, ending helicopter manufacture in Britain. Founded as Westland Aircraft Works, the Yeovil factory has manufactured aircraft since 1915. ■

NHS

Resident doctors strike

RESIDENT DOCTORS in England are taking industrial action again over pay and jobs. A six-day strike began on 7 April, their fifteenth strike since March 2023. There is no end in sight to this bitter dispute. The current action was called after a ballot of the resident hospital doctors (formerly called “junior”). Over 93 per cent voted for it, though the turnout of 53 per cent was lower than for the ballot prior to last year’s strike.

The government made an offer of 3.5 per cent in March – below RPI inflation (currently 3.6 per cent). The offer was seen as risible, ignoring years of low pay increases. The BMA has been demanding pay restoration for doctors, who have

suffered cuts in real terms of 20 per cent since 2008. Health secretary Wes Streeting then withdrew his offer of 1,000 extra training posts the BMA were demanding, a deliberate provocation.

In response to the strike, the Chief Executive of NHS England, Sir Jim Mackey, said the NHS will design clinical models that are less reliant on resident doctors. He denied he was making a threat, but also claimed services had run more smoothly during the strikes, when consultants and other clinicians had filled in for resident doctors.

As the dispute became more bitter, the BMA announced a ballot of its consultant and other senior doctor members on strike action, over their 3.5 per cent pay award. They also have seen erosion of their pay in real terms since 2008. ■



Farmers demonstrating in Whitehall, 2024.

‘Reset’ threat to agriculture

THE STARMER government’s “reset” with the EU threatens to undermine food standards and production in Britain in the name of removing trade barriers and its unshakeable assumption that Brexit has been a disadvantage.

Britain will adopt new EU food regulations. The stated aim is to boost trade and reduce red tape for exporters. The real result is increased costs and to align Britain even more with EU regulations, as shown in Starmer’s announcement on 13 April.

Some media reports, and some politicians, suggest the EU food deal means marmalade sold in British shops will have to be re-labelled. This is not true. The EU is widening the legal definition of “marmalade” from June, but marmalade in British shops is already usually labelled as orange or lemon marmalade, within the EU directive.

But this false panic is beside the point. The marmalade ruling is only one of 76 updated EU food-related laws that would apply in Britain if the EU food deal is implemented (in mid-2027 if Labour ministers get their way).

Many other impacts are less benign – threatening food security, as many people and organisations have pointed out since the deal was touted last year.

Britain will have no effective say in new regulations, no matter how inappropriate they are. The EU’s attitude is take it or leave it – that’s what “dynamic alignment” means.

And alignment with the EU brings an immediate regulatory cost – the opposite of what the government claims. It would also constrain advances in gene-edited crops (“precision breeding”), a few years after Britain was freed from the EU’s backward and restrictive policy.

Crop yields will also be hit with unnecessary restrictions on the use of plant control chemicals – as highlighted by a parliamentary committee in February. And the deal could undermine Britain’s high domestic standards for agriculture and animal welfare. ■

WHAT’S ON

Coming soon

MAY

CPBML May Day Meetings

“For British independence. For peace.”

Come to celebrate May Day and join the discussion. More details on page 15.

All welcome. Free entry.

Workers of all lands, unite!

Fight for independence!

No to war!



Glasgow, *In person*: Friday 1 May, 7pm
Renfield Conference Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP

London, *In person*: Friday 1 May, 7.30pm

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

Manchester, *In person*: Saturday 9 May, 2pm

Venue to be confirmed. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for details.

Bristol, *In person*: Wednesday 6 May, 6.30pm–9.30pm

The Golden Guinea Function Room, 19 Guinea Street, Bristol BS1 6SX

JUNE

Tuesday 2 June, 7pm

Online CPBML Discussion Meeting (via Zoom)

“War in the Middle East: a British working class response”

War in the Middle East underlines the reality that the USA is no friend of the British working class. But our country is entangled with the US and that needs to change. Britain can be far more self-reliant. To make that happen, the British working class must take charge.

How can we bring that about? Come and discuss. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for an invitation.

Devolution does not help British workers. The answer is to to posturing politicians...

Scotland: workers' resist

IN SCOTLAND there are signs that class struggle is beginning to take precedence over the parliamentary road to Holyrood, with a range of actions taken by organised workers all over Scotland.

Usually characterised by low turnouts, elections are coming round again: all 129 "Members of the Scottish Parliament" (MSPs) are up for re-election on 7 May. A similar vote takes place in Wales for the Senedd in Cardiff that day, as well as council and mayoral elections in England.

By the summer's end, 12 years will have passed since the unity referendum marked the rejection of separatism. A unified Britain then voted in 2016 for its independence from the European Union. Turnout was massive in these votes in comparison with the meagre turnouts for the devolved parliament.

A general loss of confidence in MSPs and a growing disenchantment with the whole idea of devolved parliaments has grown from a catalogue of unacceptable governance. The list is long. It includes: years of delay in fixing Scotland's lifeline ferries; the lack of strategy for rebuilding industry; the steady deterioration of education; becoming the worst area in Europe for drug deaths; attempting to push through the Gender Recognition Act; the effect of immigration on jobs; the disastrous imposition of net zero policies in energy.

Recognition victories

In contrast, much more positive thinking is emerging from organised workers. This goes against the flow of electioneering and posturing by the politicians. An almost cel-



Workers

Education workers taking part in the Scottish TUC march, 25 October 2025.

bratory mood was felt behind the announcement by Unite – the trade union representing the largest number of workers in the offshore oil and gas industry – that they had at last secured recognition for a unionised workforce from one of the major oil and gas operators in the North Sea.

On 9 April Unite said that the agreement with Apache Corporation meant that they would now be able to negotiate on behalf of workers to improve jobs, pay and conditions. Apache is a subsidiary of APA Corporation headquartered in Houston, Texas, which had a world-wide revenue of \$9.74 billion in 2024. The company oper-

ates two major oil and gas fields: Forties, north east of Aberdeen, and Beryl, south east of the Shetland Isles.

Successes

Other recent successes for Unite include improved pay and pension agreements for their members at Adura Energy, at Sodexo (Sullom Voe in Shetland) and at Bilfinger UK. The struggle has to go on – for example to prevent the 50 year old Sullom Voe oil and gas terminal from becoming another disaster like the closure of Grangemouth.

Andrew Hirst writing in the *Shetland*

'By summer's end, 12 years will have passed since the unity referendum marked the rejection of separatism...'

Wrest power for the working class, and not give it away

Finance a priority



Times sounded the alarm that there could be “hundreds of job losses and millions wiped from the economy unless urgent action is taken.” Unite also gave its firm backing to the government giving the go-ahead to the Rosebank and Jackdaw oil and gas fields.

Net zero negatives

All of this shows a positive outlook that contradicts the net zero policies of the British and devolved governments. Organising against the negative effects of these policies are campaigns such as Keep Grangemouth Working and an online

petition to “Keep the North Sea Working”.

Campaign group Net Zero Watch points out, “Dozens of North Sea oil and gas fields are being blocked from development by Government net zero policies, as new analysis shows more than 50 projects were rendered ‘unviable’ by the ‘windfall tax’ and exploration ban. Why kill investment into our domestic energy supply?”

Unite was busy on the higher education front too. Around 1,000 of its members took action on 7 April at Glasgow, Strathclyde and Napier universities. The union’s officer for higher education, Alison MacLean, pointed out, “Staff working in Scottish higher education have faced years of significant and successive real-terms pay cuts. Last year university staff had one of the worst-ever pay awards imposed upon them – which is why our members have no option but to fight back.”

Teachers take action

The main trade union for teaching staff in Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), called off an overwhelmingly backed strike after securing a settlement with the Scottish administration. It also seems that the SNP wanted to settle quickly to avoid strike action during the May elections.

EIS had gone so far as the issuing of a statutory notice to strike in mid-March when an emergency meeting between the EIS, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Education Secretary settled the issues. Councils will now receive £40 million in 2026-27 enabling more recruitment, and a reduction in hours allowing more time for preparation.

But the issues are not quite settled and dispute may revive in the near future. The other teaching union, the Scottish Secondary School Teachers Association, said that 88 per cent of its members consulted had rejected the agreement.

Blows to arts and culture

A rare street demonstration by a wide variety of those working in various fields of the arts took place at the City Council headquarters in Glasgow on 27 March. A large arts base (Trongate 103) housing visual arts, music groups, theatre groups, film makers and mechanical sculptors

(Sharmanka Gallery) raised the rents of its tenants beyond what was affordable. Its owners are subsidised by Glasgow City Council. Cuts have forced the rents to rise dramatically. The arts groups feel they are being forcefully evicted. The campaign continues.

Glasgow School of Art, completely ravaged by two major fires, remains a ruin amid wrangling over responsibilities and lack of funding to restore it properly.

The Centre for Contemporary Arts has closed completely. It served the city for over 50 years as a major hub for visual arts and new music. Again withering of funding seems to have been the cause.

It is such cuts to funding of the Arts that the actors’ union Equity brought to public attention recently. Paul Fleming, Equity general secretary, pointed out, “We are watching universal access to the arts and entertainment disappear across Britain. New research by the Autonomy Institute shows the dramatic fall in local authority funding.”

Scotland’s local authorities have cut spending by over 18 per cent in 2024-25. It is even worse in England and Wales with funding falling by 61 per cent and 46 per cent respectively.

In the case of libraries, the run up to the elections has been used by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland to point out the importance of libraries and the need to fund them properly. The details of their campaign can be found on their website.

Wrest power – don’t hand it over

Rather than be consumed with the petty rivalries of the politicians in forthcoming elections, the challenge is how to wrest power from them. These politicians are intent on re-running the referendum that Scottish workers won.

The talk in SNP ranks is of another referendum in 2028 to break up Britain (and our working class). They feel that the Starmer government is weak enough to concede one. Opportunist politicians who once stood for unity are now jumping on the separatist bandwagon. The same forces are determined to rejoin the capitalist club of the EU. Workers have to redouble efforts to defeat these trends. ■

Governments are obsessed with the affordability of adult social care, intimately linked with older people's physical and mental health.

Social care is a class question

ANOTHER SPEECH, another set of headlines...and another long wait for something to be done about the crisis in adult social care. In March Baroness Casey told a Nuffield Trust Summit that social care had never had its own "creation moment".

"Instead," she said, "we are left with a system with add-ons and work arounds. Sticking plasters and glue." All very true. But what to do about it?

It was 2024 when Casey was appointed to her role chairing a commission investigating adult social care. She will deliver her final report in 2028. The can has been kicked down the road for decades.

Report after report

Since 1997 there have been at least 22 major reviews, commissions and reports – the Royal Commission on Long Term Care for the Elderly in 1999, a White Paper on Building the National Care Service in 2010, the Dilnot report Fairer Care Funding in 2011, and David Cameron's 2012 Dementia Challenge, and so on.

None has had its recommendations implemented. What are the chances of the government – any capitalist government – accepting the new report in 2028 and, crucially, implementing it immediately? Zero. And the reason for this guaranteed delay and inaction is simple: money.

In the 2022/23 financial year, local authorities spent £23.3 billion on adult social care. The Health Foundation estimated that an additional £8.3 billion would be needed by 2032/33 just to keep pace with growing demand.

'With all the talk about cost, something's being missed: why is dementia rising at all?'



Monkey Business Images

Local authorities spend billions on social care, and the need is growing.

The major driver for these costs, according to the Alzheimer's Society, is dementia, accounting for something like £17 billion.

There is a kind of fiscal panic about dementia. In a way that's unsurprising, given that the cost is set to balloon to £40 billion by 2040. But with all the talk about cost, something's being missed: why is dementia rising at all?

Not just about ageing

One common assumption is that the rising prevalence of dementia is just down to an ageing population. The idea is that as people live longer, more people will inevitably suffer some form of dementia. It's seen as a sort of curse of progress.

Yet six or seven years ago, the evidence was that dementia rates had been falling – strongly – across Europe and the United States. Research presented at Alzheimer's Research UK's 2019 conference in Harrogate indicated that the incidence of dementia actually fell by 13 per cent per decade between 1985 and 2015.

While this fall in incidence was taking place, life expectancy was rising over that same thirty year period – by 4 years in the US and in Britain by 7.6 years for men and about 6 years for women. The reasons for this are not fully understood, and are likely to include better health provision, reductions in air pollution, and safer workplaces.

Now look what's happening. The improvement in life expectancy has ground

social care. But they never confront the matter so decline – the decline of Britain...

Question



to a virtual halt. Meanwhile, the incidence of dementia is rising.

Class divide

The inescapable conclusion is that dementia cannot be an inevitable by-product of old age. Other factors are at play. And, in fact, research is clear that dementia is more common among people with lower socio-economic status than among richer people, even though – as is well known, richer people live longer than poorer people.

That research is not just US-based. It was also the conclusion following up over a quarter of a million people registered in the UK Biobank.

Of course, rich people can and do get dementia. But just as it's a fact that smok-

ing kills even though many individuals who have smoked all their life live well into their 90s, so poverty is a major driver of dementia – and of public care costs too – even though it's not confined to the poor.

All this is – or should be – well known to politicians. But as the Institute of Health Equity at University College London puts it, “While there is clear evidence to support a focus on social and economic factors in mental health, cognitive impairment and dementia, this is not widely drawn on or developed in most relevant policies or interventions.”

Poverty

So it's no accident that the resurgence of dementia is going hand in hand with the growth of poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation says it is over 20 years since the last prolonged fall in poverty in Britain. In its report on poverty published in 2025, it says, “Each of the 5 Parliaments since 2005 has recorded lower quarterly income growth than the last 13 Parliaments before 2005, stretching back to the start of available data in 1955.”

The foundation notes that the lack of income growth “started with the economic slowdown even before the global financial crisis and persisted through the crisis itself”.

Put all the research together, and the inescapable conclusion is that in this country dementia and its associated costs are intimately bound up with declining health, declining wages, rising unemployment – in short, with the decline of Britain. Dementia is a class question.

Faced with burgeoning costs and what looks like a guaranteed increase in the number of people needing care, the Casey commission is not going to be able to wave a magic wand.

In her speech to the Nuffield Summit in March Casey spoke clearly and eloquently about the disorganisation and fragmentation of social care. She spoke, too, about the scandal whereby NHS organisations are paying private providers to find ways of cutting how much they spend on Continuing Health Care budgets for people with long-term health needs.

And if these companies are successful,

‘Dementia is bound up with declining health, declining wages, rising unemployment...’

they get a cut of the savings. “I am left questioning how on earth we got here?” she said. Here's an answer: a couple of decades of bringing the market into the NHS.

But these are not just financial questions. They take no account of the misery and havoc that conditions such as dementia wreak among those hit by it and among their families.

Nor the cost to the army of unpaid carers, estimated (from Census returns) to be 5.8 million in 2024. It could be higher. The results from polling conducted by YouGov for Carers UK came up with a figure of around 7 million unpaid carers.

And all this unpaid caring is storing up problems for the future. In the polling, around half of current and past carers say caring had a negative impact on their health. And it will often affect their ability to work too.

The key messages in the Institute of Health Equity's report include as elevating the risk of poor mental health and dementia the following: lower educational attainment, poor quality manual employment, unemployment, sporadic employment, poor housing, and cold homes.

The idea that any report, however well intentioned, can address all this is fanciful. If workers want the best chance of a long, happy and healthy life, they must face the facts: dementia is a class question. And doubly so.

Firstly because it tends to affect workers much more than it does the owners of capital. But also because workers themselves must, as a class, rise to the challenge of the decline of Britain – or suffer the consequences. ■

War means that prices, and taxes, go up. It is both a cause and a means for employers to pass off a systemic element of capitalism as

Inflation: war on workers

REGARDLESS OF the ins and outs of the war on Iran and whether or not there's a ceasefire, the outcome for British workers will be more inflation. This comes on top of the post-2022 cumulative inflation of 35 per cent which at its outset the government described as transitory.

The pent up inflation in the pipeline is already being depicted as an "oil shock" – as if all would have been well but for the US and Israel attacking Iran. From this "shock" we can expect much hand wringing from the government actors. But all the while, they are quietly content in the knowledge that inflation is a class weapon used to repress British workers.

The government attraction to inflation is that it is a weapon they can hide behind. For example they say they didn't see inflation coming yet ignore the obvious and predictable impact of government money printing ("quantitative easing"). Or as in 2022 they said it's because Russia invaded Ukraine. Now they blame inflation on an "oil shock" due to war.

Warmongering

Where war is the immediate cause for price rises, remember that British governments never pass the opportunity to cheer on or engage in an overseas war. Keir Starmer's foreign crusade from day one was to be the leader of the NATO pack.

Who is fooled by Starmer's disingenuous statements about standing up to Trump and not being involved in attacking Iran? Allowing the US to launch continuous strikes on Iran from British bases is merely the latest example of his complicity in warmaking.

History does not always repeat itself. But it is worth considering what happened in Britain in the early 1980s. Inflation (measured by RPI) for 1980 was 18 per cent followed by further increases of 12 per cent in 1981 and 9 per cent in 1982. These price hikes coincided with the outbreak of the Iran/Iraq war – where western powers encouraged the Saddam Hussein-led Iraq government to attack Iran.

At the same time, the British Thatcher government led a manic attack on Britain's industrial base and service provisions too. They claimed that our industry



Richard M Lee/shutterstock.com

Surging pump prices for petrol and diesel are just the tip of the iceberg.

was uneconomic. This onslaught of industrial closure and service cuts was accompanied by the slogan "the fight against inflation".

The lie they propagated was that inflation was caused by trade unions fighting to maintain the purchasing power of their members' wages. All the while making little mention of the oil price hike due to the Iraq/Iran conflict. Behind the scenes Thatcher's government described its policy of industrial closure as "shock therapy" – to the cheers of the employers and ruling class.

RPI is up around 35 per cent since 2022. Active pay fights in many areas have limited the impact – but only to some extent. Struggles to recoup the damage of long-term real pay cuts continue, but have rarely made inroads. And there are signs

now that employers are responding with threats of cuts to jobs and conditions (which inhibit pay demands too) – on the back of increases in costs, and taxes.

Inflation equals diminished working class purchasing power – that's clear. But it also diminishes the public debt in real terms.

Pauperisation

Now we have an external threat of inflation (oil and gas and so on) meaning workers' purchasing power is set to fall even further but public debt in real terms will further shrink. In government management of the post-2008 public debt, money printing is being inflated away while the British working class is being pauperised.

In 2026, how can workers break from this ever-tightening, vicious, spiral?

... of inflation and an excuse for government and ... nothing to do with them...

S



In reply, a simple question to ask is – why have British oil prices this year increased at all when our oil is sourced from British waters in the North Sea as well as from places like Norway?

The answer is that oil prices in Britain are determined internationally, index-linked to global rather than local prices.

In effect North Sea oil production has no allegiance to Britain or for Britain to benefit at a lower price than international market prices. This straightforward point is skipped over in popular media and by politicians.

They like to say something like this, “North Sea oil development would neither reduce domestic bills nor improve energy security, since prices are set globally and much UK oil is exported internationally”.

Break from the global index

To break from this unquestioning adherence to a global price index, all current and future oil production in British waters including recent new discoveries and future exploration should be subject to an export ban. Then our oil and gas would be reserved solely for British domestic use. Our oil should also be priced in British pounds not in US dollars.

This would require the regulation of all oil producers operating in British waters. Such an idea would create hysterical squeals from government and many of the

‘All current and future oil production in British waters should be subject to an export ban, reserved solely for domestic use...’

usual group who say “Britain is weak and finished” – no doubt including the Green lobby who don’t want oil and industry anyway.

The alternative is to be beholden to a global index and to put up with this wretched government’s faux inflation concerns while it is fully aware that inflation is a class weapon used to repress workers.

Looking at things through this lens enables events including imperialist war and inflation to be understood for what they are, namely a conscious attack on workers here and elsewhere. The fight for wages is the fight for peace. ■

CPBML public meeting

Tuesday 2 June London, 7 pm, via Zoom

“War in the Middle East: a British working class response”

War in the Middle East underlines the reality that the USA is no friend of the British working class. But our country is entangled with the US and that needs to change. Britain can be far more self-reliant. To make that happen, the British working class must take charge.

How can we bring that about? Come along and discuss. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for an invitation.



Britain relies on oil and gas for around three-quarters of its energy. We will be relying on oil and gas for the foreseeable future.

North Sea energy for Britain



Lee181169 (Public Domain)

Oil platform in the Montrose Alpha field, in Britain's sector of the North Sea. Output from Montrose Alpha began in 1976. A major upgrade in 2017 assured oil production up to 2030.

BRITAIN CANNOT do without oil and gas. Even though oil and gas production is forecast to be cut from 74 million tonnes in 2022 to 33 million tonnes by 2030, these 33 million tonnes are still needed. Even on government projections, oil and gas will meet a fifth of our needs in 2050 – the year when the government aims for us to have net zero carbon emissions.

Yet successive governments have chosen to import energy rather than produce it. Energy secretary Ed Miliband has gone even further by banning all new drilling and all new exploration for oil and gas.

Not a single exploration well was drilled in British waters last year – for the first time since 1964. But Norway, which shares the North Sea basin, drilled 49 exploration

wells last year, making 21 new discoveries in the process.

Miliband has imposed effective marginal tax rates of over 100 per cent on some companies. As Offshore Energies UK says, the 78 per cent flat rate total tax imposed on oil and gas profits is driving companies away.

Missing out

The results? A recent study from the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology looked at areas known to hold oil and gas resources, but which Miliband has refused to license for drilling. It found that Britain will miss out on more than 4.6 billion barrels of oil and gas under Labour's ban on new drilling.

Britain imported last year 42 per cent more liquefied natural gas than in 2024. This has higher emissions and is four times worse for the environment than our domestic gas from the North Sea. And this imported gas comes mostly from the USA: its transport adds yet more to emissions.

This government policy means squandering £50 billion of the previous investment in the North Sea. And Britain becomes less energy secure.

Offshore Energies UK, the trade body for Britain's oil and gas industry, says that there are 51 gas fields in our waters, including the Glendronach and Glengorm fields, plus 60 possible extensions to existing fields. They could provide a total of 3.25 billion barrels of oil equivalent (BOE).

...s energy – a level that has hardly changed in decades.
...e, as the Climate Change Committee says...

Britain!

The North Sea Transition Authority's latest Reserves and Resources report, published in October 2025, estimates proven and probable UK oil and gas reserves at 2.9 billion BOE at the end of 2024.

Contingent resources – petroleum estimated to be recoverable from known deposits, but not ready for commercial development – stand at 6.2 billion BOE. Prospective resources – undiscovered potentially recoverable resources in mapped leads and prospects yet to be drilled – are estimated at 4.6 billion BOE.

There are also potential gas fields onshore, like the one discovered last year under Lincolnshire. This could provide 480 billion cubic metres of gas, enough to meet the country's total gas needs for seven to ten years. But this can only be extracted by hydraulic fracking – which Miliband has also banned.

Two important North Sea fields, as yet unexploited, are Rosebank and Jackdaw. Together these two fields could produce up to 2.3 billion cubic metres of gas per year.

Rosebank, a reserve 60 miles west of Shetland, is buried 5,200 feet beneath the seabed – and the largest undeveloped oil and gas field in British waters. When in opposition, Miliband described its possible exploitation as "climate vandalism".

Gas ready to come

Jackdaw, a joint venture between Shell and Equinor ASA, the state-owned Norwegian oil company formerly known as Statoil, lies 150 miles east of Aberdeen. It has already been partly drilled. If Jackdaw is approved, its gas could enter Britain's gas network this year, according to the venture's boss Neil McCulloch.

Jackdaw could provide 6 to 7 per cent of our production, enough gas to heat 1.4 million homes – increasing reliable supplies and helping to cap costs. Campaigners against oil and gas exploitation are again gearing up their opposition and challenging those figures.

Boris Johnson's government granted Equinor permission to drill at Rosebank. But the Scottish Court of Session overturned that decision in January 2025. The court also blocked production at Jackdaw.

On 23 March, Unite oil and gas workers

launched "Keep the North Sea Working", a campaign demanding protection for jobs and for the communities those jobs sustain. Current policies are destroying 1,000 skilled, productive jobs a month. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said, "The government's energy policies in Westminster and Holyrood are putting jobs and energy security at risk. Blocking oil and gas production in the North Sea, especially now, is an act of monumental political self-harm."

People across Britain generally agree that we should develop our energy resources. A nationwide survey of 2,000 people, conducted 10-13 March by Opinium on behalf of Offshore Energies UK, found that 76 per cent agree that "because global events can disrupt energy supplies, the UK should continue producing oil and gas at home rather than relying more on imports."

And around 40 per cent believe the best approach to our energy security is investing in a balanced mix of renewables and fossil fuel. Just 26 per cent want a renewables-only approach, and 13 per cent want oil and gas only.

Offshore Energies UK CEO David Whitehouse commented, "The public are clear – the UK needs homegrown energy and a balanced transition that strengthens

'Successive governments have chosen to import energy rather than produce it...'

our national security."

Even RenewableUK, which represents 500 companies in Britain's renewable energy industry, has called on Miliband to "take energy out of the culture wars" by increasing North Sea production of oil and gas.

Tara Singh, their chief executive, said, "Britain will be stronger, safer and less exposed if it produces more home-grown energy of every kind...Let's start with gas. However fast we build clean power, Britain will still need gas well into the foreseeable future: to heat homes and power industry where electrification doesn't make sense for households and businesses and to help

Continued on page 14



BRITAIN'S ECONOMY

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Continued from page 13

keep the electricity system balanced. So it is entirely sensible to support continued domestic oil and gas production in the North Sea. If we do not produce that gas here, we will still need it. We will simply import more of it.”

The EU's Green Deal?

The Prime Minister wants “deeper economic integration” with the EU, to be achieved this year. He wants to give control over our energy policy to the EU, and to firm up his government’s net zero targets.

Starmer embraces the EU approach of prioritising net zero over industry. He wants “the dynamic alignment” of British law with EU rules on “the promotion of renewable energy”. This could force us to decarbonise across the board – not just electricity, but also heating and transport – and far more quickly than we have done so far. That is an EU takeover of Britain’s energy policy, not a realignment (see Box).

Starmer’s government wants Britain to rejoin the EU’s internal electricity market and align with EU’s wholesale and retail

“The UK needs homegrown energy and a balanced transition that strengthens our national security...”

EU: what’s in a name?

THE LABOUR government aims to tie Britain to the EU’s severe net zero targets, pushing up energy costs. The EU’s decarbonisation target is nearly twice Britain’s current level. Reaching it would require accelerating the rollout of electric vehicles and the phasing out of gas boilers to an impractical extent.

On 4 March, Brussels published its proposed Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA). Industry Commissioner Stéphane Séjourné said, “We need to be very clear [this] is going to accelerate decarbonization. That’s the whole point of it.”

So it is not about accelerating industry. It was originally called the Industrial Decarbonization Accelerator Act, but the name was changed in an attempt to deflect the growing public opposition, across all the EU member countries, to net zero policies.

Brussels is trying to distance itself from its earlier “Green Deal” language – but not from the reality. Former EU climate chief Frans Timmermans, the architect of the Green Deal, recently asked, “Why don’t we rephrase the Green Deal? Why don’t we give it another name?” ■

electricity market rules. Britain would be bound by these rules, with no say over them. Under a legally binding financial mechanism, Britain would never stop making payments to the EU.

Professor John Constable of the University of Austin, an expert on Britain’s renewable sector, said the deal was “fundamentally political”. He said, “I fear that the Labour Government is trying to poison the well for any incoming government. It will be a poisoned chalice – they will be so fettered by EU law, and it will be incredibly difficult to unwind.”

Chancellor Rachel Reeves is on record in support of North Sea drilling because of its positive effect on “jobs and tax revenue”. The SNP’s John Swinney echoes her. When politicians start to talk sense, you just know that elections are coming soon.

The choice

The economic choice facing us is – do we stay committed to net zero or do we rebuild industry after a period of economic destruction? A recent paper from the Great British Business Council think tank sets out the choices in detail.

We need to repeal the 2008 Climate Change Act, which forces us to subordinate energy security and affordability to the pursuit of net zero. We should scrap the UK Emissions Trading Scheme, which

makes oil and gas more expensive than renewables. And not join the equivalent EU scheme either!

As the world becomes increasingly volatile, the need for Britain is to prioritise our energy and our industrial resilience.

Britain needs more investment in gas storage capacity. Strategic gas stocks amount to at most only 2 per cent of annual usage (Germany stores about a quarter of its annual usage). When Centrica closed the Rough storage facility, this government washed its hands of the problem, saying that it was a commercial decision.

Invest in sovereignty

Britain need to invest in developing energy sovereignty in order to revive industry. Government should impose an export ban on all current and future oil production in British waters, keeping British oil solely for British domestic use. Our oil should be priced in British pounds not in US dollars, priced to serve the needs of British industries and British households.

Successive governments have misdirected far too much of our money into futile attempts to be relevant militarily in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, rather than investing in what we actually need to defend our country. Energy independence is vital for our national security. Without energy independence, we are at the mercy of foreign suppliers. ■

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In the first of a two-part feature *Workers* looks at what's going on with natural resources...

The fight for the Arctic: Part 1

US Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Benjamin German (CC BY 2.0)



LC-130 "Skibird" from the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing in Scotia, New York, at Camp Raven, Greenland.

WHILE MEDIA attention has focussed on Trump's threats to annex NATO allies Greenland and Canada, a European Parliament report and recommendation to the EU Commission last November shows that we should look closer to home to uncover the real threat to peace, sovereignty, industry and progress in the Arctic and its sub-Arctic nations.

The report will form the basis of an updated EU policy on the Arctic due out this summer. It amounts to an attack on the Arctic Council, the intergovernmental co-ordinating forum founded in 1996, building on Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech, in which he urged the creation of an "Arctic Zone of Peace".

Full membership of the Council comprises the eight sovereign Arctic States,

those with territory north of the Arctic Circle: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and USA.

Apart from Russia, all full members of the Council are also NATO members (Finland and Sweden only recently); they are compelled to join NATO's wars. But they are not all members of the EU. Further enlargement is a priority for the EU: it is exploiting the current volatile situation to encourage the re-accession of Greenland, and to acquire Iceland (which has no army) and Norway.

EU bid

The EU has long sought membership of the Council in its own right, claiming to be "an Arctic actor with strategic interest...whereas three EU member states and

two additional members of the EEA [European Economic Area] are part of the Arctic Council, while seven of its members are NATO states." But the Council has repeatedly deferred granting the EU permanent observer status.

In 1985 Greenland exercised its autonomy to exit the EU over a fishing dispute. In 2008 a high-level conference was called in the Greenland city of Ilulissat to counter EU attempts to impose a new regime on states operating in the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO).

The resulting Ilulissat Declaration granted those states stewardship and jurisdiction over large parts of the Arctic Ocean as the ice melted. Ten years later the Council drew up the CAO Fisheries Agreement resulting in a moratorium on

going on in the Arctic, and the looming war over its

Preparing for war

commercial fishing until 2037. The World Economic Forum unsuccessfully challenged its prioritisation of nature over profits.

Iceland's fishing rights were also behind the suspension of its accession talks in 2015. A referendum in August this year will decide whether talks should resume. Control over its fisheries is at stake: as we know from our own experience, sovereignty once surrendered is hard to regain. Norway understood this well when it voted twice against full EU membership in order to protect its fishing and agriculture.

The Faroe Islands are not part of the EU. Since 1977 they have had their own fisheries agreement with Russia, craftily doubling exports to Russia after western sanctions were imposed.

The Council, based in Tromsø, cooperates on such peacetime matters as nature conservation, search and rescue, and oil spill response. It includes permanent seats for six Indigenous Peoples' organisations. It is highly regarded for its scientific research.

Britain still retains a research station, founded in 1991, on the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, operated by the British Antarctic Survey. Its hydrology and marine research attract oceanographers from universities around the world.

The Conservative government's Arctic Policy Framework of 2023 noted: "The Arctic matters to the United Kingdom...as the nearest neighbour to the region..." The British connection, both geographically and politically, goes back a long way. The islands of Shetland and Orkney were once part of Norway and still have strong connections.

The so-called Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap (GIUK) is a strategic stretch of water between the north and the open Atlantic. It was used by NATO for surveillance against the USSR during the Cuban nuclear missile crisis, and is, once again, a focus of NATO attention.

In 1998 the Council admitted Britain and Poland as non-Arctic permanent observers. Five Asian countries with a fishing interest joined in 2013 – China, Japan, South Korea, India and Singapore. In its first Arctic policy in 2018, China cheekily described itself as "a near-Arctic State".

The EU was apoplectic. China was politely downgraded to "Arctic Stakeholder" – on a par with Britain.

All observers to the Council must acknowledge the sovereignty of the Arctic States, and their commitment to a low tension non-military agenda (NATO membership notwithstanding). To acknowledge the high degree of cooperation between ideologically diverse states sharing a harsh environment, the term "Arctic Exceptionalism" was coined – only to be temporarily discarded in 2014 when Russia was sanctioned in response to its actions in the Crimea.

Undermining

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 prompted further attempts to undermine the integrity of the Council, so far mostly unsuccessful. The question now is whether it can withstand the actions of Trump and his supporters.

The 2023 UK Framework stated: "The UK fully respects the sovereign rights of the eight Arctic States and Indigenous Peoples of the Region and is keen to play its part in ensuring the region remains peaceful." Whether Starmer, with his obeisance to NATO, honours this pledge is open to question.

The EU has failed so far to persuade the Council that it should have a seat in its own right. But true to form the bloc finds ways to strengthen its control in the region: it poses as champion of the Arctic peoples, protecting them from environmental degradation as warming in the Arctic approaches four times the global average. In 2024 the EU established an office in the Greenland capital Nuuk, marking a new phase of usurpation.

The EU report belittles the Council as amateurish in the face of professional warfare, and presents the EU as the superior co-ordinating authority. It sneers at the Council's "limited mandate", by which it means the key principle that for the Arctic to be truly a "zone of peace", military security should be off the agenda.

The EU's message is clear: it is taking over from the old order, Arctic Exceptionalism is dead, peace and cooperation outdated. Compared with Trump's

'Seemingly less menacing than Trump, the EU is actually more expansionist, more harmful to national economies...'

rough wooing of unimpressed Greenlanders, the EU is more subtle. Seemingly less menacing than Trump, it is actually more expansionist, more opportunistic, more harmful to national economies – and more completely aligned to NATO's war aims.

In February defence secretary John Healey stated: "The UK is stepping up to protect the Arctic and High North – doubling the number of troops we have in Norway and scaling up joint exercises with NATO allies." He was referring to the launch of NATO's "Arctic Sentry" mission, and Britain's key role in coordinating Nordic members' militaries.

NATO militarisation

The European Parliament calls on the European Commission to condemn the growing militarisation of the Arctic. Yet in reality the EU, in close collaboration with NATO and Britain, is bent not just on the general militarisation of the region but on its imminent war readiness.

The question arises: what role, if any, should Britain play in the region? It matters that the Arctic should be in the right hands. But under Starmer's supine leadership the British people are being dragged back into an ever closer alliance with NATO's political wing, the EU, with its new bid for Arctic hegemony. Whatever Brussels decides, Starmer will go along with it.

The strategic value of Arctic locations to Britain's defence can only be estimated once Britain is able to make independent choices free of NATO and the EU. ■

On 19 March the government announced its steel strategy to face to secure the vital industry, particularly the cost of

The steel industry needs

THE BRITISH government has taken a small step towards securing Britain's steel industry with the announcement of a steel strategy. But limited action on tariffs serves only to highlight the inadequacy of its plans and the scale of the challenge.

On 19 March the business secretary Peter Kyle visited Tata Steel in Port Talbot, South Wales to meet steelworkers (those that are left). He used the occasion for the long-awaited launch of the government's steel strategy.

The stated aim of the strategy is to boost domestic production so that it can meet up to half of Britain's domestic demand for steel. And it claims to set out a path to secure the industry's role in supporting vital sectors like infrastructure, defence and clean energy.

British steel producers and thousands of steel workers from Glasgow to Port Talbot will be assessing the new strategy. They will ask whether it will in fact protect domestic steelmaking and build more resilience in the supply chain.

It has taken a year since the government consulted on plans for steel. In the meanwhile the industry is increasingly vulnerable.

There are several reasons for this vulnerability: the long time scale for creating new capacity; uncertainty about the replacement of coal-fired blast furnaces by electric-powered ones; the unclear intentions of the foreign companies that now own the steelmakers; the unpredictable impact of tariffs imposed and disputed by the USA, China and the EU.

Energy

But above all the future for steelmaking in Britain is tied to government energy policy and net zero targets. They lead to high energy prices and inevitable demands from some industrial sectors to source steel from abroad.

The government will provide up to £2.5 billion of financing for investment in the steel sector in the life of this parliament. The steel strategy is claimed to be a vital part of the government's strategic approach to British industry. That seems tenuous at best.

From 1 July 2026, overall quota levels



Grubb/Wikimedia (Public Domain)

One of the blast furnaces at Port Talbot steelworks in 2007 when operational. The last one closed

for steel imports will be significantly reduced by 60 per cent, compared to current arrangements. Steel imported into Britain above these new quota levels will be subject to a 50 per cent tariff. It will apply to imported steel products where they can be made in Britain.

Essential

Steel is essential for a nation's industry and infrastructure. And the capacity to make steel is important for national sovereignty and independence. The new tariff measure

is designed to protect British steel production in the face of global steel overcapacity.

Without action, Britain's steelmaking capability is in real jeopardy. The lack of basic steelmaking would leave the country reliant on overseas suppliers.

To be effective the approach must be truly strategic – encompassing new technologies as well as procurement policies for major projects. Otherwise the risk is that downstream industry – steel fabrication, shipbuilding and the like – leaves Britain.

For example, the strategy states that

...including import tariffs. But there are wider challenges for energy...

...energy to survive



...ed in 2024, but the need for steel continues.

electric arc furnaces are the way forward. But Tata says that the addition of a direct reduced iron plant, which can produce high quality steel from electric furnaces, depends on government support and competitively priced energy.

And analysis, such as a paper titled *Premeditated Industrial Destruction?* from the Great British Business Council think tank, makes it clear that without a change to British energy prices and the underpinning policy, even the remaining steel industry won't last (the same goes for aluminium

production too).

Unless the British steel industry can continue to make high quality steel – a sector in which it has excelled – then users such as the aerospace industry will import supplies from abroad; tariffs would not apply. Or worse, that provides an incentive to move the highly skilled manufacturing out of Britain.

Unite, one of the industry trade unions, has welcomed the government's imposition of steel tariffs to safeguard jobs and industry. But in line with its long-standing policy, the union says that proactive policies that provide long-term stability are essential in ensuring a successful future for the industry.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham expressed doubts that the government has yet grasped the point. She said: "...this last minute situation is just another reminder that the reactive approach to UK steel that sees it lurch from crisis to crisis needs to be overhauled."

Think long term

She said there should be a long-term strategy, which "...includes legislating that all UK infrastructure developments and public sector projects use steel made in Britain".

Unite regional secretary Peter Hughes provided further detail, describing the strategy as only a first step in backing the

'Energy policy and net zero targets lead to high energy prices and inevitable demands to source steel from abroad...'

industry, a foundation for Britain's economy. He said, "...the government must also back the production of virgin green steel as we can't simply rely on electric arc furnaces, to produce all the steel we need."

The other two main unions in the industry have made less of the limitations and needs highlighted by Unite. The response from Community was almost sycophantic in praise of the Labour government and its approach to the industry. And GMB said much the same, though it did say that questions on ownership and the technology mix need spelling out. ■

• This is a slightly updated version of an article first published online in March on www.cpbml.org.uk.

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's series of public, in-person meetings continues with our May Day meetings in London, Bristol, Glasgow and Manchester. All meeting details are published on What's On, page 5, as well as in our eNewsletter, and at cpbml.org.uk/events.

M As well as our in-person meetings, we hold regular Zoom discussion meetings – the next one, on war in the Middle East and the working class response, is on Tuesday 2 June at 7pm. Email info@cpbml.org.uk for an invitation. We also run study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further.

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

A system created to serve the needs of tax dodgers has become for gangsters, fraudsters and terrorists of all stripes...

Washing dollars for profit



Photo High-value notes are boon for the launderers.

Everybody loves our dollars: how money laundering won, by Oliver Bullough, hardback, 311 pages, ISBN 978-1399618090, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2026, £25. Kindle and eBook editions available. Paperback edition due January 2027.

THIS OUTSTANDING book describes the growing money laundering system. An alliance between greedy tax dodgers and compliant politicians created this system, used by gangsters, fraudsters, terrorists and kleptocrats to launder their wealth.

The author, Oliver Bullough, is an investigative journalist specialising in financial crime. *Workers* reviewed one of his previous books, *Butler to the World*, in September/October 2022. That looked at the role of Britain's institutions in servicing dirty money and the people who control it. This one takes a look worldwide.

The governments of the G7 countries let money flow freely through the world's financial system. These governments all serve finance capital, which is wedded to the free movement of capital, labour, goods and services. But so is the criminal underworld. In fact, one might almost say

that finance capital and the criminal underworld are two sides of the same coin – a unity of capitalism and criminality.

The governments profit from this freedom by printing vast numbers of banknotes, especially high-value ones like \$100 notes. How do criminals launder money? Mostly by using cash, as they always have done.

To stop producing these big notes is such an obvious thing to do – which raises the question, why hasn't it been done? Perhaps because the US government in particular makes huge profits by providing the currency of the global criminal underworld. It exchanges pieces of paper, which cost almost nothing to print, for manufactured goods.

Cryptocurrencies

The US government has also unleashed an environment where crypto-currencies like Bitcoin (the largest) and Tether (a so-called "stablecoin") thrive. These provide highly efficient ways to launder money – and are openly designed to evade the monetary controls and policies of nation states.

Despite that aim, a big share of the profits from stablecoin accrue largely to the US government. That means that the more of them there are, then the more money flows to the US Treasury.

Russian authorities use stablecoin to evade the sanctions put on their financial system and to trade oil unimpeded. Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS and other terrorists have used stablecoin to attract donations, move money and fund their activities, all without governments being able to stop them.

The commander of the US Southern Command, part of the US military responsible for security in the Caribbean, Central and South America, told a Senate committee in 2021 that Chinese money laundering is "the number one underwriter of transnational criminal organisations".

For example, the Chinese Underground Banking System sources cash from criminal groups all over Britain involved in drug trafficking, organised immigration crime and human trafficking. Albanian gangsters have gained control of the European cocaine market because they have outsourced money laundering to the Chinese. All the Mexican cartels move their money via Chinese gangs.

Anonymity for criminals

Governments allow the sale of anonymous companies that let criminals hide their ownership of bank accounts, which is a key part of laundering their wealth. The best places to get anonymous shell companies have long been US states like Delaware and Nevada. They add a veneer of respectability that offshore tax havens such as the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands might lack.

The US government passed a law that mandates the collection of the names of people behind the shell companies. It was effective from the start of 2024, but President Trump has said he won't enforce it. The US administration has also pardoned a succession of financial criminals.

Britain too has always provided a ready source of dodgy shell companies. And supposed controls are ineffective, for example rules on overseas property ownership don't reveal the real owners.

ome an ideal vehicle

‘Britain has always provided a ready source of dodgy shell companies...’

The EU has, characteristically, gone backwards, while claiming it is increasing controls. A 2022 ruling by the European Court of Justice effectively closed public registers of company ownership on the ground of “privacy rights”. A wealthy Russian objected to his name being made public and won the court case.

Politicians have also created an anti-money laundering system, which somehow constantly fails. Indeed, it almost seems designed to fail. It is supposed to make money laundering prohibitively costly and thus unprofitable. But it doesn’t work, because it is still so easy to move cash in its physical form. Which means that all its rules, compliance and debanking are achieving nothing.

Regulation and sanction against money laundering tends to focus on the misdeeds of very small operators. In 2000, the US Financial Action Task Force issued a blacklist of 15 countries guilty of money laundering.

With the exception of the Cayman Islands, no British territories were black-listed, not the British Virgin Islands, not Bermuda, not Anguilla, not Gibraltar, not Jersey, not the Isle of Man, not the UK itself. London was then and is now the world’s biggest offshore banking centre. All the above had laundered far more money than most of those on the list.

Investigative journalists have exposed the scale and methods behind money laundering, for example with the Panama Papers in 2016 and the Pandora Papers in 2021. Yet the pursuit and prosecution of those involved is patchy and limited. This book helps illustrate why it will remain so. ■

WORKERS

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One hundred years ago the General Strike took place in Britain. In marking the centenary, it's vital to recognise what actually happened.

1926: The General Strike

IN TRADE union history 4 May 1926 is a special date – the day the General Strike started. But it's important to separate the myths from what actually happened. Above all, it's often forgotten that the strike was born of weakness, not strength.

In 1914, to strengthen their bargaining hand, the miners had sponsored the formation of a Triple Industrial Alliance with railway and transport workers as a tactic in their fight for pay and conditions. The idea that trade unions should be revolutionary organisations – called syndicalism – was popular before the war and part of the background to this move.

At the end of March 1921 mines, taken over by the government during World War One, were returned to private ownership. Coal owners refused to modernise the industry but immediately announced sweeping wage reductions, imposing a lockout of union members at all collieries.

As happened in 1919 with some success, railway and transport unions again threatened a Triple Alliance strike in support. This time the government responded with a State of Emergency, had machine-guns posted at pitheads and sent troops in battle order to working class areas.

Last-minute negotiations petered out in confusion. Strike action was withdrawn, earning the event the derogatory name Black Friday. The miners resumed work on the owners' terms.

The 1923 boom in mining allowed negotiation of higher wages, but collapse soon followed. By 1925 coal owners renewed calls for a reduction in wages. The newly formed TUC General Council, in an attempt to displace the Alliance, supported the miners.

'The response to the strike call was overwhelming. Its completeness surprised everyone...'

The government bought time in negotiations and brokered a deceptive peace with a nine-month coal subsidy. The trade unions, swollen-headed by the effectiveness of their mere threat to strike, thought Prime Minister Baldwin had capitulated, and called the day Red Friday.

But the government – knowing it wasn't ready – had allowed an armistice in order to gain time for a later assault. It took preparatory action in a strategic, class-conscious fashion. By the spring of 1926, it had stockpiles of food, coal and fuel.

Meanwhile trade union leaders acted as if trouble could be averted. Although the unions had declared war and rhetoric still flourished, union leaders and most of the membership had not apparently really meant it.

The trade unions made no preparations for a national strike until 27 April 1926. The majority of the General Council lacked enthusiasm for action. Unreasoning hope for a settlement was pinned on the Samuel Commission. When it reported unfavourably in March 1926 on the key issues of hours and wages, the miners refused to accept it.

Vain hope

Three weeks of futile negotiation followed. But now the government was prepared and not interested in making concessions. The unions remained ridiculously hopeful of a settlement.

But in the final negotiations on Friday 29 April, mine owners offered a wage cut on worse terms than the Samuel Commission. The government refused to interfere, and brought in an Emergency Powers Act. On 30 April – the day on which the subsidy ran out – mine owners posted notices in most pits. A million miners were locked out.

On 1 May the unions declared they were prepared to hand over their autonomy to the General Council during the dispute (never a wise course of action) and voted to join a National Strike on 3 May. The General Council now deemed the conduct of the dispute to be completely in its hands, either to organise a strike or – increasingly from day one – to arrange a climb-down and call it off.



Public Domain

Troops mustered at Hyde Park, London, during the strike.

The "General Strike" was not quite a general, all-embracing strike. It was a partial national strike of some elements. Only sections of the labour movement were called out: railways, transport, iron and steel workers, builders, printers, dockers – between 1.5 and 1.75 million workers. Other trades were kept back.

Critically, the trade unions went into battle unready and with divided leadership. Government was ready though. Departments sent out detailed instructions. All army and navy leave was cancelled.

The response to the strike call was overwhelming. Its completeness surprised everyone including the TUC and the Labour Party, which feared losing "bourgeois" respectability by association. Public transport was mightily affected, especially trains, and trams in London stopped running for the duration of the dispute.

Despite much publicity, volunteers on buses and elsewhere had little effect. But government plans to use road haulage lorries worked – goods were transported around the country by non-unionised labour.

The TUC General Council called off the strike on 12 May. It obtained no terms for the miners or for the other workers who

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the General Strike.

had struck in sympathy with them. The miners continued on strike alone for six months. Eventually they were forced back to work on regional settlements, longer hours and lower wages, with an ever-present pool of unemployed miners to undermine their efforts.

In other trades and occupations, employers sought to inflict setback and sack trade union leaders. Within a year the Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act was introduced, forbidding sympathetic strikes and mass picketing. TUC membership fell from 5.5 million to 3.75 million by 1930.

Tactics and strategy are the lifeblood of our class. Properly understood, a general strike is a potent political weapon reserved for when a working class is ready to overthrow the exploiters' system and seize the levers of power. Unless such a level of understanding is there, a general strike should not be broached. Other more irregular tactics should apply. ■

- The General Federation of Trade Unions is marking the centenary, in partnership with the Working Class Movement Library and other similar organisations. Go to generalstrike100.com for an interactive map of events taking place.

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Britain? Join the CPBML.

ABOUT US

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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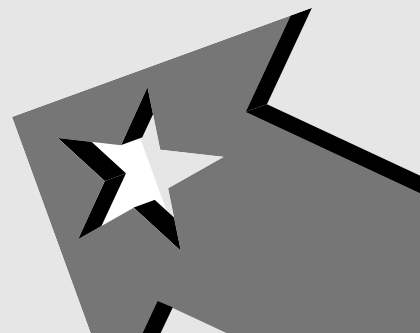
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Britain needs no war

‘Imperialist meddling in the Middle East has never brought progress. Outside interventions do not produce democracy...’

BRITISH WORKERS cannot leave it to Keir Starmer and his government to decide on what our country does about attacks by the US and Israel across the Middle East, and the response by Iran and others.

The US and Israel started the murderous wholesale bombing of Iran in February 2026. The Israeli government wages brutal bombing campaigns against Gaza, Iran and Lebanon. The Starmer government armed and backed all these assaults.

Starmer poses as reluctant to support US military action and the blockade of Iranian ports. And he warns against Trump’s boastful threats to wipe out Iran. But where it matters, his words are worthless.

Starmer seems to have no independent view about the war, or anything else. While clutching desperately onto the USA’s coat-tails he tries to ingratiate himself with the EU.

On 13 March, he said that people are “really worried” about the war’s impact and “want to see us doing all we can to de-escalate.” But he sends warplanes, troops and air defence systems to Israel, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. And allows US forces to use British airbases for their attacks.

Starmer has never asked what the British people thought of the Israeli-US attack on Iran. But even his ignorant and isolated government will be aware of the lack of support for it.

The lack of enthusiasm from people here in Britain is hardly surprising, given the history of lies over the threat from Iraq that led to the futile 2003 invasion. Also the futile 20-year Afghan war.

The most recent US-backed intervention against Iran took place in the 1980s. Backed by the British government, it sponsored the attack by Iraq, then led by Saddam Hussein, causing much destruction and loss of life. Yet Iran’s regime survived.

The elected leaders of twelve trade unions issued a statement on 1 March condemning the war as illegal and opposing attacks on civilians. Yet they attributed US action to pressure from Israel. They promote the notion that the threat to British workers is from “the far right”. The real

threats to the workers they represent are the British government and the US war.

Trump makes his own decisions, in what he considers the interests of the US finance capitalist class – and not those of any of the peoples of the region. That includes Israel: it may now be aligned with his aims, but may not be when talks begin to stop the war.

The US treats its supposed allies badly and capriciously – not just in the threat to occupy Greenland. Surely Britain should take Trump at his word, call his bluff, and pull away from NATO?

And that’s the problem. NATO membership means being at the beck and call of the USA. If we want Britain to have no part in this war, we have to expel US bases from our country and get out of NATO.

Imperialist meddling in the Middle East has never brought progress. Outside interventions do not produce democracy. Those who supported the invasion of Iraq because of the rotten Saddam Hussein regime, will sooner or later support intervention to change the regime in Iran – even if they don’t support the current attack.

Britain must stop interfering in other sovereign nations, no matter how wicked they are supposed to be. Wherever they can workers must force the government to stop interfering in the Middle East, stop promoting the war, and stop arming and supporting any of the governments in the region.

The ruling class here is using the war to demand more spending on “defence” – and to get us closer to the EU. They spend our much-needed resources in conflicts elsewhere, prioritising anywhere but Britain.

That won’t change by itself, even if Starmer departs. Workers want to strengthen Britain’s energy and food security and to defend our borders. It’s up to us to force that.

Empty calls for a ceasefire or an end to the war won’t make these good things happen. All that we can and must do is to stop letting US forces use our bases, and to distance ourselves from the US government, principally by calling for Britain to leave NATO. ■

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