

WORKERS

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POST-REFERENDUM, TIME TO ORGANISE...

FOR AN INDEPENDENT BRITAIN

Teachers Target struggle

Pensions Free from the EU

Students Brexit boost

University pay No excuses

Football Gold, not glory

Rail Safety battle

plus **News,**

Book Reviews

Historic Notes

and more

IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

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What next for Brexit?

THE DECISION to leave the EU has been made, and we must grapple urgently with the more difficult task of deciding what kind of Britain we want. This can't be left to those who opposed Brexit.

The referendum campaign saw an explosion of thought and discussion across Britain. It had nothing to do with the parliamentary parties: you could hear it on the streets, in workplaces, in pubs and clubs. That mass movement, that independence of mind, must be carried on – and deepened – if Brexit is to become a reality.

The world has changed. We can now control our future. Where do we start? For the 43 years of Britain's subservience to the EU there has been virtually no planning – the EU did it for us (or not). Since the vote, many people here – Leave and Remain voters alike – are realising there is a new world of possibilities opening up based on self-reliance.

The TUC's response is little short of pathetic. Working people, it says, should not "pay the price of Brexit". What price would that be? Brexit is what the working class voted for, what it wants, what it knows will give it the opportunity to advance. Already there's a Brexit bonus for would-be students (see "Brexit boosts student choice", page 3), while the EU assault on workplace pensions has been blunted (see page 12). Outside the EU, we will do better.

The working class now has to focus on Britain as an independent nation in the world of today. Our enemies are trying to negate or postpone Brexit, and

the working class must rally to push it forward. This means acting on the basis that we are out of the EU.

Informally Britain should at once take soundings with EU countries about the prospects of continuing trade on a country-to-country basis. Simultaneously Britain should conduct formal trade talks with the non-EU countries in Europe and all other countries in the world.

Also at this time we should begin to rejig our economy and our educational system (as we did in WW2) to make sure that we can survive as an effective independent nation. This is the new meaning of "Rebuild Britain".

Our greatest resource is ourselves, the people of Britain. If we lack people with the skills needed, they must be trained, not poached from other countries. Above all, the people themselves must take the lead in calling for this to be done.

While all this is happening we must look again at NATO and our relations with the USA reaching right back to 1945. A take-off point can be the statement of the US President that, if we leave the EU, "we go to the back of the queue" – not a bad place to be while we re-examine our place in the world.

Politics is too important to be left to the politicians. The country wants independence. People want control over their lives. In every workplace, in every community, the people must take up the challenge: What kind of a country do we want? How do we impose our will? ■



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Brexit boosts student choice



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THE VOTE to leave the European Union is being blamed for all sorts of ills, but it's now becoming clear that in higher education the mere fact of the vote will benefit thousands of young British people looking for a place at the university of their choice.

Thousands of extra places are being offered through clearing by self-styled "top" universities, including in the Russell Group, because they are no longer sure of being able to fill them with students from the European Union.

In the topsy-turvy world of university finance (see feature article, page 14) uncertainty means that hard-to-get-into universities such as Leeds are having to work to acquire students. Leeds on its own has 1,000 degree course combinations in clearing.

"People are nervous and universities are being defensive; if EU students do not turn up, universities want to make sure they fill their places," said University of Exeter vice-chancellor Sir Steve Smith. "There is a lot of uncertainty post-Brexit. Students will have a lot of choice this summer."

Meanwhile, other universities are offering a range of incentives. These vary from the free season tickets for Leicester City (from De Montfort University) to "bogof" offers at Sheffield Hallam, where applicants with three As at A-level will be able to do a follow-on Master's course for free.

Meanwhile, newspaper reports suggest that some universities have had their credit ratings downgraded over worries about how many international students they will be able to attract. ■

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

HOUSING

Subsidy for landlords

BRITISH WORKERS know this country has a housing crisis. Rents are too high, the cost of buying a house is beyond many people. On all counts the situation is worsening and government actions are contributing to it.

Figures published in August by the National Housing Federation show that over £9 billion a year is now paid in housing benefits to people living in private rented accommodation, compared to £4.6 billion in 2008. The number of claimants in the private sector has grown over the same period by over 40 per cent to about 1.5 million – and most of that increase is attributable to people who are in work.



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The federation, which represents housing associations, pointed out that private rents are 23 per cent higher than paid for social housing. It estimates that alone accounts for about £2 billion of the total £25 billion cost of housing benefit.

The federation says that a shortage of social housing is causing this trend and that a better use of resources would be to build more affordable housing. Whether that is right or not, the latest Housing Act will do the opposite. It extends the "right to buy" to housing association tenants and will force them to pay increased rents for higher earnings. ■



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One of the many banners on display at Tolpuddle for the annual rally and festival in the village from which six agricultural workers were transported to Australia in 1834 for organising a union. The festival is now easily the largest annual labour movement event in southern England, with more than 10,000 people coming.

ON THE WEB

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

Reclaim the unions (and ditch the Labour Party)

The Brexit campaign and in particular its result pose big problems not only for business and government in Britain and throughout Europe but also for the Labour Party and trade unions at home.

‘Almighty mess’ of NHS privatisation

The NHS’s Primary Care Support Services were privatised in April, transferred to multinational profit-sucker Capita, along with over a thousand workers – and things have not gone well

North Sea oil workers vote for strike over pay

More than 200 Unite and RMT workers in the Wood Group working on Shell’s North Sea platforms have voted in favour of strike action over pay.

EU and NATO ramp up tension with Russia

EU and NATO leaders have declared they will deploy more troops and weapons on Russia’s borders.

Air pollution killing Londoners

Londoners are falling ill and dying because the capital has levels of nitrogen oxides comparable to those of Shanghai and Beijing, according to a new report published in July.

Plus: the e-newsletter

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Election fraud on the rise

ELECTION FRAUD is growing in Britain, says a report headed by former communities secretary and now anti-corruption czar Sir Eric Pickles, published on 12 August. The report was commissioned after the election scandal in Tower Hamlets, east London, which led to the disqualification of mayor Lutfur Rahman in 2015. It proposes a number of changes to voting systems, including tougher checks on voter registration and requiring voter ID at polling stations, saying corruption is particularly prevalent in some communities, especially where voters are from backgrounds such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, countries where “an individual’s right to vote in secret and exercise free choice may not be fully valued”.

There is clear evidence of pressure from elders on some members of these communities to vote a particular way, says the report, especially on women and the young. And there is even pressure to allow others to vote in their place.

There had been many warnings over a number of years about misconduct in Tower Hamlets, but nothing was done. It took action by four local residents, bringing a petition in the High Court at great personal risk, for Rahman to be brought to book. The court found he had lied about another candidate’s actions and character, used council grants to bribe voters, and was responsible for the “spiritual intimidation of voters”, all illegal acts.

As yet no criminal prosecution has been brought – a failure by the Metropolitan Police described in the report as astonishing. According to Pickles, state institutions have avoided challenging such behaviour because of “over-sensitivity” about ethnicity and religion, and for fear of accusations of racism and damaging community cohesion.

As the report states, the practices uncovered in Tower Hamlets are not isolated – there were 665 allegations last year alone. The availability of postal votes on demand, brought in by the Blair government in 2011, compounded the problem as they are easily used by others. Pickles also criticises the Electoral Commission for encouraging the use of “community languages” in polling stations. Only English should be used, he says, by polling officials and in signage. This is to prevent intimidation, and to be clear that a working knowledge of English is needed for those electing councillors and MPs.

The report has been submitted to government. It has yet to respond. ■

LOCAL GOVT

Divisions over pay

UNISON’S silliness over local government pay in recent years continues as the 2016-17 pay claim looms. Unison, GMB and Unite cannot agree what the claim should be, so Unison has decided to go solo – lodging a claim for £1 per hour with slight twists for London, despite the established practice that no single union claim will be accepted by the employer.

There is no consensus among the

trade unions, and no cooperation from the employers. So the claim will fall at the first hurdle. Not to worry: Unison has invented a whole negotiation structure, totally unfit for purpose, which is set to meet forever, consult forever, never give leadership, and before very long wheel out the only tactic it can think of – a strike ballot.

The track record on participation in local government strike ballots – running at around 6 per cent of the membership depending upon which version of Unison’s smoke and mirrors department you wish to believe – bodes ill for the claim. ■

POST OFFICES

Striking for the future

POST OFFICE workers have voted to strike against office closures, job losses and threats to their pensions. Communications Workers Union members voted 83 per cent in favour of action on a turnout of more than 50 per cent. Unite is also balloting its members.

Post Office Ltd runs Crown Post Offices and counters. It was kept in public ownership after the separation from Royal Mail which was partly privatised in 2013. The government's promise made at the time that the Post Office would be safe in public hands was meaningless.

Public funding fell from £210 million in

2013 to £80 million this year, and the company has failed to generate income to make up the shortfall. Instead its response has been a downward spiral of closing offices and passing business to franchises in WH Smith and other high street shops.

CWU members see the Post Office as a national institution providing an essential service. They are calling for meaningful discussions with the company and government about a plan for its future.

Unions fear losing 2,000 jobs over the next year out of a current total of 7,500 as a result of closing 60 offices and other reductions in services. The last straw for workers was the announcement that from next April the final salary pension scheme would be closed to new contributions even though it is in surplus. ■

Hinkley C set for review

THE GOVERNMENT is to review the Hinkley C nuclear plant deal with France and China. The project is beset with problems, not least that the European Pressurised Reactor is as yet unproven technology. There are no working examples anywhere. Olkiluoto in Finland and Flamanville in France have yet to make their debut, and both are plagued by construction delays and costs currently triple original estimates.

The costs are astronomical. If the contract is agreed, British taxpayers, through subsidised loans and guaranteed prices, will pay double the £18 billion construction costs, with electricity generation not expected before 2025 at the earliest.

Even at that cost, the plant would not be in British hands. Thanks to successive governments abdicating responsibility for energy, and supervising the decommissioning of our nuclear industry, Hinkley C is set to be two-thirds French and one-third Chinese owned, courtesy of EDF and CGN, both state-owned companies.

David Cameron's government was keen to rush the deal through, citing lack of capacity. EDF, hit by falling power prices, was desperate to get a foothold in Britain, where current nuclear facilities are all close to expiry. China, with a stranglehold on steel production, didn't need a second invitation to join the party.

But what of British interests? The TUC's Frances O'Grady is urging a green light at all costs, citing the thousands of jobs at stake, perhaps 25,000 in total, of which 5,600 in direct construction and 900 to maintain the site after completion. But how many will be British jobs? Are we talking about British steelworkers and British engineers, or more likely, delivering American fast food to French construction workers in Somerset.

With this review, the government has an opportunity to re-examine and reinvest in an independent energy policy, based on new and fast-evolving technology. Part nuclear, part gas and fossil fuel, part renewable, but all British. ■

WIND POWER

Planning for subsidies

PLANNING PERMISSION for the world's largest wind farm costing £6 billion to construct has been agreed 55 miles off the Flamborough coast, directly crossing two major nature reserves on the Yorkshire coast. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is considering further legal challenges to the decision.

This will be the second wind farm planned for the area proposed by Danish company DONG Energy. But the developer

will only go ahead if taxpayer subsidies in the region of £4 billion to £6 billion are forthcoming in addition to the subsidy it receives towards its Hornsea One project, which guarantees a price of £140 for every megawatt-hour generated over 15 years – three times the current market price.

Wind farm technology has been proven as uneconomic, unreliable and costly even without the added daylight robbery proposed by the developer. An energy strategy facing up to reality about so-called renewables and preserving the environment is required – not one of fattening up Danish companies. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 4 September, 11 am to 5 pm

Burston School Strike Festival,
Burston, Near Diss, Norfolk



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

Thursday 15 September, 7.30pm

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

“After the Vote: What Next?”

CPBML Public Meeting

We've given the EU its marching orders. Now we need to take the debate on the future of Britain that flared up during the referendum and turn it into a strategy for the working class. Meanwhile, moves are still being made to deny the result of the democratic vote to leave. How do we ensure the will of the people prevails? All welcome.



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The referendum result continues to highlight the ever-widening gap between the unions and the workers. It also underscores the urgent need for unions to reorganise.

Trade unions: organise for the future



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TUC rally against the Trade Union Act, November 2015. Did the TUC do a deal to back Remain if clauses in the Act were withdrawn?

THE MAGNIFICENT clarity shown by the vote to leave the EU must now be carried through into the trade unions. Most workers voted Leave. The world has changed, and unions must look to the future. The focus needs to be on discussions about what an independent Britain should look like for British workers, and how we organise to achieve this.

But we must also face up to the mess created by the past. The lack of clarity shown in most unions before the Referendum manifested itself in their appalling behaviour during the campaign. Some were viciously active for Remain, some pretended neutrality and indifference, and yet others manipulated member opinion to arrive at a Remain position. Only a few, like the RMT, stuck to principle.

The members, meanwhile, seemed to have taken their own advice and ignored their union leaderships when voting. Yet

after the vote, those who continue to deny the referendum result are still trying to create confusion among the working class through its trade unions.

Deal? What deal?

And just when was that deal struck for the unions to campaign for a Remain vote? The rumour, never repudiated, is that it was the day after the government climbed down over facility time and deduction of subscriptions at source in the progress of the Trade Union Bill in Parliament – enough to buy off a number of large unions still clinging to their check-off systems. In Unison's case more publicity was issued to support the Remain campaign than in the entire campaign against the Trade Union Act.

The continuing decline in membership, despite every trade union being a self-proclaimed "organising union", again strikes at the heart of relevance and the ability to work

in the interests of workers. Over a long period unions have absorbed and reinforced a fatalism emanating from workers themselves and their lack of belief and confidence in their own strength, history and abilities to deal with the employers. But millions of workers overcame that fatalism during the Brexit campaign, despite their unions' role,

'Unison issued more publicity to support Remain than in the entire campaign against the Trade Union Act.'

Opening chasm between membership and structure within to take responsibility for an independent Britain...

For independence

by voting to take back control.

In the trade unions, the willingness to seize upon glib campaign slogans without analysis or understanding shows further the weakness and lack of class thinking. For example, to campaign for the “living wage” establishes wages at a new national minimum wage, slightly above the state national minimum wage. Such campaigns, hailed as progress by most trade unions, undercut established better rates for the job won through struggle, substituting institutionalised benefits and low wages, and reinforcing fatalism in the workplace.

In the name of do-gooding we have created a nightmare for ourselves. For example Unite’s campaign in London hospitals for the “London living wage” undercut the established Agenda for Change banding. The employers beamed at the opportunity presented to cut wages but retreated in the face of clearer trade unionist opposition.

But the marker had been put down: sloganising and quick fix solutions. These are often really about trying to stop the loss of members by poaching from other trade unions in similar declining membership, and resolve nothing.

Attempts to halt decline which were a knee jerk reaction to Thatcher’s attack in the 1980s have not succeeded, only making trade unions appear more impotent, divorced from their membership base. For example, creating swathes of lay trade union branch officer positions, supposedly to attract participation by promoting any fad of the day, have largely created division and vested interest that combine to paralyse the ability to function.

One size doesn’t fit all

The creation of one-size-fits-all mega-unions has divorced them from their memberships and from the concerns that bring people together – the workplace, skill, industry, identity. Obviously there are unions that are the exception to this trend, such as the RMT in the privatised rail companies. But the larger general unions, Unison, GMB and Unite, are usually competing between themselves for the same membership.

They have largely failed to recognise the new reality of a growing privatised outsourced public sector. There is an inability to

translate decades of well organised workplaces with usually one employer into the mess of scattered workplaces with multiple employers.

More workers than ever are in work but have weaker or no workplace organisation. This is the result of the loss of the nationalised industries with their trade union organisation, the extermination of large scale manufacturing industry and trade union density relevant to the work itself, and the continuing wave of outsourcing everything. Now, many employers will treat with, but not recognise, trade unions, knowing they are antiquated, rusty, staffed by ghosts or only surviving because legislation demands it.

A return to principle is required for us to address collectively the issues that unite workers: pay, terms and conditions, the issues of the workplace, health and safety, the identity of the skill, job, trade and so on. We challenge exploitation, the profit motive and the failure of market economics in the 21st century. We put forward instead a strategic overview of what work an independent Britain needs, what industrial strategies we require and where we are going. Trade unions should drive forward a “manifesto for work” to reclaim our natural territory in the place of work, and recruit and organise on that basis.

Purpose

There is the need to challenge the models of trade unionism, the wrong models, the imported models, to arrive at purpose and fitness for purpose. Vested interests and competition, membership wars resolved by raiding the trade union next to you, merger and empire building have to cease.

The adoption of business unionism is one model almost tailor-made for the recent Trade Union Act. The union becomes an insurance policy with innumerable talking shops and conferences to distract from the inability to operate on the shop floor.

The resurrection of the corporatism model of the 1970s and 80s working hand in glove with the state likewise must be resisted as it fetters the uniqueness and independence of our unions. The acceptance of anti-trade union legislation, resisted so fiercely in the 1970s but so meekly embraced in the 21st century, is an aspect

Spiral of decline

THE DOWNWARD spiral continues: 58 trade unions representing approximately 5.8 million workers reflects the Trades Union Congress in decline and irrelevance. This at a time of the greatest number of workers ever employed in Britain – over 32 million. Why then the failure to grow?

Between 4 and 10 per cent of members voted in recent national leadership elections held by Britain’s three largest trade unions – Unison, Unite and GMB. In other words no executive council or general secretary has a mandate for anything. All trade unions have swathes of vacancies in their democratic structures. ■

of this corporatism.

And of course there is the political model of trade unionism, adopted after abandoning the workplace. It attempts either to create the Labour Party in an image that it never was, or another “workers party” to thrive in the corruption of Parliament in the same way as the Labour Party has always done. Few trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party dare publish the real figures of actual active members in the Labour Party. The recent Labour Party leadership contest, like Benn and Foot previously, is just a diversion.

After the referendum the field of operation is utterly changed. How do 32 million workers in work organise and fight with self reliance for their interests? If workers do this, there will not be a parliamentarian Labour Party or capitalism in the 21st century.

Recreation of purpose would contribute to greater engagement. Those in the trade unions who desperately sought sanctuary in the EU must now face reality and look to what is needed in the future. In their creation, our trade unions were a model emulated across the world. Now they have to be the engines for class rejuvenation as all power emanates from the shop floor and workplace in Britain. ■

If teacher unions are to protect and improve members' pay and conditions, their structure and objectives must be reconsidered and revamped. Otherwise they will be as

Teachers need to target



Workers

5 July 2016: Teachers gathering outside the BBC in central London before their march to Parliament Square.

THE ORGANISATION and delivery of education has changed radically in recent decades. This altered landscape demands that teacher trade unions overhaul how they operate if they are to make progress.

In recent years the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the largest and most active union, has tended to repeat the tactic of national strikes with marches and rallies. These have become ritualistic actions, tired and overused, where a strike becomes a form of ineffective protest and assembly, bereft of a negotiating arena. Instead, teacher unions need to channel struggle so that industrial action is targeted at those with powers of governance for specific schools.

The ineffective ritualised approach that

now bedevils the NUT suits the so-called "activist" mentality that just wants to occupy time and space rather than advance the relative power of teacher trade unionism and make members more involved. Campaigns and industrial action ought to have a potential end-result, a likely collective improvement to teachers' working conditions. Trade unionism is about improving the lot of workers, not endlessly repeating futile gestures.

Dismantling

One of the biggest changes in the educational landscape has been the dismantling of state and local authority planning and control of schooling. There is now a bewildering variety of arrangements: sponsored academies, multi-academy trusts (MATs),

academy chains, free schools and grammar schools, and so on while the dwindling numbers of state schools have powers of decision-making over pay and conditions.

We have to accept that the old set-up has gone and alter the way we think. Nationally applied action, successful in the 1970s and 1980s because it reflected the situation at the time, is no longer the proper way to conduct struggle.

There was national negotiating machinery for teachers' pay and conditions of service, known as the Burnham Committee, from 1919 until 1988. It was made up of representatives from teaching unions, local education authorities and government. But that tripartite world has gone. Thatcher's government abolished Burnham following

pay and conditions of work, then tactics and strategy must be as powerless as beached whales deprived of the sea...

...their struggle

teachers' guerrilla strikes in 1985-6. Overnight, teachers' pay and conditions were imposed by the Secretary of State.

In 1991 the government appointed a review body to make annual recommendations on pay, with the final decision taken by government. Later, Labour abolished local education authorities.

In the past few years government has introduced further "reforms" that require schools to develop pay policies and make individual pay decisions. Decisions on performance-based pay progression are taken at school level. Official policy is that "starting pay can reflect local conditions". In other words, pay less where the market can allow such a thing, for example schools in rural areas.

Similarly, conditions of service are effectively delegated. Nationally determined pay scales and incremental progression are no longer obligatory for all. Schools can move away from them, though teacher shortages have so far been an inhibiting factor.

Respond

State education applied through national procedures and local education authorities has been removed. Now the only remaining state role is the lever of inspection via Ofsted and financial provision. Teacher unions have to adjust to this less cosy environment and learn how to prosper in a fragmented, more private, sometimes privatised world. It can be done.

How do we apply union pressure in these new circumstances, this new reality? First, we must stop squandering and dissipating our strength in national set-plays of industrial action that are unable to force a settlement outcome. We must no longer pretend there is strength where there is not. Successful campaigns and action need to be directed at defending conditions and pay or extracting improvements in chains, MATs or self-governing schools.

Secondly, actions and campaigns must focus on reaching settlements, agreements and improvements inside the new negotiating units. The level of union activity must be raised within each self-governing school, MAT or chain until we can produce negotiated settlements on pay and conditions that bring real benefits to union members.

'Repeated and untargeted national action is getting us nowhere.'

When the first breakthroughs happen, we can expect there to be a snowball effect as union groups elsewhere will want to imitate best practice. A culture among teachers of wanting to work in union agreement schools will encourage other management units to accede to later claims if they wish to retain their staff.

Predictably the politico element will be reluctant to change direction, preferring vainglorious posturing in the known to practical advances in the unknown. Their mantra will probably be "keep to national action, keep to national action". But repeated and untargeted national action is getting us nowhere. Indeed over recent years the turnout of striking members is getting less and less, as lots of members see union strength is not being applied sensibly to get an outcome and realise the futility.

Strategy and tactics will have to change unless the union wants to become gradually ineffective and irrelevant. Members must be mustered to protect and improve pay and conditions of service within the new negotiating units.

The union will need to start where it is strong. Let those who feel most aggrieved and most willing to challenge have indicative ballots to test the water; where there is a high vote in favour, then that's where trail-blazing campaigns on pay and conditions can be initiated. Hopefully many managements and governing bodies will agree settlements in negotiation. Where feeling is strongest, those memberships can be balloted for industrial action to change the mind of intransigent managements.

To sustain this approach, the NUT will have to undergo a total transformation affecting probably all aspects of the union, including attitudes, structure and speed of decision-making. So far the NUT's organisational structure is largely based on divisional

associations that reflect the old education authorities, which no longer exist. There is a lingering attachment to geographical arrangements (for the national executive, divisions, regional officers) but in truth the old organisation does not reflect the new collective bargaining reality.

There will need to be an internal debate to discuss how to re-adjust the union to meet the challenges ahead. There will be no easy answers, but pragmatic modifications will emerge. All parts of the union will have to support and service the new thrust for collective bargaining at the negotiation units, which must become the central union task.

The proliferation of casework must be isolated and taken away from national executive members and regional officials, whose prime responsibility must become supporting negotiations and action at the level of the negotiating units. The same must apply to divisional officers. The growing union influence in workplaces will eventually counter fragmentation.

New role for reps

The role of the school representative will probably alter, with the skills of being able to unite as many teachers in a place as possible and to represent them with management being the most important. As getting breakthroughs on negotiations will depend on the involvement and pressure of a mass of teachers, sectarian stances and toleration of small union groups must disappear.

Even the union conference needs drastic surgery, if it is ever to regain a true position of "sovereign authority". At the moment members rarely take any notice of it. At 1,700 delegates it is far too big and constructed around geographical determinants of divisions and regions.

Again, decisive discussions are needed about how to relate the conference delegations to the negotiation units on the ground. You don't need more than 200 delegates, maybe less. Their authority will be greater for being fewer and more related to the importance of everyday negotiation and members' working welfare.

This new approach will bring more members into active participation in union work, as they see it will directly benefit themselves and their work colleagues. ■

Honesty, equality, democracy – all this and more comes with them as capable of blunting the effect of privatisation. Is the

Cooperatives – models for

FROM THE government to the trade unions, many people across the political spectrum advocate greater worker involvement in the governance and affairs of their employers. The virtues of worker cooperatives are extolled alongside those that want to see greater employee share ownership, and the John Lewis Partnership (to give it its formal title) is frequently held up as a shining example of worker involvement.

Britain's cooperative movement proclaims its values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, along with honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others, and many in the trade unions and the Labour Party back this approach. Elements of the Tories and big business clearly prefer employee share ownership to cooperatives.

Worker-owned cooperatives and companies can arguably be set up in any part of the economy to deliver a commercial service. If the goods and services are popular, of good quality, and priced realistically, they would probably thrive. But those that argue for this model to be extended to the provision of public services are in effect advocating privatisation, with public sector bodies taken out of the public sector to compete as a profit-driven entity.

In this year's Welsh Assembly elections, Carwyn Jones, the "First Minister of Wales, campaigned for the creation of a "not for dividend" company to take over the railway passenger services in Wales. He said, "I am expecting real benefits to passengers, including faster journey times, higher quality services, improved reliability and less overcrowding. Our vision is to see a not-for-dividend model with a strong connection

with the communities it serves."

This approach is supported by train drivers' union ASLEF which, along with the Co-operative Party, Cooperatives & Mutuals Wales and Co-operatives UK, commissioned a report titled *A People's Railway for Wales*. Advocates say that while this new mutually owned company "would not be a full co-operative", its ethos would fully reflect cooperative principles of social responsibility, democracy, equity and service to the community.

A not-for-dividend approach suggests a profit-driven company, reinvesting those profits in the services it provides. But the reality of the railways in Wales is that they don't make profits, and are unlikely ever to do so, instead requiring state subsidies.

Bitter experience

How this approach would work is unclear, as are its advantages over the traditional model of state ownership. What is clear from the sometimes bitter experiences of workers elsewhere is that staff are unlikely to benefit more than marginally, either in pay and conditions or in a greater influence in the direction of the business.

It is instructive to examine other examples of "mutual" ownership to see how well workers have benefitted from this.

Take "My Civil Service Pension" (MyCSP), which administers the pensions of civil servants and was of course once part of the civil service. In 2010, it was effectively privatised as a Mutual Joint Venture by Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude. It was forced upon the staff despite their clear opposition, the staff recognising that they would have little or no control over the way the business gets run.

On 1 May 2012, it became a limited company in which the government retained a significant shareholding, and the employees have 25 per cent of the shares in the controlling trust. But 40 per cent of shares were sold to Xafinity Ltd, part of the Equiniti Group, whose Chair and Chief Executive came from outsourcing sharks Serco and Capita, respectively.

The history of creating mutuals out of public services is littered with heroic failures. John Major's government privatised the nationalised bus companies in the 1980s,

and many were bought by employees. But hopes of this being the beginning of the much-vaunted "shareholder democracy" evaporated when the poorly paid workers sold on their shares at a quick profit to the highest bidder, making millionaires out of people like Brian Souter of Stagecoach.

Even those who tried to stay the course soon found themselves under pressure not only from the big companies, but also from the banks that refused to lend for much-needed investment at affordable rates of interest.

Members of building societies that were allowed to de-mutualise were balloted on whether to turn them into banks, and, unsurprisingly, workers voted overwhelmingly to take the cash on offer. Most building societies are now conventional banks with conventional share ownership.

Recently departed Prime Minister David Cameron often cited John Lewis as the model for mutual ownership. 91,000 staff are "partners" in a business with over 400 stores, a production unit and a farm. Yet its cleaners were outsourced and thus denied the opportunity to share the profits. It does not recognise unions – its constitution clearly discourages them (see Box, left).

Worker harder!

It also used to limit the pay of its most highly paid managers to 25 times that of a Partner, but this was recently changed to 75 times! Chairman Sir Charles Mayfield, who receives an annual salary of around £1.5 million, has said employees must work harder to justify earning the government's higher national living wage: "You can only afford to pay someone more if the value of their contribution is better. What was OK at £7.20 an hour is not OK at £9.20 an hour." Precisely how his contribution is worth £1.5 million a year is not stated.

Waitrose (part of the John Lewis Partnership) has cut "perks" for its staff to help pay for the national living wage, and has stopped paying Sunday and overtime rates for new workers. There seems little doubt that working for John Lewis is much like working for any other employer, but perhaps (for now) slightly better paid.

The biggest mutual employer of them all is the Co-operative Group, the one every-

The non-union partnership

"Every partner is free to belong to a trade union, although if there is conflict between a trade union and the Partnership those concerned must consider carefully their responsibilities as partners."

John Lewis policy

cooperatives, according to their backers. Some even see dream right? Or is reality somewhat different?

for worker ownership?



EG Focus (CC-BY-SA 2.0)

John Lewis in Westfield Stratford City. Maximum pay for managers used to limited to 25 times that of a shop-floor worker. Now it's 75 times!

one knows as seemingly having a shop on every street corner.

Growing out of the work of the Rochdale Pioneers, the co-operative movement was initially a response to widespread food insecurity and adulteration issues. In 2000, the merger of the wholesale and retail arms of the Co-op created the world's largest consumer co-operative, with 6.5 million customers. In more recent times the Co-op has contracted considerably in the face of intensive price competition from the private

“Work harder to justify earning the national living wage.”

supermarkets such as Tesco, and its banking arm found itself massively over-extended in the financial crisis of 2008.

The Co-op has had a strong relationship with the trade unions, and shop workers' union USDAW has a significant membership with the employers under the Co-op banner. But in the main this has not been translated into better pay and conditions.

Stormy

Relationships with the unions have been stormy in the recent past. The Co-op de-recognised the GMB in 2007, terminating an arrangement that went back to the Victorian era. But the Co-op soon found itself ostracised. A motion moved by GMB and seconded by USDAW was passed unanimously at the TUC Congress in 2008 condemning the decision and pledging all unions' support to work to overturn it. The

Co-operative Party also carried a similar motion at its annual conference.

As a result, the Co-op was banned from TUC and Labour Party Conferences, and events such as the Tolpuddle Martyrs festival where it had been previously welcomed. Undeterred, the Co-op board has ploughed on. The GMB remains unrecognised, but continues to have a substantial membership in the company.

As John Medhurst of the Institute of Employment Rights said of the cooperative approaching 2012, “A Victorian vision, it uses the language of equality and democracy to divide workers, to create armies of little Thatcherites competing with each other for shares in place of trade union and employment rights.” ■

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

The referendum campaign blunted one EU attack on pensions. Now the real pensions fight must begin...

Pensions after Brexit

EVEN BEFORE the vote to Leave, the Brexit campaign had already pulled off one stunning result: it had – for the time being at least – halted the attack on workplace pensions. Nevertheless it has not stopped those still in the Remain camp from trying to make out that the European Union protects UK workers' pensions. Quite frankly, that idea is risible.

The fact is that since 1993 the EU has been ratcheting up its control over British pensions. Its latest attempt would have seen off the last of the final salary company schemes in existence (see Box below).

In the wake of the referendum result, the TUC has called for action to protect pensions. Astonishingly, it is now saying, "The Pensions Regulator should allow maximum flexibility in scheme funding to ensure that short-term volatility doesn't lead to a fresh round of pension fund closures." Quite right, it should. But it has been precisely the EU that has put the screws on funding flexibility!

British workers have never had a "generous" state old age pension. But after 1945 the level of State Pension was supplemented for many workers by access through their workplace to a final salary occupational

pension. It was the trade unions, particularly in the Civil Service, that led the way, with action resulting in the introduction of these schemes in the 1950s.

Over the decades, the law changed to allow pension scheme membership to become automatic when a worker joined a company with a final salary scheme. Workers usually contributed up to 5 per cent of their pay, with the employer contributing between 12 and 18 per cent.

Undermining

The government's first attempt to undermine final salary pensions came in 1987. The chosen tool was the so-called "personal pension", which workers could take with them as they moved between employers. To encourage the shift, the government also changed the law so that workers starting a new job with an employer that offered a final salary pension were no longer enrolled automatically in the plan.

Many workers took the government's prompt. They thought they could do better by not paying into a collective final salary arrangement and instead take out a personal pension. They were wrong, and it marked

"The EU would have seen off the last of the final salary company schemes."

the start of the onslaught on collective pension provision.

From the early 1990s the pension attack was further developed and became orchestrated through the EU. This began with the legal case of Barber vs Guardian Royal Exchange (GRE). As an employee of GRE, Mr Barber had gone to the European Court of Justice on the grounds that his final salary pension was sex discriminatory.

The European Court duly agreed that he had been discriminated against and that all UK final salary pensions should be treated as equal pay with effect from May 1993 onwards.

The decision was a godsend to all those who wanted to attack UK pensions. Firstly it meant that all British final salary schemes would in future be subject to EU directives. Secondly the judgement, while masquerading as equality, provided the opportunity to raise women's normal retirement age for an occupational pension from 60 to 65, the same age as men.

Maxwell

The next step in the attack came through the 1995 Pensions Act. Using the Maxwell affair, where Mirror Group pension investments had been embezzled by the company's owner, Robert Maxwell, the Act took the opportunity to give full vent to market forces to compare the assets of a pension scheme against its liabilities.

Scheme funding had always been assessed over the long term. But making schemes subject to destructive short-term market fluctuations produced paper deficits that could then be used as a pretext to close final salary schemes.

To further increase the deficits of final salary schemes, the 1995 Pensions Act also declared that a minimum rate of increase (inflation proofing) should apply to all final

The EU's pensions vendetta

THE EU'S LATEST pensions directive is a direct threat to the dwindling number of final salary schemes in Britain. Using what is known as MiFID II – the Markets in Financial Instruments Act – the European Insurance and Occupational Pension Authority (EIOPA) called for each final salary scheme to be treated as if it were an insurance company.

This would further pump up deficits so that Britain's private companies, which by now had mostly closed their final salary schemes, would still face mounting deficits for past service pensions going back over the time when the schemes were open.

Having destroyed final salary schemes for the future, EIOPA wanted to leave its mark by pushing British companies with past final salary schemes into greater financial straits – or to at least make them

as uncompetitive as possible. Critics describe MiFID as "reckless prudence".

As things stand MiFID II will need to be moved into British law by 3 July 2017 for it to apply in Britain from 3 January 2018, unless the terms of Brexit are agreed before then. This raises the likelihood that Britain will have to comply with the wider aspects of MiFID II legislation for a period of time before negotiations on leaving the EU are completed.

But just before the Brexit vote it was agreed that final salary pension schemes (there are very few in the EU – the vast majority are in Britain) should for the time being be excluded from the MiFID II Directive. But this has not prevented the EIOPA fanatics from still lobbying for Britain's schemes to be included at a later date and was, until the Brexit vote, an ongoing stand-off. ■



What the economy needs is earlier pensions, rather than later and later retirement – due to be 68 for those born after 1978.

salary pensions from 1997 onwards. Over time, along with ongoing market forces, the “gift” of inflation protection would serve to further balloon scheme deficits by another 20 per cent or more.

The 1995 Act also enabled the equalisation (upwards) of retirement ages to be extended from company schemes to the State Pension. But for technical convenience, rather than go through the European Court of Justice, the 1995 Act utilised the European Court of Human Rights to declare that UK State Pension benefits should only be paid from age 65 onwards – massively reducing benefits for millions of women.

Having put the legalities in place, the next step was for Labour’s Chancellor Brown to co-ordinate his 1997 tax raid on final salary investments to coincide with the EU Action Plan which at national level eventually ushered in Britain’s Financial Services Authority (FSA – now the FCA, the Financial Conduct Authority) as a financial products regulator in 2000.

Brown’s raid – still an annual tax grab from schemes – has since provided the government with £10 billion each year in revenue and is another key contributor to the poor state of occupational pensions today.

Subordinated

From 2005 onwards the FSA was to be accompanied by the Pensions Regulator, another EU conduit. In turn both the FSA and the Pensions Regulator were to be formally subordinated to the European Insurance and Occupational Pension

Authority (EIOPA) in 2011.

Germany does not have any final salary pension schemes, but even so EIOPA was to be based there. It is from Frankfurt that it now issues its UK pension directives for implementation by either the FCA or the Pensions Regulator.

From a British perspective the main task EIOPA set for itself was to think up more destructive ways of inflating deficits. Hence the so-called “MiFID” initiative (see Box), which also tied in with the government’s attack in 2010/2011 on final salary schemes in the public sector.

After Brexit, what next for pensions? Free of the EU, workers should be thinking

of forcing a huge increase in State Pension and making it payable from age 60 onwards. Experience has shown that any other form of pension provision sooner or later ends up becoming a free market basket case.

Decent pensions at 60 would also free up work opportunities for our younger workers by allowing older workers who currently cannot afford to retire to do so. It is self-evident that if older workers stay longer in the labour force this must reduce the opportunities for young British workers in the labour market. Successive pensions policies have amounted to an attack on both younger and older workers alike: this must now be reversed as part of Brexit. ■

Meet the Party

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

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

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

Teaching staff in Britain's universities are ramping up their... could be joined by administrative staff...

No excuses: university p



Andrew Ward/www.andrew-ward.com

UCU members marching in London during their 2013 pay dispute. The fight is now on again in earnest.

IN ALL THE post Brexit furore in higher education, the vice chancellors' main tactic has been to "forget" that they are in the middle of a pay dispute with their staff. Prior to the referendum in June academic staff in the University and College Union (UCU) took two days of national strike action. Since the referendum UCU members across the country have taken a further day of action, with local branches choosing the strike day for maximum local impact.

Now a clear majority of Unison members working in universities (including administrative and professional staff such as librarians) have rejected the pay offer in their consultation. The union's Higher Education Service Group Executive decided to ballot members in September and call on them to take escalating industrial action in the autumn. In announcing the ballot Unison

pointed out that it expects the employers "to use the uncertainty caused by the EU referendum decision as another excuse to avoid a decent pay award."

So as the new term begins the challenge will be for all union members to keep focused on the real issues and not be drawn into an agenda set by vice chancellors.

No distractions!

There is no talk of having to reduce vice chancellors' ever-rising pay as a result of "Brexit uncertainty", so that excuse cannot be allowed in relation to staff pay either. But the uncertainty factor is bound to be an employer argument for not improving on the 1.1 per cent offer – they call it an improved offer because they added 0.1 per cent to their original insulting 1 per cent offer!

When the UCU and the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) submitted the national pay claim for a 5 per cent pay rise earlier in the year they pointed out that the background was a huge drop in value in the pay of academic staff since 2009 – a fall of 14.5 per cent compared with rises in the

Retail Price Index. So if EU membership was such a boon to universities, how come those benefits never reached the staff?

Even more telling is that during the same period the proportion of university expenditure spent on staff salaries has declined, with money instead being invested in buildings or contributing to surpluses in some institutions. In June an EIS report showed that the Scottish university sector generated a record operating surplus in 2014-15 with closing reserves of over £3 billion!

So whatever the student fee regime in different parts of Britain, it is clear that university income is not reaching the staff who are teaching those students. For administrative and professional staff having to decide on action in September, Unison has quantified their reduction in pay at between £1,585 and £8,428 since 2009 in real terms, as pay "rises" were consistently below the rise in the cost of living.

Unison members in universities now undertake an ever-growing range of complex roles which make the difference between a university being "open" or

'University income is not reaching staff.'

fight for pay. With the autumn term beginning, they

Pay matters

“closed”. All students now access the majority of their learning materials online and all taught classes are supported by the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), with its related electronic reading materials supplied and maintained by staff such as university librarians and e-learning support staff.

For academic staff, what was initially seen as an additional tactic of resigning their external examinerships is being recognised as increasingly effective. Its real impact on the employer will only be felt in the coming academic year. More than a thousand staff have now resigned their external examinerships.

James Newell, a politics professor at the University of Salford and one of the external examiners to have resigned, has pointed out that the tactic is akin to a marking boycott. Without the external examiners, the whole marking system could grind to a halt.

To date the most important weapon of a marking boycott has not been used. That will change this autumn when UCU and EIS members bring it into the fight for the first time. In combination with the resignation of external examiners, the boycott could make a big impact on assessment processes.

Take the lead post Brexit

Rather than meekly accept the employers’ assertions about the negative effects of Brexit, trade unions need to ask the critical questions.

Currently 5 per cent of UK students are

‘A marking boycott has not been used. That will change.’

from the EU and their impact on our Higher Education system can be debated. On the one hand the Institute for Social and Economic Research argues for the positive impact within our universities of EU students: “EU undergraduates, in particular, are very high performers, and are more likely to obtain a first [class degree], less likely to be unemployed, and earn higher salaries, on average, than their UK domiciled peers.”

Yet the Student Loan Company reported in May 2016 that non-payment of student loans by EU students is now costing UK taxpayers £89 million a year, up from £25 million in 2010. As these non-payments do not yet reflect EU students who have had the £9,000 loans, the figures are set for a large jump.

In fact, the reclassification of EU students as “international” students may be a financial benefit to universities and although numbers may decrease, income may rise!

Trade unionists including those in the National Union of Students need to re-focus this debate on the real role of a university and how a university can meet the collective need of the population (see “What is a

University for?”, *Workers*, June/July 2016). The employers have shown remarkable consistency over the past ten years in creating more senior managers, paying vice chancellors large salaries and building up huge reserves. Simultaneously students have been plunged into greater and greater debt and staff have been paid less and less.

It is also a fact that 15 per cent of UK university academics are from the EU. A number of these are involved in specific EU funded roles such as “Jean Monnet Chairs” – posts for university professors, as they are described, “to deepen teaching in EU Studies...mentor the young generation of researchers in EU Studies...and organise activities...targeting to policymakers local, regional, national.” Or they could be called part of the EU propaganda machine.

Most, though, will be here because of genuine international collaboration and, as for other EU citizens who were here before 23 June, there will need to be a transition plan. It is already evident that work is being undertaken on that plan.

In August Chancellor of the Exchequer Phillip Hammond said that where UK organisations bid directly to Brussels on a competitive basis for funding projects while we still belong to the EU, for example universities participating in the big EU research programme Horizon 2020, the Treasury will underwrite payment of such awards, even when specific projects continue beyond the UK’s departure from the EU. ■



CPBML/Workers

Public Meeting, London

Thursday 15 September, 7.30 pm

“After the Vote: What Next?”

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

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

The struggle for safety and jobs on Britain's railways is intensifying...

Battle on the railways



Train Photos (CC-BY-SA 2.0)

What the driver has to look out for: interior of a Govia Thameslink train (class 386 Electrostar), showing all the screens the driver has to monitor – on top of driving the train. No wonder rail workers are fighting to retain guards.

A GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED cost-cutting move to do away with safety-qualified guards on trains across the various private train companies that run the country's national rail services has been met head on by the RMT, supported by train drivers' union ASLEF.

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), Britain's biggest train company, has responded by introducing an emergency timetable which has seen 341 trains a day axed completely.

The company has also engineered massive disruption in its remaining services to try to force the RMT to accept the abolition of the guard's role on its services. It has been able to do this because – unlike most

other rail franchises – it is run on a contract basis where the government bears the costs of the dispute.

A similar move in ScotRail was dropped after union opposition, with ScotRail accepting that its trains would run with safety-qualified guards. The RMT then offered GTR a similar deal. GTR refused to even discuss it.

ASLEF tried to support RMT's position but was thwarted by court action. So it has changed tack and instead gone into dispute over GTR's imposition of new rosters introduced to facilitate the emergency timetable brought in because of the RMT's action. The ballot closes on 31 August and is expected to be overwhelmingly in favour of action. ASLEF has made it clear that it is concerned about the safety of driver-only operation (DOO) of trains.

Station staff too

GTR is also trying to cut station staff and close or drastically reduce the opening hours of 83 of its ticket offices. The TSSA is balloting its members for industrial action, and is expected to announce a positive vote

on 2 September. The RMT has already completed a ballot of its station members, with 70 per cent voting to strike. Both unions fear for the safety of both staff and passengers as stations are de-staffed.

Passengers are bearing the brunt of disruption. Many have lost their jobs because they can't get to work. And rather than blaming the unions, they blame GTR for taking hours to complete journeys that normally take minutes, in conditions that would be illegal for the carriage of live animals. Numerous demonstrations have called on the government to kick Govia out and return the railways to public ownership, missing the point that it is the government itself that is orchestrating their misery.

Fares to rise

To add insult to injury, GTR's passengers along with all other rail users have found out that fares will increase by around 1.9 per cent from January 2017. As the government made this announcement, the TUC noted that fares have risen over twice as fast as wages over the past six years, while dividends to the shareholders of the private rail operators have risen by 21 per cent in the last year to £222 million.

The RMT has also been in dispute with Virgin Trains East Coast, privatised just over a year ago, and with Eurostar. The battle with Virgin is over the company's proposals to cut on-train staff, and a recent ballot saw a clear mandate for industrial action. A softening of Virgin's position resulted in strikes being called off and negotiations being resumed. In Eurostar, the strike threats by both RMT and TSSA also brought the employer back to the negotiating table.

With the government's agenda to cut rail staffing enthusiastically driven forward by the private operators, the unions will need to think carefully about their tactics and strategies. They should certainly avoid being pulled into long-drawn-out disputes.

The government has identified the railways as an industry where workers and their unions have too much power, and unions must be prepared for the onslaught to intensify. They will need to pace their responses. That may require them to accept some unpalatable changes as the price for maintaining their organisation and strength. ■

'Unions will need to think carefully about their tactics and strategies.'

Who pays wins is the new footballing mantra – for clubs and for fans alike...

Gold, not glory

“THE GAME is about glory,” said Bill Nicholson in 1971. The legendary Tottenham Hotspur manager was speaking to Hunter Davies during his research for *The Glory Game*, a meticulous examination of Spurs’ 1971-72 Division One campaign. Nicholson may have been right in 1971, but in 2016 the game is about money above all else.

How else to explain the amount of column inches, tweets, Instagram posts and more dedicated to the summer transfer window, year-on-year? Manchester United have spent some £90 million on Paul Pogba. Trevor Francis joined Nottingham Forest with the first-ever £1 million transfer fee in 1979, an amount that would have boggled Nicholson’s mind only eight years earlier.

Balance sheets

There is still glory to be had in the game, but for many football fans today “victory” has become outspending rivals, dissecting “net spends” or record sponsorship deals. Success is measured on the balance sheet, not by the trophy cabinet.

Look at the FA Cup. As recently as the late 1990s the third round weekend was the biggest event in the English football calendar. But in January 2000 the FA and Manchester United contrived that United took part in FIFA’s Club World Cup instead of defending the FA Cup as holders. Commercial interests had cemented their takeover which began in 1992 with the formation of the Premier League.

Today the early rounds still see plum draws for the Davids against Goliaths. But now Goliath sends the kids out to fight in his place. And the final kicks off not at 15:00 but at 17:30 – to ensure higher television ratings,

‘The League’s custodians have little interest in preserving its best qualities.’



Workers

Millwall fans at the Den, south London. But it’s money that shouts loudest now.

naturally. The glory of playing at the national stadium is cheapened by playing the semi-finals at Wembley, the sole purpose of which is to maximise FA revenues.

To add insult to injury, the replay system is under threat and moving cup matches from weekends to midweek is under serious consideration. The ultimate embodiment of the century-old meritocracy at the heart of British football has been surgically removed.

The denigration of the FA Cup is only one part of the erosion of what was once the beating heart of British football. The Football League is the envy of rival European FAs, where the lack of depth beyond top-flight competition is often pronounced. But the League’s custodians have little interest in preserving its best qualities.

Printing money

The Championship (Division One or even Division Two in old money) is the fourth biggest league in the world in terms of TV coverage; yet it is at risk of being combined with the current Under-23s Premier League, as an additional arm of the money-

printing operation.

Beyond this, the Football League has attempted to spice up the Football League Trophy by inviting Premier League academy teams to compete. Most have declined; the big clubs want fewer fixtures, not more. But, as with most “modernising” initiatives, once the ball is rolling changes will be made.

The amount of money at the top of the game is monumental, but little finds its way to teams further down the pyramid, hence the attempt to bring more teams into the smaller Football League competitions. Throw in a new Premier League TV deal worth more than £2.5 billion a season over the next three years and it’s no surprise that newly relegated Newcastle United, Norwich City and Aston Villa are desperate to get back on the gravy train. The Football League television deal offers nowhere near the same levels of compensation.

Relegated Premier League clubs receive so-called “parachute payments” for up to

Continued on page 18



PistoAmaudov/istockphoto.com

Leicester City parade as champions: despite their win, little has changed at the top of the Premier League.

Continued from page 17

three seasons following demotion. The other 89 Football League clubs will divide a small percentage of the Premier League megabucks via a new contractual obligation, something the cartel of clubs at the top have previously resisted. Far from being a sign of some profound realisation that top flight football might actually need the grassroots game, this highlights the newest largesse available to Premier League clubs.

Income from the Premier League could rise to as much as £8 billion across the three years once overseas TV rights accrue. 3-4 per cent of that across Leagues One and Two seems a small price for a guarantee of keeping lower leagues compliant. Given that Sky has deals with both the Premier League

and the Football League, it's instructive that this has taken 24 years to happen.

A reliable source informed *Workers* that Premier League TV auctions are not the tough negotiations you might expect. Broadcasting executives simply write down the price the network is willing to pay on a folded scrap of paper and chuck it onto the table. Biggest bet wins.

Sky was blown out of the water by BT for the Champions League rights in 2013 (£897 million for three seasons, and the 2015 final was the last on terrestrial TV). Sky was determined not to be outdone again for the Premier League, without which it could lose the majority of its subscribers. In 1992 Sky paid £0.6 million for each televised match. Today's prices see the Murdoch machine and BT Sport chucking £10.2 million a game at the Premier League.

Since the global crash in 2008 the question has been asked, time and again: How will it affect football, both in Britain and across the world? The continuing answer seems to be more money is spent by clubs, while "new markets" fill the coffers and the traditional fan base is eased out in favour of the corporate customer.

At a price

This comes at a price for workers in the broadcast media. Sky's successful Premier League bid resulted in the media giant's workforce being severely pared back.

While prices increase, BT Sport expands, but it is making a loss. It is using Premier League football as a vehicle to increase its broadband customer base.

The significant reduction in full-time staff at BBC and ITV has been noted by broad-

Do they know it's football?

"At the end of the day they need to get behind the team. Away from home our fans are fantastic, I'd call them the hardcore fans.

"But at home they have a few drinks and probably the prawn sandwiches, and they don't realise what's going on out on the pitch.

"I don't think some of the people who come to Old Trafford can spell football, never mind understand it."

Roy Keane, 2000

casting staff union BECTU. The terrestrial broadcasters continue to haemorrhage sports rights such as Formula One and Champions League to pay per view competitors, or else having to share existing deals to make ends meet, as with this year's Six Nations rugby.

When rights deals explode and Sky subscriptions rise, supporters inevitably suffer. This season, though, a £30 "capped" ticket has been introduced in the Premier League for away fans following a sustained campaign by supporters' groups for a £20 cap. Needless to say, this small concession from Premier League clubs, for whom ticket revenue is inconsequential to their overall balance sheet, was trumpeted as a win for supporters and evidence of listening to concerns. Rules dictate that this cap will mean equivalent seats in home sections are also priced at £30 per match, but this is still out of reach for many fans, given a 38 game season and associated costs.

Last season Liverpool fans forced an about-turn by the club's US owners when they tried to increase match day prices for the new mega-stand at Anfield. That was another small success, but the purging of the working class in favour of the football tourist and the executive box continues.

Given the size of some Premier League stadiums, 3,000 £30 tickets are insignificant when corporate box prices at Arsenal reach as much as £28,800 – for one match. When

Irish international Roy Keane lambasted the "prawn sandwich brigade", the matchday culture in Britain was already transformed in the wake of Hillsborough. But 16 years later we live in a world of Friday Night Football, Monday Night Football, never-ending football. Saturation point has long been reached but consumption continues unabated.

There might be an antidote in the current non-league revival at clubs such as Bromley FC, Dulwich Hamlet, Maidstone United, FC United of Manchester and AFC Wimbledon, the last two formed by fans of Manchester United and Wimbledon.

The United fans could no longer associate themselves with a club leveraged into debt by American hedge fund managers. Wimbledon were stolen by a small-timer from the music industry and now masquerade as MK Dons. The current fervour surrounding non-league is a positive and could be the future of the game. An afternoon at Dulwich Hamlet feels more like "real" football than the sanitised, humourless Emirates.

Sustainable?

Even non-league success may be no more sustainable than the megabucks league at the top. For every Dulwich Hamlet, there is a team in the same division watched by the stereotypical man, his dog and the Club Secretary. The current system will ultimately ensure the success stories at non-league level only become part of the establishment as they move up through the divisions.

Fan-owned clubs are held up as a positive example. But Swansea City, owned partly by a Supporters Trust, has seen its majority shareholders sell up to a US consortium. It is hard to see how much further

'An afternoon at Dulwich Hamlet feels more like "real" football than the sanitised, humourless Emirates.'

their unique success story can develop.

Despite Leicester City's Premier League win last season, little has changed at the top. Clubs have adopted the idea that lightning cannot strike twice. Instead of smashing the status quo, the new TV deal reinforces it, enriching the haves and granting new, ill-warranted wealth to the former have-nots, who will now squander millions on agents and wages.

Today's English top flight is essentially a global football competition that happens to be based in England. Manchester United is registered in the Cayman Islands, lines up major press releases with the opening of the Chinese Stock Exchange and has "brand partners" across the world, whether telephone cards in Malaysia or peanuts in Brazil. Liverpool, Derby, Crystal Palace, Swansea, Everton, Arsenal and more are all US-owned; cash cows for their owners.

Post-industrial Britain has seen the gradual transfer of power from the heartlands of the North West to London, as Manchester United's rivalry with Liverpool was superseded on the field by those with Arsenal in the late 1990s and early 2000s, followed by Chelsea and now gulf state-backed Manchester City, previously an insignificance to them.

Bubble

Can the bubble burst? It has been predicted many times before and instead it swells. The game is a microcosm of the problem affecting Britain – an obsession with bringing wealth in at the expense of developing our own identity. Look at the distrust of young talented British players today, in favour of established foreign imports, compared to the past reverence for players like Duncan Edwards, Bobby Moore, Stanley Matthews and Tom Finney.

For there to be a future for football in Britain, a complete overhaul of the grassroots structure and beyond is required. The number of players at all levels and the number of professional teams is not sustainable in the long-term if money-making dominates everything. The game has been sacrificed at the altar of satellite television and is no longer a sport, but a product to be maximised, with the Premier League continuing to blow bubbles. ■

The Chilcot Inquiry into the 2003 Iraq war finally reported in July. The evidence itself speaks volumes...

No case for war

Cpl Paul Jarvis/MOD



The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers in action outside Basra, March 2003.

Not the Chilcot Report, by Peter Osborne, hardback, 208 pages, ISBN 9781784977962, Head of Zeus, 2016, £10, Kindle & e-book editions available.

IN THIS BOOK journalist Peter Osborne takes a look at the evidence the Chilcot Inquiry heard, and presents the case against the war on Iraq. He uses the testimony that can be found on the excellent Iraq Inquiry website, www.iraqinquiry.org.uk.

Blair's aim was always regime change, whatever he said to the contrary. His foreign policy adviser Sir David Manning wrote to him in March 2002, "I said that you would not budge in your support for regime change ...". Alastair Campbell wrote in his diary entry of 2 April, "We discussed whether the central aim was WMD or regime change...TB felt it was regime change..."

Lord Butler chaired a review in 2004 into the use of intelligence prior to the Iraq war. He told the House of Lords in 2007, "The United Kingdom intelligence community told [Blair] on 23 August 2002 that, 'we know little about Iraq's chemical and biological weapons work since late 1988'. The Prime Minister...told Parliament only just over a

month later that the picture painted by our intelligence services was 'extensive, detailed and authoritative'. Those words could simply not have been justified by the material that the intelligence community provided to him."

The Butler Review stated that there was "a stronger assessment in the dossier in relation to Iraqi chemical weapons production than was justified by the available Intelligence." Osborne sums up: "Tony Blair's statements to the media and Parliament were gross misrepresentations of the underlying intelligence produced by the JIC [Joint Intelligence Committee] and available to him as prime minister."

The House of Commons motion approving military action stated falsely that a second UN resolution was not possible because France had "made plain in public

"The attack on Iraq was a war of aggression."

its intention to use its veto [in the Security Council] whatever the circumstances". But President Chirac had not said that. He had clearly laid out the circumstances in which France would not have vetoed the war. On 10 March, he said that "war would become inevitable" only if disarming Iraq by inspection became impossible, that is, nobody would cast a veto.

As Sir Stephen Wall, Blair's EU adviser, told the inquiry, "the Prime Minister and Alastair [Campbell] know that what they are claiming Chirac said is not what he actually said."

Wall also testified that on the day after the Chirac interview, he witnessed Blair give Campbell "his marching orders to play the anti-French card with the Sun and others". Blair deliberately sought to blame France for his failure to secure a second resolution. When Wall was asked, "what you're saying there is that Downing Street deliberately lied about Chirac's statement?" Sir Stephen replied, "Yes."

M15's director general judged that "a war in Iraq would aggravate the threat from whatever source to the United Kingdom." The Intelligence and Security Committee agreed: the threat from al-Qaeda "would be heightened by military action against Iraq".

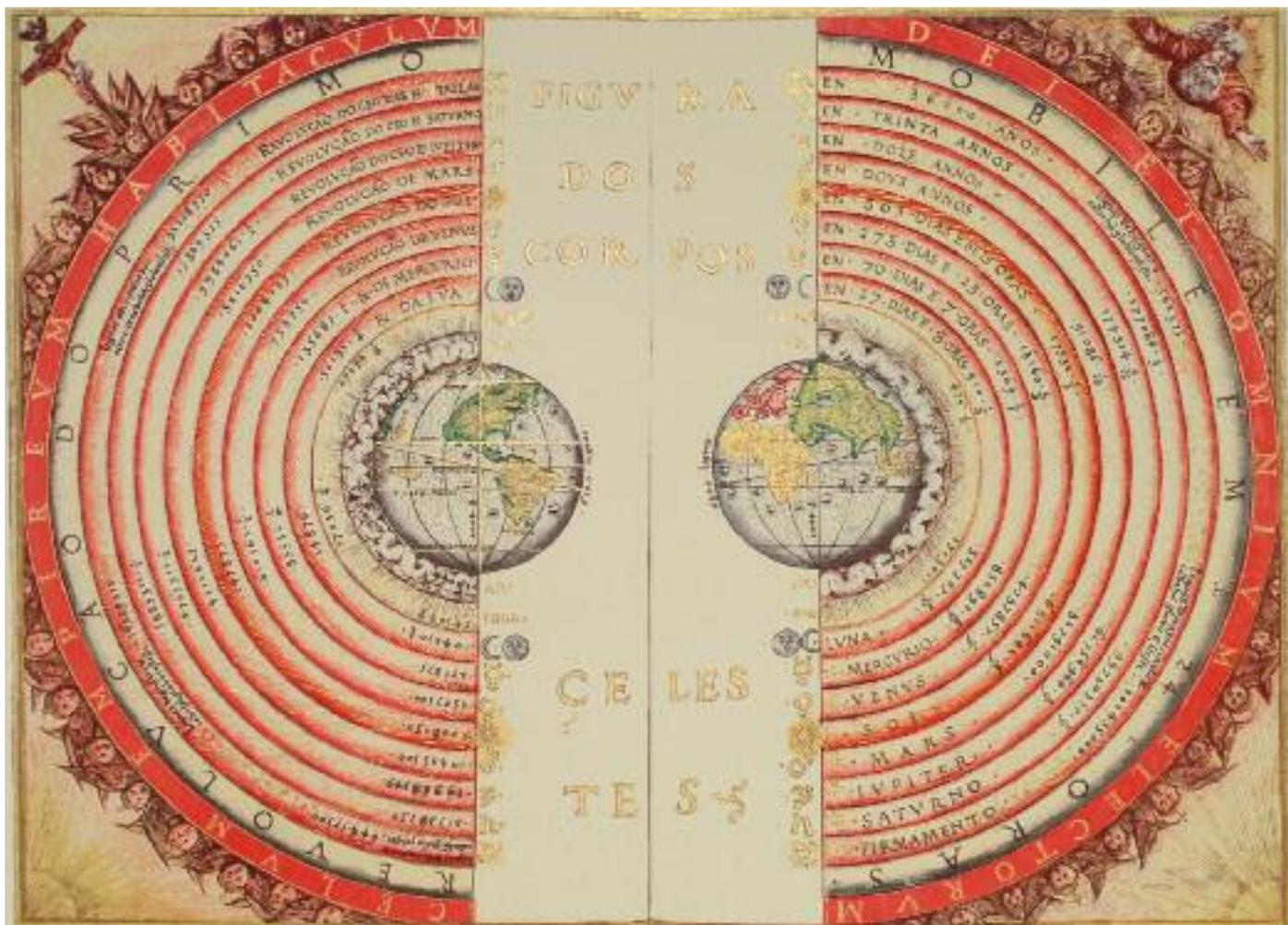
"No grounds for war"

On 18 March 2003 the House of Commons voted for war by 412 to 149. Osborne comments, "It is a fundamental principle of international law that states are prohibited from using force except in self-defence or unless its use is formally authorized by the Security Council...No country was attacked by Iraq in March 2003 and there were therefore no grounds to go to war with Iraq on grounds of self-defence. The Security Council never authorized military action to disarm Iraq of its 'weapons of mass destruction'. Therefore the attack on Iraq by the United States and the United Kingdom in March 2003 was a war of aggression."

The Cameron government attacked Libya, an equally illegal, immoral and disastrous war, and the present May government is continuing Cameron's interventions in Syria and Ukraine. We need to stop attacking other countries and meddling in their internal affairs. ■

400 years ago the Catholic Church banned Copernicus's books and announced its first judgement against Galileo...

The Earth and the Sun



How the Earth used to be viewed: an illustration by Portuguese cartographer Bartolomeu Velho, now in the National Library in Paris.

IN THE LATE 16th and early 17th centuries two men helped to cast out ancient ideas about physics and astronomy. Their work laid the foundation for modern scientific understanding.

Copernicus (1473-1543) was a Renaissance mathematician and astronomer, who studied astronomy and maths at Krakow University and obtained a doctorate in church law. After studying medicine at Padua University, and practising it for nearly half a century, he spent his last decades at Warmia (now in northern Poland) observing and developing his theories on astronomy.

His central theory was that the earth rotates daily on its axis and revolves yearly around the Sun as do the other planets. This

was a heliocentric, “sun-centred” system (from the Greek word helios meaning “sun”). It challenged the long-held opinion that the Earth was stationary at the centre of the universe with all the planets, the Moon and the Sun rotating around it.

Copernicus probably discovered his main idea sometime between 1508 and 1514, when he wrote a manuscript entitled the *Commentariolus* (meaning “Little Commentary”). Even though the final version of his theory, *On the revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, was essentially finished by 1532, the book did not appear in print until 1543, the year of his death.

A heliocentric system went against the accepted view of his day. Copernicus tentatively shared his ideas in *Commentariolus*

with selected friends. He continued to think, recalculate and gradually develop the treatise that would fundamentally revise the understanding of cosmology and physics held since classical Greek times.

Copernicus delayed publication, possibly fearing academic and religious opposition, and waited 30 years to issue the mature, evidentially-rounded version of his heliocentric theory. It was published in 1543 in the receptive town of Nuremberg, a centre of business, finance, enterprise and technology. Interestingly, no one was punished or threatened; his book was read in universities across Europe. A second edition

Continued on page 22



Copernicus's statue outside the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.

Continued from page 21

appeared in 1566. His treatise was not proscribed, probably because it included lots of maths and he wrote it in Latin. There was no posthumous proclamation of Copernicus as a heretic; no hunting down or punishing of those who agreed with him.

The church was slow to condemn Copernicus's ideas. Heliocentrism was even being lectured upon in Rome by the Papal Secretary when Pope Clement VII (1523-34) was part of the audience. Copernicus's heliocentric theory only became a matter of theological contention with the warning given to Galileo in 1616, 73 years after its original publication.

'Copernicus's theory was a challenge to two thousand years of physical science.'

To the traditionalists, however, the heliocentric system seemed to be absurd and contrary to common sense, as the earth did not appear to be flying through space and spinning on its axis as well. Copernicus's theory was a challenge to two thousand years of physical science, represented by the philosophy of Aristotle and medieval logical analyses of motion.

Observations

The test of Copernicus's theory lay not in brilliant rhetoric or philosophical argument, but in empirical observations. He made copious measurements of the exact angular position of astronomical bodies, undertaken with instruments of increasing accuracy. Copernicus's development of a heliocentric theory of the cosmos arose from a desire to make sense of the universe and to devise coherent explanations for the movement of the planets. Philosophers in the classical tradition did not for the most part understand the need to match theories and observation.

Born 21 years after Copernicus's death, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was an astronomer, mathematician, philosopher, physicist and engineer. Considered the father of modern science by many, including Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking, he is

renowned for his studies on the laws of motion and for many scientific discoveries. These include the telescopic confirmation of the phases of Venus (which validated Copernicus's theory), the discovery of the four largest satellites of Jupiter, and the observation and analysis of sunspots.

Starting a medical degree at Pisa University, he quickly found it was not to his taste and studied mathematics and natural philosophy instead. In 1589 he became professor of mathematics. From 1592 to 1610 he taught geometry, mechanics and astronomy at Padua University, which at the time was not only Italy's but probably Europe's top university for scientific and medical subjects.

Galileo pioneered not only the development of the telescope as an astronomical instrument, but also an early microscope – and was amazed at the complex beauty of insects. His *Starry Messenger* (1610) was the first published scientific treatise to be based on observations made with a telescope. He exploited the international acclaim which his 1610 telescopic discoveries brought him to secure a prestigious appointment at the court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

In 1614, Galileo was accused by the Catholic Church of heresy for his support of the Copernican theory that the Sun was at the centre of the solar system. In 1616, the church banned him from teaching or advocating these theories. He was again condemned for heresy in 1632 for defending his views and the Copernican theory in his book *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*.

Galileo was summoned to appear before the Inquisition in Rome. He was convicted, forced to recant and publicly withdraw his support for Copernican theory. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, later reduced to permanent house arrest which remained the situation until his death.

For the church, Galileo's main fault was not to argue for his idea (which was not unusual and often tolerated within learned confines) but to publish his work in everyday Italian, so that non-scholars could read it. As the ruling classes have always realised, ideas become a material force once they are grasped by the mass of people, and a

danger to ruling class power.

Though going blind, Galileo continued to write and, in 1638, published his *Discourses Concerning Two New Sciences* explaining his ideas on the laws of motion and the principles of mechanics.

Galileo had a gift for pure mathematics and applied and mechanical engineering design. Evidently he was a skilled practical operator, good with his hands, at home in the worlds of university academic and practical mathematician, with one foot firmly planted in the world of the tradesman and skilled artisan. He also worked in applied science and technology, inventing instruments.

His work replaced old, untested ideas about motion with objective, verifiable mathematical descriptions. This laid the foundations for the revolution in scientific understanding led by Isaac Newton (born the year Galileo died).

Experiment

Galileo's approach to all aspects of physics and astronomy was to experiment and observe first, theorise second, and then to describe this mathematically. Galileo epitomised a new approach to understanding the natural world, by the use of controlled experimental conditions, investigating a small part of nature in the hope of gaining insight into the whole.

Though both Copernicus and Galileo probably deserve the title of genius, they were not special figures who grasped the truth while the rest floundered in ignorance. Rather, they flourished in an environment increasingly conducive to breakthroughs in knowledge. They benefited from a European tradition of improving technology that went back to the eleventh century.

Though both Copernicus and Galileo undoubtedly had great minds, crucially they had perceptive eyes, dexterous hands and a distinct practical bent which got the most out of the technology of their scientific instruments. As their scientific ideas took hold, many ancient cultural beliefs such as astrology and alchemy bit the dust and essentially the modern world began. ■

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

NO ADVANCE WITHOUT MARXISM

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interested in these ideas?

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

'A united Britain free of the EU is the people's only real route to independence.'

A YOUNG POLL in July indicated that Britain's decision to leave the EU has not cut Scottish support for remaining within the UK. This undermines the SNP's push for a second referendum – as does the falling oil price, which led last year to a deficit of tax revenue against spending of £14.9 billion. The latest figures, due to be published as *Workers* was going to press, are likely to be even worse.

Theresa May, to her credit, is on the record as stating that future options will take full account of the need to protect the economy north of the border and made a point of scheduling an early meeting with the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. Yet when May arrived at Holyrood on 15 July there was no Union flag on display, only Scotland's and the EU's. That was both arrogant and a calculated insult.

Ignoring all the evidence inside Scotland and in the wider economy, Sturgeon said in July that Brexit puts Scotland "truly on the brink of independence". Alex Salmond, the former SNP leader, has asserted that it is now inevitable. As if separation and membership of the EU were independence! The truth is that from John O'Groats to Land's End, a united Britain free of the EU is the people's only real route to independence.

If Scotland were to join the EU it would have to adopt the euro. To call this independence for Scotland is laughable – outside of Britain it would become utterly dependent on the EU, effectively a vassal state.

Meanwhile, the separatist fantasy becomes ever more absurd. RBS chief executive Ross McEwan said this August that the bank would move HQ to London in the event of Scottish separation. Yet in the SNP's November 2013 Independence White

Paper Salmond designated Royal Bank of Scotland as the putative nation's sovereign bank as part of his "Celtic tiger" dream.

RBS anyway is hardly a solid rock of reliability. It required a £42 billion bailout in 2009–10 and has lost around £7 billion each year since then. The bailout involved the British government buying shares at 502p a pop; they are currently worth around 185p.

Salmond's original business plan, drawn up in collaboration with Fred Goodwin (then head of RBS), was predicated on oil trading at \$110 a barrel. The price currently hovers at around \$45. US investor and analyst Warren Buffet is on record as stating that the marginal cost of oil extraction around the world once capital investment has been recovered is now close to \$20.

It is obvious that without support from the Bank of England the economy of Scotland would be in serious trouble. There would be no Barnett Formula allocating funds from central government to support a Scotland outside Britain and no loan guarantees from the Bank of England worth billions of pounds that currently underpin capital investment in the North Sea.

The "fiscal transfer" mechanism (funds from the UK as a whole) currently supports the existing Union. That's equivalent to 14 per cent of Scotland's GDP, about £15 billion per annum.

It is irrelevant whether there were greater or lesser Leave votes in different areas of Britain, whether in Scotland or elsewhere. Having made the decision to leave the EU, it is vital that Britain – with all its constituent parts – remains united. All delusions about division or separation belong to the past. We must now focus firmly on the future, on rebuilding Britain as a united, independent country with the interests of all our people at its heart. ■

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