

WORKERS

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GET ON, GET OUT!

Take control Just leave

Fidel At the UN

Movement of labour Not free

Brexit bloomers

War Spanner in the EU works

plus News,

Industry Chance of a lifetime

Book Reviews

Rail Brexit opportunity

Historic Notes

Farming A new future

and more

WORKERS



Take control

LAST YEAR the people of Britain stood up. We voted to end our membership of the EU, to make our own decisions without the EU telling us what to do. We said no to a European political union, to an ever more centralised and undemocratic state.

The shockwave of Brexit echoed around the world, and the ripples are still spreading. We showed the way, proving that it is indeed possible to roll back the attack on nation states, stop the juggernaut of finance capitalism.

By saying no to the EU in the referendum, we ripped a giant hole in the EU's credibility. Like the boy who said that the emperor had no clothes, we have exposed the EU as the enemy of the people that it is. Now former Remainers are falling over themselves to say they were wrong – from historian Niall Ferguson to former Conservative chairman Grant Shapps.

Conservation organisations are lining up to press the opportunities of Brexit to safeguard our natural heritage. Even Brexit's opponents in academia have been silenced (somewhat) by the government's massive boost to R&D funding (see News, p3).

The contagion spread. In December Italians voted by a massive majority to dismiss the plans of europhile prime minister Matteo Renzi, a man who had not even been elected to parliament and was inserted into office on the instructions of the EU. It capped a bad year for Brussels, and with any luck this year should be even worse. The EU "project" is on the rocks – excellent news for the peoples of Europe.

As this issue of *Workers* goes to press, Brexit is still, of course, unfinished business. Who knows what the Supreme Court will decide? It ought to rule in the government's favour. After all, Britain joined the EU (or the EEC as it was then known) in 1972 without an act of parliament. Why require one to leave it?

In June 2015 Philip Hammond, then foreign secretary, moved the second reading of the referendum bill saying, as Hansard records, "...we should all be able to agree on the simple principle that the decision about our membership should be taken by the British people, not by Whitehall bureaucrats, certainly not by Brussels Eurocrats; not even by Government Ministers or parliamentarians in this Chamber. The decision must be for the common sense of the British people."

The question was asked, and in such clear terms that surely even judges can understand it: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?" And the decision was made.

We didn't vote for a "hard" Brexit or a "soft" Brexit, or any shades of comfort in between. We voted to leave. Full stop. Now all who have the interests of the people at heart must unite to ensure that decision is respected and implemented.

We can leave without anyone's permission, and we can leave now. The sooner the government acts to start the process of leaving, the better.

Stop paying, stop obeying. Take control. ■



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Budget signals Brexit shift



See LI (CC-BY-SA 2.0)

Last year's Brexit decision is starting to influence Britain's economic direction. The biggest shift is away from Cameron and Osborne's rigid fiscal controls, paving the way to borrow for investment.

Chancellor Philip Hammond, in his first Autumn Statement on 23 November, ended his predecessor's fixation on eliminating the budget deficit by 2020. He made a commitment to high-value investment with the aim of improving Britain's productivity.

Such developments are essential for a high-wage, high-skill economy.

In particular the government will set up a new national productivity investment fund with £23 billion to spend on innovation and infrastructure over the next five years. Research and development expenditure in Britain has fallen sharply since the 1980s, a major factor in declining productivity levels. As around 40 per cent of R&D spending here is by overseas companies, benefits can often end up elsewhere.

The government's stated aim is to build on Britain's strengths in science and technology innovation, and to ensure the next generation of discoveries are made, developed and produced in Britain. It announced additional R&D investment, rising to an extra £2 billion a year by 2020-21. That's more than enough to make up any shortfall from lack of access to EU research funding.

Significant additional funding will be allocated to transport networks and vehicles of the future. An additional £1.1 billion of investment is earmarked for English local transport networks, £220 million to address traffic pinch points on strategic roads, £450 million to trial digital signalling on our railways and £390 million to further develop low emission vehicles.

There is a welcome pledge to develop all parts of Britain, not just the south-east. Now this stance must be realised with practical projects. Ideas should be generated from a wide basis. For example, there is an interesting proposal to for a direct rail link between Cambridge and Oxford to stimulate science-based industry along that corridor.

There are also plans to "drive up the performance of our regional cities". As with all aspects of the government plans these need scrutiny to ensure they benefit the British people and not only businesses. And there's still much to defend and fight for in the health service and education. These sectors saw no extra funding from Hammond. ■

FIRES

Huge rise in deaths

THE LATEST figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government show that 294 people died in fires in England during 2015. That's an increase of 21 per cent over the 242 deaths recorded in 2014, and the largest increase since figures were published in 2001-02.

Several factors contributed to that rise – but the amount of poor housing with increased occupancy at a time of reduction in the fire services is a lethal combination. ■

CONSERVATION

Natural Brexit

WILDLIFE AND conservation charities are realising the opportunities created by leaving the EU.

Natural World, the magazine of wildlife trusts across Britain, declared its post-Brexit vision in a recent editorial, stating that the 23 June vote "will change the basis of our farming, fisheries and wildlife protection fundamentally". "Change you resisted can be liberating and energising", it said, if the trusts work hard to influence what happens next. They are already meeting civil servants, select committees and ministers.

In December a letter to *The Times* from 13 of Britain's leading environmental organisations including the RSPB, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and WWF-UK, with a combined membership of 7.9 million, announced their coming together into "Greener UK".

Some of the signatories actively campaigned against Leave, but now say in the letter that Brexit could offer "important opportunities to ...reverse the decline in the UK's natural environment". ■

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



ON THE WEB

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

Crown post offices strike for survival

Members of the Communication Workers Union in Crown post offices across the country have been on strike against further “managed decline” of British postal services.

Manufacture defies the Remain lies

The Remainers are professional denigrators of Britain, running down anything in an attempt to show they were right. Manufacturing is proving them wrong.

No progress without unity – and independence for Britain

After the SNP lost the 2014 vote, many in Scotland joined the SNP. In England too, many joined Labour and the Lib Dems after the EU referendum. These are reactionary currents.

Brexit frees up scheme to protect Britain's woodland

A “Buy British” scheme is to be launched using Brexit freedoms from EU directives to protect our woodlands from pests and diseases brought in by imported trees.

Judges seek to thwart will of people

The Supreme Court should allow the government to implement the Brexit referendum

Plus: the e-newsletter

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

Workers



Demonstrators set off from the British Library, London.

Marching for libraries

SOME 3,000 public library workers, users and authors marched on 5 November from the British Library, London, to Trafalgar Square. Since then the government announced a £4 million package of support for public libraries, named the Opportunities for Everyone Fund. But libraries have to bid for the funding and demonstrate that they are “innovative and efficient”, and councils are being forced down the route of having their library services off to trusts and mutuals.

To put the £4 million in context, a few days later CIPFA, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, reported that spending by libraries had fallen by £25 million and 67 libraries had closed in the financial year ending in April 2016. Since 2010, 478 libraries have closed across England, Scotland and Wales.

In the latest local cuts, Swindon is to close 10 out of its 15 libraries, Nottingham and Sheffield are both selling off their central libraries to property developers, and Scottish Borders is implementing redundancies, while Suffolk, the poster-boy for library mutuals faces a cut of 34 per cent. ■

ECONOMY

Brexit forecasts revised

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund now accepts that its forecast of a post-Brexit vote financial crash has proved overly pessimistic. Unemployment has held steady at an 11-year low of 4.9 per cent, while the pace of wage growth slowed slightly to 2.3 per cent from 2.4 per cent, as expected.

The economy will avoid recession in the second half of the year, the IMF thinks. In September, British factories had their best month for almost three years, as a lower pound fuelled an export surge.

The Bank of England forecast in August that there would be zero growth in the third quarter. In fact it was 0.5 per cent up. The Office for Budget Responsibility forecast in November that we will have grown by 2.1 per cent in 2016, higher than it forecast in March.

Also in November, manufacturers posted their best month for orders this year, with production expectations at their

highest since February 2015. Business investment increased by 0.9 per cent during the quarter.

Robert Azevedo, the World Trade Organization’s director-general, said before the referendum that if we voted to leave, we would face “tortuous” negotiations to re-enter the WTO, while incurring “billions in annual costs”. In late October, he said that leaving the EU could be “relatively straightforward”.

The government has pledged £23 billion over the next five years to a new National Productivity Investment Fund, £2.3 billion for a Housing Infrastructure Fund, and £1.4 billion for affordable housing. Mr Hammond also confirmed the Prime Minister’s earlier announcement that the government will invest an extra £2 billion annually in research and development by 2020/21. The £23 billion will be spent on areas such as new housing projects and hi-tech research, funded by extra borrowing. A Treasury spokesman, lifting a phrase previously more commonly used by Labour, said “he is borrowing to invest”. ■

SOCIAL CARE

How Mitie fell

SPECIALIST OUTSOURCING company Mitie has decided home care isn't profitable any more. Its departing chief executive Ruby McGregor-Smith, Tory peer, announced a £100 million loss as the company withdrew from the domestic home care market.

"The cuts have gone too deep...there's no understanding of what that's going to do to the elderly in the UK," she said. And there was more: "It's so badly paid that it's not

easy to attract staff to that market. Pay needs to be much higher than the living wage." But Mitie has never paid well, leading to demonstrations against it between 2013 and 2015.

Since Mitie can no longer make a profit out of health and social care, it's off out of it. These were the vultures queuing up to take over social care from local authority control, whose options now are either to sell it, shut it down, or even return it to local authority control. The economics of privatising home care which made Mitie millions in recent years are now driving it to quit. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

FEBRUARY

Thursday 2 February, 7.30pm

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

"Feeding an Independent Britain"

CPBML Public Meeting

Hard hit by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, British agriculture now has a chance with Brexit to be what it should be: a plentiful source of healthy food – and of better employment too. Come and discuss. All welcome.

METRICATION

Bin the regulations!

SINCE DECIMALISATION of the currency in 1970 there has been a continuous campaign by supporters of metrication, promoted by the EU, to enforce changes to weights, measurements and distances. Road signs have been changed, weights and measures in shops changed, weather forecasts changed, and so on.

For retailers metric weights and measurements have usually resulted in smaller quantities of goods being sold at effectively higher prices and subsequent confusion for customers. In 2001 the "Metric Martyrs", were market traders prosecuted and hounded for refusing to sell fruit and vegetables in metric weights. Brexit, independence, means we can finally bin all these "infringements" from the EU. ■



George Hutchinson/CC-BY-SA-3.0

HMS Duncan, sailing inbound to Portsmouth Harbour.

Rattling sabres – but rustily

AFTER ALL THE sabre rattling and tub thumping over the Russians exercising their right to sail international waters, the Royal Navy's spin department is looking a little seasick. One of the glorified gunboats, HMS Duncan, deployed to pursue the Russian aircraft carrier, broke down while playing war games with the navies of Portugal, Spain and Germany and had to be towed home like a derelict barge. Sad when its design is hailed as revolutionary and the pride of the Navy.

When the Russian aircraft carrier and support vessels were passing, the Navy spin was that they were so unseaworthy that most of the fleet consisted of tugs and repair ships. But the Russian fleet got to the Mediterranean; HMS Duncan didn't make the Bay of Biscay.

When is the government going to admit the Empire has gone and turn the Royal Navy into a useful agency for fisheries protection and the prevention of people smuggling? With the smallest number of ships under its auspices – 3 assault ships, 13 frigates, 6 destroyers, a third of what it had 20 years ago – the time to give up pretence is overdue.

Royal Navy ships are leased back to the Royal Navy. This was a complicated deal to keep various private shipbuilders in business dating back to Thatcher's time. They could be rented out to navies of the world – India, Australia, New Zealand, Middle Eastern states – if required. Hence the pressure from the shipbuilders to get navy contracts is really about exports, and not sinking Russian fleets or defending Britain's shores.

- More sabre rattling occurred with the deployment of 150 British troops to Poland, as near as they can possibly get to Russia's border. Provocative and stupid, this is boy scout politicking. The government is parading a fabricated history of close working between Britain and Poland, in so doing rewriting the period prior to the Second World War when British intrigues in Poland were all about encouraging it to attack the Soviet Union. Only in recent years when Poland joined the EU and provided cheap labour have British employers smiled on Poland. ■



STAY INFORMED

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FANCY THAT

Brexit bloomers

Property pundits pasted

"A KPMG poll of 25 global real estate investors with assets under management of over \$400bn has revealed today that two thirds believe a Brexit would result in less inward investment into UK property and property companies." (*The Daily Telegraph*, 3 April 2016).

"Four of China's biggest banks have this month agreed to finance the first stage of a \$2.12 billion transformation of an old East End dock into a hub for Asian businesses, says Bloomberg." (*The Drum*, 18 November 2016)

No disruption

"Negotiations about the shape of the UK's post-Brexit trade arrangements would have to start from scratch after a leave vote in the EU referendum, the head of the World Trade Organisation said" (*The Guardian*, 7 June 2016).

"The UK is a member of the WTO today, it will continue to be a member tomorrow. There will be no discontinuity in membership. ... Trade will not stop, it will continue and members negotiate the legal basis under which that trade is going to happen. But it doesn't mean that we'll have a vacuum or a disruption." (*Sky News*, 26 October 2016)

Still investing in cars

"Jaguar Land Rover, Britain's biggest carmaker, estimates its annual profit could be cut by £1bn by the end of the decade if Britain leaves the European Union, according to two sources familiar with the company's thinking." (*The Guardian*, 21 June 2016).

"The boss of Jaguar Land Rover wants to make new electric vehicles in the West Midlands, creating 10,000 new jobs at the auto maker and up to 60,000 more in its supply chain across the region." (*Express and Star*, 26 November 2016)

Plus: Brexit on the web

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

Fidel Castro, 1926 –2016



Marcelo Montecino (CC-BY-SA 2.0)

"My country is in silence, no music to be heard, not a single smile, nothing, there is much sadness, our best son has departed our country. What pain!" – The words of a Havana resident after the announcement of the death of Cuba's former president Fidel Ruz Castro.

IN ACCORDANCE with his wishes, Fidel's body was cremated within hours of his death on 26 November. There were to be no embalmed body, statues or other trappings of a personality cult. After lying in state, his ashes were transported across Cuba to Santiago de Cuba, where he made his victory speech on 1 January 1959, reversing the route that brought his rebel army to Havana from the Sierra Maestra mountains in eastern Cuba.

Santiago de Cuba, the Hero City that was the cradle of the revolution, already hosted the tomb of José Martí, Cuba's national hero who led the fight for independence from Spain. Here space had been reserved for Fidel's ashes, which were interred in the tomb after a private ceremony.

Across the world, in Africa where Cuba's role is well known in supporting liberation movements, providing healthcare and education for independent African states, or in Latin America and the Caribbean where similar Cuban solidarity initiatives are well known, Fidel Castro is loved and seen as the embodiment of this solidarity.

Many leaders from Africa, Latin America and Asia attended the public funeral, recognising the role Fidel played in the fight for liberation and independence. From the liberation war in Guinea-Bissau against the Portuguese colonialists to the defence of newly independent Angola threatened with invasion, his support was unwavering. Cuban troops, under his personal command, albeit he was in Havana, defeated the South African army and air force in a battle that would play a major role the independence of Namibia and the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

The US government squabbled among itself over the "serious" issue of whether any senior figure from the US should attend the memorial service for Fidel in Havana, bandying words like "despot", "mass murderer" and "brutal dictator". The British government didn't know what to say about his death. It settled for qualified condolences and like other European governments could not resist using the occasion to demand political changes in Cuba.

Meanwhile the Cuban people, in pain and in unsmiling sadness and silence over Fidel's departure, looked to the future. Young Cubans were queuing up across the country to sign pledges to continue the revolution, committing themselves to socialism and the values of Fidel.

In Cuba, Fidel inspired a generation to rise up against the brutal Batista dictatorship, which was backed by the US government and the mafia. He represented the struggle for independence from US control, independence for the Cuban nation and the Cuban working class. This is something we should praise and remember him for, because that is now our struggle. A struggle for the independence of our nation and our working class.

And we will win just as Fidel and the Cuban working class won and continue to win.
Hasta la victoria siempre! Always on to victory!



Syrian and Iraqi immigrants getting off a boat from Turkey at the Greek island of Lesbos, October 2015.

People smuggling, trafficking, organised gangs – what’s free about that?

Why the movement of labour is not “free”

MIGRATION IS no longer a taboo subject in Britain. But calm debate is rare, and rarer since the referendum.

The European Union actively uses the phrase “free movement” but most migration is anything but free. It is a process of moving labour from areas of unemployment and low wages to areas of higher wages used by employers across the globe. It should really be called the transporting of cheap labour rather than free movement.

Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley Bank used the phrase “global labour arbitrage” which he described as a system of economic rewards derived from “exploiting the international wage hierarchy, resulting in outsized returns for corporations and investors”. Well, at least he was honest about who got the rewards.

‘A process over which we have no control.’

Workers are opposed to this so-called “freedom” at the destination point of that movement, since it is done to depress wages there. In addition organised workers, professional regulators and even governments can also raise concerns at the point of origin of that movement, as has been seen when the Portuguese and Spanish nursing regulators in 2015 formally complained to the UK that agencies recruiting in their countries had been providing misleading information.

Employers love it

As Karl Marx pointed out, capitalism is a system that is always seeking to increase the profits of the employing class. It is very limited in how it can do this. Sometimes the price of raw materials will fall but mostly they rise. Of course sometimes there are technological breakthroughs that allow production of goods to increase hugely for the same or less labour time. But the main fallback for employers across the globe is to find ways of paying workers less.

In the 19th century it was assumed that as the global demand for labour increased

with industrialisation then wages would rise. Marx pointed out that this was not happening and developed his “general law of accumulation” which explained that “accumulation” by the capitalist class was entirely reliant on a “reserve army of labour”. When Marx was writing, the “reserve army” was within the nation and evident in the unemployed, but also in the constant movement of labour from countryside to town (as is seen in modern day China).

Since Marx’s day capitalists have developed their methods to include the “off shoring” of work with the relocation of industry and services from countries with higher wages to lower wages. In this situation it is the work that is moved to the reserve army of labour rather than the other way around. The process of “off shoring” certainly caused unemployment and depression of wages in higher wage areas of the globe.

But in the same historical period capitalism has also relied on the physical movement of labour from areas of low wage to

Continued on page 8

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higher wage – the better to depress wages at the point of destination. In Britain this migration has come from within and outside the EU.

The recent history of the EU has been of an eastward expansion and the facilitation of movement of labour from low to higher wage areas. Within the EU this is a process over which we have no control. There are now 3.2 million UK residents who were born in other parts of the EU, of whom 2.26 million are in the workforce. The speed and scale of migration is significant. Prior to 1997 net migration (EU and non EU) was rarely more than 50,000 a year. In 2004 the migration figure rose significantly, reflecting the EU's expansion.

In the year ending June 2016 immigration to Britain reached 650,000 according to the Office of National Statistics – its highest ever annual level. Within this total EU migration was also at an historic high. Balanced against the number leaving, this

Points of profit

The points at which money can be made in the trafficking process paraphrased from a Romanian government booklet trying to prevent the trade.

- The recruiters: “those who sell illusions, deceive, defraud, and abuse people’s trust.”
- Those responsible for smuggling and transport.
- Those providing counterfeit IDs and travel documents.
- Those who watch the victims so they don’t escape.
- Those involved in the management and control of nightclubs, brothels, farms.
- Those who deliver the money.
- Those who launder the money. ■



Early morning, 6 September 2016: Polish workers in their way to the UK go through the passport c

gave a net migration figure of 335,000. It means that 335,000 more people are living here than one year ago – more than the whole population of Coventry or Cardiff. There are six EU member states where the average wage is less than a third of our minimum wage and another eight where it is less than half. It is no surprise that of the recent record number of EU citizens coming to live in Britain, 54,000 came from Romania, which has the lowest wage rates in the EU.

The government was pleased to report recent employment statistics for the period July to September 2016 which in comparison to the same period in 2015 showed a rise in employment of UK nationals by 213,000 to 28.39 million. But more significantly during the same period citizens from other EU countries working in the UK increased by 221,000 to 2.26 million.

Planning for a population

The key thing for Britain now is to survive and prosper outside the EU. For that we need a steady population size – not growing or reducing drastically. Note that our population was 50 million in 1950 and 65 million in 2015. Some migration is healthy – roughly the same number of immigrants and emigrants.

Governments, especially any which intend to act in the interests of workers, usually aim to meet the basic needs of a population, and that requires planning – which is the antithesis of free movement. Quite simply, it is impossible to plan to meet

the needs of any population that is expanding in a chaotic and unpredictable way. This is felt by citizens in very tangible ways with pressures on housing, health, education, transport and other services. The gates of tube stations in London are now regularly closed as the sheer volume of passengers makes stations unsafe and therefore the flow has to be regulated by a queue system.

Newly migrated labourers are often housed in conditions that breach a range of environmental health standards. Fire brigades across the country have reported the increased hazard that they describe as “beds in sheds”, where people are living in sheds, garages or other illegally flung together accommodation.

Migration allows employers to avoid providing training for their employees. Instead they import skilled workers, arguing that Britain needs migration because of “skill shortages”.

Even those who are unhappy with the scale of migration to the UK often suggest that it is acceptable for Britain to allow the migration of the “brightest and the best”. How can it be right for Britain to systematically lure those people educated at the expense of a country less wealthy than us? See *Workers* November/December 2016 for the negative impact of the worldwide movement of health care staff – the damaging effect are felt most often those areas of the globe with the greatest health needs.

It is no surprise that the rise in migration since 2004 has coincided with the biggest attack on further education colleges which



Control at the France–UK border in Calais ferry terminal.

typically have provided courses to young people (and older workers who needed to retrain) in skills such as electrical engineering, plumbing and information technology.

Remarkably, during the Second World War Britain managed to upskill its workforce in a wide range of engineering, chemical industry and other skills, despite most of the workforce being at war! All areas of further education were involved – including universities which facilitated scientific PhDs in record time to increase knowledge. Someone needs to sit down and write a list of the known skills shortages along with the available courses. If no course is available, developing one must be treated as a matter of urgency. Yes, there are skill shortages – but more importantly there is a shortage of will to address those shortages.

Lucrative and lethal

Superficially it looks as if the movement of people around the globe happens as a matter of individual choice but this ignores how it is done. Of course there are still people who move across the world for personal or family reasons. But there is a range of agencies actively engaged in moving the working age population – at one end of the spectrum they may well be acting legally (if often unethically) while at the other end there is a global crime wave which now pays better than shifting other cargo such as narcotics.

Within the EU, movement of labour is largely facilitated by labour agencies which are paid a fee per worker moved. There are limited controls on those agencies, which in

‘We are now facing a criminal trade in people that is unprecedented in history.’

turn may adopt illegal and unethical practices. For example despite it being illegal since 2014 for employers seeking labour for a UK workplace to advertise only outside the UK in the European Economic Area, politicians from all sides in the referendum debate conceded that there are still UK jobs which are not advertised in Britain.

But much of the current population movement in Europe and elsewhere is part of a huge criminal network. The movement of population into and across the EU entered a new phase in 2015 following Angela Merkel’s invitation to migrants to settle in the EU. Initially this was portrayed as assistance to refugees from Syria, but more than 40 per cent of those who have recently sought asylum in Germany are from countries in the Balkans which thankfully have not seen conflict in 20 years.

Once migrants have made it into an EU country, the borderless Schengen system creates chaotic movements of people.

The wars created by Britain and the USA in the Middle East have generated a huge

rise in refugees but the vast majority of these refugees are in Turkey or Lebanon or elsewhere in the Middle East. What we are now facing is a criminal trade in people that is unprecedented in history, with people smugglers and traffickers moving people across the globe.

People smugglers move people from A to B for money. People traffickers are involved in what is called modern day slavery in that they move people for money but in addition keep control of them at the point of destination, generally setting them to work for nothing. The traffickers enforce control with threats to their families at their point of origin.

Modern slavery

The UK began to wake up to the horrors of modern slavery in February 2004 when at least 21 Chinese cockle pickers drowned in Morecambe Bay. In 2015 a Modern Slavery Act was passed. A review of the act in 2016 found that 289 offences were prosecuted under the act in 2015, and that there had been a 40 per cent rise in the number of victims referred for support. In July 2016 the Anti-Slavery Commissioner suggested that the number of crimes being reported and investigated under the act was falling short of the real number of cases of human trafficking and modern slavery.

The route used by traffickers and smugglers across the Mediterranean is being actively controlled by Turkey in a deal with the EU by which Turkey blocks rather than facilitates the illegal trade in migrants. But it could change its position at any time. Criminal activity has switched to the more dangerous route via Libya and more deaths of migrants. As at 5 December, recorded deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean for 2016 were 4,715.

The problem facing the countries of Europe is not a migrant crisis. It is a people smuggling and a trafficking crisis, which needs to be tackled. See Box (left) for the stages in the trade. At each stage there is a different set of criminals who work as a cell – take one stage out and the others continue.

Each country needs to deal with the stage relevant to the flow. Instead of imposing fines, Britain could start with imprisoning the employers using this type of labour and confiscating their assets. ■

One of the worst lies told in the referendum was that the EU to leave holds out the prospect of a reduction of the risk of

A spanner in the works of



François Hollande of France, Matteo Renzi of Italy and Angela Merkel of Germany united on board a French aircraft carrier in August 2015 in a clear visual statement of intent to militarise the EU.

IN BRITAIN, the leaving of the EU is the most significant political event of most people's lifetimes. It has been likened to 1945, or even – wrongly – to February 1917 in Russia.

Yet one of the most profound implications of the vote to leave hasn't really been much commented on, and that is the blow that Brexit struck against the plans being made for war, in particular a war against Russia. As a Party we recently released a document summing up our view of the international situation, called Britain in the World. It includes the following:

“We are constantly told that the exist-

• This article is based on the speech given at a CPBML public meeting in London in November.

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

Today, the EU is inseparable from NATO as all applicants to the former must first join the latter. Together with the USA

‘The EU has supported every war that NATO has launched.’

they are a force for war; the Soviet Union was a force for peace. Had the Soviet Union continued to exist, there would have been no invasion of Iraq or Afghanistan, no bombing of Libya and the chaos that followed, no ISIS and no war against Syria.

The BBC website says that the EU was created because countries that trade with other are less likely to go to war with one other. But when countries band together and agree not to fight, they constitute the beginnings of a military alliance against other countries not in that bloc. And a military alliance among capitalist countries is an aggressive alliance.

That was the significance of the EU's so-called trade treaties, TTIP, CETA and so forth; they were, and remain in truth, embryonic military pacts, and were part

EU is a force for peace. The opposite is true, and the vote of war...

of the EU war machine

of the EU and NATO's encirclement of Russia. And modern wars can only happen if these alliances or blocs exist.

The First World War stemmed from the world being divided into the Triple Alliance and the Entente Cordiale (and they all traded with each other). The Second World War was, until the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, fought between the anti-Comintern Axis and countries that belonged to the League of Nations, both examples of blocs.

The first organisation of European countries to be established after the Second World War was not economic but military, set up between west European countries and the USA in 1949. It was the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or NATO.

In fact, the US (not the Europeans) had proposed an Organisation for European Economic Co-operation as early as 1948, and Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, proposed the establishment of the Western European Union, a sort of NATO-without-the-Americans, also in 1948.

Artificial

West Germany was in origin an artificial creation of the USA, and that artificial state played the leading role in establishing the equally artificial putative state of the EU. So the argument, often run out, that the EU is a counterweight to the USA, is not based on any facts.

The facts show that the allegedly economic community of European states began as an offshoot of, and remains today central to, an American-led military organisation. The European Coal and Steel Community, said to be the embryo of the EU, was not established until 1951.

The head of the ECSC was Jean Monnet, often described as the father of the EU. Passionate about bringing the peoples of Europe together, Monnet had also been investigated in 1941 in America because of his pre-war business dealings with the Nazis. He went on to write the 1957 Treaty of Rome, which effectively established the EU's forerunner organisation the European Community.

But the idea of a "united Europe"

didn't originate with Monnet. That other great European, Adolf Hitler, dreamt of a New Order straddling Europe with its own currency (the Reichsmark), its own army (the Wehrmacht) and its own police force (the Gestapo).

The US has always been in favour of dealing with the countries of Europe as a single entity, as a bloc, not as individual nations. America's leading foreign policy advisor said at the end of the war, "the only thing wrong with Hitler's New Order in Europe is that it was Hitler's".

War

The North Atlantic Treaty states that any attack upon any NATO member is considered an attack on all NATO members. The EU has supported every war that NATO has launched, whether it was against Iraq in 1991, Yugoslavia in 1992, Iraq again in 2003, Afghanistan, Libya in 2011, and Syria. These wars are called "military engagements", undertaken by the "international community", or sometimes, "coalition forces". Or even, when they're testing how stupid we really are, they are described as "humanitarian missions", just to see if we'll swallow that.

However they're described, these wars have been fought in what we are told is our "national interest". But had any of those countries attacked by NATO ever actually threatened Britain? Or attacked any other NATO member country? No, of course they hadn't. Were any of those countries about to attack us? Or any other NATO member country? No of course they weren't. Not even NATO suggested that they were.

The closest NATO came to suggesting such a thing was the gossamer thin fabrication of Saddam's phantom weapons of mass destruction, weapons on which in reality NATO has a near monopoly.

The rulers of these countries attacked by NATO/EU were demonised systematically. But we should ask, do we really think that Saddam was worse than the Saudi royal family, that firm ally of NATO? The Saudi Arabia that is now proven beyond reasonable doubt to have funded the fascists who killed nearly 3,000 people in the World Trade Center?

'The US has always been in favour of dealing with the countries of Europe as a single entity.'

In Syria millions of women go to school, work in the professions and are able to vote. Is it a worse country than Saudi Arabia, where it is illegal for women to drive, and the stoning of women for adultery is commonplace?

And as if to prove the insanity and cowardice abroad in the world, three weeks ago Russia was voted off the UN Human Rights Committee, and Saudi Arabia elected, unanimously, for a second term. The reason the Russian leaders had to be thrown out is because they are independent of the USA, of NATO, of the EU.

Unacceptable

That kind of independence was not acceptable to the old colonial empires of Britain, France and Belgium 150 years ago, and it's not acceptable today to the new empires of the USA, NATO and the EU. So they had to go.

But is it any of our business who runs other countries? Haven't countries got the right to decide for themselves how and by whom they are governed? We think we have, so why doesn't that apply to everyone? International law says everyone has that right. All of which begs the question, what is our national interest? Have these wars been in our interests?

The cost of the war against Afghanistan alone was a massive £37 billion. That's £2,000 for every British family. Plus nearly £2 billion for the war against Libya. Not to mention the irreplaceable human cost of over 600 British lives. If that is in the British national interest then there is no better argument for changing

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Maidan Square, Ukraine 2013, with EU flags backing a coup against an elected government.

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that national interest.

All of those wars were illegal. The United Nations is only empowered to intervene in wars between member states, not intervene in conflict within member states. All the countries attacked by NATO since the collapse of the Soviet Union, including Yugoslavia, were equally sovereign members of the UN; no more nor less than are Britain or the US, and all wars against them were illegal.

Independence is now a central political issue. It's what the referendum was all about. We have stood up to our ruling class and its media. We can do the same with NATO.

Independence of mind

Independence of mind is where it all begins; it is the beginning of the end of oppression. Question what you're told, come to your own conclusions, don't allow yourself to be force-fed propaganda, gossip or distorted views.

It's true that first of all we must keep the pressure on to make sure we leave the

EU, or to use a Geordie phrase, to keep the cat's arse to the fire. But the road we've opened up leads to Britain leaving NATO. Just as our inclusion in its military ranks pre-dated our inclusion in the EU, so our independence of the latter must lead to our independence of the former.

The military alliance of European countries within NATO came first but the EU has got its own separate military organisation as well. What do those within the British trade union movement so fond of extolling the nice sweet face of the EU make of the European Defence Agency for example, established in 2004 to coordinate military capabilities and create a European military equipment market?

And what about the EU's own army, the Eurocorps and the European Rapid Reaction Force, set up even earlier, in 1999? That's 60,000 soldiers who can be deployed within 60 days.

Green light

Do those who opposed leaving the EU also support the expansion and beefing up of NATO? You can't have one without the other. If we'd voted to remain it would

'We should be very wary whenever the EU or NATO impose sanctions.'

have been a green light for more reactionary policies, for even more money to be extracted from us and for war.

Sometimes, when warmongering doesn't lead directly to war, we might overlook the inherent danger. One of the most dangerous of recently averted wars was in the Ukraine. The EU didn't get its war, and NATO didn't get its Black Sea naval base.

But the EU has not forgotten the Ukraine. A more convenient jumping off point for aggression against Russia does not exist for NATO. That's true not just geographically and militarily, but politically, with the most militant Ukrainian separatists simultaneously the most pro-EU people in Europe – and the most neo-fascist of all.

Sanctions, economic and political, are weapons of war. All the EU/NATO wars have involved the use of sanctions against sovereign countries. So we should be very wary whenever NATO and the EU decide to impose sanctions against a country; it means they are preparing for war against them. And which country is subject to the most extreme sanctions of all? Russia. Nuclear-armed Russia.

So Britain leaving the EU must mean a weakening, hopefully fatal, of those bullying sanctions. This would start the process of pulling the rug out from under the Americans' attempts to get Europeans to fight Russia for them. It would be even better if we then do the obvious thing and begin trading properly with Russia, rather than applying sanctions against it which are harmful to us. We have struck out for peace in our rejection of the EU.

Now let us assert what we have yet to fully gain: our independence. ■

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 2 February with the title "Feeding an Independent Britain". 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

Free of the EU, Britain must seize the chance of a lifetime to create a new industrial revolution...

Remake industry!



Prapham Jambala/shutterstock.com

THE GOVERNMENT'S proposed industrial strategy represents a conscious step away from the unfettered free market philosophy of Thatcher, Cameron and Labour politicians, dominant for the past 40 years. Of course May and company are not free marketeers, but they do reflect the contradiction between British capitalism and the European Union.

With Brexit the differing views as to what an independent Britain should be will compete with one another. We will be free of the EU push to make all member countries dependent on each other and the EU. Free of the EU's attempt to assign us the role of financial services while Germany provides

most industry.

To trade with the whole world we must have something more to trade and that means industry.

What about a third, fourth, fifth industrial revolution as touted by some in the media?

'We must have something to trade with, and that means industry.'

We need to look at where we are now. Superficially the workers of the 18th and 19th centuries' first industrial revolution – working in steam, coal and factory manufacturing would appear to be light years away from workers of the 21st century. But the reality for workers is often not that different.

A silicon Britain, a high-tech computer-driven Britain, is still one of low skill jobs, low paid jobs, long hours culture, job instability, under-employment, fragmented employment, neutered trade unions, and total flexibility for employers but not for workers.

So a new industrial strategy? The history

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The road to a new industrial revolution

- BRITAIN to be based upon **advanced manufacturing** – the “new” industries – aerospace; silicon electronics; plastics / printed electronics; industrial biotechnology; composites and nanotechnology; the digital economy and life sciences. In 2010 manufacture created over £160 billion in wealth.
- **Aerospace** – the UK has 25 per cent of the global market, second only to the USA. 112,000 workers, £22.3 billion turnover, 600 employers.
- Strengthen **research and development** – three quarters of UK research and development goes into manufacturing. Reshape further and higher education to enhance industry and production.
- Massively invest, re-equip in **engineering construction** – the key to all modern infrastructure. Literally rebuild Britain’s infrastructure of roads, rail, airports, docks.
- **Textiles** – 1 million workers in mid-1980s, now 10,000, in high-end market niche. A skilled, inventive and talented industry. Britain to dress the world?
- **Energy industries** – re-create an integrated diverse energy supply industry, self-reliant and independent. Re-create the

industrial capacity required to build, maintain and renew such industry. No energy means no industrial society.

- Redefine **financial and professional services** – accountancy, legal, housing and property, architectural and engineering services. What is required? Service for whom?
- Redefine the new **digital economy** – employing 1.57 million workers in 2010. Delivering telecommunications infrastructure, the online environment plus media, film, animation, music etc. 2.5 million workers in technology occupations.
- **Life sciences and pharmaceuticals** – pharmaceuticals, medical technology, biotechnology, biology, chemistry, maths, chemical engineering etc. Cuba has vastly developed these industries in the service of the people of Cuba and the world. We could do the same.
- **Health and social care** – ensuring the health and well-being of the people of Britain from cradle to grave. Re-establish social care rather than personal care; rebuild the NHS as fit for purpose.
- Redefine the **retail** sector – employs 2.8 million workers. End the domination of

supermarket monopolies.

- Redefine **tourism, hospitality, leisure**, a sector which employs nearly 3 million workers and is expected to supplant manufacturing wealth creation, reaching £188 billion per annum by 2020. Don’t just cater to parasitic tourism and the idle rich.
- **Low carbon** industrial strategy. From car scrappage, to clean coal technology, CO2 storage etc. The potential basis of old industrial skills applied to a new work environment.
- **High energy-intensive users** – iron, steel, aluminium, cement, pulp and paper, and chemicals – employing over 222,000 workers, the industrial backbone of future regeneration.
- Massive reinvestment in **education** at every level.
- **National direction, control and planning**. Streamline industries and work. Publish Britain’s first five year plan.

Investment, skills, education, education for life, jobs for life, wealth creation for the people – a new industrial revolution but this time ours. ■

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of British government and economic initiatives from 1918 to 2016 is one of attempts to cure the fundamental flaws in the British economy. It has been circular, regurgitating the same old themes: destroy a traditional manufacturing industry and then throw bribes at capitalist firms supposedly to redevelop and recreate jobs. The car industry is an obvious case in point.

But the wipeout of traditional industrial bases in Yorkshire, Scotland, the North East, South Wales, Midlands, the Black Country, Kent and the South East, and London too, has been the blueprint: 200,000 jobs lost in coal, 200,000 in steel, 250,000 in agriculture (and related), nearly a million in textiles and clothing, 450,000 jobs lost in London alone between 1970 and 1990. Docks, engineering, print, manufacturing –

the list goes on.

Political parties over the past 100 years have run manifestos on change, rebuilding, restoring some long-lost past before British capitalism went into absolute decline.

Yet irrespective of their political persuasion the capitalists and their governments have always shifted the burden of bailing out their own crisis onto the working class. As in the 1920s and 1930s, so today.

Production

Many historic industries have gone: textiles, coal and the old blue-collar mass manufacturing. But the evolution of production, though seriously reduced, in aerospace, pharmaceuticals, electronics, research and design remain and are vital for Britain.

Meanwhile capitalism has developed parasitic creations to try to survive – the stock exchange, the futures markets, ser-

vice industries, and the fostering of debt.

By 2020 household debt in Britain will be £2 trillion – £30,000 for every man, woman and child.

For over a century capitalist Britain has been in a cul-de-sac with no exit strategy. Thatcherism and the neoliberal economics of the EU were not capitalism reborn but the drowning man clutching at a straw. Capitalists cannot resolve this fundamental contradiction of capitalism: they want unfettered productivity, unrestricted accumulation of profit, a totally enslaved working class in mind and body.

So a new industrial revolution requires us to stop following on the tailcoats of the government and employers as has been the norm for the last 100 years. The working class, if it is to develop a new independence in Britain, must create an industrial strategy that works for us. ■

The failure to fight for wages has worked its way through to an ever-lengthening working day...

Worked to the bone

CAPITAL SURVIVES by the accumulation of wealth. That wealth, that surplus value, comes from the employment and exploitation of labour. There are more workers in employment than at any time in British history – and as a result it has the greatest accumulation of surplus value in British history – and yet the economy teeters from crisis to crisis.

Working class resistance during the first industrial revolution stopped that capitalist drive. It had to be because otherwise British workers, as an appendage to the machine, with a life expectancy of between 25 and 30 years, would have been exterminated. The same battle confronts us now.

The so-called “Uber” and “Gig” economic models have made the individualised, self-employed division of the working class into units of single workers. The ultimate divide and rule of capitalism accompanies technological developments and a renewed assault on workers’ thinking.

A shiny high-tech office block is still a battery hen factory for those who work there, with every minute monitored and measured against productivity and profit.

So what thinking runs through British workers’ minds? Between 1918 and 2016 two core ideas emerged: the need for a “living wage” and a “working day”.

Wage cuts

One of these ideas lives on with the trade unions (largely) wedded to the “living wage”, even though in many instances it constitutes a wage cut. And we fool ourselves that the new minimum wage of the government has been breached because we’ve implemented our own slightly higher minimum wage. Meanwhile, the working day is lengthening out of control.

Why has such thinking constantly re-emerged during the last 100 years and why

‘We fool ourselves that the minimum wage has been breached.’



Mtaylor848 (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Sports Direct has become a byword for the use of zero-hours contracts. Picture shows its outlet in The Headrow, Leeds.

is there such a passion for it now?

Rather than resist and assert ourselves, we tail behind capitalism. It means a failure in our confidence as workers to win, a failure in thinking and fatalism within our ranks.

The failures have to be challenged and changed. It’s the kind of pathetic thinking which Marxists and skilled workers ripped to shreds decades ago when there was a clamour for a “fair day’s pay” and Marx defined our understanding of the wages system.

And the “working day”? There is greater confusion around hours than ever: more workers are in part-time multiple jobs because full-time permanent employment has been fragmented. More than ever are employed, but more are underemployed, and more are surviving hand to mouth.

Employers invest in strategies to make collectivity among workers impossible: workers based and working from home; zero-hours contracts as really enforced self-employment; false self-employment; the

division between employees, workers, agency workers, personal service, self-employed, umbrella companies employment, part-time. All is aimed at generating competition among workers.

The concept adopted by trade unionists about work-life balance has been seized upon by some employers to break continuity of employment whenever they can.

Unemployment figures are reduced by creating self-employed who receive government subsidies, sowing confusion in workers’ thinking. 15 per cent, 4.5 million of the 30 million workers in Britain, are now deemed self-employed, the highest figure ever.

Overtime – voluntary and enforced – as well as agency, locum and bank working are all mechanisms whereby workers clutch at more hours, because we have failed to fight for higher wages.

Like hamsters on a treadmill we run faster and faster to stand still. Get off the treadmill, ditch capitalism. ■

For forty years we have documented the disastrous effects on British agriculture and fisheries. Now, with an end to EU membership in sight, British workers face a new set of challenges.

Agriculture and fisheries



Workers

Pigs rooting in Suffolk. Over the decades of British membership the pig industry has suffered greatly from lax EU standards on animal welfare.

WITH BREXIT, the whole British working class has the opportunity to find new solutions to the problem that every human society, at whatever stage of development, has to face: how to feed the people.

We have written about farmers paid to grow nothing on their land under the set-aside rules, fishermen forced to throw fish back into the sea, or to stand by as others plundered our natural resources, with our fishing ports becoming as dead as mining towns. We have covered the payment of subsidies to other European countries whose agricultural economies were still peasant-based, and then there were the butter mountains and wine lakes across the EU.

More recently, the “three crop rule”, introduced by the EU in 2015, and described by the National Farmers’ Union (NFU) as “utter madness”, requires some farmers with more than 30 hectares of arable land to grow three different crops. Yet it was British farmers who pioneered crop-rotation systems, and sustainable continuous cropping systems!

The NFU President, Peter Kendall, said, “The three crop rule goes against all of the

NFU core policy principles of simplicity, market orientation, and increased efficiency. It will increase costs, reduce efficiency, increase traffic on rural roads and in some cases could lead to negative environmental consequences.”

Where we are

To work for a safe, reliable, secure food supply, we need to start by surveying where we are, and what assets we hold. 71 per cent, 17.2 million hectares, of the country’s land is used for farming. We grow crops and raise livestock in environments as varied as the flat prairies of East Anglia and the hill farms of Wales, Cumbria and Scotland. We can grow quantities of arable crops and fruit and produce meat and dairy products that go some way to meeting our needs.

We are currently 76 per cent self-sufficient. We can export and trade in products that are much prized abroad, and highly exportable. Scotch whisky tops the list, at a value of £4 billion a year in exports around the world, according to DEFRA.

It is not surprising that, in a country with an advanced working class, the agricultural and food products we export are those that

require human skill to endow them with their qualities, added-value products rather than raw commodities, products such as smoked salmon, cheese, beer and even wine. Others include oysters, natural honey, gin, cider, flavourings and specialist ingredients.

British agriculture employs relatively few workers. In 1851 1.7 million worked in agriculture, the lowest proportion of any European country at that time. By 1921 there were 1 million. Now it’s around 400,000. But apart from the importance to the population as a whole of those workers who work on the land, their work is interdependent with the labour of many others.

Some produce and maintain agricultural machinery and precision tools, some are involved with veterinary medicines, feedstuffs, crop protection and nutrition, seeds, genetics, computing, energy generation and infrastructure.

The same is true of fisheries – each fisherman on the water requires boat builders and boatyards, fuel, suppliers of nets and other gear, fishmongers and distribution workers. And then the agrifood sector also employs all those who manufacture and process foodstuffs, and who work in trans-

s of EEC, later EU, membership on British agriculture and Britain can at last begin to put things right...

s can look to the future

‘Free movement allowed employers to perpetuate the gangmaster system.’

port, sale and in the service industries that feed workers.

But some employers in agriculture and horticulture backed the EU and the “right to free movement”. It allowed them to employ itinerant, seasonal workers on poverty wages, herded into filthy dormitories perpetuating the gangmaster system. The death of the Chinese cockle pickers in Morecambe Bay in 2004 was the consequence of this people-trafficking. Particularly in East Anglia, criminal gangs continue to enrich themselves on this system.

Now is the time to build more proper jobs in agriculture, with guaranteed year-round employment, and career structures. The intelligence of a modern nation can find a solution to fluctuations in the need for labour from place to place and time to time.

Public health professionals have rightly focused attention on the consequences for the nation of poor diet and housing, and their relationship to many of the diseases that afflict us. Workers in the NHS too must be involved in deciding how and what we

produce and import.

There will need to be education and training to develop the skills we need to feed ourselves and investment in scientific research and projects that increase productivity and yield. Disease resistance and biotechnology are not evils beyond human control, but necessities for a modern economy and a priority for investment. We will no longer be at the mercy of regulations framed in Brussels by those agribusiness lobbyists with the ear of a commissioner.

Fishing

As for fisheries, in 2014 fishing contributed £426 million to the UK GDP and employed around 12,000 fishermen. The EU forced us to share access to fishing grounds from 12-200 miles from the coast. We are now free to return to the standard set in international law, that is, exclusive national fishing rights up to 200 miles from the coast, the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), as do Norway and Iceland.

It would, of course, be open to us to negotiate access, and quotas, for other countries’ fishing fleets to parts of our waters, if we wish, and for ours to theirs.

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

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

There is a great deal to be done. These are questions not only for those who work on land and sea, but for the whole British working class. The petty division and diversion of Scottish separatism was neatly put in its place by the Shetland Fishermen’s Association. They gave publicity to a report from NAFC Marine Centre of the University of the Highlands and Islands in Shetland, based on European Commission data, which showed that more than half of the fish caught in British waters between 2012 and 2014 were taken by foreign fishing boats.

Their Executive Officer, Simon Collins, commented, “This report confirms the view of the entire Scottish fishing industry that Brexit creates a sea of opportunity for island and coastal communities throughout the UK. Once out of Europe, the UK will have the right to manage its own waters as it sees fit and control access to them.

“The report shows just how strong a bargaining position we have. We should deny access to our rich and productive fishing grounds to any country not prepared to offer something in return, and by that I mean fairer shares of scientifically agreed quotas.

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



Workers

CPBML/Workers
Public Meeting, London
Thursday 2 February, 7.30 pm
“Feeding an Independent Britain”
Brockway Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London
WC1R 4RL. Nearest tube Holborn.

Hard hit by the EU’s Common Agriculture Policy, British agriculture now has a chance with Brexit to be what it should be: a plentiful source of healthy food – and of better employment too. Come and discuss. All welcome.

**Under the EU our railways have been fragmented, privatised
With independence looming, what now needs to be done?**

Another Brexit opportunity

BREXIT COULD have a profound impact on rail services in Britain. There is a bright future ahead but there is much to do to shape the agenda beforehand and much to do afterwards to assert the will of the British people and ensure a railway that serves their needs, and not the needs of private operators, foreign rail companies, and EU bureaucrats. What will the realities of Brexit mean, and what needs to be done?

The current privatised and fragmented British rail industry is a direct product of EU directives and laws. The EU and its predecessors have spent decades looking at ways to undermine publicly owned state railway operators, which provided rail services based upon the strategic needs of the people that owned them.

The EU has systematically sought to fragment the railways of much of Europe and pave the way for private sector profiteers that are out for a quick buck and never mind the consequences for safety.

EU 'liberalisation'

The Thatcher and Major governments of the 1980s and 1990s were enthusiastic advocates of this EU "liberalisation", as it was termed. British Rail was broken up into over 200 private companies in the 1990s, the only state operator in Europe (except Sweden) to disappear.

The then EEC dictated that wheel and rail were to be separated and Major was only too pleased to hand over the infrastructure to private company Railtrack, which saw its role more as a property company than the custodian of a strategically important transport network. Safety suffered greatly as eye and ball were also separated, and this resulted in high profile rail crashes such as those at Hatfield and Potters Bar.

The then Blair government had no real alternative but to force Railtrack into insolvency and create from its ashes an effectively publicly owned Network Rail to run the national rail network. Network Rail promptly ended contracts for maintenance and on both safety and cost grounds, it took the work in-house.

Labour has long cited the EU as the reason for it not being able to take the railways back into public ownership. The EU



Andrew Wlard/www.andrew-wlard.com

Rail unions campaigned for a Leave vote, knowing that only out of the EU can rail privatisation be reversed

itself has implemented three "rail packages" that have opened up freight and international passenger services to competition. The result is that different state rail companies compete on the more lucrative international routes with an end to tickets valid on all services.

Freight across Europe has become a free for all. Predictably, the biggest fish in

'Freight across Europe has become a free-for-all.'

the pond, German state company Deutsche Bahn (DB) has gobbled up many other operators, some small but some that were part of other countries' state railways.

DB now owns five out of the six rail freight companies created when British Rail was privatised, now called DB Cargo UK, which employs 3,400 staff. Recent downturns in coal and steel have seen this market leader lose a significant chunk of their rail freight traffic. DB Cargo has seized this opportunity to axe nearly 1,000 jobs.

The German company is also currently attempting to bully those staff remaining to take cuts in pay with much worse conditions, with the threat that if the staff and their unions do not accept their terms, DB

and sold off to foreign – mainly state-owned – companies.

ity – the railways



ersed. Photo shows anti-EU demo, Paris, 2008.

will shut down the whole British operation.

Rail union RMT has responded by calling for British government intervention to save skilled jobs in the rail freight industry, blaming government inaction to protect steel, coal and the rest of Britain's manufacturing base. The RMT has pointed to the government's recently published strategy underlining its commitment to rail freight, including ensuring more capacity on the network, and the union has demanded that the government brings DB Cargo into public ownership as the only way that strategy will be achieved.

The collapse of steel traffic on the railways is a direct result of EU rules that prevent the British government giving state aid

to a strategically important manufacturing industry. Steel volumes have dropped as a result of high energy prices, the extra cost of climate change policies, and dumping of cheap steel produced with state aid in China. The number of steel trains run by DB Cargo UK in the first nine months of 2016 was 5,820, down 33 per cent from 8,733 for the same period in 2015.

Threat

Should DB follow through with its threat and shut up shop, around two-thirds of Britain's rail freight capacity would disappear. Not only would this make it very much harder to get freight off Britain's overcrowded roads and on to the railways, but it would cause real headaches for Network Rail. DB Cargo operates many of the engineering trains that are essential to track maintenance and enhancements. Without those trains, Network Rail's engineering programme would simply stop, and so would key parts of the railway.

DB also owns many of Britain's passenger rail franchises along with one of the two "open access" passenger operators. French and Dutch national railways own many of the others. The French company SNCF is a major player in Southern, now infamous for its appalling services and disputes with all of the rail unions. It was notable that Southern recently attempted to use EU law to stop drivers' union ASLEF from taking industrial action, a law SNCF would not dare try to use in France! The court, perhaps sensing the anti-EU mood of the country following the referendum, chose to uphold ASLEF's right to take action.

So why are so many European state-owned railways operating in Britain? The answer is simple – they can make profits here that they can then re-invest in their own countries. This has been brought about partly by the EU, and partly by successive British government's commitment to the EU agenda of privatisation. The British rail companies simply do not have the clout of the much larger foreign state-owned companies, and have been able to make little impact in continental Europe.

The future of these commercial relationships after Brexit will be determined by the nature of the relationship which will emerge

'Why are so many European state-owned companies operating in Britain?'

between Britain and the EU. The challenge facing Britain's rail workers and their unions is to ensure that Brexit means an end to what is effectively a subsidy by British taxpayers to German, French and Dutch railways.

The EU's "liberalisation" has also undermined safety. A serious collision between a freight train and a passenger train in Mannheim in 2014 was caused by a casual worker employed as a freight train driver but who only drove trains every now and then. He did not know the route and the location of signals, he over-ran a signal at danger, and it was only good fortune that large numbers of passengers were not killed.

Near catastrophe

In Britain more recently, a "casual" train driver in charge of a steam train came close to causing a catastrophic accident in which hundreds would almost certainly have been killed. There have been other serious incidents of this type.

A recent meeting of rail industry safety professionals concluded that Brexit would be positive, and that Britain would no longer have to continually fight against some of the more bizarre edicts emanating from the EU Agency for Railways.

Rail unions RMT and ASLEF campaigned for a Leave vote in last summer's referendum, both being clear that the only way that the policy of all the rail unions to return the railways to public ownership would be realised would be outside the clutches of the EU and its privatisation and liberalisation agenda.

The RMT union stresses that the EU is

Continued on page 20

A new book on spies and government sheds light on conspiracies old and new...

Uncovering secrecy

The Black Door: Spies, Secret Intelligence and British Prime Ministers, by Richard Aldrich and Rory Cormac, hardback, 624 pages, ISBN 978-0007555444, William Collins, 2016, £30. Kindle and e-book editions available, paperback available April 2017.

THIS BOOK shows how the intelligence services became an integral part of government policy through an exploration of the evolving relationship with prime ministers from 1909 to today.

Aldrich and Cormac tell of anti-Soviet actions – the Zinoviev letter forgery in 1924 and the ARCOS raid fiasco in 1927. They detail how Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain used his friend, MI5 officer Sir Joseph Ball, to run Britain's foreign policy behind the Cabinet's back, to get rid of his Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and to tap Eden's and Churchill's phones.

They show how Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee pushed for the failed, illegal intervention in Albania in 1949. He also pushed for the 1953 coup to oust Iran's elected government.

But their most interesting revelations are the most recent, about the Cameron government's effort to get us to attack Syria and to overthrow its elected government. Cameron claimed he had a justification for war when there was a chemical weapons attack on the town of Ghouta on 21 August 2013. He at once blamed President Assad.

But, as Aldrich and Cormac point out, "Some in MI6 suspected that rebel groups were trying to provoke Obama into greater intervention by simulating a government sarin attack inside Syria. They reasoned that...it made sense for the opposition to perpetrate this deception. It was hard to explain why Assad would use chemical weapons, given that Obama's 'red line threat' was public, and after all, Assad's

'How Blair and Cameron misled the public.'



Civil war in Syria, the result of a failed Western plan to topple Assad.

military position was better now than it had been a year before."

In early May 2013 when members of the opposition al-Nusra front were arrested, the police told the press that they had found a quantity of sarin. UN inspectors in Ghouta concluded it was hard to identify those responsible as potential evidence was being moved and possibly manipulated. Aldrich and Cormac sum up, "The truth is that we will never have a definitive judgement on the perpetrator of the dreadful attack on Ghouta."

Misleading

But they do explain that like Blair, Cameron misled the public through oversimplification. He gave no indication of the fervent debate behind the scenes about culpability and moved well beyond his intelligence briefings by stating that Assad was definitely responsible.

By August, Cameron and Obama were both freely asserting Assad was to blame. But British intelligence had obtained a small sample of the sarin used in the attack on Ghouta. To its surprise the gas did not match the materials kept by the Syrian army's chemical weapons unit, samples of which had been passed to MI6 by a Syrian officer (although these too could have been a deception). The unwelcome news was relayed to the White House, and was one of

the factors that paused Obama's own attack.

This news began to leak out. On 6 September 2013, a respected group of retired US intelligence officers claimed that privately, American intelligence officials disagreed with the White House assessment. CIA analyst Ray McGovern, who had chaired the National Intelligence Estimates Board and who had served in the community for 27 years, said that his colleagues were telling him "categorically" that, contrary to the claims of the White House: "he most reliable intelligence shows that Bashar al-Assad was NOT responsible for the chemical incident that killed and injured Syrian civilians on August 21, and that British intelligence officials also know this."

Aldrich and Cormac conclude, "Cameron had also failed to admit that the principle of intervention would lead to a proposed strike which was part of a bigger plan to smash the Syrian government. America was to lead with a 'shock and awe' campaign led by a fleet of B-52s armed with 2,000-pound bombs intended to penetrate Assad's safest command bunker. French air power was also to be involved. Even as Parliament rejected Cameron's proposals, the RAF was arming Typhoon fighter jets in Cyprus, while the Royal Navy had despatched a submarine with Cruise missiles." ■

The world only began to understand Castro after his speech at the UN General Assembly 21 months after the Cuban Revolution, which he

1960: Fidel Castro at the

THE WORLD of 1960 was used to Latin American “revolutions” that were either reversed by the United States or simply failed. After his speech, that same world knew that Fidel Castro was aware of this, especially after the fate of the Guatemalan Government of Jacobo Arbenz, overthrown by a CIA-organised coup in 1954. Arbenz’s crime in the eyes of the US was to introduce land reforms to give many of the peasants ownership of the land they worked.

The Cuban Revolution itself had already embarked on similar land reform, nationalising the land and giving the plantations to those that worked them. In doing so, Cuba reaped the wrath of US capitalists such as the United Fruit Company and sugar plantation owners. Cuba had also embarked on a programme of free universal education and health, considered anathema by the US.

Barred

Castro’s speech, given on 26 September 1960, started by expressing the hope that other nations’ UN delegations had not been treated like the Cuban delegation in New York. They had apparently been evicted from one hotel and barred from all the other hotels in Manhattan. They eventually found the only hotel willing to accommodate them in Harlem, a home of New York’s black population. Fidel and his delegation were well aware of the history of the descendants of African slaves, because Cuba’s history was all about slavery. His delegation was treated with respect by his new hosts.

Perhaps the most significant part of his speech was when he described how the Cuban people had fought for their independence from Spain for 30 years, only to have it snatched from them by the US at the final moment. He told the General Assembly that when the Spanish were on the verge of defeat in 1901, US troops entered Cuba to secure the victory for themselves. The US refused to leave the country until Cuba

“Do away with the philosophy of plunder.”



U.S. News & World Report

Fidel Castro, centre right, at the UN General Assembly, New York, September 1960.

agreed to insert certain clauses into its new constitution.

These clauses, stipulated by an Act of the US Congress that became known as the Platt Amendment, were forcibly incorporated into the laws of Cuba – seven clauses altogether which banned it from making treaties with other countries, controlled the Cuban budget deficit, forced it to sanitise cities and ports to prevent diseases from spreading to the US, gave the US the right to intervene in Cuba to protect property, and forced it to lease Guantanamo Bay to the US as a naval base.

US colony

There was an extra clause making the seven clauses permanent, but the main infringements of Cuban sovereignty were the right of the US to interfere in Cuba’s economy, the right of the US to intervene in Cuba militarily and the right to permanently lease a naval base. Castro told the General Assembly that these clauses effectively made Cuba a US colony in the same way as other former Spanish colonies like Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The US, he went on to explain, then acquired all of the best Cuban agricultural land for US companies, concessions of

natural resources and mines, concessions of public utilities for exploitation purposes and commercial concessions of various types.

Castro told the UN delegates that the Cuban people had to fight for a further seven years, from 1952 to 1959 to achieve their independence, fighting against the US-backed dictator Batista. And what did the revolution find when it came to power? Mass unemployment and high illiteracy, as well as an appalling lack of education and health care. Most homes had no electricity and farmers paid extortionate rents to landowners. The country’s reserves of \$500 billion had been reduced to \$70 billion overnight. He described how it was necessary to nationalise the electricity generating industry and telecommunications, which were owned by US corporate monopolies.

Castro then addressed problems around the world. He gave a clear Marxist-Leninist analysis, siding with the working class against monopoly capitalism. He backed the liberation movement in Algeria, saying Algeria will never be part of France. He backed liberation movements across Africa, Asia and Latin America. He condemned capitalism, imperialism and the threat to war they posed. He went on:

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“Do away with the philosophy of plunder and you will have done away forever with the philosophy of war. Do away with colonies, wipe out the exploitation of countries by monopolies and mankind will have reached a true era of progress.”

Condemnation

He condemned the behaviour of the US government across Latin America, for commercial concessions won at the point of a gun. He demanded the Peoples Republic of China be represented in the United Nations.

His speech made it abundantly clear to Cuba's neighbour to the north, the US, that the Cuban Revolution would not be going the way of Jacobo Arbenz's in Guatemala. In fact, the applause he received for his speech suggested to the US that he might enjoy widespread support around the world.

The US retaliated a few weeks later with an economic embargo that lasted for 55 years until it was partly lifted in 2015. And in April 1961 the US launched the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. But the Cuban Revolution and Fidel endured. He went on Cuban TV in December 1961 to tell the Cuban people that he was a Marxist-Leninist, and would be until the day he died. ■

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

NO ADVANCE WITHOUT MARXISM

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?

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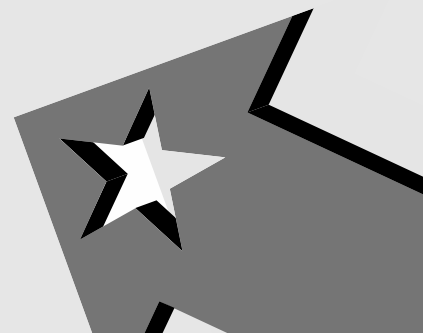
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Which side are you on?

'The issue for the working class, the overwhelming majority of the people of Britain, is control.'

IN THE DAYS leading up to the French Revolution of 1789, the National Assembly used to meet with the commoners on the left and the aristocrats on the right. From this came the terms "left wing" and "right wing". But what was a useful description 230 years ago has turned into its opposite. In modern Britain, these terms mean nothing.

They've actually meant nothing for quite a few years now. On their way to meaningless they have managed to obscure the truth that class is the true determinant of politics. So being "left wing" came increasingly to mean just single-issue politics, and less and less to do with seeking to advance the interests of the working class as a whole.

Now the key question confronting Britain (and the world) is whether we allow global corporations and finance capital to destroy nations in their quest for universal dominance. "Left" and "right" have become a hindrance to thought.

That hindrance was visible during the referendum campaign, when the forces (to use the term loosely) of the "left" generally refused to work with the "right". The culmination of this stupidity was the idea that Britain needed a "left wing" exit from the EU, when actually what we need is exit, pure and simple.

Such is the poverty of the left/right approach, as if "taking the fight to the Tories" were the be-all and end-all of politics.

Fortunately, the working class has taken no notice of its would-be political instructors. Workers voted to leave, and it will destroy the Labour party unless that organisation takes its instructions from them. While Labour fiddles, its voters are abandoning it. And not just its voters: in the Richmond Park by-election, its candidate

managed fewer votes than there are party members in the constituency, which must be some kind of record.

Politics is being remade before our eyes. The issue for the working class, the overwhelming majority of the people of Britain, is control. We want to be able to control what goes on in our workplaces, our towns, our cities, our country.

The slogan of the referendum, "Take control", was mocked by media commentators, but it is at the heart of progressive thinking. Workers don't want to be told what to think and do by outsiders, and least of all by the likes of the EU, the International Monetary Fund and the banks.

Anyone who subscribes to this new politics is labelled "populist" (now a term used sneeringly, twisted from its original meaning). Those said to be embracing populism are often referred to as being "left behind by globalisation", as if the rise of global corporations seeking to sap the power of nation states were some kind of beneficial process that had somehow forgotten to include a section of society.

This is nonsense, of course. All the grand talk about "globalisation" comes down to enriching a handful of billionaires while asset stripping the world. It is about exerting control and power over the world's peoples. No one is "left behind" – on the contrary, all are to be under their thumb.

The institutions of finance capital can only do this if they destroy nation states and the power – however little used it may sometimes be – of the peoples of the world to say no, to assert their own interests, to take control.

The fight to "take control" extends to all areas of life. It has the capacity to rejuvenate our unions, our thinking, and our country. That, not "left" and "right", is the new dividing line. Which side are you on? ■

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