

WORKERS

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UNITY STOP THE EUROPEAN UNION IN ITS TRACKS

UNISON Pay turmoil

DEVOMANC Who wants it?

ARTS For people, not profit

SCIENCE No to superstition

VIETNAM 1975 victory

BARTS start talking

ZERO HOURS

plus News,

Book Reviews

and more

WORKERS

“ US backs down over Cuba

EVERY YEAR workers throughout the world celebrate May Day. Forty years ago, it coincided with the liberation of South Vietnam (see page 22). This year, May Day comes hot on the heels of the US's massive climbdown over Cuba – brilliant news.

After decades of attacks on Cuba resulted in the total isolation of the US, Obama finally backed down and took steps to normalise relations with the island. So much for “superpowers”.

Overall, though, the international situation is dire, with wars and national disintegration rife. Now the US-British-Saudi alliance is wrecking yet another country. The Saudis, armed and backed by Cameron and Obama, are attacking Yemen, and will destroy it, if we let them, just as the NATO pow-

ers destroyed Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Each time they claim humanitarian motives. Each time they cause humanitarian disasters.

The United Nations Security Council on 14 April rejected a Russian proposal for an embargo on arms sales to any country involved in the fighting. It voted instead for an arms embargo only on the Yemeni people, not on the Saudi aggressor.

When Russia acts to defend its neighbours from similar interventions, this is deemed a threat to world peace. When the US and British governments destroy Iraq and Libya, they call it humanitarian intervention. That's imperialism for you.

Cuba stands as a beacon of what a steadfast anti-imperialist people can win. ■

Politics and survival

BY THE TIME you read this, the election will probably have morphed into a grand negotiation about a coalition. This they call politics. But you can be sure millions will still be on zero hours contracts, Britain will still be in the EU, the NHS will still be being dismantled – make your own list. Nothing will have changed.

Britain needs change, but that will have to come from the working class. What do we call politics? Surely not the parliamentary charade. Or are we so

hung up on “issues” – from so-called gender politics to the mirage of equality under capitalism – that we ignore what is happening before our eyes? Britain is being asset-stripped, gutted, our future mortgaged to the banks. Do we want to become a zero nation: zero hours, zero jobs, zero security?

Our task is to understand as a class, politically, that either we take control of Britain or we go under, becoming a husk of a country, controlled from abroad and run by exploiters for exploiters. ■

Cover image Andrew Ward/www.andrew-ward.com



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We're subsidising EU rail



A Northern Rail train at Pudsey station – Northern Rail is part owned by a Dutch state company.

AS PART OF its activity around the General Election, rail union RMT organised a series of protests across the north of England highlighting the fact that hundreds of millions of pounds paid by British rail passengers will be going to subsidise rail services in other parts of Europe.

Transpennine Express (already part owned by French nationalised railway SNCF) and Northern Rail (part owned by Dutch state company NS) have already creamed off almost £400 million, money that could have been used for cheaper fares, new trains and more rail staff to assist passengers.

With the Northern Rail franchise now up for grabs, the shortlisted bidders are the Dutch, French and German state railways. RMT says that British passengers are being used as "cash cows" to hold down fares and improve services for railways in France, Netherlands and Germany. Transpennine Express will also soon be re-franchised with the same bidders jumping on the gravy train.

The union expects whoever wins the new franchise to suck up even bigger profits by cutting rail services and staff, with passengers crammed into overcrowded, driver-only operated trains, paying the most expensive rail fares in Europe.

RMT members have taken to the streets and rail stations across the north with the message that it is time to put passengers first, and are calling on the public to sign up for a publicly owned People's Railway to serve the region (to sign their petition, go to <http://tinyurl.com/p8wm29c>). The union is demanding that every penny that is put into the railway will be invested in the railway, fair fares for passengers, new trains and more and better services, with guards on trains to ensure the safety of passengers, and proper staffing for stations and ticket offices.

The union is also seeking proper democratic oversight of the region's railways by communities and local councils, instead of rail policy in the north being dictated by private and foreign companies. RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said: "For all the posturing and hot air about a 'Northern Powerhouse' from Osborne and Cameron the reality is not only rail services starved of resources and locked in the slow lane but one where European rail operators are being given the green light to bleed Northern and TPE dry to subsidise their domestic operations. That is rail privatisation in action."

SCOTLAND

The £7.6 billion hole

THE INSTITUTE for Fiscal Studies has concluded that Scotland would be left with a £7.6 billion gap in its finances if it pursued fiscal autonomy, because falling oil revenues would leave the country with a tax shortfall – to be met by cuts or taxes.

SNP minister Derek Mackay confirmed on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that the Scottish government had accepted the forecast of a £7.6 billion black hole. He said, "I'm not challenging the work that the IFS has done."

STEEL

Strike ballot goes ahead

STEEL WORKERS employed by Tata Steel in Port Talbot, Scunthorpe, Rotherham and other sites are to ballot during May on strike action over imposed changes to the pension scheme.

The planned closure of the final salary pension scheme would affect 17,000 workers. The decision to ballot followed the breakdown of talks at ACAS in April.

TB

Worse than Niger

FIGURES RELEASED by Public Health England show that rates of tuberculosis in some London boroughs are worse than in some of the poorest countries in the world. Newham, Brent, Hounslow and Ealing all have higher levels of infection than Niger, Eritrea, Tajikistan and several east European countries.

Workers

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

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



ON THE WEB

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

Cancer care in Britain – needs improving

Britain lags behind in cancer treatment according to Macmillan Cancer Support, despite official claims suggesting progress is being made...

Joint fight to stop huge NHS privatisation

Three unions are combining to halt a contract worth over £1 billion for primary care support services going to the private sector...

Middlesbrough looks to outsource everything

Labour-controlled Middlesbrough is set to outsource nearly all of its public services...

Council fights back over newspaper order

Greenwich is fighting government instructions to reduce the frequency of the council's newspaper from weekly to four times a year...

Attack on May Day march rebuffed

South East Region TUC has seen off an attempt to stop the London 2015 May Day march by making the organisers foot the bill for policing it...

TTIP 'danger to environment'

A report from MPs says proposals in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership treaty pose dangers for the environment, animal welfare and public health in Europe...

Plus: the e-newsletter

Visit cpbml.org.uk to sign up to your free regular copy of the CPBML's newsletter delivered to your email inbox.

Pay turmoil in Unison

UNISON'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT sector has been thrown into turmoil following the hijacking of the union's democratic procedures after last year's local government pay fiasco. To recap: in 2014 armchair generals committed the union to an undeliverable unsupported, confused pay strategy. The government walked the union into a cul de sac and gloated as industrial action was generally unsupported.

The union negotiators retreated from the cul de sac, snatching a settlement that was poor – but all that was possible given the lack of support for action. The members then voted to accept the deal, with a decisive majority, 64.35 per cent, on a turnout of 19.77 per cent.

That was not acceptable to the ultra-left. They combined with other left variants to call a special conference to overturn the pay deal and the vote of the broader membership. The outcome was a meeting where disaffected delusionists passed innumerable meaningless motions, abusing the concept of "lay members" and seeking to appoint themselves to oversee future disputes. Their true contempt for the membership is underlined by the setting aside of members' previous ballot decisions in favour of some sort of activists' collective.

The silence and absence of so many branches while surreal orchestrated ploys were played out on the conference floor was palpable. The members have withdrawn from the infantile disorder which presents itself as so-called lay democracy – but the situation will not change until the members take charge.

So pay negotiations are to be reopened. Well, only if the employers agree. And with inflation figures around zero, what will Unison do then? There is no prospect of united action by Unison, Unite and the GMB.

Perhaps there is another agenda – Unison is to have an election for its general secretary later in the year. At least five candidates are promoting themselves, the outright ultra-left and those courting them following on from the disputes in both local government and health.

In the longer term, does the ultra-left view the prospect of the union fragmenting into regionalism, municipalism, localism as a good thing – a way of capturing the assets of the union rather than having a unified national union?

Despite great progress made in Unison in trying to create a truly unified public service union, much of its structure is unfit for purpose, rooted in the past and backward-looking. That is an issue the whole membership is going to have to grapple with. ■

DEBT

The cost of university

A REPORT from PricewaterhouseCoopers report at the end of March showed almost half – 46 per cent – of Britain's 9 per cent increase in household debt in 2014 was accounted for by young people making their way through university.

The report estimates that graduates who started courses after 2012 will owe between £40,000 and £50,000. But because many will never earn graduate salaries, up to 40 per cent of this debt will never be fully paid off.

And the debt is piling up further. A 2014 analysis by the Citizens Advice Bureau showed young people are increasingly using pay day lenders to finance their day-to-day expenditure – accounting for 62 per cent of the "high-interest" credit used by under 25s, with 10 per cent of all those with serious debt

problems in the 17-24 age group. One in three of young people with "serious financial problems" is in work. ■

RAIL

Strike ballot looms

Rail unions RMT and TSSA look set to call around 20,000 Network Rail staff out on strike in a fight over pay after talks at ACAS broke down. This will be the first national rail strike since the railways were privatised in 1996.

Network Rail, which runs Britain's rail infrastructure, officially became a public sector company last September. The rail unions have rejected Network Rail's attempts to foist upon rail workers the sort of pay cuts that have been imposed on other parts of the public sector, describing the latest pay proposals as falling well short of what is required to maintain the living standards, job security and working conditions of the staff. ■

Unity 'frees camp' from ISIS



UN workers distributing food in Yarmouk in February 2014.

REPORTS HAVE reached *Workers* that the combined force of all the armed rival Palestinian factions in the giant Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria, plus the Syrian Arab Army and the Palestinian Liberation Army, a division of the SAA, have liberated most of the camp from ISIS, the terror group. Information is still very sketchy, and the number of casualties is unknown. There is now talk about aid getting into the camp.

Factionalism has forever plagued the politics of the Palestinian liberation movement. The Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp was no exception. The camp is effectively a suburb of Damascus, Syria's capital, and was at one time home to half a million people, including 160,000 registered Palestinian refugees and their descendants who were displaced from Palestine in 1948. Added to this were scores of thousands of unregistered Palestinian refugees who were displaced during the 1967 Six Day War as well as poor Syrians and Iraqi refugees.

For all that, Yarmouk was considered the safest place in the safest Middle East capital and was renowned for its hospitality.

That all changed when the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011. Islamist and criminal gangs roamed the Syrian countryside, but Yarmouk was always a safe haven for Syrians displaced by the fighting. Then the Islamists entered the Yarmouk some two years ago, taking over most of the camp and looting the houses. Most of the population fled and now reside either in Damascus or in other Palestinian refugee camps in Syria and in Lebanon.

Under siege

But 18,000 stayed, determined to keep their homes in the camp, which was placed under siege by the Syrian Arab Army demanding the surrender or withdrawal of the Islamists. Then one group metamorphosed into another more extreme gang, and 18 months ago ISIS took over the camp. There followed many executions for blasphemy, and the looting and rape continued, but the Palestinians took up arms and fought and defeated ISIS – only for them to be replaced by al-Qaeda.

The Palestinians were divided. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) stayed neutral on the basis that the war was an internal Syrian affair. Non-PLO Hamas had previously supported the anti-government fighters because of their association with the Muslim Brotherhood. Meanwhile, PLO had suspended the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (a faction loyal to the Assad government) for taking up arms in support of the Syrian state and fighting alongside the Syrian Arab Army.

More recently ISIS took over the camp in greater numbers after being invited in by al-Qaeda. The PLO convened a meeting of all Palestinian groups plus the Syrian Arab Army, which agreed a united strategy to fight ISIS. This unity is unique in the Syrian tragedy and should serve as a lesson to all of the disaffected armed groups in Syria who claim to be opposed to the alien Islamic terrorism of ISIS and al-Qaeda.

This unity is an alternative for the myriad of armed gangs across Syria, thought to number over a thousand, who compete for funds from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the Gulf dictatorships and NATO, and which falsely assume the name of "rebels". The real traitors in their country are ISIS and al-Qaeda, and so the combined strength of the Syrian Arab Army, which itself has lost 60,000 dead, and the disaffected gangs, could quickly put an end to all foreign intervention and lead the unity and salvation that Syria needs. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

CPBML MAY DAY MEETINGS

"British workers – unity not division"

LEEDS Thursday 30 April, 7.30 pm.
Sovereign Suite, Cosmopolitan Hotel,
Lower Briggate, Leeds LS1 4AE

EDINBURGH Friday 1 May, 6.30 pm.
Word Power Bookshop, 43 West
Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DB

LONDON Friday 1 May, 7.30 pm.
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1R 4RL

The British working class has been a thorn in the side of capitalism ever since it came into being. Hence the attempt by capitalism to divide and rule.

We are all exploited by capitalism for the creation of profit. Any attempt to divide us helps our enemy. This May Day, say no to capitalist-inspired division, yes to working-class unity.

Down with separatism, down with the EU, no to imperialism. Workers of all lands, unite!

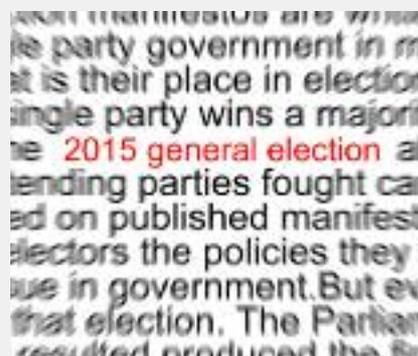
For more detail, see advert, page 8.

JUNE

Thursday 11 June, 7.30 pm.

"After the election – the next step for workers"

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



Whatever coalitions are cobbled together, the tasks facing British workers remain the same: we are going to have to fight for our survival as a nation and as a class.

Come and discuss. All welcome.

Politicians are pressing ahead with internal devolution in England, using diktats to get round rebuffs at the polls...

The DevoManc debacle

THERE'S BEEN very little support for splitting up England whenever it has been put to the vote. Two years ago the people of Manchester voted not to have an elected mayor. They could not see why they needed yet another politician. In 2004 people in northern England voted overwhelmingly against devolution. Only Bristol has been tempted, but that's not turning out to be too popular.

Those views have been ignored. On 23 June last year, at a conference in Manchester, George Osborne said, without apparent shame, "Every northern city needs a Boris Johnson to fight their corner on the world stage." He went on: "...I am starting the conversation about a serious devolution of powers and budgets to northern cities." The offer is open "only to any city that wants to move to a new model of city government...and have an elected mayor".

The "conversation" turned out to be a one-sided discussion behind closed doors. The chief executive of Manchester Council was told by Osborne to hammer out a secret deal with Whitehall on devolution for Greater Manchester. On 3 November the details were announced (see Box, below). Michael Heseltine claimed "English devolution is now unstoppable".

The so-called DevoManc agreement devolves responsibilities from central government to the new Greater Manchester Combined Authority. This happened without any pretence of democratic process. There was no vote, no consultation, no White Paper and no parliamentary debate or other democratic scrutiny.

This goes beyond anything on offer to Scotland. Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP will have taken note. A second vote on Scottish devolution is now a more likely possibility.

Contempt

Together central and local politicians are contemptuous not just of the public (ie the working class) but of Parliament too. Before the general election Osborne will have cut a third of what cities receive from central government. Those with devolved powers will have the task of managing that pain.

There were promises of a high-speed rail network, improved cross-Pennine trains and roads, and investment in science. Manchester will have control over property taxes and the northern regions would have the right to tax revenues from shale gas when exploited.

All of the investment is much needed, but it's not new money. Local property

taxes will be clawed back by greater reductions in central grants. Once built, new scientific institutions will have to compete for a share of much reduced national funding. Each separate region or city will try to undercut or swallow its neighbour. None of them will create or support a national plan for transport, education or research.

Last December Osborne announced the setting up of the Sir Henry Royce Institute for Advanced Materials Research & Innovation in Manchester as part of the government's "northern powerhouse" propaganda. Scientific advances and Nobel award-winning research into graphene at the University of Manchester underpin that new institute. They were possible because of national funding.

Breaking up Britain into small parcels, splitting control of national resources and reliance on private funding will make it less likely that such high-quality and pioneering work will happen in future.

Devolved funding creates nothing new, adds no value and is frequently a smoke-screen to reduce funding rather than increase it. Those welcoming DevoManc or its siblings to follow should be challenged to explain how a split in funding can benefit the country as a whole.

Three steps towards unwanted devolution

1 15 September 2014. Plan announced to give Greater Manchester greater control of its finances and an elected mayor:

- Total Manchester public spending brought under the control of Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), under a new local governance structure.
- GMCA given legal powers to enact local joined-up government, encouraging multi-agency initiatives.
- Power over property taxes, moving on to income taxes.
- Powers to reinvest savings and proceeds locally, while a percentage of overheads remains with Whitehall.
- Creation of a new "democratic" system with an elected Assembly led by

the Mayor of Manchester. Provisional mayor appointed.

2 3 November 2014. Devolution agreement between Chancellor of the Exchequer and leaders of the GMCA. A new, directly elected mayor would have powers including:

- Responsibility for a devolved and consolidated transport budget.
- Strategic planning, including creation of a statutory spatial framework.
- Control of a new £300 million Housing Investment Fund.
- Control of a reformed earn-back deal, within the current envelope of £30 million a year for 30 years.
- Taking over the current responsibil-

ities of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

GMCA powers to include:

- Opportunity to be a joint commissioner with Department for Work and Pensions.
- An invitation, along with Greater Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups, to develop a plan to integrate health and social care across Greater Manchester, based on control of existing health and social care budgets.

3 27 February 2015. Memorandum of Understanding between NHS England and Greater Manchester.

- Announced a shared plan for £6 billion health and social care funding. ■



Tameside Hospital, Greater Manchester. DevoManc could see budgetary control go to an authority set up without any democratic mandate.

It has not taken long to see how this drive to localism will manifest itself. On 27 February it was announced that DevoManc is being used to further break up the NHS and to take away everything that makes it a national health service. Greater Manchester began to take control of a local health budget from this April. The region's councils and health groups will take over £6 billion allocated for health and social care, with full devolution planned by April 2016.

Gaps

Everyone knows of the problems that can arise in the gap between health and social care. And most people who have experienced this realise that inadequate funds for either or both are the root cause. Osborne acts as if no one had thought of joining up health and social care before now – hoping that no questions are asked on the overall funding and the creation of a Manchester Health Service in place of the National Health Service.

Dr David Wrigley, a GP in the North West and a member of the BMA Council said “Local patient groups, local GPs, local NHS staff, local MPs, national medical organisations, and patient groups...need to ask where the consultation was and why democracy has been sidelined. They need to ask what the implications are for their care and what happens when local authority budgets are cut further in coming years.”

There are potentially around 30 geo-

graphical footprints in England similar to Manchester. Running alongside the Manchester Devolution is a national programme for Health Services of 29 “vanguard integrated care pilot sites”.

These have already been approved with authority to configure services in line with local requirements without obligation to take note of any national strategy.

‘Devolved funding creates nothing new, adds no value.’

Local leaders will see that a future secretary of state for health has no legal responsibilities for targets or performance monitoring. There will be no workforce strategy or associated planning, no national capital programme, no planned preventative maintenance or modernisation strategy. Such leaders might easily conclude that central government, having no purpose other than resource allocation, ought to just delegate in full the necessary finance and associated powers. That will lead to chaos and corruption and it will do nothing to train the legions of doctors and midwives politicians are fond of promising.

All this will be in place across England by April 2016, including powers to appoint local secretaries of state. An “in or out” referendum on the EU may follow soon after. We need to consider the implications of localism and the break-up of national institutions for national sovereignty.

A national system of socialised health care in Britain comes to an end once this programme is fully implemented. We need to think about the ideological implications of this “loss of conscience” by the working class.

What makes us stronger

A united Britain is important for workers. It's not about chauvinism or jingoism. It's simply that an independent Britain will make us stronger as a class and therefore more able to defend ourselves against naked profit making and more able to create the future we want.

Dividing Britain would make us weaker, not stronger. Last September the people of Scotland voted decisively to stay part of Britain. The wish for unity and opposition to division is as important in the regions of England as it is in Wales or Scotland.

England, Scotland and Wales provide us with one border and a common language – an excellent starting point for a working class future. We also have a shared history and culture. This must be the basis for our relations with other independent European nations. ■



CPBML MAY DAY MEETINGS 2015

BRITISH WORKERS: UNITY NOT DIVISION

Capitalism never gives up in its drive to defeat the working class today and render it incapable of winning in the future.

Ensuring its profits is all that matters to the ruling class – even if that means signing us up to destructive treaties like the EU's TTIP or dragging us into its imperialist wars.

The British working class has been a thorn in the side of capitalism ever since it came into being. Hence the attempt by capitalism to divide and rule.

Even when we score a notable victory – such as the vote of Scottish workers to remain part of the British working class – the enemy immediately tries to regain the upper hand.

Our greatest strength is our unity in struggle – but that requires a clarity of thought which is not always evident.

Those in the labour movement who emphasise differences between workers – religion, north/south, male/female, “race” or skin colour, “well-paid” vs “vulnerable workers” and so on and on – reject the essential common class interest of all workers in Britain.

We are all exploited by capitalism for the creation of profit. Any attempt to divide us helps our enemy. This May Day, say no to capitalist-inspired division, yes to working-class unity.

Down with separatism, down with the EU, no to imperialism. Workers of all lands, unite!



EDINBURGH

Speakers, music and discussion
Friday 1 May, 6.30pm
Word Power Bookshop
43 West Nicolson Street
Edinburgh EH8 9DB

LEEDS

Speakers and discussion
Thursday 30 April, 7.30pm
Sovereign Suite
Cosmopolitan Hotel
Lower Briggate
Leeds LS1 4AE

LONDON

Speakers, social and refreshments
Friday 1 May, 7.30
Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London WC1R 4RL

SEE CPBML.ORG.UK FOR UP-TO-DATE NEWS OF ALL CPBML EVENTS

Zero-hours contracts are rife in higher education and research – with most universities using them...

Something for nothing



spacedrone809/shutterstock.com

WITH SCOTTISH universities among the highest users of zero-hours contracts, it is fitting that the University and College Union (UCU) should hold its annual congress this May in Glasgow. Casualisation and the associated attack on professionalism in the further and higher education sector are now endemic, with widespread use of zero-hours contracts.

Few students appreciate that their courses are often being taught by staff earning less than the minimum wage, as those lecturers are frequently not paid for the preparation, marking and administration involved. British universities produce world-class research but few are aware that many of the researchers are also on these same contracts.

Zero-hours contracts do not guarantee a minimum number of hours, and mean that staff cannot budget to meet bills or plan for a future. Typically they mean a lecturer is only paid for the direct teaching time with students. Hours can suddenly be withdrawn with no pay, for example if a course is cancelled, even if the staff member has prepared the teaching.

In 2013 the UCU used a Freedom of

‘Some universities are kept going by staff who earn less than the minimum wage.’

Information request to reveal the extent of zero-hours contracts. This revealed that 52 per cent of British institutions used them, and this rose to 79 per cent of Scottish institutions – with the University of Edinburgh employing more people on these contracts than any other university in the country.

Even the Scottish Affairs Select Committee expressed alarm at how much zero-hours contracts were used by Scotland's higher education sector. It said that in some cases universities were being kept going by staff who earn less than the minimum wage and described the situation as one of “unashamed exploitation”.

Since 2013 the universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow have committed to work with the UCU to end zero-hours contracts and some progress has been made. Mary Senior, UCU Scotland official, said: “The widespread use of zero-hours contracts in Scottish universities continues to be an embarrassment. But the fact that our largest universities can commit to working with us to address the problem, shows that better workforce planning without zero-hours contracts is possible.”

When UCU exposed the extent of these contracts in 2013 no clear pattern emerged about their use. It concluded that employers used such contracts to avoid their legislative responsibilities, aiming also to create a compliant workforce.

One trend is clear: where workers expose their use and the employer's tactics, employers do change their stance. They know that the league of shame of who uses zero-hours contracts is a “reputational risk”. So the onus is on trade unions to highlight that risk and negotiate for staff to move to permanent contracts – and not fixed-term contracts which is the other trick employers will try on. ■

The parliamentary parties are for saving capitalism and are designed for this – to enforce the free (for capitalism) movement

Unity needed – to stop the



Workers

The Brandenburg Gate, Berlin. Symbol of a united Germany – and a European Union dedicated to exploitation.

AS *WORKERS WENT* to press, there had been hardly a mention in this election campaign of foreign policy – let alone of the profoundly adverse effects of Britain's membership of the European Union.

It is our working class who feel the brunt of its actions to build profits while suppressing wages and living standards. Now, in its quest to do so much more efficiently, the EU reaches out to that empire of capitalism, the USA, to find legal chains to bind us into its scheme – through the mechanism of the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

As we have noted in previous issues of *Workers* there is a significant growth in awareness among organised workers of what this treaty means for Britain and the urgent need to oppose it.

The EU itself has, over decades, imposed multiple "directives" and regulations on workers in an attempt to prevent us

from defending our pay and conditions. It has enforced privatisation of public services, overridden our laws, attempted to pull the country apart, and undermined our national sovereignty.

Signing up to TTIP would be a major reinforcement of this attack. By far the best solution would be to reassert our national sovereignty – in a Britain that has been forged by workers' unity – and abandon the sinking EU ship. That's why workers should take the lead in demanding a vote on this in a referendum.

The embrace of the lenders

The ongoing crisis in Greece shows clearly the nature of the EU as an exploitative capitalist block. An unprepared Greece was forced into the eurozone with catastrophic consequences, with its GDP falling by a third, unemployment rising to 27 per cent (for youth it's over 60 per cent) and a third of

its people classified as "in poverty".

Of the 230 billion euro bailout only 27 billion went into the Greek economy, while over 200 billion had to go to repay German, French, US and British banks. In order to generate funds to make these repayments, the EU insisted on a guarantee that Greece create a government surplus of 4.5 per cent of GDP in 2015-16.

Methods used had to satisfy the lenders – the European Central Bank (ECB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU Commission. Despite brave words there was no way out for the Greek government from the clutches of this "troika".

The Greek prime minister pointed out they were "holding a noose around our neck".

The ECB went on to stop Greece selling treasury bills to Greek banks as well as withholding previously agreed credits.

Awareness of the nature of the EU and

enhancing its profits. And the EU is the instrument
 of the expropriation of labour, capital and services...

The EU pulling us apart

lack of control over their own economy has spread rapidly in Greece – with strong opposition to impoverishment, privatisation of state services and erosion of collective bargaining. Yet the flaw in this scenario is that they remain wedded to the EU and its currency, an external institution representing the interests of finance capitalism.

The Spanish experience

Similar tales of woe can be found in Spain, Portugal and Ireland that should reinforce our determination to abandon the EU and its diktats. In Spain we find the steady erosion of its traditional agricultural and manufacturing industries since it joined the EU in 1986, combined with rising unemployment. Among youth it has now risen to over 50 per cent.

Spain's financial crisis from 2008 was worsened by collapse in a rampantly speculative building market. Big landowners had taken EU subsidies on condition of cutting back basic commodities such as milk and had fallen in with the multinational super-market business of cheap, low quality produce. Its manufacturing was decimated by German competition.

Privatisation right across utilities and transport, lower pensions and proposed retirement at 70, increased tuition fees and cuts in funding of local services are some of the results.

In Portugal, a dictatorship had been overthrown in 1985, but the social advances and optimism created then have been gradually undermined.

Unemployment, just over 4 per cent in 1993, is now over 17 per cent with the figure for youth at over 40 per cent. Wages continue to fall as job insecurity rises.

There was no consultation with the Portuguese people as the Socialist Party took the country into the EU then the euro. They had to resign after signing an "austerity" package with the "troika" – leaving a right-wing coalition to enforce the cuts and privatisations.

As for Ireland, an interesting commentary came from Patricia McKenna – chair of the Irish People's Movement, which had led the campaign against the EU in the Irish referendum – when she spoke in Glasgow earlier this year. She "found it an irony that the

'Of the 230 billion euro Greek bailout, more than 200 million went to repay German and other banks.'

parties supporting independence were also strongly supportive of the EU (which denied economic sovereignty and independence)".

She found it very difficult to understand how people could see the EU as democratic. Most of the peoples of Europe had had no opportunity at all to vote on the key changes that had occurred over the past 20 years. The Irish people had – as a result of a clause in their written constitution – been able to do this.

On two critical occasions (on the Nice Treaty and on the Lisbon Treaty) they had voted "no". On both occasions they had been required to vote again, under massive pressure, to give a "yes" vote. This, she said, was not what she understood as democracy.

McKenna pointed out that the unelected EU Commission and the Council of Ministers wielded such pressure that the EU parliament rarely stopped legislation in part or in whole. The EU Commission had the sole right to initiate legislation. Her country had experienced the worst emigration for many decades as well as impoverishment and privatisation.

In light of her experience of the campaigns in Ireland, she advised those in Britain fighting a referendum against the EU to demand and ensure a balance of resources and ground rules that would prevent external interference from the EU.

The parties campaigning here in Britain are weak and vacillating on this issue. Cameron's ploy of advocating a referendum only to demand staying in the club has come unstuck. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker is insisting that any treaty negotiations on Britain's relationship with the EU must be ruled out until two years after the referendum promised by David Cameron.

His chance to whitewash the EU and make it seem more acceptable is receding. Workers must step up the demand for a referendum on this – and prepare to campaign to win it. Other parties are weak on the

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Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's series of London public meetings continues with a meeting on 11 June in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, dealing with the aftermath of the election. Other meetings are held around Britain. For meeting details see What's On, page 5, or visit www.cpbml.org.uk/events.

M The Party's annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2015, Friday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There are also CPBML May Day meetings in Edinburgh and Leeds. See page 8 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

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issue. Labour, Greens and SNP are keen to criticise aspects of TTIP but ignore or make no criticism of the EU, which is pushing through its implementation.

Already we have seen the European Court of Justice (ECJ) establishing case law over several years in favour of companies using the EU-inspired free movement of labour to push down long-fought-for standards in wages and conditions. That's why the fight for pay is on the "front line" of this struggle and its importance should be recognised and raised.

The MP Ian Davidson (leading campaigner against the euro in the 1990s) pointed out recently the important role of the ECJ. He criticised those "who denied that the EU was a capitalist institution committed to promoting a free market engineered to subordinate the collective bargaining power of working people".

Davidson cited the ECJ as being closely connected with this process – that unlike any other court, it was in its essence political. Its decision making was not based on points of law but on the political assessment of how far a particular issue, in terms of legal outcome, would assist or not assist the "ever closer union" of the EU.

Danger

He also pointed to the danger of this process being intensified by the current negotiations by the EU on TTIP. This would further elevate the interests of private capital, in terms of legal process, over national governments and the interests of workers and consumers.

For an example of our own vulnerability, look no further than the NHS: with 75 per cent of contracts now going to the private sector under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the NHS is in much more danger. Any attempt to reverse such legislation could face the same type of legal action as was mounted against the Slovak government's de-privatisation attempt in 2006. Workers must consider how they would tackle such obstacles.

The bigger picture is that the eurozone as a whole is in recession, with European Central Bank forecasts of unemployment



Workers

Springtime for British farming, and sheep in the Scottish borders. Many farms here straddle the "border" without the false divisions foisted on us by the EU and separatists.

remaining at 10 per cent well into 2017. The "Fiscal Compact" of 2012 commits 27 EU countries to achieving zero deficit budgets by 2019. This will require further massive cutbacks and privatisations. That's why recession persists.

The "internal devaluation" envisaged would result in reductions in the real costs of production for capitalism – ensuring profits and re-investment for further exploitation. And in this single market created across the EU, the many weaker economies lose out to the few stronger ones. This was disguised by bank credits until the crash came. Credit is being pumped again, making the weaker even more dependent.

Who is the creditor? Above all, within this capitalist EU system, the answer would be Germany. Speaking at a 2013 Scottish Trade Union Congress fringe meeting on the EU, Ian Davidson illustrated the control-

ling influence of Germany within the EU: "First, there is the Cyprus bailout. That was debated in the German Bundestag – it was not debated in the Cyprus parliament.

"The Cypriot people were presented with a *fait accompli* – a terrible one for their own economy and future." Second, he said, there is the response of the people of Greece to their bailout, with 80 per cent now calling for full reparations for the damage done by Germany during World War Two, and 40 per cent ready to leave the eurozone.

Struggle

The workers of Germany itself have an illustrious history of struggle – from the attempt at revolution in 1919, through heroic resistance to Nazism, to the building of a socialist state in the east – that can enable them to fight this capitalist attack as they find themselves in the same predicaments as workers in other European countries, and here in Britain.

And it is here in Britain that an exemplary national plan should be created by workers. Let's build a united sovereign Britain that works for our interests – to lead the way in manufacturing, energy, transport, self-sufficient agriculture and fisheries and world renowned culture. ■

'TTIP would further elevate the interests of private capital.'

Failed leadership, in-fighting and lack of vision – London’s NHS colossus...

Barts: start talking

THE LARGEST NHS trust in Britain, Barts Health in London, with over 17,000 health staff at six hospitals, including the Royal London, is blundering towards the precipice of bankruptcy. Barts Health as a trust was flawed from the inception of the Barts PFI deal, which dates back to the 1980s though it was only delivered under the last Labour government. It created a state-of-the-art hospital on a site dating back nearly 800 years, but the trust was tied into an unsupportable and impossible PFI debt.

This became even more obvious when the coalition government took office in 2010. Health secretary Andrew Lansley tried to exclude his office from any responsibility for failing NHS trusts. His attempt to introduce such a get-out clause in his Health and Social Care Bill and subsequent Act was defeated, but anyone working at the trust or in the health trade unions knew that sooner or later the Barts situation would implode.

Adding Newham Healthcare Trust (itself another recent Labour PFI creation), and Whipps Cross in Leytonstone (which had been promised but not received a new PFI extension, and which still has a mothballed power station intended for the replacement hospital) to the Barts mix was simply an attempt to make Barts financially viable.

Under the previous government, important restructurings were taking place across health care provision in London which created centres of excellence for specialties, with smaller less skilled hospitals directing patients to them. This has led to a significant improvement for patients. Hence the roles of Newham and Whipps Cross were to change and Barts specialisms were to expand. The change of government in 2010 stopped this process.

Bart’s management strategy became one of trying to meet the PFI repayments of £100 million a year, without support or bail out from government, by making the staff pay for reducing the debt.

A “turn around” team, driven by accountancy and banking pedigree, was brought in to achieve the savings. Management abused the terms of the Agenda for Change agreement (which concerned job evaluations and bandings of posts), moving to reduce all staff bandings (wages and skills) by one or two levels. Hundreds of staff saw



Workers

Radiographers picketing at Whipps Cross in October 2014.

their wages savagely cut.

The challenge to this is now gaining momentum. Unison, having demonstrated the flaws in the process and having cajoled other reluctant unions into supporting a fight against these downbandings, has also gained support from the NHS Employers’ Confederation job evaluation experts in saying that the process pursued at Barts was wrong and now needs reversing.

Unravelling

So the attempt to make the workforce pay for the PFI disaster looked to be heading for the rocks and the central management strategy was starting to unravel. Then the November 2014 visit by the Care Quality Commission resulted in a blistering report (published in March 2015) which condemned the trust management for failing to address management failures, inadequate resources and persisting with poor outsourcing practices.

Whipps Cross has been placed in special measures to try to save the hospital. Senior resignations from the board followed immediately (more should follow!).

The view held by the health trade unions that there is a long history of poor management and leadership by the employer across the legacy hospitals, which became institutionalised in the newly merged trust, has been utterly vindicated. The trust is now effectively rudderless.

But this Barts “style” has had a significant impact on union branches and membership over many years. Dysfunctional management, dysfunctional trade unions, demoralised staff, significant staff turnover rates, staff happy enough to have Barts on their CV but not willing to stay – all have contributed to the crisis.

An extensive staff survey – still to receive proper attention – highlighted bullying and harassment. The failure of trade union members and staff to address this “style” collectively speaks volumes. Have we learnt nothing from the Mid Staffs nightmare – where people knew what the problems were but stood back twiddling their thumbs, or looked the other way, or pursued their own interests?

The other diversion Barts and its legacy trusts have had to cope with over many years has been the attempt to infiltrate and take over the union branches, primarily Unison and Unite, by the ultra-left. This has resulted in sectarianism, in-fighting, division, exclusion, cliques trying to control the trade union branches. The staff at the hospitals will need to take hold of their organisations to rectify this destructive activity.

Barts cannot remain as several trusts bolted together. It has to become one to survive. It must become a centre of excellence, with constituent hospitals such as Whipps Cross and Newham serving that purpose.

This will inevitably involve a centralising strategy of concentrating provision for certain specialisms (a process which has already proved so successful in improving outcomes for stroke patients in London). It may be that as a result hospitals such as Whipps Cross and Newham will need to reduce some provisions further to enable this strategy to proceed – and staff, local people and politicians will need to accept the logic of this.

What is needed now is for management in Barts Health to start a genuine exchange with the trade unions. Both must be clear that the PFI debt is for the government to resolve, not for the staff to pay for (which resulted in the disaster described in the Care Quality Commission’s report). Only then can Barts Trust begin the road to recovery. ■

What is art? Is it just a mechanism to create profit for capital? If so, how do we go about securing it?

The battle for the arts:

SHOULD THE ARTS be expected to create capital, and capital expected to fund the arts? Or are the arts an essential human function that ultimately cannot be controlled by capital? They are far older – at least 30,000 years older – and they have flourished in different economic systems without capital, including socialism.

For capitalism the answer is straightforward. Everyone and everything has to support the creation of capital – for profit, naturally. Indeed, the arts are now even called “Cultural and Creative Industries”. But for those who earn their living as artists under capitalism, the question presents an irreconcilable contradiction.

This can be seen no more clearly than in the recently published Warwick Commission’s report, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth*.

The report is intended as a blueprint for “how Britain can secure greater value from its cultural and creative assets” and its five goals provide further clarity on the deepness of the mire: investment; greater “diversity”; better education and skills training; access to digital technology; building community identity at local and regional level.

Membership of the commission consisted of leading business figures and academics as much as advisers from the world of the arts, so its muddled title is no surprise.

At the heart of the report is a spectacular refusal to recognise the contradiction. It contains a social-democratic, idealist and egalitarian call for capitalist funders (government, corporations, philanthropists) and working class producers (the “creative and cultural industries”) to unite to “guarantee equal access” to a rich cultural education in order to live a

‘For capitalism everyone and everything has to support its own profit.’



Workers

Henry Moore at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park – the park’s collection was based on works commissioned by the Yorkshire County Council, the product of the postwar belief in the concept of arts for all.

creative life as a “universal human right”.

The context is repeatedly described in imperialist terms as one of global competition – “carving out Britain’s global status in the world” – and impoverishment for the foreseeable future: “The UK is in a period of embedded austerity....this trajectory will continue....” The limits on expectations are established at the outset.

In a vain effort to circumvent the art/profit contradiction the Report does what so many reports coming out of universities do these days: it concocts an

academic model which does more to confound than explain. In this case we have the curious metaphor of an “ecosystem” of nine interlocking sectors of creative talent: architecture; advertising; crafts; design (including graphics and fashion); film, TV, video, radio and photography; IT services; publishing; museums, galleries and libraries; and the performing and visual arts.

According to figures from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the workforce of 1.7 million inside this

ital, or is it something else, a universal human need? And

people versus profit



Commissioned by the Arts Council and London County

bubble is growing four times faster than the British workforce as a whole, contributing £77 billion of “value added” [see *Workers*, March/April issue for meaning of this term]. But, it says, more investment, participation, education and access to digital technology is needed to maximise “value”.

It makes no explicit mention of manufacturing, that is, wealth creation. In the report Tory Minister for Intellectual Property Baroness Neville Rolfe gives some telling statistics: Britain now invests

more per annum in ideas and brands (£126 billion) than in factories or machinery (£88 billion). Half of this investment – 4.3 per cent of GDP – is for protected intellectual property rights.

Yet the report describes the creative industries as “one of the mainsprings of the British economy [whose] future sustainability and growth need to become a priority for the nation”.

A new organisation, the Creative Industries Federation, has been founded to lobby for the sector, which also includes “heritage”.

The timing of the report, coming just before a general election, is significant. Together with the BBC’s year-long Get Creative celebration of British arts, it is guidance to a future government, and much of it has already been adopted as Labour policy.

Here we see further evidence of the arts/profit contradiction. Britain needs a national plan for the arts, but this must be part of a planned, balanced economy, not a substitute for manufacturing and production of goods. Indeed, the latter are the foundation for arts creation.

Warwick talks about Britain’s “historical advantage in key industries eroded by international competitors”; but it is at this point of inter-connection with traditional as well as new industries that investment is needed and significant value will be created, but by industry for art. In reality the sustainability of the arts depends on the wider industrial economy, fuelled by production and trade in the things which people need and find useful.

As a working class, we would want Britain to be the best it can be in offering its creative riches to the world, but the metrics of capitalist competition are a dead hand on creative life. It is this resolution to the irreconcilable contradiction which, unsurprisingly given its composition, the Commission cannot touch.

It should be demanding the return of a unified British body for the arts. When the Arts Council of Great Britain was attacked as elitist and broken up in 1994 into its various branches for the distribution of Lottery money, it provided the framework for the fragmentation of culture and fund-

‘In reality the sustainability of the arts depends on the wider industrial economy.’

ing into competing regions (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

The arts were consigned to corporate sponsorship – it was the beginning of a devolutionary process which continues to this day, and is epitomised by Warwick’s recommendations on community identity. It also suited the EU’s regionalisation programme.

In the decades during and since Thatcher’s term of office the arts have struggled to survive. Jeremy Hunt cut the Arts Council budget by over 30 per cent. Between 2010 and 2015 local government has lost 40 per cent of its arts budget. Direct spending on the arts, heritage, museums and libraries is a mere 0.3 per cent of total spending. This under “a government that knows the price of everything and the value of nothing”, as one trade union contributor to the BBC’s *Arts Question Time* put it.

As grant-aid has been reduced in real terms, the arts have again become dependent on philanthropy and corporate giving.

‘Austerity’ politics

The politics of “austerity” flowing from the failed eurozone are distorting the meaning of investment, taking enterprise out of the hands of artists, robbing them of their self-sufficiency, and allying their interests with a plethora of new business-school models propped up by public funds, such as “social enterprise financing”, “investment portfolios”, “peer to peer investment”, “equity crowd funding”, “impact-focused debt-funding”.

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The only solution the commission can come up with is redistribution, not a proper investment plan for the future. Trade unionists representing workers in theatre, film, dance, music, libraries, museums and galleries were not invited to contribute to the report, and apart from the NUT have been largely silent in response. They did however mount their own conference on the future of the arts on 14 March and campaigned around the country under the banner "Show Culture Some Love".

Redistribution has been seized on as policy by Labour, ever looking for the easy way out. With the Local Government Association, Labour has drawn up an eight-point plan for such things as use of empty shops, sharing back-office facilities, and leasing market stalls at peppercorn rents, but nothing substantial, and only "for consideration" – in power, easily forgotten.

In his film about the National Gallery,

Fred Wiseman, in his non-judgmental way, reveals the dumbing down that can take place when mere publicists and accountants drive board decisions. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic gallery staff there, already on minimum wages, are being replaced by even cheaper private security personnel with no cultural background.

Across Britain workers in the creative sector, from cinemas to museums and monuments, are fighting to be valued. Many cannot afford to live on their meagre pay. Wardens at Windsor Castle are the latest to join the struggle to have their hours of labour recognised.

In the past three years 71 per cent of artists received no fee for exhibiting in publicly funded galleries ("Paying Artists Campaign").

Money...for investors

Taxpayer money for investment goes to investment firms rather than directly to the artist. Not only are these replicated layers of funding inefficient, it is a kind of theft.

'EU law forbids state subsidy – and no one has the guts to face a run-in with the EU over its arts policy.'

The Labour Party and TUC are complicit, because they believe in the EU's austerity measures and cap on borrowing and have no alternative economic plan.

Despite this gloomy picture, there have been some noteworthy successes: 27,000 new British jobs in film, TV, radio and photography were created during 2011-2013. This has an impact on the broader economy through such activities as transport, location hire, accommodation and catering.

Arts education for all, too

ON THE POSITIVE side, Warwick calls for continued and increased public investment in education and training. This is because, no matter how hard it tries to push a private/public partnership agenda, it cannot escape the key role of state education in developing the creativity and curiosity of students.

The government may be obsessed with "reducing the deficit", but cultural workers have decided not to stand still, and instead to take some initiatives for the future. The Creative Industries sector was one of the first to set up apprenticeships at graduate level, in response to high demand.

Intensive summer arts courses for high-risk young people have resulted in a reduction in offending rates. The RSC's Stand Up for Shakespeare campaign and Learning and Performance Network is another collaboration with teachers.

The Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA), a

collection of 9,000 individuals and organisations (National Theatre, Tate Modern, National Children's Bureau, RSC, Sage Gateshead, English Heritage, etc), produced a manifesto entitled *A Right to Culture for Every Child*.

The manifesto proposes actions broadly welcomed by the NUT: a national plan focusing on schools, eg for music education; an arts and culture coordinator for every school; Ofsted inspection for a balanced curriculum including arts; STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) to become STEAM (added Arts); and industry-endorsed careers advice. (The NUT would, however, prefer less, not more Ofsted).

CLA points to a 50 per cent drop in Design & Technology including textiles at GCSE level between 2003-2013, and 23 per cent in Performing Arts. This decline was reinforced by the introduction of the

English baccalaureate (Ebacc) in 2010, resulting in a fall in state schools of specialist arts teachers. It had a disproportionate impact on schools with the most disadvantaged children, whose parents could not afford extra-curricular tuition.

From 2007-2013 there was a 25 per cent drop in other craft-related GCSEs (but a 70 per cent growth in Media, especially screen-based, such as Film). Much of the decline is related to loss of traditional British industries: there has been a 58 per cent fall in Ceramics and Glass over the last five years.

Britain needs creative scientists and artists who understand the properties of materials and the new possibilities offered by technology, but in 2012-13 only 8.4 per cent combined arts with sciences in AS Levels. Children should no longer have to choose between science or arts, as they did in the 1950s. ■

But with the UK Film Council now disbanded, the British Film Institute on its own is no longer able to focus exclusively on its cultural obligations, but is encumbered with commercial trivia such as PPI, Lottery grants and tax incentives.

The Warwick report calls for more of this sort of private short-term financial tinkering for TV, video games and software development, theatres and orchestras. It comes out against government grants and subsidies – state support which not only demonstrates human value but is more efficient in the long term.

The reason is not openly stated, but it must be at least in part because EU law forbids state subsidy, and virtually none of the parties has the guts to face a run-in with the EU over its arts policy.

In his book *Cultural Capital* Robert Hewison writes: “Without a firm commitment to culture as a common good, the public realm will continue to be divided and fragmented by privatising interests that work on the principle of competition, not cooperation.”

It is tempting to imagine that in the not too distant future the people of Britain might vote to leave the EU. Liberation from those shackles would enable British workers to start to construct the sort of



Workers

Welsh pipers, orchestra and singers: mass activity without thought of profit

cooperative, productive and creative society that capitalism cannot provide. In accepting the limitations of bourgeois economics today we snuff out our vision for tomorrow.

There is a working class alternative – resist at every turn, conspire, plan to rebuild, impose our demands for a more civilised and creative Britain where people not profit come first. Take back the arts. ■

CPBML/Workers

Public Meeting, London

Thursday 11 June, 7.30 pm

“After the election – the next steps for workers”

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

Whatever coalitions are cobbled together, the tasks facing British workers remain the same: we are going to have to fight for our survival as a nation and as a class. Come and discuss. All welcome.

Illustration Bahadır Yeniceri/shutterstock.com

**Britain punches above its weight in science. But with pro
Union and the rise of unreason, nothing can be taken for granted.**

Science for the people: /

IF ALL BRITAIN had in the way of scientific research were just what is contained in London, we would be a global scientific power. London has 23 universities and research institutes, including the Francis Crick centre, which will be Europe's biggest biomedical research institute. London has more universities in the global top 20 than any other city in the world.

But Britain has much more – Oxford, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Manchester, Newcastle, and on and on.

How come? What is special about Britain? Is it something in the blood? Are British people naturally cleverer and more inventive than others?

A cursory look at the science of inheritance and the history of Britain shows that the idea is ludicrous. And more than a quarter of the British Nobel prizes have been won by people born abroad, including those who won Nobels for the structure of the atom, the structure of DNA, the invention of fibre optics, graphene...

No. People come here because it is a brilliant place to do research. What is special about Britain is the unique combination of industry and enlightenment. That and the fact that religion has never been allowed to stifle our education system. Not yet.

Britain really is a scientific powerhouse. We are 1 per cent of the world's population, with around 3 per cent of the world's R&D, and we produce 14 per cent of the world's highest-quality research.

But if it's clear that Britain's science is really strong, scientists are becoming increasingly concerned that soon that might be all history. Lack of investment is the main issue. Over the past three decades government expenditure on R&D has declined in real terms.

Private industry is hopeless: the amount it invests in R&D is just 0.57 per cent of our GDP, against 0.85 per cent in Germany and 0.92 per cent in the US. No wonder Paul Nurse, President of the Royal Society, talks



The Diamond Light Source, Britain's (sole) national synchrotron facility, at Harwell, Oxfordshire. It

about short-term thinking not just among politicians but in companies as well: "Their focus is on annual returns for the shareholder and big annual bonuses for the bosses rather than investing in the future." That's 21st-century capitalism for you.

Actually, the position in Britain is even worse than that, because its historic strength in pharmaceuticals means that they account for over 27 per cent of all private R&D in the country. Strip that out and the figures would be still more dire.

Our science rose with commerce and industry. It can't survive indefinitely without them. In the 20 years since 1995 the economy has grown by a little over 50 per cent, but the numbers of people employed in R&D have remained static – overall numbers have fallen slightly, numbers of scientists have risen slightly.

So with all this lack of investment, how does British science do so well? The answer lies in our history of scientific thought and development. As Paul Nurse has put it: "We are lucky that 350 years of groundbreaking scientific endeavour has given us a good head start."

350 years ago takes us back to the start of the Royal Society, whose luminaries

included the likes of Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke and Christopher Wren (architecture brought in the money, but Wren was also a professor of astronomy; the Monument to the Great Fire that he designed with Hooke was intended also as a huge telescope).

But rational and experimental thought in Britain goes back even further. In the 1620s Francis Bacon was experimenting with freezing food as a means of preserving it, for example.

For all the positives, all the progress, Britain is also becoming fertile ground for superstition and unreason. We have to face up to a few problems.

Problem 1. The rise of false science.

Green extremists, for example, often ignore science and seem to think they don't even have to prove their case. Too often they are allowed to get away with it.

To many in the structures of the trade unions (admittedly, a small and dwindling number) it seems "obvious" that nuclear power is bad, fracking is bad, GM is bad, carbon production is Satanism, and so on.

This article is an edited and updated version of the speech given at a CPBML meeting in London in March 2015.

...action ebbing away abroad, the dead hand of the European
...cranked...

Away with superstitions



it's Your Day Photography, Sean Dillow

produces intense beams of light that help scientists to understand materials from proteins to metals.

‘Britain is becoming fertile ground for superstition and unreason.’

Actually, most trade union members don't agree, but their abandonment of the official structure of unions is leaving the field free for ultra-left and environmental cranks on the one hand and europhiliacs on the other – and creating a dangerous dislocation between unions and members that will damage recruitment and weaken the working class.

Briefly, some examples of unreason. First, the disaster – now being replicated in the US – of denying the effectiveness and safety of MMR vaccination. This leads to epidemics.

Second, the vilification of nuclear power. Britain built the first nuclear power station, Calder Hall. We led the world in reactor design. Civil nuclear power, properly regulated, is also safe. Opinion polls show

that the public supports a programme of replacing our ageing nuclear power stations with new ones. So why aren't we building them?

Third, the demonisation of GM, genetic modification. If you think GM is inherently evil, then what about artificial insulin? It's all produced by genetic modification. As to food, well, it's up to you what you put in your body, and labelling should say how food is produced. But don't think being against GM means you won't be eating genes: even an “organic” banana has billions of genes.

Fourth, and currently fashionable, anti fracking. Why do environmentalists hate it so much? Shale gas is less polluting than coal and oil. Why does the TUC call for a halt to fracking “unless proven harmless to people and the environment”? Science cannot prove a negative. If nothing is to be done unless it is “proven harmless”, we would never replace our current nuclear stations, develop new sources of power – or even build a new bridge. We would slip back into our pre-industrial past, when life expectancy in this country was 40. It's now 80. The only scientific approach is to look at what we know, to calculate probabilities,

and assess risk against benefit.

Here's a reasonable risk benefit assessment of fracking. Risk: Too many uncertainties to quantify, but unlikely to be significant – and if so, it would be simple to stop it. Benefit: Enough gas to supply Britain's current needs for 400 years.

Problem 2. The European Union.

The EU is trying to turn the universities and research institutes into its tame clients, and has been doing a pretty good job of it. Its new R&D programme, Horizon 2020, was allocated 79 billion euros over seven years, which is a lot of money (something like ten times Britain's total annual government funding of science).

Our own universities, starved of funds here, are naturally eager to get on the gravy train. Some have developed entirely new business units to enable researchers to get hold of EU grants.

But it's all our money in the first place, taken from our science funding, sent over to Europe, skimmed, and then doled back to

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And the next generation?



Corbis UK

The number of young people choosing to study science is actually rising, despite the fees. From 2007/8 to 2013/14: Physics up 16 per cent, Engineering and Technology up 15 per cent, Biological Sciences up 30 per cent.

Chemistry departments are re-opening, for example at King's College London and Lancaster, and there are more students (no doubt understanding that a science degree really does help get a job).

In the decade leading up to 2005 30 of Britain's 70 chemistry departments closed. Then, in 2006 the University of Sussex said it was closing its truly world-leading chemistry department.

Huge outrage followed – government looked into it, and was forced to provide a few hundred million to encourage schools'

chemistry and to fund higher education. The Sussex chemistry department is still there.

But how long will this last? The government seems to be doing all it can to turn children off science. At the end of 2014 Ofqual announced that GCSE science would be examined by written exam only, putting practical work – where the fun really lies – under threat.

Faced with laboratory space that isn't contributing to exam success on the one hand, and with rising rolls on the other, how many schools will turn their labs into ordinary classrooms?

Or to put it another way, how long will it take government-inspired perversion of education and low levels of investment to overturn 350 years of scientific tradition? ■

that Britain's scientific development is linked to industry, to production. Move the production abroad, and research will follow.

One in seven of the world's top medicines was developed here. But the pharmaceutical industry is increasingly being lured overseas, either to the US, or to countries like Belgium because of the tax breaks, or to China and India.

Equally, scientists in Cambridge developed the technology that runs at least 95 per cent of the world's mobile phones – but not one of the billions of chips a year used by mobile phone makers is made here.

Karl Marx knew the potential of science and followed its development keenly. He believed, too, that society had its own laws of development, its own science, just as nature does, and devoted his life to the elaboration of scientific socialism.

People talk about science changing the world, but of course it doesn't. Only people can change the world, and they do it deliberately or not, with the tools they have to hand. Science and scientific thinking are part of that toolset, and the most important part at that. Religious thought, mysticism, and environmental extremism – anything that puts people last – are just part of the problem. ■



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us as some kind of Brussels bounty. Worse, the trend is to hand over increasing sums to the EU, the world's ultimate capitalist club.

And then the universities get short-changed anyway. On 13 April, 50 (yes, 50!) of Britain's top university staff went off to Brussels to lobby against stripping 2.7 billion euros of Horizon 2020 money and handing it over to the newly created EU investment fund. They could have saved

themselves some money and stayed at home.

Problem 3. Parasitic capitalism.

Capitalism is creating a country where profit comes from speculation, production is outsourced, and the rich thrive not by talent or industry but by appropriating from the poor and from the nation as a whole.

There's no getting away from the fact

In this issue we look at two rather different books on the Scottish referendum...

Rewriting history?

More of a nightmare

The Dream Shall Never Die: 100 Days That Changed Scotland Forever, by Alex Salmond, hardback, 263 pages, ISBN 978-0008139766, William Collins, 2015, £12.99.

THIS IS the SNP's Alex Salmond's diary of the last hundred days of the Scottish referendum campaign last year.

He claims, "Where we do have tremendous support is in the breadth of the business community...Our list of business supporters, led by Brian Souter, Jim McColl and George Matthewson, is impressive."

Souter is the boss of a private bus company. A month after he gave the SNP £500,000, the party dropped its commitment to re-regulate the bus network. McColl is so committed to Scotland that he is a tax exile in Monaco. Matthewson backed the disastrous 2007 takeover by RBS of ABN Amro, whose debts killed off the Scottish bank.

The SNP worked with the Tories at Holyrood for four whole years, relying on them to pass all its annual budgets. The Labour Party worked with the Tories for just a hundred days in the Better Together campaign. Salmond tactfully never mentions the first fact, but never fails to mention the second.

Salmond says essentially vote SNP to get the Tories out. But certainly for workers, the SNP is just as great a threat as the Tories, for they are determined to break up Britain and will pursue that in Parliament. Scottish workers who opposed separation in the referendum – a handsome majority – might be able to help spoil such a plan by tactical voting to keep the SNP out.

Salmond writes of "Scotland's spending advantage", admitting that what he calls the "three other nations" (three? – he must want to break up Ireland permanently as well as Britain!) have a "public spending advantage" over England – which shoots down the usual SNP claim that Scotland subsidises England.

Just like the Labour Party, Salmond and the SNP oppose a democratic referendum on EU membership. And Salmond endorses the SNP's undemocratic proposal that, if a referendum is held, there should



The Scottish referendum: in the end, the vote was decisively against separation.

Andrea Obzerova/shutterstock.com

be a triple lock on any referendum decision. There would have to be majorities in England, Scotland, Wales and northern Ireland separately for Britain to leave the EU. The result would not be decided by majority vote but by minority rule. ■

Campaign perspective

100 days of hope and fear: how Scotland's referendum was lost and won, by David Torrance, paperback, 192 pages, ISBN 978-1910021316, Luath Press Ltd, 2014, £9.99.

DAVID TORRANCE is a journalist and author. Throughout last year's Scottish referendum campaign he tried to keep an objective stance, as befits a journalist, rejecting attempts to put him into one camp or the other. In this fascinating account he gives us a flavour of the campaign's lively meetings and intense debates. He also makes some sharp comments on some of the ideas expressed in the campaign.

The Scottish National Party's policy of secession would damage all of us. The SNP rejects Union with England and Wales in which it has ten per cent of the population and a commensurate say. Yet it embraces the EU in which it would have

around one per cent of the population and a commensurately smaller say. And why leave a successful Union in order to join an unsuccessful one?

Secession would destroy both national solidarity and working class unity. The SNP claims that dividing us would unite us, on the spurious grounds that a breakaway Scotland would provide an irresistible progressive example which England and Wales would soon follow. Torrance rejects this, and observes that in fact two small rump states would more likely retreat into reaction, evidenced by the lack of progress in the Czech Republic and Slovakia since their split.

Torrance points out that the SNP agreed to accept the referendum outcome as required by the agreement between the United Kingdom government and the Scottish government signed in Edinburgh on 15 October 2012. It stated, "... the governments are agreed that the referendum should: ...be conducted so as to command the confidence of parliaments, governments and people, deliver a fair test and a decisive expression of the views of people in Scotland and a result that everyone will respect."

The vote was 55-45 against secession – a clear, fair and decisive result that we should all respect. ■

Vietnam's long struggle for independence culminated in victory for the country against the military might of France and of America.

1975: Victory in Vietnam

FORTY YEARS AGO Saigon was liberated and the long Vietnam War effectively came to an end. The Vietnamese fight for independence has ancient roots. The nation emerged in 208 BC, forged in response to incursions from China. Vietnam repeatedly challenged domination by its much larger neighbour. Periods of independence alternated with occupations that were resisted or repelled.

When the French occupied Vietnam in 1858, struggle against foreign invaders was already a tradition. There were periodic uprisings against this Western empire too. By 1930 the Indochinese Communist Party was formed and opposition gathered. The Japanese occupied Indochina after France fell to Germany in 1940, but it kept the French administration intact.

Protracted war

In 1941 the Vietminh national front started a protracted guerrilla war against all these occupiers. Many Vietnamese leaders had received military training during the 1930s and 1940s in the revolutionary base areas of China. By summer 1944 larger guerrilla detachments were formed and a general insurrection was unleashed in August 1945. On 2 September the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was declared.

On 26 September 1945 British forces landed in Saigon and returned authority to the French imperialists. They tried to reconquer Vietnam, with massive financial and military support from the US. That prompted renewed resistance that lasted a further nine years.

The French imperialists dispersed their forces to occupy Vietnam. But the guerrilla forces concentrated themselves and turned the imperialist rear into their liberated front lines. As more territory was freed, French plantations were broken up, feudal landlords' holdings were distributed to the peasants and local people's power set up. Over the nine years America spent \$3 billion trying to help the French military crush the fledgling DRV state. Vietnam's abundance of rice, rubber and coal made it an attractive place to imperialists.

The Vietnam Workers Party was formed in 1951. Its programme was to win indepen-



The victorious Vietnamese entering the former US base of Danang in 1975.

dence, unify the nation, abolish the colonial regime, obliterate feudal vestiges, give the land to the peasants and develop popular democracy. It grew in strength alongside the military struggle.

In May 1954 the French were finally defeated in the greatest anti-colonial battle ever at Dien Bien Phu. The French military had considered that base impregnable. They didn't know that thousands of Vietnamese volunteers had created hundreds of miles of roads and trenches. A further 200,000 hauled artillery, ammunition, food and fuel over mountains using bicycles, oxcarts and other crude vehicles.

After 55 days of continuous fighting, the fortified camp was destroyed and over 11,000 French troops surrendered. Within months, the French were forced to enter into peace talks in Geneva and leave Vietnam.

But the Geneva Accords denied the Vietnamese what they had won on the bat-

tlefield when the country was divided into north and south. The independence of the DRV was recognised, but the elections that were supposed to be held to reunify the country within two years were cancelled by Ngo Dinh Diem, the first of many US-backed puppet rulers in Saigon. Vietnam was forced to fight on against the US war machine for a further 15 years. Ultimately, over half a million US troops were deployed.

In 1960 the National Liberation Front (NLF) was created to develop resistance to the partition of the country. Political factors dominated military planning, and new NLF recruits received 15 days of education and training before receiving a gun, unless enemy activity interrupted the course. The first 5 days were devoted exclusively to political education.

The Vietnamese knew that to liberate their country they required not only a fighting force but also a politically conscious and motivated population. The task was to unite the greatest number possible against the invader. There should be no separation between the trained fighters and the general population but willing cooperation, involving millions who would provide food, shelter and intelligence.

The US military feared everyone and carried out many massacres of the civilian population. The most notorious, My Lai in

“Unite the greatest number possible against the invader.”

victories for this small
ca...

1968, wasn't an exception. The Pentagon's demands for higher and higher body counts and a culture of "kill anything that moves" generated war crimes. The US also adopted relentless bombing as well as chemical warfare, dropping Agent Orange chemicals to defoliate jungle hideouts and destroy crops.

The Vietminh had used the Ho Chi Minh Trail for communications in the war against the French. Now the complex web of ancient jungle paths was revived against the Americans. The ingenuity and organisation behind the Trail were astounding. It developed into an intricate maze of roads, foot and bicycle paths. There were supply bunkers, storage areas, barracks, hospitals, and command facilities. All were concealed from US planes by natural and man-made camouflage. By 1973 trucks could drive the entire length of the trail without emerging from the canopy except to cross streams.

The Tet Offensive from January to March 1968 was a decisive blow, sending shock waves across the world. The NLF and DRV armies simultaneously attacked nearly every US military base and headquarters plus 140 cities and towns in South Vietnam. It took the US and puppet forces completely by surprise. Major targets were attacked in Saigon including the US Embassy and the Presidential Palace.

Spring offensive

This wasn't irregular or guerrilla war but an all-out offensive, which won a crucial political victory despite severe Vietnamese casualties. And when the Vietnamese launched a spring offensive in 1975, the Saigon regime collapsed in less than two months; the South was liberated by 30 April. Unforgettable images of South Vietnamese collaborators scurrying to the top of the US Embassy to flee Saigon in US helicopters were beamed around the globe.

Vietnam was reunified, Saigon renamed Ho Chi Minh City. American imperialism was badly weakened, though subsequent conflicts have not been as successful.

Vietnam's contribution to the twentieth century was extraordinary. Its victory was due to the tenacious application of nationalism and communism from a communist party in touch with the traditions of its people and inspired by a revolutionary spirit. ■

6 SIX CALLS TO ACTION

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

Our country is under attack. Every single institution is in decline. The only growth is in unemployment, poverty and war. There is a crisis – of thought, and of deed. The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist held its 16th Congress in November 2012, a coming together of the Party to consider the state of Britain and what needs to happen in the future. Here we set out briefly six Calls to Action for the British working class – for a deeper explanation, see www.cpbml.org.uk.

1: Out of the European Union, enemy to our survival

The European Union represents the dictatorship of finance capital, foreign domination. The British working class must declare our intention to leave the EU.

2: No to the breakup of Britain, defend our national sovereignty

Devolution, and now the threats of separation and regionalism, are all products of only one thing: de-industrialisation.

3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation

Unions exist as working members in real workplaces or they become something else entirely – something wholly negative. Take responsibility for your own unions.

4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

The fight for pay is central to our survival as a class, and must be central to the agenda of our trade unions.

5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

The regeneration of industry in Britain is essential to the future of our nation. Our grand-parents, and theirs, knew this. We must now reassert it at the centre of class thinking.

6: Build the Party

The task of the Party is singular: to change the ideology of the British working class in order that they make revolution here.

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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- Subscribe to *Workers*, our bimonthly magazine, either online at workers.org.uk or by sending £12 for a year's issues (cheques payable to Workers) to the address below.
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CPBML

78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

email info@cpbml.org.uk

twitter [@cpbml](https://twitter.com/cpbml)

www.cpbml.org.uk

phone 020 8801 9543



Zero for us, subsidies for them

'How have workers been forced down so far? Is it that capitalists want to see just how far down they can push us?'

AS CAPITALISM continues its drive to reduce workers to utter penury and, worse, compliance in that drive, the number of workers on zero hours contracts has soared from 200,000 in 2010 to 1.8 million in 2015. Some 2.3 per cent of the 30 million-strong workforce are now afflicted by these contracts, and the trend shows no sign of easing.

Zero hours contracts, and the variants that offer fixed amounts such as 5, 10 or 25 hours – any number just so long as it is impossible to live on – are promoted by employers as “choice”.

These are contracts that tie a worker to an employer with no guarantee of any hours, and prevent that worker seeking additional work elsewhere. That's not choice: it's latter-day slavery, as are the contracts that may not tie workers to a particular employer but mean they have to work in one, two, three jobs to survive.

The Office for National Statistics has introduced some contradictory factors that mean you cannot compare like with like, preventing analysis. But it is clear that zero hours contracts hit workers of all ages between 25 and 65, particularly women, be they full-time or part-time. And in all occupations (see “Something for nothing”, page 9).

The net result is that there is no stable employment, permanent insecurity about where the next wage packet is coming from, fear in the workplace, a fragmentation in workers' collective identity and a bullying, arrogant, triumphant management style.

How have workers been forced down so far? Is it that capitalists want to see just how far down they can push us? The truth is that there is no limit on what they will impose on us – if we accept it.

That's what capitalism does. The system drives companies to seek profits. In Britain companies actually have a legal duty to make as much money for their shareholders as possible.

Couple zero hours contracts with payment

of either the national minimum wage or the so-called “living wage” and you still arrive at the continuing depression of wages.

Despite all the talk, the “living wage” covers only around 30,000 workers in Britain. To put that into context, something over 920,000 workers are on the national minimum wage in London alone. The Living Wage Foundation philosophy is threadbare and its supporters are presenting a new mythology. It seeks to undermine the need for strong trade unions or even any trade union and it promotes a strategy for making a do-gooder employer the desired norm.

As *Workers* has already shown, both the national minimum wage and the living wage are calculated by assuming that workers on these rates will be receiving state benefits – indeed, around 60 per cent of workers in work claim benefit in some form or other.

The result is that the government is using taxation to fund massive hand-outs to employers. How massive? About £11 billion a year, said Citizens UK this April. And since workers are the main source of taxation revenue, companies are getting other workers to subsidise the wages they won't pay. Worse, the low wages poverty culture has become ingrained in the workplace.

Employers have whole departments writing their socially acceptable, ethical, transparent, equality-guaranteed, independently audited, customer service public relations charters – to quote their terminology. What about us? The reality for all workers on zero hours contracts and the national minimum / living wage is low wages, long hours, total flexibility, total fragmentation, and non-union workplaces.

Workers will have to return to the days of the creation of trade unions, forged by a young working class whose very lives were threatened by the demands of capital. They joined together in conditions of great danger and secrecy, learning that when they fought together they could win. The lesson they learned will need to be learned again. ■

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