

# WORKERS

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MARCH/APRIL 2020 £1



## AGRICULTURE: THE BIG OPPORTUNITY

**EU** Stay alert

**FISH QUOTAS** The truth

**SHIPPING** Jones Act call

**HS2** Yes, Britain needs it

**ENVIRONMENT** Up to us

**SCOTLAND** Voting rights

**TRADE** Industry first

**UNIS** Huge strikes

**IRELAND** Poll upset

*plus* News, Book Review,

Historic Notes

and more

# WORKERS



## If a job's worth doing...

LEAVING THE EU is some job, and like any job, if it's worth doing, it's worth doing well. And we intend to do it wholeheartedly. Celebrate, be optimistic – but stay vigilant and be ready for the hard work to come.

On 31 January those who fought for decades to leave the EU and those who have come to the fight more recently celebrated the length and breadth of Britain.

Formally leaving the EU is a historic landmark. Remember: as recently as the end of October a politics professor predicted in the *Independent* newspaper that Brexit would not happen and that "we'll still be in the EU for some time to come at the rate we're going now." Many shared his view.

But the rate changed, decisively. The election came, and the country decided that it was about Brexit (despite all the claims of the Labour Party that it was about something else). In one mighty push, the great blockage to the Brexit process at Westminster and elsewhere was moved along. Moved along – but not fully out of the way.

The eleven-month transition period is fraught with risk and danger. The biggest risk of all is that the people decide the job is done when it is not fully complete.

Some organisations that have played a part in leaving the EU, such as the website Brexit Central, have disbanded – as have some local leavers groups.

To assume the battle is over would be to repeat

the historic mistake after the June 2016 referendum when the "Vote Leave" groups disbanded. Workers are thinking beings and shouldn't make the same mistake twice in such a short period.

Look rather to the position of Fishing for Leave, which is as active today as at any point in that industry's long battle with the EU. It knows that when Boris Johnson's government repeats Theresa May's pledge that "we will take back control and be an independent coastal state", that's only half the story.

We take control by virtue of terminating our membership – but if during the transition period the government agrees with the EU to roll over current access and quotas, then Brexit is not done.

Look also at Lawyers for Britain, which says of the transition period, "...there is still legal work to be done, and Lawyers for Britain will not be declaring 'job done' until we are confident that we have actually secured the return to this country of independent democratic control over our laws, money, borders and international trade".

The Withdrawal Agreement and its accompanying Political Declaration still pose threats to our sovereignty and independence. The hard work continues. We will continue to analyse these threats and publicise the actions of all those who are organising to defend British independence.

We are keen to hear from readers about the fight in their locality. The job must be done properly. We call for the people to recommit to the job at hand. ■

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Workers

Opponents of separatism raise the union flag outside the Scottish Parliament.

## Scots votes for foreign citizens

ON 20 FEBRUARY the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh passed legislation that for the first time allows foreign nationals to vote in elections that are held in Scotland. It means that foreign nationals - including refugees – can now vote in both Holyrood and local council elections. The SNP proposals to change the law was supported by Labour, Green and Liberal Democrat MSPs.

An attempt to extend voting rights to asylum seekers was not adopted – but with pressure from the Scottish Refugee Council and other campaigners, this may be added later.

This act of the legislature in Edinburgh follows similar moves by the Welsh administration last year – the Cardiff assembly gave the franchise in Welsh elections to anyone legally resident. Like the Scottish move, it is intended to ride roughshod over the ending of voting rights for European Union citizens living in Britain now that the UK is exiting the EU.

The Holyrood administration may try to apply this franchise legislation to any future Scottish separation referendum, which it is now seeking. This would happen if a weak central government in the future devolved such authority to Holyrood – in the way that David Cameron did for the 2014 Scottish referendum.

All of this can be traced back to the undermining of the 2014 defeat of separatism, and thereafter, when more powers were promised to the Scottish parliament. The current campaign by the Labour Party, the Scottish TUC and other separatists for “more powers” and “federalism” is a recipe for creating an outpost of the EU within our society, with similar calls for regional separation now spreading to England. ■

## FISHING

### How to deal with the EU

FISHING FOR Leave has provided the government with the perfect strategy for dealing with the EU’s “self-entitled and belligerent demand to continue its fleet’s unhindered exploitation of British waters”.

Despite the clear intention in the Political Declaration to put shared fishing rights into the pot during trade negotiations between the UK and EU, Fishing For Leave has declared: “Fishing may be hanging on a thread, but it’s not over yet if the Government stands firm on a British interpretation of the Political Declaration wording.”

Only by exercising “exclusive sovereignty over all our waters and resources” can we “husband our waters using the best management and science available”, it says. ■

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

## OVER-60s

### Malnutrition trebles

THE NUMBER of over-60s diagnosed with malnutrition has more than trebled in the past decade, says NHS Digital.

Around a tenth of older adults, some 1.3 million people, are either malnourished or at risk of malnutrition. But with the vast majority living at home, the problem often goes unreported.

The independent Malnutrition Task Force said the problem isn’t just poverty, citing poor public health messaging, a lack of mobility or ability to shop, eat and drink at home without help, and loneliness and isolation. ■

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession call us on 07308 979308 or email [workers@cpbml.org.uk](mailto:workers@cpbml.org.uk)



**ON THE WEB**

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

**Outrage as Metro trains outsourced to Switzerland**

Manufacturing union Unite has slammed the government after the contract for Tyne & Wear metro trains was awarded to a Swiss company.

**Young people ‘condemned’ by cuts to youth services**

A YMCA report reveals a real-terms decline of 70 per cent in youth services in England and Wales since 2010 – and warns of dire consequences.

**Rail franchise system in meltdown**

As the rail industry waits for the publication of the Williams Review, the current franchise system continues to collapse under the weight of its many contradictions.

**The search for profit – and the march to war**

Unable to reverse its falling rate of profit, capital is increasingly turning to adventures abroad.

**MEPs leave Brussels amid EU hostility to national sovereignty**

Britain’s MEPs left the European Parliament for good after a debate which showed that the only nationalism the EU will permit is EU-nationalism.

**Plus: the e-newsletter**

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

Workers



**24 February: floods and blizzards notwithstanding, Glasgow pickets were out in force.**

**Huge strikes hit universities**

UNIVERSITY AND College Union (UCU) members are staging the UK’s biggest ever university strikes. Staff began their second bout of industrial action this academic year with more universities – over 74 compared with 60 last November – joining 14 days of walkouts. Beginning on Thursday 20 and Friday 21 February the action, unifying university staff across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, will escalate over a further three weeks.

The dispute centres on the sustainability of the Universities Superannuation Scheme and the rising pension contributions for members, and on universities’ failure to make significant improvements on pay, equality, casualisation and workloads.

As in November, the students are again supporting their lecturers. Writing in the *Guardian*, National Union of Students vice-president for higher education, Claire Sosienski Smith, said the marketised university system had hiked fees and cut staff pay, and therefore it was no surprise students backed their staff.

The action in 2018 saved the Universities Superannuation Scheme from the ravages of the EU’s European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority accounting mechanism. This was a fantastic achievement. But the UCU is still unwilling to acknowledge that this is where the threat to the pensions scheme originates.

Inevitably, the negative impact the increase in pensions contributions has on staff pay makes the fight to bring pay levels back up to their 2009 value that much harder. Even according to findings from the Universities and Colleges Employers Association, pay is already down by around 17 per cent in real terms.

The increased use of casual staff, as elsewhere in the labour market, has been one of the elements helping to bring pay down. A big element of the dispute is against casualisation, in favour of permanent contracts. The UCU, though, has not wanted to link casualisation, or low pay, to the reserve army of labour made possible by the EU’s “freedom” of movement, which the union continues to champion despite the election result. Redressing the gender pay gap in the university sector is the fourth important element in the dispute.

The UCU lays the blame for the renewed strike action squarely at the door of the employers after Universities UK refused to make a new offer on pensions. Across the UK, picket lines are bigger than in November and the force of a national union is being felt by the employers. What stronger message could there be to workers that the separatist line being peddled by nationalists in Scotland, and those in the UK who think they can get “socialism in one region”, is as reactionary as it is divisive and will play into the hands of the employers at every turn. The UCU is showing how a strong, unified force of workers can make its power felt across the UK. ■

**NEW LEAFLET**

**Unity, not separatism**

ONCE AGAIN the SNP is calling for a second referendum on Scottish “independence”. But there can be no independence within the EU – an issue explored in a new leaflet from the CPBML.

The leaflet asks whether Scotland is still a leader in enlightened, rational thinking based on reason, or in danger of sinking back into the dark ages of myth and fantasy with calls for internal disunity and

voluntary subjugation to a foreign power.

If there is a second Scottish referendum about separation from the UK, will Scots vote for global capitalism, or for independence through the unity of the British working class?

It’s a simple choice. Separatism, federalism and regionalism all seek to break up Britain in one way or another. None of these has a place in the British working class democratic approach.

Download a copy at [cpbml.org.uk](http://cpbml.org.uk), or for print copies, enquire at [info@cpbml.org.uk](mailto:info@cpbml.org.uk). ■

## HOUSING

### Overcrowding doubles

ANALYSIS OF the English Housing Survey for 2018/19 by Shelter has revealed that the number of households living in overcrowded privately rented properties has doubled in the last decade. More than 283,000 households were living in overcrowded

properties last year, up from 183,000 a decade ago, and up 9 per cent on the previous year.

Meanwhile, research by the Intergenerational Foundation charitable think-tank has found that the number of “rabbit hutch” homes with living space of less than 37 square metres being built has risen fourfold since 2013, with almost 10,000 built in 2018.



Leo Varadkar goes to meet the Irish president before calling the election.

## Irish voters create upset

AFTER THE 9 February general election in the Republic of Ireland most commentators say that the surge in support for Sinn Féin caught everyone – including Sinn Féin – by surprise. The party fielded just 42 candidates yet the Dáil (the Irish Parliament) has 160 seats.

Nevertheless Sinn Féin received the greatest share of first preference votes. Ireland uses a PR system of voting – in the election. This was certainly a significant achievement for Sinn Féin. Its campaign focused on issues such as housing and health care.

Fine Gael, the out-going government, had hoped to be rewarded in the election for Leo Varadkar’s prominent support for the EU during Brexit negotiations. Instead it felt the voters’ wrath. Fine Gael’s defeat was mirrored by Varadkar’s poor performance in his constituency. The party leader was elected on the fifth count, making him the first outgoing Taoiseach (prime minister) since the foundation of the state who failed to top the poll in his constituency.

The election resulted in a near three-way draw with Fianna Fáil gaining 38 seats, Sinn Féin gaining 37 seats and Fine Gael coming third with 35. A governing coalition needs to command at least 80 seats, so another election in the coming weeks cannot be ruled out. The alternative is a coalition of at least three parties.

Mary Lou McDonald, leader of Sinn Féin, told *The Times* newspaper, “I am absolutely sure we were elected on a mandate to be in government”. She insists that it would be “totally wrong” for Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael to form a government that excluded her party.

The election campaign may have been dominated by domestic issues but Ms McDonald insists that people were also voting for a united Ireland. “Certainly, that is in the mix, there is no doubt. Irish unity now is discussed across the island in a way that I never recall in my lifetime. If you look northwards, the unionist majority has gone. There has been a generational turning of the wheel.”

That assertion may be something of a leap, but it is at least partly supported by a poll carried out by Lord Ashcroft in September 2019. His survey of 1,500 northern Irish voters found, for the first time, a majority (51 per cent) in support of a united Ireland.

The 2020 election result in Ireland is far from the first time that the Irish people have confounded received wisdom. Back in 2008 the Irish establishment – the main political parties, the media, the pope and even the Irish Farmers Association – all pushed for a “Yes” vote on the Lisbon Treaty. The Irish voted “No” by 53.4 to 46.6 per cent.

They were vilified and made to vote again – but that is another story.

## WHAT'S ON

### Coming soon

#### MARCH

Tuesday 3 March, 7.30pm

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

CPBML public meeting: “How to protect the environment (and why the EU makes things worse)”



What needs to be done to protect the environment? Is there any truth in the assertion that the EU protects it? Come and discuss. All welcome. Free entry.

#### MAY

CPBML May Day Meetings

“2020 Vision: An Independent Britain”

**BRISTOL:** Friday 1 May, 7pm

Room 202, Tony Benn House, Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6AY

**GLASGOW:** Friday 1 May, 7pm

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

**LEEDS:** Friday 1 May, 7pm

Victoria Hotel, 28 Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3DL

**LONDON:** Friday 1 May, 7.30pm

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

See notice, page 9.



**We want to get Brexit completed. But we've just had a 42-month tutorial in why we should not leave things to the establishment. So what do we need to be vigilant about and prepared for?**

# The transition: stay alert

Alexey Federenko/shutterstock.com



**The joy of leaving: Parliament Square, 31 January. Now we have to make sure the job is done properly.**

AFTER THE paralysis of 42 months without a government conducting its usual business, let alone implementing the people's referendum decision, what do people want now? To get things done, for the government to get things done.

We want to get Brexit completed. We want housing, transport that works, and politicians who don't get in the way. But we've just had a 42-month tutorial in why we should not leave things to the establishment – the politicians, the judges and the state they run.

So what do we need to be vigilant about and prepared for?

At the recent CPBML event on Keeping Brexit on Track in January, the importance of raising awareness in relation to both questions was highlighted. As one participant stressed, we need to "call out anything that is going wrong. Secrecy, the way the EU always works, is our enemy".

Leaving the EU was a prerequisite for

British independence, but achieving that goal is a process driven by the people rather than politicians. We need to take our lead from those in the front line in the fishing industry (see Box, opposite).

## Control of our laws

More than any recent governments, Boris Johnson's knows that it will be judged by what it can deliver to fulfil its promises. It knows that it has only been "lent" support.

So one starting point for workers is monitoring delivery of those promises. We know that the Conservative manifesto said they would "end the role of the European Court of Justice." But as Lawyers for Britain continues to note, the Withdrawal Agreement, despite the removal of the original Northern Ireland backstop Protocol, still contains many damaging provisions left over from Theresa May's negotiations.

Lawyers for Britain points out that the agreement contains provisions "which

provide for long-term binding ECJ jurisdiction over the UK." So honouring the manifesto claim of ending the role of the ECJ "remains unfinished business for the next stage of the negotiations".

The Johnson government has made a start by formally and legally ruling out any extension to the transition period. Ministers have also said they will not be bound by those aspects of the Political Declaration which would allow ECJ supremacy over us and bind us into the EU's so-called "level

**'The Transition period will see an almighty tug of war about the ECJ...'**

# 12-month tutorial in why we should not leave things to the and prepared for?

# But, stay ready

playing field". Regulatory alignment is another term for it. The UK's chief Brexit negotiator David Frost has now rejected the whole concept, warning that EU oversight of whether British laws are rigorous enough would contravene "the fundamentals of what it means to be an independent country."

So the transition period will see an almighty tug of war about the role of the ECJ. There will be no shortage of EU supporters in Britain such as the Grassroots for Europe campaign (whose January 2020 conference was attended by over 400 people and graced with a recorded message from Gina Miller) willing to fund and front all manner of legal challenges.

## Control of our borders

When the people voted to leave in 2016, it was among other things a clear instruction to end the free movement of labour from the EU. Most people knew that uncontrolled migration was a benefit to employers and an important mechanism for suppressing wages.

The current government commitment is to treat migrants from the EU and outside the EU the same. The outrage is that the discrimination in favour of the EU continued for so long.

But there the good news ends – because the government has also committed itself to an "Australian style" points system and to importing the "brightest and the best". We have seen a version of this policy since the inception of the NHS, where much poorer countries than Britain spend their national wealth on training doctors and nurses who are then attracted to the NHS via recruitment campaigns.

It was refreshing to hear Simon Stevens, Head of NHS England, tell a conference in 2019 that the NHS "must stop denuding low income countries of health professionals they need". At the same conference, leading cancer surgeon Professor J. Meirion Thomas said " ...there is a moral issue here. We are poaching doctors from abroad and have done for decades."

Instead of extending the policy of poaching skilled workers to other sectors of the economy, we need to be revitalising our own neglected education system.

Someone needs to say it bluntly: if employers in Britain are free to import the

Workers



## Fishing: 5 red lines

Fishing for Leave ([ffl.org.uk](http://ffl.org.uk)) has posted its key demands for the future organisation of fishing in British waters:

- 1** Any fisheries agreement must only be on a strictly annual basis. Sir Humphry mustn't have the chance to make the temporary permanent.
- 2** Any access and quota swaps under a limited annual agreement must only be granted when the UK receives a reciprocal value of fishing opportunities in return.
- 3** The UK must take the automatic repatriation of our rightful share of quotas under the international principle of Zonal Attachment – where nations have

quotas based on the predominance of species in their waters.

**4** The EU recognising Zonal Attachment must be the pre-condition of any limited annual access. The EU must cut its cloth to reflect loss of UK waters in order to obey [the] UNCLOS requirement to fish its available waters/resources sustainably.

**5** Government must not yield to EU threats on fisheries access for markets. The EU is highly dependent on UK seafood exports and financial services. No other nation trades fishing for trade. Words are one thing, delivery another! Best of luck Boris Johnson – don't cave [in] and let us down. ■

"brightest and the best", many will take that as a green light to cut their training budgets. We have our own brightest and best here in Britain, waiting for a government that will invest in training them.

Unsurprisingly, the training schemes that seem to deliver the right level of skill are those where the employer takes responsibility, and that responsibility can be country-wide. For example, the New Holland agricultural machinery company trains many individuals at its base in Essex but has

longstanding links with, for example, courses at Reaseheath College in Cheshire and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), based in Edinburgh.

More recently New Holland has been involved along with other employers, including JCB, in starting up one of the most sophisticated technical education centres of its type in Britain – the £8 million Centre for Advanced Engineering and

*Continued on page 8*



Glasgow, 25 June 2016, two days after the EU referendum: standing up against separatism.

## Keep Britain united

THE TRANSITION period is seen by the EU and their separatist allies in Britain as an opportunity for splitting Britain. Too many people don't recognise the importance of national unity for the development of a thriving Britain. We cannot afford this attitude of not caring, and we must stop the separatists.

Once again the Scottish National Party is calling for another "independence" referendum and calling for Scotland to re-join the EU. The CPBML has just produced a series of challenging questions to all those who push this position (see News, page 4).

For years the EU has pushed its

European Committee of the Regions (which views Wales, Scotland etc as regions) which has fostered separatism as another way to attack the nation state. So this renewed attack should surprise no one.

During Britain's difficult months since the June 2016 referendum the EU has been keen to invite the SNP to Brussels to see what mischief can be achieved. Similar mischief makers are talking up independence for Wales – but not acknowledging that the Welsh Nationalist Party share of the vote actually declined to less than 10 per cent in the December general election. ■

*Continued from page 7*

Agri-Technology at Reaseheath College, officially opened on 14 February. The aim is to deliver next generation skills in precision engineering, precision farming, service engineering and diagnostic testing – but this sort of thinking is rare employers in here.

The big opportunity in leaving the EU is the ability to have a plan for British industrial development. Our biggest challenge as

workers is how to force joined-up thinking on this government and the employers.

Workers know that everything starts with production. We know ours is a productive country which can afford decent health and social care for example. We must be an industrial nation to survive. To do that we have to have national control of trade.

Or do we know that? At one time our trade unions would be shouting this from the rooftops. Now they think that free trade

deals are a good thing, oblivious that the benefits accrue to a tiny number of very wealthy employers.

In a survey last year carried out by BMG research, participants were asked to respond to the statement "Without an agreed trade deal, countries cannot trade with one another." No fewer than 62 per cent of those questioned either answered incorrectly or said they didn't know. The fact is, companies don't need trade deals, free or otherwise, to trade around the world.

The EU still wants to resurrect the TTIP agreement with the US, on hold ever since Donald Trump was elected as US president. That deal would have handed control of trade to an unaccountable and self-perpetuating group of international lawyers.

We must be alert to any attempt by the government to negotiate its own TTIP with the US, flooding Britain with cheap and dubious US foodstuffs.

### Industry first

You can't have a strategy for trade without having a strategy for what you want to produce. And that's what is lacking in Britain.

In 2017 the May government did produce a document called an Industrial Strategy which despite its limitations at least sought to be a kind of overview planning document. It seems to have disappeared.

The current government website – updated in September 2019 – now has only a link to something called the Grand Challenges. The text contains the words "industrial strategy" but makes no attempt to provide an overview of industry let alone any comprehensive plan of what we need to be an independent country.

The website lists the "four grand challenges" as artificial intelligence and data; an ageing society, clean growth and the future of mobility – all serious topics, but the pragmatic questions such as how we meet Britain's energy needs in the next five years don't get much of a look-in.

So on the one hand a lack of industrial strategy and on the other hand a recently launched government "trade consultation". With this the government wants to cut import tariffs generally, eliminating all tariffs of 2.5 per cent or lower, rounding down all





# CPBML MAY DAY MEETINGS 2020

## 2020 VISION: AN INDEPENDENT BRITAIN!

tariffs to the nearest 5 or 10 per cent, and “removing tariffs where the UK has zero or limited domestic production”, which it says “could help to lower prices to consumers”. No suggestion of any protection of our existing industry at all.

In contrast a trawl of Boris Johnson’s speeches reveals a number of commitments which could be protective of British industry. By January 2021 he will introduce;

- a new state aid regime so government can intervene to protect jobs when an industry is in trouble ( such as supporting Flybe);
- a changed public procurement policy, to promote the local economy;
- a buy British rule for public bodies.

So, in summary, a messy and uncertain future for British industry. We need an extension to that election slogan: to “Get Brexit done” we need to add “and Britain rebuilt”. There can’t be a “Buy British rule” unless we make things in Britain. The recent coronavirus crisis is a salutary reminder about global supply chains and the importance of self-sufficiency.

### Control of our waters

Maybe it is years of watching the weather and a preparedness to cope with storms, but the fishing industry is currently providing an object lesson to the nation of how to be vigilant in the transition period.

The Johnson government can be in no doubt that with fishing, its every move is being watched and reported upon. Leading the charge is the organisation Fishing for Leave. It points out that Brexit is an opportunity for Britain to become a sustainable and successful fishing nation and provides “a golden opportunity to regain 70% of the UK’s fisheries resources and rejuvenate a multi-billion-pound industry for the nation”.

On 6 February Fishing for Leave welcomed the news that the UK position on a fisheries agreement with the EU is to be similar to Norway’s. The organisation immediately posted its key demands to prevent backtracking, concluding with both a good luck message and warning for the Prime Minister.

There needs to be the same directness and urgency across the country on all of the threats of the transition period. ■



### GLASGOW

Speakers and discussion  
Friday 1 May, 7pm  
Renfield Conference  
Centre  
260 Bath Street  
Glasgow G2 4JP

### LEEDS

Conversation and  
refreshments  
Friday 1 May, 7pm  
Victoria Hotel  
28 Great George Street  
Leeds LS1 3DL

### LONDON

Speakers and discussion  
Friday 1 May, 7.30pm  
Brockway Room,  
Conway Hall  
Red Lion Square  
London WC1R 4RL

### BRISTOL

Speakers and discussion  
Friday 1 May, 7pm  
Room 202, Tony Benn House  
Victoria Street  
Bristol BS1 6AY

SEE CPBML.ORG.UK FOR DETAILS

# Brexit provides British agriculture with the chance of a lifetime to prop up its ailing and corrupt Common Agricultural Policy

## Agriculture: the great op

FREE FROM the chains of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, we can now consider how to feed ourselves, look after our countryside and our animals, and develop agriculture and its supporting industries for the future. An agriculture Bill has been introduced in the new Parliamentary session. It sets out how the government will support farmers with direct payments. Another Act has already put temporary arrangements for farm payments in place.

It includes measures to ensure transparency and fairness in food production, to encourage food production in sustainable ways, and, perhaps most significantly, to require ministers to publish plans first for five years from 2021 and then in seven-year cycles on how to provide financial support for agriculture, and to report on food security at least every five years.

Meanwhile, back in Brussels, as *Workers* goes to press, the EU is riven by division over its new seven-year budget. No longer able to use British taxpayers' contribution to bail out backward economies, the Common Agricultural Policy is at the heart of this fierce debate.

It's a fight between countries dubbed the frugal five (Denmark, Sweden, Austria, the Netherlands and Germany) and the "friends of cohesion" (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Croatia, Malta, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Portugal and Greece) – "friends of corruption" to their opponents.

Who will win out? Fortunately we do not need to concern ourselves with the answer, but a deal will not meet the needs of rural communities across Europe. We expect France's small farmers to riot, but who'd have thought that the law-abiding Germans would block traffic in Berlin and other cities

**'Wildlife habitat, even if the land is unfarmable, is frequently cleared...'**



Alexandros Michailidis/shutterstock.com

Milk producers coat EU Council buildings with milk powder during a protest in Brussels in 2017.

with bonfires and tractors, as we've now seen?

The Common Agricultural Policy has been a part of the EU and its predecessor organisations since 1962; the Treaty of Rome which established the EEC in 1957 included agriculture at the insistence of France. Continental European agriculture had developed very differently from that in Britain: here, early land enclosure and the agricultural and industrial revolutions created a working-class in town and country. There, even now, many countries still have substantial numbers of small peasant proprietors farming as they have for centuries.

The CAP gave us the absurdities of milk lakes, butter mountains and wine lakes. To remedy the wine lakes the EU proposed to

grub up vineyards in some of the finest wine producing areas in France, Italy and Spain. It gave us set-aside, under which farmers were paid not to produce food. Today the EU spends around 40 per cent of its budget, £44 billion a year, on agriculture.

### Regular scandals

All this expenditure of money raised from workers has not been used to any great effect. Food scandals are a regular feature of past decades: last year three people died in Germany after eating listeria-contaminated meat. Although the authorities knew about the bacterial discovery, production was only halted after two weeks.

In 2013 meat products in Britain and Ireland were found to contain horsemeat,

me. While the EU is desperately trying to find the money  
y, Britain can plan for a productive future...

# opportunity



and subsequent investigations found that horsemeat from Romania was relabelled as beef, then transported to Cyprus, on to the Netherlands, and to Britain, Ireland and France. Dioxins have been found in food intended for humans on several occasions: in Italy in 1976 at Seveso, milk in Belgium in 1979, meat and milk in Germany in 1998, buffalo milk in Italy in 2008 and a quarter of a million chicken eggs in Germany in 2012.

Environmentalists pointed out how the CAP provides perverse incentives. Subsidy payments are made for land in "agricultural condition", so wildlife habitat, even if the land is unfarmable, is frequently cleared to create empty unproductive ground.

Subsidies favour the giant agribusiness concerns against the small producer, since

the more land you own, the bigger your payment. There is no residence qualification to receive subsidies: Russian oligarchs, Saudi Arabian princes and Texas oil barons are all among those who receive subsidies, taken from the British taxpayer and generously redistributed to these absentees. The price of land has been ramped up, far out of the reach of most farmers, so agricultural land ownership is now the preserve of finance capital.

Small wonder that Parliament was so unenthusiastic about Brexit: a Friends of the Earth survey found that 48 MPs and members of the House of Lords claimed £5.7 million in 2017 under the CAP. Across the EU, the top 10 per cent of CAP subsidy recipients account for nearly 50 per cent of the total subsidy bill, and the top 20 per cent get 80 per cent.

Across the EU, the big food companies gain large income streams in subsidies. For example, according to a report by the Transnational Institute, in 2009 Tereos (France) received €177 million, Saint Louis Sucre (France) €143 million, Azucarera Ebro (Spain) €119 million and Südzucker (Germany) €42 million.

With the expansion of the EU to include Eastern European countries, a new twist to the folly has emerged. The CAP has become a tool of government patronage and corruption. A report by *New York Times* journalists showed how the CAP is used to introduce patronage, corruption and a new feudalism in nine Eastern European countries. For example, in the Czech Republic the prime minister, Andrej Babis, an agriculturist billionaire, received millions in subsidies.

## Organised crime

Organised criminals in Italy discovered early on the money-making potential of agriculture (to the extent that commentators now refer to the "agrimafia"). They bought land cheap, using intimidation, and then waited for the subsidy cheques to roll in. In Slovakia the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta gangs are in on the act, profiting from subsidies and suborning politicians. A Slovak journalist investigating these links was killed in 2018.

The EU prefers not to do anything about this. The central position of agriculture, and of subsidies, means no one has an interest

in uncovering or preventing abuses. The EU rebuffed calls for investigations: both the Commission and the European Parliament rejected a move in 2015 to tighten subsidy regulation, and to prevent politicians profiting from subsidies they have a part in administering. In fact proposals for change in the CAP currently under discussion would decrease the already minimal and lax regime.

In many of the East European countries, after the counter-revolutions of the early 1990s considerable amounts of land still remained in public ownership. The privatisers, who were quick to see the value of energy, transport and other utilities, seem to have overlooked agriculture. So the EU worked hand in glove with national governments to put land up for auction, selling large tracts at knock-down prices, with the assurance of a steady income from EU subsidies.

Proposals to sell the land in small parcels, affordable and manageable by existing agricultural workers, were blocked. Often at the auctions, the oligarchs would be the sole bidders; local farmers were told not to submit bids, as the successful bid had already been decided.

We are free of this. But what now? Planning is necessary, but for whom and in whose interests? The Agriculture Bill is a start but we need much more. Subsidies must go to those who produce and work on the land, not absentee speculators and hobby farmers, and must be geared to the nation's needs, not sectional self-interest. We could break the stranglehold of the supermarkets on food prices, and offer safe affordable food for consumers at prices that keep farms and farmers going.

We now have the opportunity to introduce our own welfare standards, to stop live animal exports, and revive local slaughterhouses, with strict inspection regimes.

We need secure, safe, sustainable food for all. We need rural communities that thrive, provided with the infrastructure and services they need to produce. We need to safeguard animal welfare, secure the future for our wildlife and wild places. We can reap the benefit of scientific and technical innovation in farming and food science in a second agricultural revolution. All this is now possible. ■

# HS2 or High Speed 2, a new railway from London to Birmingham signal from the Johnson government...

## Why Britain needs HS2

WHY IS there such controversy over the high-speed rail link between London and Birmingham, HS2 – especially when compared to past infrastructure projects, such as the Channel Tunnel and its associated new railway to London (HS1), and the many miles of motorway constructed over the last 60 odd years?

Of course the development is most unwelcome for those that live in the path of the new railway. No matter how badly needed a new infrastructure development is, few feel well disposed when faced with their home being demolished to make way for it.

It is also understandable that following a long period of cutbacks in public spending and the recession following the banking crisis of 2008, the enormous and growing cost of the project gives cause for concern.

But the plain fact is that HS2 will bring significant benefits to millions of people across the country. HS2 will serve 25 or more stations on 345 miles of new track connecting around 30 million people. That's almost half the country's population.

### Welcomed

The rail unions ASLEF, RMT and TSSA all welcomed the news, demanding that the government goes further and commits to taking it all the way to Scotland. RMT however warned that decades of underinvestment in training and skills will need to be addressed quickly if HS2 and other rail infrastructure projects now being considered are to be successfully delivered.

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said "HS2 is not only a vital upgrade to our transport network, it's a chance to create thousands of high-quality jobs. But to fully deliver for workers, contractors must work closely with unions to create great jobs and ensure high safety standards."

The CBI also welcomed the government's confirmation of the project, pointing out the key truth that "once built, HS2 will bring much needed capacity to our railways". They also observed that HS2 will help realise the government's general election promise of an infrastructure revolution for the north of England and the Midlands.

The many opposing HS2 often refer to it as a "vanity project" which will do nothing for ordinary people and will just be a railway for the well-heeled to be whisked between



Simon Vayro/shutterstock.com

March 2019: work on the construction stage of HS2 under way at Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire

Britain's major cities. And sadly, successive governments and HS2 Ltd have done little to counter these arguments. But the reality is very different.

Britain's railways have during this century seen a big turnaround in their popularity as more and more people have moved away from the congested road network and the growing expense of car ownership. For many more, rail is the preferred means of internal travel – to work, at work, and for leisure.

Rail passenger numbers had doubled in

20 years to 1.5 billion when HS2 got the original go-ahead in 2012-13 and another 15 per cent have since been squeezed on. Some argue this is due to privatisation, but with no evidence to support this assertion. More likely, this is despite privatisation.

### Upgraded

In 2000, there were around 20 daily trains from London to Manchester – now there are nearly 50. The West Coast Main Line that they use has already had to be upgraded in the first decade of the century in order to

ingham and then on to the north, has finally got the green

# – and needs it urgently



shire.

cope. That involved 10 years of disruption, especially at weekends, and the costs were huge – around £10 billion at today's prices – triple the budget! And it is again now full to bursting. Freight operators in particular bemoan the lack of paths on the West Coast Main Line for their freight trains.

During the upgrading of the West Coast route, it was observed that upgrading a railway built in the mid-nineteenth century (as most of Britain's railways were) while keeping it open for traffic is actually far more expensive than building a new line – and a

new line delivers far more capacity gain than upgrading an existing railway. It was around this time that plans were firmed up to grasp the nettle and take the opportunity to build a new railway.

Britain's nineteenth-century railways – first in the world – were built, like the canals before them, to a size now considered small. Countries across the world took the opportunity to learn from the British experience when following Britain's lead, and built railways that could take much bigger trains. In those days 90 mph was considered high-

**'Upgrading a railway built in the mid-nineteenth century is far more expensive than building a new line.'**

speed for the steam trains then in service.

The railways opened up mass travel, a modern and attractive alternative to the ancient, slow, narrow and winding road networks then in existence. Those roads were unable to cope with a massive growth in car ownership in Europe and the USA particularly after the Second World War, and most motorways began to be built at enormous expense to provide the much-needed additional road capacity.

At the same time, France, then other European countries, and then many others across the world such as Japan and China, also began to modernise their rail systems, building high-speed railways that could take trains travelling at nearly 200 mph.

## Motorways march on

Britain built a motorway network which it continues to supplement to this day. Yet few seem to complain about the costs of doing so – the recently opened Glasgow extension of the M74 cost around £140 million a mile to construct. And Britain continues to build around 300 miles of new road every year.

But successive British governments have been very much less enthusiastic about investment in new rail infrastructure. Almost no new railways were built in Britain throughout the twentieth century.

When the Channel Tunnel opened in 1994, France built a connecting high-speed line to allow trains to speed up to nearly 190 mph on coming out of the tunnel, all the way to Paris. Belgium opened its high-speed connection to Brussels a few years later.

*Continued on page 12*



*Continued from page 11*

Consequently trains had to slow down on emerging from the tunnel into Britain and use old commuter tracks at no more than 90 mph to get to London. It was 2007 before a high-speed line opened to London – HS1. And it remains Britain's only high-speed line – for now.

Although the principal reason for building HS2 is to provide much needed additional capacity, HS2 is also a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a railway line to 21st-century standards, able to use modern technology, capable of being upgraded further in the future.

## Bigger trains

It can allow much bigger trains both in cross section and in length. Such a new railway can move as many passengers as two three-lane motorways, and has the additional advantage of maintaining high-speed right into city centres.

The “classic” old-style railway is one where fast inter-city trains mix with local stopping trains and slower freight trains. This mix limits the number of trains that can run. Capacity will be dramatically increased on no fewer than three existing lines – the West Coast, the East Coast, and the Midland Main Line – by taking all their fast inter-city services away to HS2, allowing many more commuter and stopping trains to run, along with more freight trains.

So while MPs in the “home counties” bleat continuously about HS2 doing nothing for their constituents, they ignore the potential for big improvements to local train services along with the potential for many fewer lorries rumbling past constituents' homes – with the freight going by rail instead.

And when the economic benefits that

usually follow any transport infrastructure enhancement are delivered in this case, the South East along with the whole country can benefit. HS2 will support 30,000 construction jobs at its peak, plus around 2,000 apprenticeships. Around 3,000 jobs will be created to actually operate it. And many more jobs will be created or retained supplying and maintaining new trains, rails, and other rail equipment.

Towns on the route of HS1, the short high-speed line across Kent to the Channel Tunnel, have seen increased investment in businesses and homes. Just the promise of HS2 has resulted in clear signs of a rebalancing of Birmingham's economy, such as a boom in construction and the relocation to the city of major firms such as HSBC.

## Costs

It is easy to see why the costs of HS2 are such an issue. Recent uninformed and unquestioning media reports of total costs are verging on the ludicrous, with baseless figures of £106 billion gaining common currency. The real costs are more likely to be around £88 billion.

Phase 1 of the new line is likely to cost around £170 million a mile. The recently opened Dutch high-speed line cost around £109 million a mile, although it should also be borne in mind that Crossrail, still not yet delivered, has so far cost around £270 million a mile.

Costs are driven up by the British government's insistence that the firms constructing the line bear the liability for any design risks and problems that arise for years after it opens. Since many of those firms will be long gone in 20 years' time, they have to pay exorbitant insurance premiums to cover those liabilities adding around

£30 billion to construction costs.

This method of procurement is unlikely to be repeated in Phase 2, not least because HS2 Ltd has been stripped of responsibility for delivering most of it – another company will be doing so. HS2 Ltd has also had responsibility for the lucrative redevelopment of London Euston station taken away from it. These decisions were perhaps inevitable given the poor and much criticised performance of HS2 Ltd in planning, advocating and delivering the new railway.

Those that say that £80-100 billion is better spent on other rail projects miss the crucial point that HS2 actually facilitates those other projects. HS3 (sometimes called Northern Powerhouse Rail) is a popular alternative for some newly elected northern Tory MPs. But they miss the point that HS3 is only possible (and viable) if HS2 gets built. And of course building HS3 instead of HS2 will do nothing to alleviate the capacity problems out of London going north.

## Mad-cap alternatives

Finally, there are those that advocate various mad-cap alternative and cheaper schemes. Except these don't provide the extra capacity where it is needed, or would cost even more. Some seriously suggest another pair of tracks alongside the West Coast Main Line, ignoring the huge number of houses, schools, industrial premises – yes, and ancient woodlands – that would have to be destroyed to do so.

Some who welcome more people and goods travelling by train still oppose HS2 because they wrongly believe that the line will wipe out much of the country's ancient woodland. It won't – only around 0.01 per cent will be destroyed.

Andrew Haines, Network Rail CEO, said recently that to deliver a fraction of HS2's extra capacity Network Rail would have to close part of one of the three main lines to the north every weekend for 30 years!

Railways played a crucial role in Britain becoming the world's first industrial nation. They can again be crucial in dramatically improving Britain's transport provision, benefiting all of the country's people. The key question is not whether or not they should be built. The key question is this: In whose interests will HS2 be built and run? ■

**‘Capacity will be dramatically increased on no fewer than three existing lines...’**

**British fishermen have reacted angrily to attempts to slur them by saying they sold off fishing rights...**

# The truth about quotas

FISHING WAS a key issue during the EU Referendum campaign, not just in the coastal communities of the British Isles of course but also in towns and cities across the nation.

The Remain establishment argued that it hardly mattered economically. Leavers upheld its importance in the life of the nation. The fishermen have fiercely defended their industry, with memories of the government's betrayal in using it as a bargaining chip to join the EEC in 1973 still fresh and sore.

With the general election over and debate moving on to the elements of a potential trade deal with the EU, fishing is still centre stage. The EU Commission is adamant it will not allow any reduction in the rights of EU crews to fish in our waters. And although the government has pledged to steadfastly uphold our fishing interests, suspicions remain. Fishermen are watching developments vigilantly.

Attempts to undermine their case are rife, of course. The accusation is that British fishermen sold off their quotas (their catch allowance for different species) to the EU, and so have only themselves to blame.

It's worth looking at the background to this slur.

In the 1990s, a long-running legal case known as *Factortame* considered the rights of Spanish fishermen to fish in British waters. It sounds like an obscure legal term. In fact it is the name of a private company formed by Spanish fishermen, Factortame Ltd.

## Restricted

The case had its origins in the Merchant Shipping Act of 1988, passed by Parliament to restrict access to British waters for foreign-owned vessels, and to prevent them from avoiding this restriction by re-registering as British ships. Re-registering would have enabled them to sell their catch in EU markets while counting them as part of the British fishing quota ("quota-hopping").

The Spanish fishermen were furious at this exercise of British sovereignty, and went to court. First, Factortame won a judicial review against the government. It claimed that the Merchant Shipping Act breached EU law by requiring ships registered in the UK to have a majority of British owners.



Image courtesy Fishing for Leave

**Destruction: decommissioned British fishing boats being scrapped in Denmark, 2003.**

Further challenges followed, leading to complex arguments in the British courts over the most basic question of all: Which is sovereign, British or EU law?

In the days before the Supreme Court, it all ended up in the House of Lords. The Lords referred the matter to the European Court of Justice, which ruled (for the first time) that the courts had the power to "disapply" an Act of Parliament if it was contrary to EU law.

And indeed the Merchant Shipping Act was duly found to be inconsistent with the most basic principles of EU law: freedom of movement and capital, and the right of "establishment" – the right to set up a company and trade anywhere in the EU. Naturally, according to the European court, the Spanish fishermen were entitled to compensation from the British government.

The consequences were rapid and harmful. After Factortame, the practice of foreign-owned ships registering as British "flagships" became rife. Sharing the British fishing quota among essentially non-British companies became widespread.

So the quota wasn't surrendered for cash by greedy British fishermen – it was prised out of their hands by the EU. Far from profiteering by selling quotas many, as Fishing for Leave says, were "forced to sell to EU companies as the British industry collapsed from EU robbery!".

The quota is ridiculously low anyway. It was set in 1983 by what is known as the EU "Relative Stability" ruling on quota allocations between countries. And it remains in force, set in EU stone, in spite of significant changes in the quantity and makeup of fish populations, particularly in the northern North Sea.

"Relative Stability" allowed Britain a very low share of fishing rights in the rich waters around its shores, such that now 60 per cent of our fish is caught by EU vessels.

When Britain joined the EU in 1973, it triggered a progressive and catastrophic collapse in the British fishing industry, with dire results for our coastal communities. Now we must insist that it is given wholehearted support from government, and freedom to expand and prosper. ■

**Britain is an island nation, but its shipping is open to any company employing seafarers at below the UK minimum wage. Time to**

# Unions call for ‘Jones Act’

SINCE THE general election two trade unions have been renewing calls for more employment for British seafarers on British ships, especially those engaged in the coastal trade and across the English and Irish Channels.

The calls crystallise around the idea that Britain needs an equivalent of the US Jones Act, introduced in 1920, in the aftermath of the First World War. The war had reminded people how important a merchant fleet was to a country largely dependent on goods coming in via ports, rather than land crossings.

The Jones Act specifies that all coastal trade in the US – known as “cabotage” – including from the continental states to Hawaii, must be conducted on ships that are owned by US citizens, US-flagged, built in the US and 75 per cent crewed by US citizens or people with permanent residence.

And it goes even further. At least 90 per cent of the steel used in repairs made on American ships must be made with American steel, which essentially means that all ship repair has to be carried out in US ports.

Known formally as the Merchant Marine Act, it celebrates its 100th anniversary on 5 June this year. But it is under attack, and has been for much of its life. The US’s “free traders” hate it. So too do non-US shipping companies, eager for a slice of the US market. And so too does the EU.

## Protection call

Back in Britain, unions like the RMT and Nautilus International look longingly at the Jones Act. The RMT’s SOS 2020 campaign, for example, is calling explicitly for “cabotage” protection for UK crew and ships “based on the Jones Act”. The demand has featured in demonstrations around the country from Hull to Liverpool and Cardiff.

A petition was set up last year calling for a British Jones Act, gathering several thousand signatures, but it closed early because of the general election.

Inside the EU, of course, such a law would immediately be overturned by the European Court of Justice, running counter as it does to the hallowed notion that any company in the EU is free to set up and operate anywhere within the bloc.



Reading Tom (CC BY 2.0)

**The MV Ulysses leaving Holyhead, bound for Dublin. The ship is flagged out to Cyprus, and Irish of just €5.15 an hour – such exploitation, says the seafarers union RMT, is not unusual.**

The ECJ even ruled in the *Factortame* case (see page 15) that Britain could not require 75 per cent of the owners of a British-registered vessel to be British citizens, overturning a key element of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1988. (That decision also established the supremacy of EU law over UK law.) But now we have left the EU, and the time is ripe to consider what serves our interests best.

It’s the kind of idea that you might think would find some favour with the new government. Think again. Far from supporting the idea of a UK version of the Jones Act, prime minister Boris Johnson wants the US to ditch its own legislation.

The point came up when Johnson and

US president Donald Trump held a working breakfast in Biarritz, France, at the G7 summit in August last year.

Trump said that Britain’s leaving the EU was like removing an anchor from around its legs. Johnson replied, “Talking of the anchor – talking of the anchor, Donald, what we want is for our ships to be able to take freight, say, from New York to Boston, which at the moment they can’t do. So, we want cabotage. How about that?”

## Evasive

Trump was evasive. “Many things – many things we’re talking about,” he bumbled. But Johnson should consider that he was travelling a route well trodden by Brussels: the EU



country in the EU. British ships sail under foreign flags, to change all that...

# ' to save jobs and industry



Ferries employs Latvian ratings on it on wages

used talks about its proposed TTIP free trade agreement to call on the US to abandon the Jones Act.

Trade unions that understand the issue think differently. Speaking in Brussels in 2017 during European Shipping Week, Nautilus International general secretary Mark Dickinson hit the nail on the head: "Instead of attacking the Jones Act, we should emulate it and understand the strategic economic and defence drivers that have ensured the Act's survival for almost 100 years."

So when Johnson says "we" want entry into US cabotage, who does he mean by "we"? Not unemployed and underemployed British seafarers for sure. Let's start at home.

The RMT made the point about employment forcibly when it protested outside the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff on 9 January this year. While seafarers add millions to the Welsh economy each year, local workers "cannot always compete for this work due to legal loopholes that allow anti-trade union companies like Irish Ferries to crew their ships with seafarers from outside Wales, the UK and Ireland on contracts that pay below the minimum wage for months at sea".

It gave the example of Latvian ratings on Irish Ferries' *MV Ulysses* – which flies the Cypriot flag! – being paid a basic €5.51 per hour on the Holyhead-Dublin route in 2018. This exploitation of crew is "all too common", it said, and undermines industry standards set by RMT collective bargaining agreements.

## 'Shameful'

The RMT points to P&O's "shameful" use of ratings from Portugal and Latvia on its services out of Hull, for example, as well as below minimum wage contracts on the Condor Ferries out of Portsmouth that provide a lifeline to Guernsey and Jersey.

The SOS 2020 campaign was launched in October 2016 with the message that by 2020, with an ageing workforce, thousands of seafarers would be retiring. It is calling for:

- Equal rights in employment, equality and immigration law for UK seafarers;
- Cabotage protections for UK crew and ships based on the Jones Act;
- Statutory targets to train thousands of UK Ratings;
- Improved safety standards in UK shipping;
- Protection of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's Merchant Seafarers from privatisation.

2020 is now upon us, and government action has been conspicuously absent. Nautilus International assistant general secretary Ronnie Cunningham told last September's TUC Congress that two years previously the government had announced a target of doubling the number of ships on the UK Register of Shipping – but tonnage on the register actually dropped by a third.

"It doesn't stop there," Cunningham continued. "Government and ship owners committed to increasing Merchant Navy

**'2020 is now upon us, and government action has been conspicuously absent...'**

cadet numbers by 400 per year but have fallen short of this with only 50 being taken on in the last 12 months." A mere 12.5 per cent of the target.

Cunningham hit out at the obsession with trade at the expense of employment. "The government has forgotten that 95 per cent of trade comes and goes by sea," he said. "I have lost count of the number of times government ministers have told us we will 'trade our way' out of the downturn or that trade deals will be our salvation in a post-Brexit economy."

## Manifesto

During the general election, Nautilus International issued a Manifesto for Shipping, calling on whoever formed the new government to invest in training British seafarers and, among other things, "Enhance the employment of British seafarers, especially in coastal shipping; passenger and freight ferry services (domestic and intra-European); the offshore renewables sector; and in offshore oil and gas exploration and decommissioning."

But Westminster has long forgotten about British seafaring. The Labour Party in its 105-page manifesto for the election did not mention shipping, or ferries, or cabotage. Not a word. It was an omission that spoke volumes about its pretensions to speak for Britain. Likewise the Conservative manifesto made great play about plans for "freeports" and "free trade" but avoided even a single reference to shipping.

So there is a hard road ahead. But the workers in the industry have made a start on defining their own strategy. Those in other industries should do likewise. We didn't vote to bring control back from Brussels only to hand it to the global free traders. ■

In fighting man-made climate change and defending the environment, we must be clear-eyed about the role of global capitalism – which created the problems. Nor with the EU.

# The environment: what



NASA

**Air pollution over the UK, 22 April 2011, captured by NASA – Britain was wreathed in smog (more noticeable in this image over the dark blue of the North Sea), triggering air quality warnings. According to UK Air, most of the pollution came from continental Europe.**

CREATED BY global capitalism, the huge and growing problems with our environment must be tackled by nation states and their organisations such as the UN. Of course nation states are better able to tackle them if not governed by politicians in thrall to global capitalism.

It's wrong to think that solutions must be "transnational" – beyond national action and the democratic reach of workers. The EU works closely in concert with global capitalism; its claims of "green" credentials are spurious, its decisions are not democratic.

Britain should be able to play a more effective role in tackling man-made climate change and pollution outside control from Brussels. But only if we impose this task upon our government, make it answer to us rather than to global capitalism.

We can change the policies of a national government more easily than we can change those of the EU. The four freedoms of movement at the heart of the EU – capital, people, goods and services – all act to prevent conservation and planned use of

resources. They increase waste, emissions and pollution.

A lot that is said about the environment and climate change lacks clarity. Without an understanding of the dangers and risks, we will be prey to unscientific ideas and false policies, which can cause more damage than they claim to solve.

For most people the environment means the air we breathe and the place we live. The fear is that air is polluted and land is flooded.

**'It's wrong to think solutions must be "transnational" and beyond the democratic reach of workers.'**

Both are detrimental, but neither is a direct consequence of climate change, nor are they evidence of it happening. We must look deeper.

The scientific consensus is that average temperatures across the world have risen quite sharply over 150 years or so and continue to do so. This has been reported in successive assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a United Nations body.

The rise in temperature is believed to be mostly as a result of human industrial activity. The evidence for that is disputed at times, but the speed of change points away from long term natural processes and cycles.

So far, so good. But the implications of global warming are disputed; verifiable facts become scarce. The risk is that global warming, if sustained and continued, would lead to a change in the world's climate and not just adverse local weather. Temperatures would permanently move out of the accustomed range.

environment, the solution does not lie with global capitalism, which defends capital. Workers must do it themselves...

# What should workers do?

The two main predicted and damaging effects are: a rise in sea levels due to melting ice; and a dramatic reduction in biological diversity due to inability of plant and animal species to adapt quickly enough.

What's not known is how soon climate will change and by how far. Some scientists claim to have good predictive models, but these are not yet demonstrably accurate. There are several complicating factors that limit understanding. Underlying geophysical change takes place over long periods of time, blurring what is attributable to humans. Some aspects of human activity, such as small airborne particles like soot (aerosols), have a cooling effect; they are harmful but if reduced will increase warming.

## Fear mongering

And above all, the effect of temperature increase on climate is not linear. Climate may be resilient to temperature change up to a certain level and then alter rapidly beyond that point. This lack of certainty leads to unscientific debate, fear mongering and easy "solutions".

For example there's a government policy to replace all domestic gas heating in Britain to help achieve UN emissions targets. That would cost an immense amount, and would mean using less efficient and more costly electrical heating. This would still create emissions unless power generation is clean. Yet Britain's housing stock is poorly insulated, even in some new buildings. Improving that might be a better way to start.

Nuclear power is one way to reduce emissions while more sustainable sources of power are developed. Sweden for example generates 83 per cent of its electricity from nuclear energy and hydropower. It met its 2020 target of 50 per cent renewable energy eight years ahead of schedule and aims to cut carbon emissions to net zero by 2045.

The potential for pollution from nuclear power is a risk, but a manageable one. Governments must exercise control over the use of this energy source.

Developing countries want a better standard of living, which will rely on industrialisation. They will inevitably emit more carbon and pollutants over the next period – until technology is available to them

enabling their industry to operate without emission. This requires worldwide cooperation. But globalisation is part of the problem, not the solution.

Capitalist corporations have moved manufacturing industry from developed countries like Britain to developing countries like China – along with a large part of their emissions and pollution. And this creates even more emissions when goods are transported to consumers across the world. We and they should make more of what we need locally.

Capitalism forces consumers to buy new products constantly, ensuring that old ones become obsolete and fail. And often they cannot be repaired or recycled. Individual consumer actions cannot change the nature of these corporations, driven by profit.

The UN climate targets can only be achieved through states taking action, by planning and exerting control. Our government, once free from EU interference, can and must be forced to set much higher standards for industry to reflect what the people want. We can protect the environment only by interfering with the capitalist drive for profit – by controlling production and packaging.

Manufacturing and transport create greenhouse gases and pollutants. They cannot run on wind and solar power alone. Government investment is required to develop more sources of clean energy with little or no carbon emissions. But such

investment is regarded as a subsidy by the EU – unfair competition. Our government, once free from EU control, must be forced to invest in developing this technology.

## Industry essential

Industry is essential to our standard of living. Those arguing for abandoning industry, "a return to the land" start from the presumption that people are powerless in the face of climate change – and against capitalism too.

When scientists talk about "net zero" they do not mean stop industry. They argue that we can balance carbon emissions (the main source of warming) with reductions.

One such scientist is Myles Allen whose report to the UN in 2003 did so much to advance understanding of what's happening. He was recently interviewed on the BBC Radio 4 programme *The Life Scientific*. He recounted that young engineers he met saw no problem with the aim of achieving "net zero" – to them it's an engineering problem. Senior managers thought it difficult because they saw it as a financial problem.

Allen's belief is that only the energy industry – oil and gas companies – has the capital and resources to solve this problem. Without effective control by governments they will not have the incentive to do so. ■

In the next issue we will look further at the environment, and in particular what we can learn from the EU's dismal record on this issue.

## CPBML public meeting



**London**

**Tuesday 3 March, 7.30 pm**

**"How to protect the environment (and why the EU makes things worse)"**

**Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL**

It's no accident that Britain's membership of the EU has seen a decline in environmental standards. What's the way forward? Come and discuss. All welcome. Free entry.

The founder of Labour Leave has written a fascinating, of ultimately unconvincing analysis of Labour's woes...

# The failure of social dem

*Left behind: why voters deserted social democracy – and how to win them back*, by John Mills, paperback, 108 pages, ISBN 978-1912581009, Civitas, 2019, £8. Free PDF download from [www.civitas.org](http://www.civitas.org).

JOHN MILLS, the economist, Labour Party member and businessman, tries to explain in this book why social democratic parties have lost support. It's worth reading to understand how attempts to regain support may also fail.

Brexit figures, as you would expect from the man who headed up the Labour Leave campaign, but only in his conclusion. Mills sees Labour's approach to Brexit as a symptom of a wider malaise, rather than as the main reason why voters deserted Labour in the last election – namely that Labour betrayed the Referendum decision.

Instead, Mills focuses his fire on Labour's failures in economic and monetary policy. The default position of social democratic parties is, he says, "...to agree with the right's austerity agenda, or at least to condone it, while claiming somewhat implausibly to be able to administer it rather more gently, but still effectively."

Those parties accepted monetarist and neoliberal doctrines as they became established. But as Mills points out, it was always apparent those policies did not really serve the interests of the people they were supposed to be representing.

Mills sets out his view of the way forward for social democracy. It must be better at running the economies for which it might be responsible. And to do so, "the crucial requirement is that [it] breaks free from some of the key tenets of neoliberalism and embraces policies which will produce considerably higher rates of economic growth than we have seen recently."

**"He can't see that social democracy is unable to break away from neoliberalism."**



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Barry, Wales, 13 December 2019. Dejected Labour party supporters after the Vale of Glamorgan ge

But he can't see that social democracy is inextricably bound up with neoliberalism. The Syriza party in Greece seemed to have done so. Then under pressure from the EU, it embraced the EU's austerity policies. The Labour Party here would follow the same path, as it has done in the past in response to previous economic crises.

Mills points out, "It was not, however, just the Anglo-Saxon countries with strong classical economic traditions – the UK and the USA – which switched to monetarism and neoliberalism. Similar policies also managed to get their grip on the European Union..."

As a result, "increasingly deflationary macroeconomic conditions prevailed in both the USA, UK and most of the rest of the western world. They were directly responsible for the low growth and slow productivity increases of the subsequent decades."

Countries need to invest in the kind of productive activities that increase living standards, says Mills. Investment in mechanisation, technology and power can produce higher social rates of return, typically running at 50 per cent a year or more. But in Britain,

investment in "other machinery and equipment", the most productive forms of investment in terms of productivity growth, fell from 4 per cent of GDP in 2008 to 2.9 per cent in 2018.

By contrast, in Britain between 1934 and 1941 "the average social rate of return was 46 per cent with 13 per cent of GDP devoted to physical investment, producing a cumulative average annual growth rate between 1934 and 1941 of 6.0 per cent ...a much better growth performance than has been seen at any time before or since".

Why? Because, he says, sterling's fall by about 30 per cent in 1931 enabled Britain's fastest peacetime growth ever – more than 4 per cent a year between 1933 and 1937.

## Finance capital

Under Thatcher the opposite happened. Her backing for finance capital above everything else meant that the exchange rate rose between 1977 and 1982 by over 60 per cent in real terms.

There was some respite after 1992 when the UK fell out of the EU's Exchange Rate Mechanism. But then "...sterling strength-

ten illuminating but  
**Democracy**



General election vote count at Barry Leisure Centre.

ened again as capital movements were liberalised – and encouraged – to an extent unrivalled anywhere else in the world. The result was a huge capital inflow as vast swathes of the UK economy – our ports, airports, energy companies, utilities, football clubs, large sections of what was left of our manufacturing base, and much else – were sold to foreign interests.”

Mills writes, “the core problem...is that, unless investment in the private sector is likely to be profitable, it will not be undertaken by businesses which need to make a profit to survive.” But relying on the private sector to invest adequately has proven to fail, over and over again. When Edward Heath tried to get the capitalist class to invest, he failed, lamenting that they just wouldn’t. Under Thatcher, they disinvested.

The book was written before the December general election. And to his credit, Mills accurately foresees Labour’s failure to gain ground. Developments do not look encouraging he says, ending with the observation that, “We face a very uncertain future.” The real question, though, is whether Labour has a future at all. ■



# JUST LEAVE!

JOURNAL OF THE CPBML ✳

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A few months after the Equal Pay Act came into force, a group of engineering workers in London took on their reluctant employer.

# Trico 1976: a fighting victory

WOMEN WORKERS had been struggling for equal pay for over a century before the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970. And Parliament gave employers another five years grace to find ways around it. Workers at Trico showed that their own action was the surest way to secure their aims.

Their struggle is documented in a fine book by Sally Groves and Vernon Merritt. Groves worked at Trico and was publicity officer on the AUEW strike committee. Merritt was a strong supporter of the strike and an AUEW member. A key theme in the book is how people thought the Act would “finally secure equal pay as a right” and what the Trico workers did when that turned out not to be so.

Trico had paid little regard to the Act. Discriminatory rates had existed for over ten years and the company had done little to end them. In September 1975 the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers [AUEW] representing the Trico workers started negotiations aiming for a common pay rate regardless of sex by the time the Act became law.

Nothing came of negotiations. The company turned the women down flat, so they went on strike on 24 May 1976. The AUEW Executive Council declared the strike official shortly afterwards on the recommendations of local officials, backed by Reg Birch, the Executive Councillor for the South East. He was also a founding member and Chairman of the CPBML.

The strikers, backed by Birch, decided to boycott the Industrial Tribunal, for very good reasons. The tribunal had turned down over 70 per cent of the equal pay applications in the first six months of its existence.

This was the first time that a trade union had ever boycotted a Tribunal. The union

was concerned that the blatant pro-employer bias damaged the spirit and intent of the Act. As predicted the Tribunal ruled against the women.

The AUEW and the Strike Committee issued a joint statement to the press: “This dispute is a milestone in the fight for equal pay for women and has been instrumental in highlighting the inadequacies and legal loopholes in the Equal Pay Act.”

The continuation of official union support for the strike was crucial, but it was never a foregone conclusion. Without this, “the women and their male supporters would not only have been demoralised and delegitimised in the eyes of the trade union movement: they would also have been starved back to work.”

The situation with the union’s Executive Council was nursed and managed constantly by Roger Butler, the union’s local official, and Reg Birch, the strikers’ representative on the executive. It did not come out until much later how important that was for the successful outcome.

## ‘Too democratic’

John Slidders, the Trico personnel executive, admitted after the strike that the union had played a huge role, with the officials doing what the members asked them to do. He said the union was “too democratic”.

On 29 September, “Reg Birch informed the company side that no deal would be acceptable to the Executive Council that was not acceptable to Bill MacLaughlin, AUEW Divisional Organiser, and Roger Butler... This was a warning to the company that they should not try and make a deal with the AUEW National Executive behind the backs of the women and their local officials.”

That strengthened the strikers’ position and ensured that the company had no alternative but to deal with MacLaughlin and Butler from then on. On 14 October the company caved in. The women’s demands were agreed in full – a common operational rate regardless of sex. Exactly what the union had been demanding in negotiations for months before the dispute.

After 21 weeks of determined struggle, the women had won. That was despite strike breaking workers bussed in with the support of the police, and the industrial tribunal



Peter Arkell/reportdigital.co.uk

**Equal pay strike at Trico, West London. The 350 women workers returned to work after 3 months on strike and with nearly all their demands met. The women walked out when management refused to give men and women doing the same job.**

decision against them.

It turned out to be the longest successful strike for equal pay in British trade union history. And it was the first time a trade union had ever negotiated a settlement despite a Tribunal decision against it.

Butler said, “This is a lesson to the movement on how equal pay can be achieved. It won’t be brought about by tribunals. It’s only through trade union unity and working-class struggle that justice for women workers will be won.”

## Unwavering

Groves and Merritt point out that it was crucial that local union officials gave unwavering support and that the strikers “...were able to keep all the negotiations in their own hands. What’s more, the Strike Committee and their officials understood the dangers inherent in relying on a law rigged in favour of the employers.”

By contrast, in the dispute at Grunwick later that summer, the workers lost because the local officials did not give unwavering support to the striking women and did not

**‘The longest successful strike for equal pay in British trade union history...’**

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women, members of the AUEW, vote to return to  
of their demands conceded by management.  
ed to make up the £6 pay differential between

keep all the negotiations in their own hands.

Groves and Merritt observe that art Trico  
“...lack of support from the Labour and TUC  
leadership meant that all the negotiations  
with company were kept firmly under the  
control of the local AUEW officials, as well  
as...Reg Birch...who ensured that the EEF  
[Engineering Employers Federation] did not  
ultimately take over and negotiate directly  
with the AUEW Executive Council, which  
would have taken the final settlement out of  
the hands of the strikers’ representatives.”

Birch paid tribute to the strikers’ victory  
as “one of the best struggles that workers  
have ever joined together in, the Trico  
women’s battle for equal pay. Black and  
white together, only wanting to know: are  
you with us or against us? Straight, simple,  
classic thinking, indomitable, unbeatable.”

*Trico: a victory to remember. The 1976  
equal pay strike at Trico Folberth,  
Brentford*, by Sally Groves and Vernon  
Merritt, hardback, 238 pages, ISBN 978-1-  
912064-87-8, Lawrence & Wishart, 2018,  
£25. ■

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**What do we do?** Rooted in our workplaces, communities and trade unions, we use every opportunity to encourage our colleagues and friends to embrace the Marxist practice and theory that alone can lead to the revolution that Britain needs. Marx’s understanding of capitalism is a powerful tool – the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 explains the crash of 2007/8.

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

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

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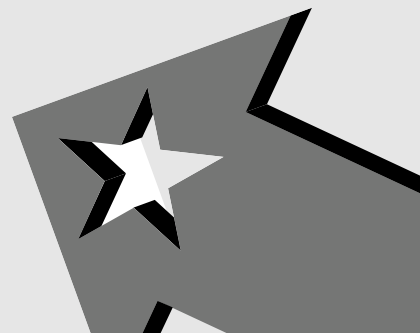
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# Stop this anti-protection racket

**'We can only be a nation of consumers if we are a nation of producers...'**

THE GOVERNMENT has started consulting over what its new "Global Tariff Policy" should be. At this stage, it is just a web-based questionnaire – but then most government "consultations" are just a cover: the Westminster mind is already made up. And if this consultation is anything to go by, the direction of travel is worrying.

At least the government is laying its cards on the table. "Now that UK has left the EU, the government is free to make its mark as a champion of free trade, safeguard against the forces of protectionism on the rise across the world, and crucially ensure that our tariff strategy is best for businesses and consumers across the UK," it says in its introduction to the consultation.

Not a word about protecting industry from unfair competition. Indeed, it looks as if the government has taken the EU's trade policy and thought how it might make it even worse.

Among other things, it adopts unchanged the EU approach to poorer developing countries (known as "Everything but Arms") that has seen, for example, suits manufactured in Cambodian sweatshops being imported into this country tariff free – and then sold as if they were British!

The government wants to cut import tariffs generally, eliminating all tariffs of 2.5 per cent or lower, rounding down all tariffs to the nearest 5 or 10 per cent, and "removing tariffs where the UK has zero or limited domestic production", which it says "could help to lower prices to consumers".

What is lacking is any proper industrial strategy that might see more things being made in this country, using tariffs sensibly to protect local industries. Or have our ruling class given up on Britain ever televisions, computers, computer chips, washing machines, dishwashers...or even, in the near future perhaps, locomotives, wind turbines...?

There's no point in "consumers" being able to save a couple of per cent on the cost of goods if millions are unemployed or underemployed and cannot afford to buy them anyway.

Or, to put it another way, we can only be a nation of consumers if we are a nation of producers – just as you can only really be a holidaymaker if you go to work for the rest of the year.

In truth, the government's Industrial Strategy hardly exists. There is a document produced by the May government in 2017, which has now been effectively forgotten. Even so, the 2017 strategy mentions the word "imports" only once, and then without mentioning the balance of payments deficit. Tariffs, of any kind, get no mention whatsoever.

The idea seems to be to expose the whole country to the shifting winds of the global market, and then everything will be fine. Well, we've seen over the past decades how that pans out.

None of this seems to worry the CBI, which should be the voice of British business but has lately become an echo chamber for global monopolies. In fact the CBI welcomed the consultation before it had even been called, in time for CBI endorsement to appear in the announcement.

Astonishingly (or not) the consultation was reported in the *Guardian* newspaper as a climbdown from its "zero tariff" plans of a year ago. Not so much a climbdown, more a touch of PR spin.

A year ago, the TUC and the industrial unions, keen to reverse the referendum and playing up the consequences of a "no deal" Brexit, were warning of the dangers of a zero or low-tariff policy. (Yes, the same TUC which supported the idea of the EU's "competence" to negotiate TTIP!) They need to start speaking up now, loudly.

We should not be leaving the EU only to hand over control to market forces. Workers must force joined-up thinking on this government – because workers know that everything starts with production. We are an industrial nation or we are nothing.

Oh, and the consultation closes at one minute before midnight on 5 March. So you'd better move fast if you want to tell the government where to stick its globalisation. ■

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