

WORKERS

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015 £1



SAVE STEEL, SAVE INDUSTRY

SOCIAL EUROPE? The big lie

TTIP The mask slips

BREXIT When, not if

DOCTORS Fight for the NHS

THEATRE Struggle offstage

ENGLISH

DEVOLUTION

plus News,

Book Review

and more

WORKERS



Steel and industry

THE CURRENT CRISIS in steel (see article, page 8) is a perfect example of the debacle facing Britain as a whole. First we have a formerly nationalised industry being privatised, then inevitably finding its way into foreign hands. What long-term interest can Tata of India or Sahaviriya Steel Industries of Thailand possibly have in a sustainable British steel industry?

Secondly, we have the European Union, whose rules on state aid form a perfect screen for the government to hide behind. The EU is dead set against nations being able to plan for the continued viability of their vital industries.

Thirdly, we have the complicity of our own government. True, the rules are there, and very damaging they are too. But the government will not even try to support British steel.

Listen to Gareth Stace from industry body UK Steel. "In Germany, government is the friend of industry," he says. "Here, you wonder what is

behind the rhetoric of a northern powerhouse if a company like SSI in Redcar can be allowed to go out of business."

And then we have the hypocrisy of the separatists. SNP leader and EU groupie Nicola Sturgeon has "pledged" to save the steel industry (in Scotland only). Yet Scotland's biggest infrastructure project of recent times, the new road bridge over the River Forth at Queensferry, was built with steel from China ordered by the Scottish government.

Finally, we have high energy costs – a big factor for energy-intensive industries such as steel. These in turn are a consequence of privatisation and the removal of controls, with foreign (often state-owned) companies free to charge far more than they can in their own countries.

Our future depends on having industries like steel. If you want an argument against the EU and for sovereignty, look no further. ■

No British intervention in Syria!

THE CAMERON government wants to bomb Syria, as do all too many Tory and Labour MPs. But British intervention could only be part of NATO's aim of ousting Syria's government. We should have no part in it.

Some MPs are talking about establishing "no-

fly zones" in Syria, bringing the RAF into direct conflict with Russian planes. Madness!

We have no interest in turning Syria into another Libya – now a country with no government, lawless, borderless, and a breeding ground for jihadists. No British intervention in Syria! ■



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

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

www.cpbml.org.uk @cpbml
Issue 191, November/December 2015



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Academy conversion by force

EACH SUCCESSIVE Secretary of State for Education tightens the noose of state control around schools, and the current one, Nicky Morgan, is no exception. The Schools and Adoption Bill currently making its way through parliament is a short bill with a long arm.

Its remit is with "maintained" (state) schools only (academies and free schools are exempt), a rapidly diminishing sector. The intention is to speed up the rate of "conversion" to academy status – by force.

By March this year, 60 per cent of state-funded secondary schools were academies (effectively independent schools funded by you and me). In primary schools the programme has been less enthusiastically embraced – less than a fifth are academies or free schools.

The new bill intends to change this. It gives extensive powers to the state to intervene in state schools, using Ofsted as the tool. Any school deemed to be "inadequate" by Ofsted – a category that has been broadened in scope over its years of existence, and its definition regularly changed to catch out more and more schools – will be forcibly converted into an academy. "Coasting" schools, schools which are doing well but not as well as they should be in Ofsted's view, will also be subject to intervention.

Until now, the practice has been that schools which fail inspections have been leaned on heavily and bullied by the DfE to join an academy chain of government choice. The problem was that often schools resisted the process. Now consultation with "stakeholders" is to be swept away in a procedure both rapid and brutal. To aid this, the right to appeal against an Ofsted judgement is to be removed.

The 2006 Education and Inspections Act gave local authorities powers to intervene in maintained schools. But local authorities have never had any jurisdiction over academies and free schools, unless they are breaking the law. The secretary of state was supposed to be directly overseeing academies and free schools, but as the scandals and failures in these schools started to stack up this became an embarrassment.

Last year the government created bodies called regional schools commissioners, as new appointed agents of the state, to do the job for them. In practice, this means that one person per region with a small staff and an advisory board is managing the whole thing. Unsurprisingly, the commissioners have so far shown limited capacity to cope, as well as limited expertise. Yet the new bill will extend their wide-ranging powers over maintained schools too, bypassing or overruling local authorities as they see fit.

How will they intervene? The idea is that academy schools will fly in to take on the job once carried out by specialist advisory staff employed by the local authority. Nobody seems to know how academies will carry out this role. And now, Ofsted has announced that new schools (the vast majority of which are free schools and academies) will not be inspected at all in their first three years. ■

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

ECONOMY

Rates threat

IN WASHINGTON the US Federal Reserve is preparing to raise interest rates, even though this would destabilise already fragile economies across the world. The new Global Financial Stability Report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warns: "Emerging markets must prepare for the adverse domestic stability implications of global financial tightening...emerging markets should prepare for an increase in corporate failures..."

After the 2008 crash, £385 billion was invested in the "major emerging market economies", which have accounted for 80 per cent of global growth in the past five years, half of that coming from China alone. But in the past 18 months speculators have taken £195 billion out of these countries.

Firms in these economies used the current glut of cheap money to borrow far too much. Chinese firms led the way, assisted by Indian, Turkish, Brazilian, Mexican and Chilean firms. The firms' debts rose from £2.6 trillion in 2004 to over £12 trillion in 2014 and their average debt grew from 48 per cent of GDP to 74 per cent. Rapid debt growth preceded previous emerging market financial crises. ■

IMPERIALISM

US confronts China

THE US government intends to send warships into the South China Sea through a 12-nautical mile zone around the disputed Spratly islands which China claims as its own territory. An anonymous defence official said that the US government was determined to put on a "show of military might" in the area. ■

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...

Volkswagen scandal: deadly consequences

The Volkswagen diesel emissions crisis is the worst ever to hit the motor industry. But what has Britain been doing? The answer is nothing.

Welsh museum staff walk out

Workers at the National Museum (Amgueddfa Cymru) of Wales went on strike against plans to scrap anti-social hours payments for weekend working.

English National Opera on the brink as cuts loom

Unions at the English National Opera in London are waiting to hear whether proper national funding will continue – or whether the axe is coming.

Electoral Commission ignored as new roll is pushed through

Against the advice of the independent Electoral Commission, the government has reduced the time frame for establishing the new electoral roll.

Council procurement policies under attack

The government plans to change the law so that councils may only disinvest, boycott or adopt sanctions if the action is in line with government policy.

Osborne eyes local government pensions, again

The new National Infrastructure Commission will steal money from workers' pension funds to do what the government should be doing anyway.

Plus: the e-newsletter

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Workers



After successful demonstrations on 17 October in London, Nottingham and Belfast against the new junior doctors' contract, the British Medical Association (BMA) announced that ballot papers will go out to its members in early November. Most of the placards had been made by the junior doctors themselves but these were interspersed with others such as "Nurses support the Junior Doctors Fight". Others were made by medical students who clearly understood that as the seed corn of the profession, they too are under attack. Photo shows demonstrators listening to speeches at the pre-march rally in Waterloo Place, off The Mall, London. See feature article, page 18.

Separatists join attack on BBC

THE SNP is weighing in behind those who want to see an end to the BBC as we know it. Scottish Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop has just outlined her plans for a "federal BBC with at least a Board for each nation" with a budget controlled in Scotland.

In an article headed "Sturgeon's dangerous plan for the BBC" in *The Scotsman* newspaper, Brian Wilson recalled that during the referendum campaign protests at the BBC headquarters in Glasgow, the "mob outside Pacific Quay...was demanding political acquiescence. The bile led by Alex Salmond against individual broadcasters' integrity was orchestrated only to intimidate."

And writer Kenneth Roy is forthright in his response to being threatened by "being held to account". Writing in the *Scottish Review*, he said, "Like many before me, I am discovering that if you're not totally for them, you're totally against them. In Miss Sturgeon's one party state, dissent – any dissent – is simply not tolerated."

- Meanwhile, in a major blow to separatist fantasies, tax revenues from North Sea oil and gas have fallen to a negative position for the first time in the industry's history. Alex Salmond's predictions of March 2013 – that production in Scottish waters would yield £57 billion in tax revenue for an independent Scotland by 2019 – has been torpedoed below the waterline.

Official figures now show that repayments to producers have cancelled out revenues, leaving the British government £39 million in the red. This loss over the first six months of the financial year shows the impact of falling production and prices. Pooling resources across Britain is the only way to safeguard the long term future of this vital industry. ■

ADULT EDUCATION Campaign launched

THE WORKERS' Educational Association (WEA) is calling for support for its campaign to save adult education. The area is under increased threat in the run-up to the government's Comprehensive Spending Review, in which departments have been asked to prepare for cuts of 25 and 40 per cent.

"Less than 6 per cent of Government spending on education and training is

devoted to adult further education and skills," says the WEA. "Further cuts, on top of the 24 per cent and 3.9 per cent cuts to the Adult Skills Budget already announced this year, will inflict serious damage to our education and skills infrastructure with detrimental impact on learners, employers and the economy."

The WEA is targeting politicians, educators, policy groups and associations of all kinds. It reports more than 500 students, members and tutors writing individual letters to MPs in the first weeks of the campaign. ■

SCIENCE

Warning of 'huge cuts'

SCIENCE IS VITAL, a grassroots organisation composed of scientists and supporters of science and research in Britain, is warning of "grave concerns" that the government is planning huge cuts to the science budget. Ominously, the business secretary is said to have hired "consultants" to suggest where the axe might fall

Back in 2010 the organisation and others fought off an attempt to cut the science budget, succeeding in getting a ring-fenced budget for research – but with no increases for inflation the value of the budget has declined.

With value of that settlement eroded

through inflation, public investment in science has declined to 0.44 per cent of GDP, "the lowest of any G8 country in the last 20 years," says Science is Vital.

But even though the government says Britain is pulling out of recession, there are no plans to reverse the decline in the R&D budget. Quite the opposite: George Osborne and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills have told Britain's research councils to model cuts of 25 to 40 per cent!

In response, Science is Vital is campaigning for a real rise in science funding, starting with a rally at Conway Hall, London, on 26 October, along with events in Glasgow, York, Newcastle, Swansea, Southampton, Leeds and Bath – a list that is set to grow. ■

Wardens break pay barrier

TRAFFIC WARDENS working for outsourcing company NSL in Camden, north London, have voted to accept a new pay agreement. The settlement, which breaks through the ceiling of the "London living wage", also avoids the need for another two weeks of planned strike action. This follows two rounds of industrial action, first for four days in August and then for ten days in September.

The dispute came as a three-year pay deal came to an end. And in a strange case of history repeating itself, the offer accepted was actually worse than one made by the employer before members took their action. Why on earth would this state of affairs occur – particularly given it had happened before?

In the NSL case the branch leadership marched the workers up to the top of the hill with little thought as to what would happen next. For the branch leadership the end game is industrial action itself – a great "political" act rather than an industrial strategy. The rallies, messages of solidarity and bravado then justify the action in itself. But in the end the membership on the NSL contract saw through such games, accepting the offer and setting their sights on the real objective of bringing the contract back in house.

"Workers' ability to withdraw their labour is a powerful act, but it shouldn't have some mystical sentiment attached to it," notes someone close to the dispute. "It is merely a tool in the armoury of the worker, to be used when it is the most effective strategy (and when it can be delivered)." ■

AFGHANISTAN

The US stays on

THE US government now intends to keep US troops in Afghanistan beyond President Obama's departure from office in January 2017, breaking his promise to end the war on his watch.

Obama had originally intended to pull out all but a small, embassy-based US military presence by the end of next year, but is announcing that 5,500 troops will remain in Afghanistan.

The present force of 9,800 US troops is to remain throughout most of next year, being reduced to 5,500 in 2017.

Other NATO countries with troops in Afghanistan – including Georgia with 885, Germany with 850, Romania with 650,

Turkey with 503 and Britain with 470 – are likely to mirror the US extension. Germany has already said it is willing to extend its presence by one year.

The US defence secretary, Ashton Carter, said: "The narrative that we're leaving Afghanistan is self-defeating. We're not, we can't and to do so would not be to take advantage of the success we've had to date."

Success? Fifteen years of war have produced only a collapsing economy, worsening security, and a splintered country.

Afghan MP Shukria Barakzai said: "The US has created a lot of problems for Afghans, ever since the cold war, so it has a responsibility to help and support Afghans." But staying on won't achieve that. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

NOVEMBER

Monday 2 November, 1 pm

Protect the right to strike

TUC lobby and rally, London, against the government's Trade Union Bill. It starts with a rally at Central Hall, Westminster, at 1 pm, moving to a lobby of parliament at 2.30 pm. For details, see <https://www.tuc.org.uk/get-involved>

Wednesday 25 November, 7.30 pm

"The Great Breakthrough – Soviet Planning versus Capitalist Chaos"

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

CPBML Public Meeting



Capitalism is wedded to the anarchy of the market. Socialism is about planning to meet the needs of people and nations – and in the past it has been spectacularly successful. Come and discuss how a planned approach can help rebuild Britain. All welcome.



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NEWS ANALYSIS

Arts: fighting the low pay culture

THERE IS no alternative to fighting when it comes to pay. And then fight some more. Unions in the arts sector have a difficult job, especially where there is no continuous history of struggle, where there is a culture of accepting low pay, even no pay, or neglecting workplace conditions.

To complicate matters, many union branches have a mix of skills and contracts, and the outcome of negotiation tends to the lowest common denominator. There is also the squeamish question of professional and vocational dedication, which employers and governments play on to shut us up.

Despite the difficulties in this sector, the issue of professional recognition is gaining ground – though it is just a start. Artists are fighting the ignorant idea that if you love your work you should not expect to be paid for it. The Actors' Equity campaign "Professionally Made, Professionally Paid" is aimed at eliminating low pay or no pay in entertainment – not least in order to educate its own members. There is even an acronym for it – LPNP!

"Free is not an Option" is the Writers' Guild campaign to tackle the growing trend of unpaid working. A survey found that 87 per cent of respondents in the TV and film industries reported being asked to work for nothing. Authors, poets and playwrights also said this was becoming standard practice even with well established and resourced companies.

The Musicians' Union campaigns under the slogan "Work Not Play". Clubs, pubs and promoters want something for nothing, treating music as a hobby rather than a profession. Another campaign is "Support My Music Teacher", as funding for arts education is cut or withdrawn.

Tate Modern, London



Workers

Meanwhile in museums, galleries and cinemas some very basic union work is being carried out. At the London Tate Galleries, those employed indirectly by security firm Wilson James are paid significantly less for the same work as those directly employed, with zero hours contracts and no basic employment rights. PCS continues to campaign there for equal pay, under the banner "EqualiTate".

At Windsor Castle wardens who voted by 84 per cent to go on strike earlier this year remain tight-lipped (probably sworn to secrecy) about a pay rise negotiated by PCS, saying only that the shop staff got a good settlement. As with the Globe guides, this was based on the "median level for the region". And at the Royal Albert Hall in August staff narrowly voted to be represented by media and entertainment union BECTU – a vital first step toward collective action.

The "living wage" is no substitute for collective action on pay, and only a sign of weakness when used as a basis for negotiation with employers. It is in fact the old "minimum wage" dressed up to seem something more generous, and does what the minimum wage did – acts as a maximum. We need to value our own labour power. ■

Never mind that whenever the pe devolution is to be forced on Eng

The atomisation

THE DRIVE to local devolution, city-state politics, mini-region politics, mutualism, municipalism, carpet-bagging, asset stripping and associated opportunities for privatisation and corruption is well under way. In the last issue of *Workers* we called for a national plan to unify and modernise services run by English local authorities. Workers need a country where we can pull together to fight for our common needs – more unity not less, more clarity about how to win together.

In November 2014 a secret agreement between Manchester politicians and the Treasury called "DevoManc" was published, a charter for massive public sector privatisation covering local government, health, transport, housing, policing etc. Effectively the shreds of the savagely cut local authority budgets were being handed over for local politicians and private business to oversee and manage further decline in Manchester.

Clearly this is a blueprint to be rolled out throughout the country. The cities' continued decline would be wrapped up in fantastic visions of job creation largely centred on the housing market. Local politicians, mostly unelected or unaccountable, would decide what is good for everyone else. It goes hand in hand with chancellor Osborne's scheme to concentrate power in the hands of mayors in many cities.

"Combined authorities", such as Greater Sheffield, are made up of the heads of adjoining councils, but they are not democratically accountable. Even the new mayors of Manchester and Sheffield will not be answerable to an elected assembly, as the mayor of London is, but only to their cabinet, composed of the other council leaders.

In the most crude and pie-eyed fashion, some local and regional politicians believe this will allow them to create islands of municipal socialism free of central government's control, escaping the savagery of its cuts and austerity agenda. They seem to imagine that they can sit out the next five years with the hatches battened down ready to emerge and flourish once the Tory government has gone.

Stupidity or cynicism?

What stupidity! Or perhaps, what cynicism. Many just can't wait to get their sticky fingers on the money, however little it may be.

Osborne has been promoting devolution and disintegration in all his speeches about making the Northern Powerhouse cities project a reality, hence DevoManc. Seeing a great political weakness, he has achieved a sleight of hand – enlisting local and regional politicians to implement the government blueprint while deluding themselves that they are really pursuing their own political agenda.

The Labour Party historically has been and still is a principal source of devolution mania. This year it was all over their election manifesto. Now Osborne has stolen their clothes and leads willing fools in the cities and regions to implement a programme for the disintegration of the country into warring factions. No more pulling together, only pulling apart.

Is this what workers want? The electorate has not been consulted. Last time we were, on the question of regional assemblies, the idea was defeated.

'The electorate has not been consulted. Last time we were, the idea was defeated.'

people have been asked they have said they don't want it –
England...

Devolution of England



Millennium Square, Leeds, and the Civic Hall – now the centre of a regional land grab.

Mitaylor848

To avoid this, decisions are now being made behind the scenes.

The cancer has rapidly spread. In London the Greater London Authority, London Councils, NHS England (London), and the Mayor of London have now published the London proposition to get Treasury agreement for London devolution. They conspire to create Boris Johnson's "world class city", which severs its umbilical cord to the rest of the Britain and floats off like Monty Python into the sunset.

26 cities

In addition there are proposals covering 26 key mid-sized cities – 7.9 million people and a budget of £163 billion. Combining their services would save the central Treasury £12.5 billion over the life of this Parliament.

All these bids are wrapped up in the twisted language of "asks". They are asking the Treasury to devolve the budgets and related financial powers to them so that they can, as they put it, regenerate, re-create themselves. In reality it looks like geographical chaos and fighting in blind alleys for a bigger share of a smaller pot.

Health devolution in London will see groupings of services and ever-greater division between the 32 boroughs. This will

bring disunity rather than city-wide integration, and loss of centres of excellence and skill as every borough fights for its share. It is a classic case of divide and rule.

All the talk of regeneration draws on the fantasies of Michael Heseltine, Thatcher's minister for regeneration in the 1980s. There can be no regeneration without the re-creation of industry and manufacturing in a planned and systematic fashion across the whole of Britain.

This is the crucial factor consistently missing from all politicians' visions, delusions, and proposals. Industry is the ghost at the banquet of devolution. Sheffield City Region proposes to create 70,000 jobs and 6,000 new businesses by 2025, but behind some brave talk, it really only plans to tout for employers and promise them improvements in training and transport.

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight says it will build 76,000 homes by 2026. Speculative developers will be given access to the land they want to build on, and in return will provide a percentage of "affordable" homes. A beautiful part of the country is to be paved over, perhaps for foreign investors.

All the "asks" reinforce the big society, localism and parish pump diversion and

splinterist politics spouted by government and opposition during the Coalition years. Devolution will allow the local authorities to sink as they manage their own decline. It will centralise critical political decision-making processes in central government – fiscal policy, defence, civil liberties and so on.

While pretending to roll back the existence of the state, the government will concentrate real power at the centre by sowing division. Devolution is all about divide and rule as every city state and mini-region competes to try and grab a share of the wealth and resources of Britain. How long before a federated England, a regionalised England, becomes an England that is no longer England?

And behind the scenes looms the shadow of the European Union with its strategy of breaking up and fragmenting nation states. What an incredible experiment Britain is providing for Brussels. ■

Bidding to devolve

SEPARATELY, ALL THESE would-be devolved authorities published proposals before chancellor Osborne's September deadline, aimed at joining up between 4 and 19 local authorities. Note the imperial ambitions of "Greater" Essex and Yorkshire.

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire (19 authorities)

Sheffield City Region (including bits of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire)

Greater Essex (15 authorities)

Gloucester County (7 authorities)

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (15 authorities, 2 national parks)

North Yorkshire (York and the East Riding)

Greater Yorkshire (Hull fighting off the East Riding)

West Yorkshire (Leeds City Region – Leeds, Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield – with land grabs into North Yorkshire and York)

West of England (4 authorities and the West of England Core City Region)

Devon and Somerset (17 authorities) ■

Without a credible energy policy Britain's entire industrial future is being hammered home that appalling truth...

No energy policy = no B



Port Talbot steelworks, south Wales. Owner Tata has said workers have nothing to fear. Not everyone is reassured.

Grubb/English Wikipedia

TALK OF THE growth of sustainable energy sources hides the truth that the British government has no coherent energy policy. Its decisions consistently undermine the independence of our energy sources. Recent events – steel plant closures, overseas states to build nuclear power stations, and withdrawal from clean coal burning – put beyond doubt that this is a national crisis.

Job losses in steel this year exceed 4,000 out of a workforce of 30,000. Others are at risk. It is a body blow to the foundations on which British manufacturing is built.

In October Tata Steel announced 1,200 redundancies; 900 in Scunthorpe and 270 at Clydebridge plate mill and Dalzell works in Motherwell. Earlier in the year Tata cut 720 jobs in its Stocksbridge specialty steel plant.

250 agency workers got the sack and a plate mill employing 150 workers at Llanwern was mothballed.

The Scunthorpe plant is one of the biggest of its kind in Europe, producing specialist steels for railways and rolling stock among other things. Tata is appealing for state aid, but the future for that town is grim.

Teesside closed

Steelmaking on Teesside is now gone as the Sahaviriya Steel Industries (SSI) Redcar works closed in September. The coke ovens and blast furnace are not mothballed but decommissioned. Almost all the 2,000 workforce have received redundancy payments. Caparo Industries entered partial administration in October, putting 1,700 steel jobs at

risk across the Black Country.

Many factors have accelerated the decline of the already vulnerable steel industry. In particular China decided to dump surplus steel onto world markets at prices below the cost of production, due to its own slowdown in growth. Russia, Brazil and Japan are doing the same.

Commentators complain this is “not a level playing field”, as if giving free rein to markets could ever be fair. China's current overcapacity is estimated at 20 times the level of Britain's annual production. Left to its own devices, a “free” market cannot resist such overwhelming forces.

High British energy prices are a factor. British steelmakers pay twice as much for electricity as their French and German coun-

ture is at risk. Events in steel and power generation

British industry

terparts. But even they cannot produce steel slabs at the world market price of \$300 a ton. These nations intervene in the market to protect their national interest. Energy costs are subsidised and environmental charges waived. Imports, particularly from China, are closely regulated or effectively blocked by legislation. Unlike British steelmakers, these industries are state owned.

Self-imposed shackles

The British government barely excuses its own non-intervention, nor did previous governments. All protest helplessness in the face of the market and ignore that the shackles are self-imposed. The business secretary Sajid Javid chaired a “high powered summit” in Rotherham in mid October to discuss the future of steel in this country. In the face of the SSI Redcar closure and as news of the bombshell in Scunthorpe was breaking, all Javid could say was that he’d set up some working parties.

The collapse of the core of British steel-making will have devastating consequences for the remaining production. Much of the specialist output sourced raw material from the plants now closed.

Javid said in the Commons on 20 October, “This Government is committed to a major programme of infrastructure spending. I am determined the UK steel industry should play a central role in its delivery”. No one will yet admit it, but the only intention must be to rely on imported steel for the promised homes, industrial development and new rail links.

In the short term, British manufacturing may survive on imported steel. Some of our advanced, specialist steel makers will find it hard to source raw product. But cars can still be assembled, houses can still be built. With the abandonment of the domestic industry we become entirely dependent on foreign steel production.

When our national interests and those of the foreign producer diverge, that dependence becomes a millstone. The fate of agriculture and fishing once we ceded independence to the EU should not be forgotten.

The story of Hinkley Point C in Somerset

Continued on page 10

Big blow for carbon capture

INNOVATION? What innovation? The government has effectively washed its hands of the White Rose carbon capture and storage (CCS) project based at Drax power station in Yorkshire (pictured below).

Drax announced at the beginning of October that it planned to withdraw from the project. The company said its decision was based “purely on a drastically different financial and regulatory environment and we must put the interests of the business and the shareholders first.”

The final straw seems to have been changes in government support for low carbon technology through removal of exemption from the climate change levy, coupled with a (temporary) fall in the wholesale price of electricity. So, the short-termism of the government in relation to energy production prompts a short term response from an energy producer.

Planned to be the first large-scale CCS plant in Europe, the project continues to receive £238 million in EU funding after an extensive competition with other EU projects. Even the EU can see the potential for a method of extracting and storing emissions from fossil fuel burning while our government struggles to present a strategy for energy production.

The Unite union’s national officer for energy, Kevin Coyne, said, “The underlying message here is that the private sector has been unable to provide the necessary investment to support the carbon capture initiative”. Garry Graham from the specialist union Prospect said, “We need a coherent strategy and a clear map of how we transition to low-carbon generation, keep the lights on and meet the needs of consumers

and businesses.”

Burning fossil fuels may not be the longer-term future of energy production, but with 40 per cent of our energy coming from such sources for the next two decades at least, a lot depends on trialling and succeeding in capturing and storing carbon emissions from power plants and industry. White Rose is an integral element in advancing to full scale production. The new coal-fired plant at Drax would have the capacity to heat 630,000 homes. It would capture 90 per cent of the emissions – some 2 million tonnes of CO₂ a year.

The pipeline to be constructed by the National Grid would pump the gas into underground saline deposits beneath the North Sea. The capacity of the pipeline is 17 million tonnes a year. So there is capacity to expand and take emissions from power stations along the Ouse and Trent valleys plus other industry.

Abandoning the future

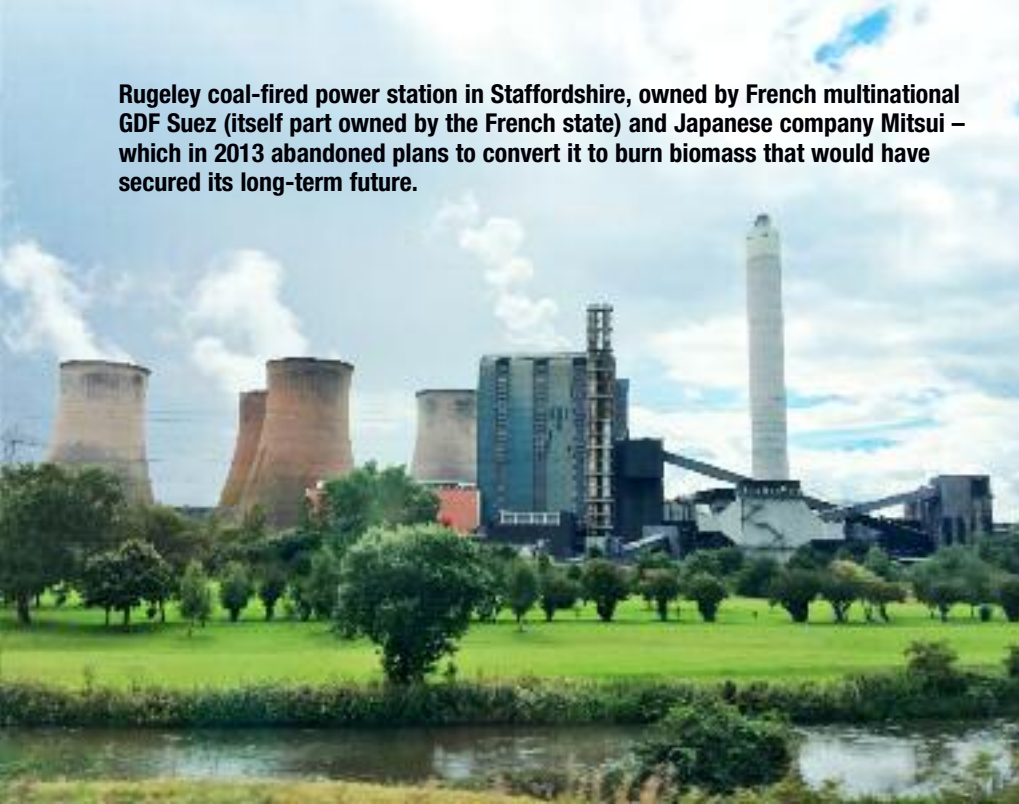
This is about cleaning up our energy and exporting this new technology abroad: scientific and engineering research, power plant engineering and construction, pipeline construction and management. The future is within our grasp – and the government does not wish to be part of it

Tellingly, the Indian government, in a recent submission to the UN, revealed that they too were looking long term at moving away from fossil fuel dependence, but they considered three to four decades as a realistic target to reaching that goal. In the meantime, they argue, there is a need to import technologies which will assist with carbon capture and storage. ■



Starablazkova

Rugeley coal-fired power station in Staffordshire, owned by French multinational GDF Suez (itself part owned by the French state) and Japanese company Mitsui – which in 2013 abandoned plans to convert it to burn biomass that would have secured its long-term future.



Workers

‘EDF and the Chinese are being subsidised by the UK taxpayer to the tune of £80 billion.’

Continued from page 9

shows the dangers of privatising energy production and placing it in foreign hands. This is the first new nuclear reactor to be commissioned since Sizewell B came on line 20 years ago. The project has been plagued by challenges since it began in 2006.

EDF, the French state-backed nuclear provider to which we sold our entire industry, said that the reactor would be built at a cost of £10 billion. Infamously EDF boasted that it would be “cooking Christmas dinners by 2017”. There are widespread doubts that the design chosen by EDF is fit for purpose, which has led to delays and spiralling costs. They are now estimated at £25 billion and will rise further with completion some time after 2023.

Energy analyst Peter Atherton has calculated that for the same price as Hinkley Point C, planned to yield 3.2GW, almost

50GW of gas-fired capacity could be built. The gas market is as volatile as any other; prices can go up as well as down. But the cost differential is impossible to ignore.

Even though the chosen design for Hinkley Point is too big, too expensive and unproven, the government has already agreed a “strike price”, a guarantee that Hinkley output will be sold at £92.50 per megawatt-hour, inflation-linked for 35 years, plus decommissioning costs. That’s two or three times the strike price envisaged for similar projects in Finland and France. The subsidy from the British taxpayer will be to the tune of £80 billion.

Bleak

The state-owned Chinese nuclear industry is funding a third of Hinkley, the costliest engineering project ever undertaken in Britain. Other providers are unwilling to sink funds into such a bleak prospect; Osborne

has already offered £2 billion worth of loan guarantees. The recent state visit to Britain by the Chinese president Xi Jinping cemented deals already struck and gave China a toehold in Britain to develop its own model reactor.

The government’s commitment to the nuclear option is pilloried by the anti-nuclear lobby on environmental grounds. But it is in fact driven by a declared adherence to a low-carbon vision of the future, regardless of cost. Nuclear is certainly part of the long-term future for energy generation, but the Hinkley saga is an economic white elephant. Even those in favour of nuclear power are scratching their heads.

As a nation, we need to get our priorities in order. Do we want a forward-looking, independent manufacturing base self-reliant in energy, or do we want a succession of governments incapable of governing in our national interest? ■



CPBML/Workers

Public Meeting, London

Wednesday 25 November, 7.30 pm

“The Great Breakthrough – Soviet Planning versus Capitalist Chaos”

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

Capitalism is wedded to the anarchy of the market. Socialism is about planning to meet the needs of people and nations – and in the past it has been spectacularly successful. Come and discuss how a planned approach can help rebuild Britain. All welcome.

When it comes to the EU and international trade treaties, it's the corporations that give the orders...

TTIP – the mask slips



Part of the huge crowd of 250,000 people who marched in Berlin on 10 October against TTIP and CETA (the TTIP-equivalent the EU is negotiating with China). Placards called for a *Volksentscheid* – a referendum – on both treaties.

OPPONENTS OF TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership treaty currently being negotiated on our behalf by the European Union, have consistently noted how secretive and undemocratic the process is. Just how undemocratic has been shown in startling manner by an interview between John Hilary from War on Want and trade commissioner Cecilia Malmström.

When Hilary challenged Malmström over the extent of opposition, as witnessed by more than three million signatures on a Europe-wide petition against the deal – not to mention a 250,000-strong demonstration in Berlin earlier in October – she replied, “I do not take my mandate from the European people.”

No indeed. She takes it from the transnational corporations.

Declared opponents are not the only ones outraged by the negotiation process. When France’s minister for foreign trade, Matthias Fekl, was interviewed in September by French regional newspaper *Sud Ouest*, he said the “total lack of transparency” posed “a democratic problem”.

In particular, Fekl said that members of the US Congress had “access to a much

higher number of documents than we do in Europe”. He also revealed that members of European parliaments could only get to read the negotiating texts in secure rooms in US embassies.

“Europe has offered many compromises, in all areas, and has received no serious offers from the Americans in return,” Fekl added. “Neither for access to their public markets, nor for access to their agricultural and food markets, which remain closed.”

‘Collapse’

And he went further, saying that France could walk out of the TTIP talks altogether. According to German newspaper *Die Zeit*, this makes him the first government minister of an EU member state to talk openly about the possibility of the TTIP negotiations collapsing entirely.

Initially those negotiating the deal were hoping to get an outline agreement by the end of the year. That looked like a modest target back in 2013 when EU member states gave the European Commission the green light to start talking to the US about TTIP. Now it is looking ludicrously optimistic.

The Economist noted on Saturday 17 October, “The TTIP negotiations have slowed to a crawl; even the discussions on tariff elimination, which was supposed to be the easy bit, have dragged.” According to the website Politico, which said it had seen an internal Commission report, the US and the EU have not even exchanged positions on 10 of the TTIP’s 24 “chapters”, which each cover different areas – let alone started to negotiate.

Standards

Meanwhile, reports from Washington suggest that the European Union is already dropping its standards ahead of a TTIP agreement.

The newsletter *Washington Trade Daily* said that EU trade counsellor Damien LeVie told a free-market US think tank that genetically modified crops and chemically washed beef carcasses were already being allowed into the EU.

The news will do nothing to dispel anxiety throughout Europe that TTIP will involve a collapse of environmental standards in a capitulation to large-scale US agriculture companies. ■

Many unions seem wedded to the EU. Yet look closely, and it's clear the EU has been a disaster for workers...

The lie of Social Europe

TO JUDGE FROM what some trade unions say about the European Union, you might think that if Britain left we would suddenly be cast into an outer darkness stripped of all rights at work – no holiday pay, no equal pay, no redundancy pay. It's a nightmare scenario, and it's leant on all the time to persuade us that there can be no advance outside the European Union.

These people talk about the idea of a "Social Europe", the notion that "economic and social progress must go hand in hand", as the European Trade Union Institute puts it. It's the failed plea of social democrats down the ages: make capitalism nicer, they say, and the economy will grow and capitalists will get richer too.

It's an argument that has fallen on deaf ears, at least as far as the capitalists are concerned. They know that they get rich by owning the means of production and exploiting the labour of others. Nice has nothing to do with it. Capitalists may lack many things, but they do have a very clear understanding of class relations and class power.

Trade unions, too, have tried this argument, and many still do. Good employee relations are good for business, they say. The interests of the two classes are not opposed, the argument runs, they are identical! But such sweet reason has never won a pay rise nor a recognition agreement.

The tragedy is that many unions, and

individual workers, have fallen for this failed thinking. And never more than when in 1988, during the depths of the Thatcher counter-revolution, the then president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, came to the TUC to move it in a pro-EU direction.

"It would be unacceptable for Europe to become a source of social regression, while we are trying to rediscover together the road to prosperity and employment," said Delors. He promised that the new internal market, the free movement of people, capital and goods, scheduled for 1992 would include a "social dimension".

To the TUC, demoralised and devoid of class thinking (or creative thinking at all) it was like manna from heaven. No longer would they need to fight – the EU would solve everything. "The only card game in town is in a town called Brussels," said Ron Todd, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union.

The Delors promise was never fulfilled. Indeed, how could it be? The EU is a capitalist club. The EU has instead become a principal source of social regression. And some 24 years later, European Central Bank president Mario Draghi put the nail in the coffin, telling the Wall Street Journal on 23 February 2012, "The European social model has already gone." That won't be news to the people of Greece.

Clearly, no one told the Labour Party.

'Thankfully, despite the TUC's best efforts, Britain has stayed out of the euro trap.'

Labour is still worshipping the corpse of Social Europe, trying to will it back into existence. At its conference in Brighton in September, in what passed for a "debate", Alan Johnson declared that there was "no progressive case for leaving the EU", wilfully ignoring the case put so well by the RMT in June when it voted to campaign for British withdrawal from the EU (see Box, page 15).

Two years before the chaos of "Black Wednesday" in 1992 when Britain quit the Exchange Rate Mechanism – a precursor to joining the euro – the TUC was still peddling its dream of "Economic and Monetary Union" (EMU) as a progressive force.

Back in 1990, the TUC dribbled, "The objectives of EMU should be to promote sustainable development, full employment, and economic and social cohesion as well as price stability," in what was also a tacit admission that EMU meant the opposite. Thankfully, despite its best efforts, Britain has stayed out of the euro trap.

The same deluded approach to the EU is evident in the TUC's current approach to TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership currently being negotiated in secret by Brussels on our behalf.

"The TUC is calling for a TTIP that creates a gold standard for workers rights – so we want American workers to have the kinds of rights protection and worker representation found in Europe," says the body that should be speaking for British workers, concluding by calling the fight to "properly involve unions in all parts of the negotiations on TTIP" an "opportunity to secure protections for public services, labour and environmental rights".

Fat chance. Neither the European Union nor the US government have had or will

Loophole: self-employment

THERE ARE now 4.6 million self-employed workers in Britain, according to the Office for National Statistics, and on average they work longer hours than employed workers. Their wages have fallen by around 22 per cent since 2008. They account for 15 per cent of the workforce, almost double the figure when records began in 1975.

When it next trumpets the supposed benefits of the EU, UCATT might like to note its own calculation last year that 963,000 workers in construction were paid, many of them falsely, as self-employed, according to figures the union obtained

from HM Revenue and Customs. No paid holidays for them.

Whether falsely self-employed or not, these workers are not protected at all by any legislation regarding hours of work. They have no guaranteed holidays. They have no guaranteed workplace or private pensions, and limited rights to even the basic state pension. No redundancy pay. No protection when a business is transferred. They are even hampered by EU legislation when combining to improve their pay and conditions because they can be treated as employers setting up a cartel! ■



The beginning of a malign myth: European Commission President Jacques Delors at the rostrum at the 1988 TUC, Bournemouth, where the pro-EEC document “Europe 1992” was endorsed. Note, left, Ken Gill, head in hands – and well he might, having just led his union, TASS, into a merger with ASTMS, whose general secretary, Clive Jenkins (right) chaired the session. His union ended up supporting the final composite after all its previous, clear objections to European union had been turned into vague aspirations.

have any intention of telling unions what is going on in the negotiations, leave alone inviting them to the table. But of course, the TUC knows that.

More delusions

The delusions – and the misinformation – have seeped right through many layers of the union movement. Witness UCATT, the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians. “Since 1998,” it proclaims on its website, “thanks to the EU Working Time Regulations, workers have had the right to guaranteed paid holidays. Since April 2009, workers are entitled to at least 5.6 weeks (28 days for workers working a five day week) annual paid holiday per year.”

The statement is wrong on just about every level. First, the Working Time Regulations are UK law, an implementation of the EU Working Time Directive. There is no such thing as the “EU Working Time regulations”.

That’s not just a quibble with wording. It highlights something crucial. An EU regulation automatically has legal force in every country of the EU. A directive, on the other hand, needs to be put (“transposed”) into national law before it has any effect.

So although our Working Time Regulations are there because of a directive, they exist – and will continue to exist – regardless of whether Britain is in the EU or not. If we left the EU tomorrow, the law would still stand in Britain. It’s not a “right”

we would “lose” if Britain became independent of the EU.

Second, the statutory right to guaranteed paid holidays was not a gift from the EU. It goes back to 1871, with the Bank Holiday Act (admittedly, only a few days). Third, not all workers are entitled to 5.6 weeks – the police and armed services are not covered. Nor are “self-employed” workers – who number roughly 4.6 million in Britain.

In construction specifically, a report from the University of Essex commissioned by UCATT and published in 2010 concluded that around 400,000 workers were “falsely self-employed” – and that’s on top of a slightly larger number of workers in the industry estimated to be genuinely self-employed. No guaranteed holidays for them. UCATT’s total membership stands at about 84,000. So much for the EU guaranteeing the holidays of construction workers.

And as importantly, the European Union’s Directive does not entitle anyone to “at least 5.6 weeks” a year. It sets a minimum of four weeks. In Britain the law construes that as excluding our eight public holidays (8 days is 1.6 weeks), but the EU directive allows countries to include public holidays.

Unions besotted with the EU should consider this: a British government – this current one, for example – would not have to leave the EU to reduce statutory holiday entitlement by eight days. All it would have

to do is get parliament to amend the Working Time Regulations. Entitlement would shrink from 4 weeks plus public holidays to 2.4 weeks plus public holidays, and we would still be compliant with the EU directive.

What’s stopping Cameron from doing that? Only the knowledge that it is (currently) politically impossible. So much for our holidays being protected by the EU!

In fact, in 1997, a year before the implementation of the European Working Time Directive in Britain, only 6 per cent of full-time workers received less than 12 days’ paid holidays (though that figure probably excludes public holidays – it is hard to tell, as the survey gathering did not distinguish between public holidays and work holidays). The figure now, according to the government, is around 3 per cent (probably accounted for by employees such as the police excluded from the Regulations). So at around 97 per cent of the working population didn’t benefit from the European Directive.

The only good guarantee of decent holidays, and other working conditions, is strong trade union organisation. Even now, with the current laws in place, the TUC says that (on top of the self-employed) 1,669,000 employees are missing out on their legal entitlement to paid holidays. A survey by Xpert PR published in 2011 found that a

They call this protection?

ASK A EUROPHILE ABOUT the “benefits” of the EU and one that might be thrown in your face is the Agency Workers Directive. Yet as trade union lawyer John Hendy has pointed out, it “appears helpful but in fact has led to a massive increase across Europe in the number of workers employed through agencies and hence without the full rights of directly employed workers”

Much the same could be said about TUPE, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations put in place as a result of the EU’s more starkly titled Business Transfers Directive.

TUPE is supposed to protect work-



ers’ rights when a business is sold, by guaranteeing them the same terms and conditions when they move from one employer to another.

It is certainly true that it was introduced reluctantly as a piece of legislation originating in Brussels, in 1981. At the time, the junior Conservative minister David Waddington told parliament he was recommending TUPE “with a remarkable lack of enthusiasm”.

But had he known what TUPE’s effect would be, Waddington might have been more enthusiastic, and unions less so – especially as TUPE has offered virtually no protection on pensions.

The EU talks big about “solidarity” and workers’ rights. But in reality it has made workers’ rights subservient to the employer’s “fundamental right” to “busi-

ness freedom”. It has done this through court judgements such as *Alemo-Herron v Parkwood Leisure* in 2013, where the right to be covered by a collective agreement after a transfer has been severely reduced.

The case covered former employees of Lewisham council, and initially an Employment Appeals Tribunal upheld their case. Then the Court of Appeal rejected it. Next the Supreme Court washed its hands of the case completely and referred it to the European Court of Justice.

The European Court sided with the employer on the basis that the right to run a company to make a profit is a more fundamental right than anything else. That’s the EU for you.

Disarming

Just as importantly, a major effect of TUPE has been to disarm workers in the face of privatisation. By holding out faint promises that all will be well, it has allowed buyers of a company or providers of outsourced services to buy the staff lock, stock and barrel – and there is a real stick as well as the phoney carrot, because if you refuse to transfer you lose the right to redundancy.

So we get back to capitalism, pure and simple. TUPE plus the court judgements have returned to the original concept, effectively wage slavery: the new capitalist buys the company or service and its assets – including human ones.

That’s not to say that clever tactical thinking cannot take advantage of the regulations to strengthen union organisation and even postpone privatisation. For a recent example of how to do this, see the fight by Unison’s branch at the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital to hang on to Orthotics (see <http://bit.ly/1VBoFKy>).

But in the end, the outsourcing or sell-off will go ahead, and organisation will inevitably be weakened. ■

Continued from page 13

common reason for increasing holiday entitlement was “employee/union negotiations”, and that companies with a “union presence” had on average two days more holiday a year. Sadly, less than 30 per cent of the workforce is covered by collective union agreements, according to official government statistics.

If we left

Pick up most newspapers and you can find total rubbish about the EU. Take this, from *The Observer*, speculating on the consequences of a Brexit: “EU law guarantees workers’ rights in areas such as maternity and paternity leave, holiday pay and in the event of mass redundancies. There would be pressure from business groups to relax these standards.”

As if there isn’t pressure now. One of the key ways that pressure is applied is in the form of fragmentation of the workforce through casualisation, which abolishes all these “rights”, and competition through unfettered migration.

The undeniable fact is that membership of the EU has gone hand in hand with a ruthless assault on Britain’s trade unions and on the pay and conditions of workers in Britain.

That’s hardly surprising. For all its talk of “a social dimension” and equal opportunities, the EU has written into its treaties the sanctity of four fundamental freedoms.

Those freedoms have been neatly spelled out by labour lawyer John Hendy in his paper “The terrible tale of the EU and Trade Union Rights” (available at tuaeu.co.uk): to provide services; to establish business; to move capital; to move labour – from one member state to another. “As we will see,” says Hendy, “these four

‘EU membership has gone hand in hand with an assault on unions.’

freedoms practically trump all other rights.”

Hendy does not dismiss all the individual employment rights in various EU directives, but says that “the limited scope of these individual rights is notable”.

He goes on: “They have little application to most terms and conditions of employment to protect or encourage good pay and decent jobs. They say nothing about pensions nor about dismissal (save in particular circumstances such as in a transfer of an undertaking). They neither promote nor protect collective bargaining. They do nothing to protect the right to strike.”

Hendy’s paper should be compulsory reading in trade union offices around the country. It gives specific examples where the European Union’s Court of Justice has upheld the rights of employers against those of workers. Tellingly, it concludes that: “The EU has become a disaster for the collective rights of workers and their unions.” ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist’s next series of London public meetings in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1R 4RL, continues on 25 November with the title “The Great Breakthrough – Soviet Planning versus Capitalist Chaos”. The meetings will take place in the Brockway Room, which can accommodate more people than the room previously used. 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

Taking on the union myth-makers

JUST ABOUT every union in Britain has policy opposing privatisation. Many are committed to fighting TTIP. It is the EU that is spearheading these attacks on workers.

Yet most unions are in denial. Take Roy Rickhuss, general secretary of steelworkers’ union Community. “I say it is not on the side of working people to threaten the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union,” he wrote on the union’s website on 25 September. Tell that to steelworkers whose industry the EU tells us we cannot support.

One union is certainly clear. In line with a motion carried at the RMT conference in Newcastle at the end of June, its general secretary, Mick Cash, has spoken clearly about the EU’s “anti-worker agenda”. His union called in June for an out vote in any referendum on the issue:

“EU policies are at odds with the aspirations of this union as the various treaties and directives are demanding the privatisation of our rail and ferry industries,” he said. ■



Joint RMT and TSSA demonstration against the EU outside its London headquarters, 2013.

Even before an actual day has been set for the referendum predicting disaster if Britain leaves. And yet it's becoming

It shouldn't be if Britain

THE EUROZONE is at a critical stage. Meant to bring the countries of Europe together economically, it has done the opposite. The eurozone economies that we were told were going to converge have diverged. The gap between the northern European countries (principally Germany) and the rest has grown and is growing.

The European Commission says that the EU must integrate or disintegrate. Its president, Jean-Claude Juncker has produced a new report urging progress on four "unions" – economic, financial, fiscal and political – to be achieved by 2025 at the latest.

So unless we vote to leave, we will be subject to a very forceful process of integration, or we will go down with the decline of the eurozone.

Unthinkable?

Lots of different people are now looking into the fine detail of what leaving would mean. For example in the Netherlands they are talking about Nexit. It is no longer taboo to talk about this subject.

Nicola Sturgeon says "it would be unthinkable for Scotland to leave the EU". Despite losing the Scottish referendum, she has real difficulty in grasping that people may think differently to herself. If it were true that no one in Scotland would ever contemplate leaving the EU, how come a Scottish constituency in the last European election voted in a UKIP candidate?

Workers make up their own minds. It may not be what you as a trade unionist or a Marxist want them to think, but make up their own minds they will. Scottish RMT members were part of their union's decision to campaign for an Out vote (see page 15). If only more trade unionists were as clear.

Don't forget we were told that it would be "unthinkable" not to join the euro, and the sweet irony is that now nobody is giving that idea a second thought.

So exit is not unthinkable – lots of people are thinking about it, right across Britain including Scotland and Wales.

Fleeing investors?

You may have heard the refrain about "fleeing investors" from several quarters. The Confederation of British Industry likes to say it at regular intervals – not altogether surpris-

ing when you consider it gets a substantial amount of its funding from the EU.

In 2013 the chief executive officer of Nissan said "Nissan will reconsider its investment in the UK if Britain leaves the EU". But then on 3 Sept 2015 Nissan announced £100 million investment in the Sunderland plant, which will secure its future beyond 2020.

So not only are they *not* withholding investment ahead of the referendum, they are happy to make a commitment for beyond that period. Tim Tozer, until recently managing director of Vauxhall, said a British exit would not cause "trouble" for the company or its parent General Motors. Employing 35,000 people in Britain, it would continue to build its Astra model here.

Some 85 per cent of Nissan vehicles produced in Britain are exported, the bulk of them to the European market. But on the CBI's own website it now states: "While the European market is important, growth there is constrained and Nissan is placing a growing emphasis on emerging markets."

In one major independent study of North American and Asian investors one of the survey questions was, "If the UK renegotiated its relationship with the EU to be less integrated would that make you more or less inclined to invest?" – and the answer was "more" inclined to invest.

As for the financial sector, the City of London, we were once told that if we did not join the euro, financial services would suffer terribly. Not so. For many reasons (many of them things which concern us greatly) investment in the unregulated London financial market will continue.

In short, for many investors it will make no difference, and some will see a Britain "untied from the EU" as more attractive.

Trade

A lot of Britain's trade is with Europe. It is today and was for a very long time before we joined the EU. And our trade has grown because now the EU has 28 countries in it. But as a proportion of our total exports the share going to the EU is going down and has been going down for two decades.

Put simply, dependence on trade with the EU is a bad thing for us as a trading nation: we must diversify. This applies in



rkf_foto/shutterstock.com

Image and reality: young male migrants sit around

'For many investors it will make no difference.'

capitalist economic terms, and if we as workers had economic control we too would need to look across the world to trade our goods.

Another sweet irony is that those of us who want to leave the EU are told that we are "little Englanders", when in fact it is those of us who want to leave the EU who see the need to trade with Brazil, India, China and Russia.

Britain will still continue to trade with EU

on membership of the EU, the mongers of doom are increasingly clear that the opposite is true...

leaves the EU, but when



on graffiti-daubed concrete in front of the pretentious logo of the European Central Bank, Frankfurt.

countries – including Ireland, of course – and they with us. A big incentive for the EU countries is that they export more to us than we to them.

Britain is actually Germany's biggest export market. We do like a Volkswagen apparently, even when they have been fiddling their figures on emissions! Why would they put us out in the cold, when they want us to buy their stuff?

EU and peace

Another myth is that the EU has kept the peace in Europe. Has it? Its origins don't encourage that idea. It was the Nazis who in 1942 first coined the phrase "European Economic Community" (EEC), or Europäische Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft as they called it.

The EEC as envisaged then was to form one single empire based around Germany. The idea had been simmering in fascist circles for some time, and continued to. There is a picture of Oswald Mosley from the British Union of Fascists standing on a plinth in Trafalgar Square with the strap line "Europe a Nation" and an array of European flags behind him.

Germany's first chancellor after the end of the Second World War, Konrad Adenauer, said: "a federated Europe will be a third force. Germany has again become a factor with which others will have to reckon. If we Europeans colonise Africa we create at the same time a supplier of raw materials for Europe."

Then look at what has actually happened: modern historians call the period

'Let's reclaim the words Europe and European from the disastrous EU.'

from the end of the Second World War to now as a time of "intervention", when formerly independent countries such as Iraq or Libya were bombed by meddling outside forces who then left a horrendous patch of lawless territory for so-called "insurgents", often funded and supplied with weapons, to fill the vacuum. The EU was certainly party to the US-led NATO interventions and their aftermath.

In Europe there was the break-up of Yugoslavia. NATO's attack on Yugoslavia in 1999, supported by the EU, was an illegal attack on a sovereign state. Remember that Germany was the first country to recognise Croatia as an independent country – an important trigger in that conflict.

Fast forward to 2013 and Ukraine. The EU wanted the elected government of Ukraine to sign an EU association agreement. That government thought it was a rotten deal and said it wanted to review its options and talk to other countries such as Russia about a better deal. The EU then backed a fascist-led uprising against the elected government. So the EU has fomented war in the Balkans, and on its Eastern border with Ukraine.

Let's reclaim the words Europe and European from the disastrous political project that is the EU and the eurozone.

Let's remember that across the continent there are people like us contemplating and working out the final detail of what it would mean to leave the disastrous project behind and reclaim their sovereignty and democracy. There is a great deal of work to be done in the trade union movement to get clarity on this question. Let's be inspired by the debate at the RMT AGM in June 2015. ■

This article is a shortened version of a speech given at a CPBML meeting in Conway Hall on 22 September]

Jeremy Hunt's hamfisted attempt to force junior doctors to backfired. Armed with the knowledge that they are defended

Junior doctors make a s

THE BRITISH Medical Association (BMA) announced that ballot papers would go out to its members in early November. It is a ballot which, should it go ahead, could well result in the first national strike action by junior doctor members since the 1970s.

The BMA was acting in response to the news that the government intends to impose a new contract with effect from August 2016, possibly using the fire and re-hire tactic increasingly popular with employers, ever since Rupert Murdoch used it to move newspaper production to Wapping and to try to break trade union organisation in the print industry. Protracted negotiations over two years had reached an impasse.

Hunt has tried to muddy the waters of the negotiations by claiming that the new contract is to enforce the government's "seven-day working".

This has been met with a sharp response from junior doctors, who know only too well that we already have a seven-day NHS, and understand the sham. Equally, when Hunt plays the safety card, as he has been doing since the Mid-Staffordshire hospitals affair, all health workers know that adequate numbers of trained professionals are the best guarantee of patient safety.

Evidence?

The evidence used to support the seven-day working claim does not stand up to the scrutiny of critical appraisal. While it is true that the published papers which Hunt likes to quote so often do indicate an increased risk of mortality for patients admitted at weekends, the evidence does not show a link with staffing arrangements.

In fact, patients admitted at weekends for elective surgery scheduled midweek will by definition be those in poor health, who can expect worse outcomes than healthier patients admitted the night before or on the day of their procedure.

Further government duplicity was revealed by an ex-Tory health minister and doctor, who told newspapers that by September 2014 there was broad agreement between the BMA and the Department of Health and a deal was close, but Hunt intervened to change the Department of Health's position. Negotiations, which had



Workers

Doctors turned out in their thousands on 17 October to march against the government's proposals

begun in 2013, broke down as both consultants' and junior doctors' representatives had no choice but to withdraw.

The government referred the contracts to the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration. Hunt announced its findings in a speech to the King's Fund, as part of his propaganda offensive.

Under the new contract junior doctors' normal working day would be increased to include a considerable amount of evening and weekend working, with an extension of

"standard time" from 60 hours to 90 hours a week. Currently 7 pm to 7 am Monday to Friday and the whole of Saturday and Sunday are considered "antisocial" hours, rewarded by a higher rate of pay. Under the proposals, "standard time" would be extended to 10pm in the evening from Monday to Friday and on Saturday too. This would enforce a pay cut of 15 per cent for many junior doctors, especially those in areas like emergency and acute medicine, which depend on out-of-hours working.

to agree to an outrageous new contract has already
 killing the NHS, the doctors are fighting back...

Stand for the NHS



ed new contract.

The achievement of limits to junior doctors' working day, after many years of struggle, is threatened by an end to the sanctions NHS Trusts can incur if agreements on junior doctors working time are breached.

Under the current New Deal contract this is enforced, not through the European Working Time Directive as the government would like us to think, but through a banding system. The banding system, hard-won, enforces payments for hours according to the length of the period spent at work, and

the hours when these fall. It has built-in safeguards to prevent excessive hours and to ensure doctors receive sufficient rest and breaks, and is enforced by monitoring visits. If a Trust is found to be in breach of these, it faces a financial penalty. This would be scrapped, and the Review Body suggested the European regulations be substituted.

The European regulations are far worse than the existing contractual provision, only allowing for shorter and less frequent rest periods, with no effective enforcement mechanism. The New Deal contract provides a safety net to prevent junior doctors from having to work dangerously long hours. The government has told the BMA it plans to reduce the number of breaks during shifts down to just 20 minutes every six hours. In practice, the BMA says, this could mean that a doctor working an 11-hour shift will only get a single 20-minute break.

Trainees in general practice, where there is already a staffing crisis (covered in recent issues of *Workers*), could end up earning less than their hospital colleagues. At the moment GP trainees are paid a supplement, which ensures they are not financially disadvantaged for their choice of specialty compared with hospital trainees. This would end, and general practice will be even more unattractive. In London, 30 per cent of GP vacancies are currently unfilled. This gives the lie to Hunt's and NHS England's rhetoric about the importance of general practice.

Losing increments

Many who spend time in higher education or research would lose their right to annual increments. Doctors who change specialty, a not-uncommon career path in areas such as surgery, where there are many sub-specialties, would have to start again at the bottom of the pay scales.

Doctors who work less than a full working week, as is often the case in specialties like paediatrics, known as Less-Than-Full-Time, would be significantly disadvantaged. The practice of Fixed Leave, by which junior doctors can be told by diktat when to take annual leave, will continue. This has long been a significant problem for junior doctors and their work-life balance.

The BMA is demanding the following before negotiations can re-open:

'The scandal has implications for patient safety.'

- Proper recognition of unsocial hours as premium time;
- No disadvantage for those working unsocial hours compared to now;
- No disadvantage for those working less than full time and taking parental leave, compared to the current system;
- Pay for all work done;
- Proper hours safeguards protecting patients and their doctors.

The scandal of an NHS staffed by exhausted, demoralised over-worked junior doctors, and locums galore, has far greater implications for patient safety than any of the incidents that Hunt and his fans like to cite. Add to this that 20 trusts are now in "special measures" and a further 27 are receiving "intensive support", and Hunt's wrecking intentions towards the NHS become crystal clear.

Many of the medical Royal Colleges, which traditionally stand aloof from trade union issues, have voiced concern about the proposals. Consultants, who remember the conditions under which they trained, have expressed considerable support for their junior colleagues.

The junior doctors have shown spirit and unity, to say nothing of tactical ingenuity, and have wrong-footed the government. A few have been heard arguing that doctors should betray their colleagues and run away from the situation by emigrating. This struggle has made it clear how migration works in the interests of capitalism, never in the interests of workers. These voices should be condemned as cowardly agents of the government. Stand and fight.

In their first struggles in the 1970s, junior doctors understood that they were workers like any other. They have come a long way, and are showing greater clarity over issues like migration and the EU than many in our class. On their demonstrations they chant the name of their union, showing a pride in their organisation lacking elsewhere in the class. We can all learn from their struggle. ■

In the theatre industry and elsewhere, management knows how to take advantage of staff commitment...

Struggle off the stage



Workers

The Globe Theatre, London: drama off the stage as well.

A LONG-RUNNING dispute over front of house staff wages and conditions at the Globe Theatre in London has been “settled” – for the time being. This follows a one-day strike in May 2015, with the threat of further action. A degree of progress has been made.

Action has concentrated minds on resolving some of the seemingly incompatible demands on theatre space, as well as throughout the building. According to one rep, from media and entertainment union BECTU, this could not have been achieved a year ago.

Considering that this was the first time the Globe tour guides had voted to go on strike, their action was commendably united. Management however had conducted a benchmarking exercise based on the “industry median” (mainly low pay), while ignoring the guides’ special skills, as well as the unique nature of the Globe itself.

The agreement, announced on 1 October, was for an increase of 3 per cent in pay, applied to all staff across the board regardless of skill level, including at the adjacent Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Although it was well short of expectations, a ballot of

members resulted in a 78.1 per cent vote to accept the company’s offer. Members are now deliberating how to build on their modest success at a future date.

The guides’ pay settlement is less than that of professional guides in the commercial tourism sector, yet their contribution to an understanding of Britain’s greatest playwright is arguably of greater social value. Their specialist knowledge, practical skills such as crowd management and vocal delivery, as well as their investment in professional development, should attract a correspondingly professional rate of pay, but their freelancing style of work plays into the hands of the employer.

Zero hours

Unlike staff exclusively conducting the Globe’s educational tours, a number of the 38 guides are primarily actors, who tolerate a zero hours arrangement. This is seen to represent “flexibility”, allowing them to attend auditions, or to work elsewhere as guides or translators. In reality the main beneficiary is management; the guides’ availability for work at the Globe outstrips the number of jobs actually offered.

‘A volunteering ethos deriving from struggling origins holds back progress today.’

Many of those with language qualifications also handle foreign student groups and their teachers, in case translation is needed. Hidden aspects of their labour power (their capacity to generate profit) include promotion, sales and fundraising, street tours to the Rose Theatre (also situated on Bankside), costume dressing and printing press demonstrations. Such work involves the company in few overhead costs, but indirectly subsidises ambitious projects like the “Round the World Hamlet”.

Management takes full advantage of staff commitment to the Globe. A volunteering ethos deriving from its struggling origins holds back progress in today’s environment.

Vision

Opened in 1997, the Globe was the brain-child of Sam Wanamaker, the American communist actor and director, famous for refusing to testify against his fellow artists to the US House of Representatives Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s. He subsequently found refuge in Britain (albeit under the watchful eye of MI5). Meeting official resistance to his plans for resurrecting Shakespeare’s Globe, Wanamaker sank his own earnings into the project. He gathered around him a kind of cooperative dedicated to his vision, with no thought of putting profit before the playhouse.

It is very different today. Capitalism has been allowed to rampage. The world of the arts has become as cut-throat as the City, with managers putting their careers and bonuses ahead of public safety and satisfaction. Class interests reveal themselves in struggle: if we are to survive there can be no clinging to the illusion of worker and employer forming one happy family, including in the arts. ■

Africa should be a rich continent. But as a new book reveals, its wealth is being systematically looted...

The rape of Africa



Copper mine in Palabora, South Africa.

***The Looting Machine: Warlords, tycoons, smugglers and the systematic theft of Africa's wealth*, by Tom Burgis, hardback, 319 pages, ISBN 978-0-00-752308-5, William Collins, 2015, £20, Kindle and e-book editions available, paperback available soon.**

THIS STUDY by investigative journalist Tom Burgis about the systematic looting of Africa's riches gives us case studies of the theft of Africa's resources. It covers Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Guinea, Niger, Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

These countries all have vast natural resources which benefit few of their citizens. Many live in extreme poverty, ranging from 43 per cent in Angola to 88 per cent in Congo. Between 2007 and 2012, just 2.5 per cent of the \$41 billion generated by Congo's mining industry went into the national budget.

Nearly \$6 trillion was illicitly taken out of the poorest African countries between 2001 and 2011. Four-fifths of this was due to trade mispricing, where companies fix the prices at which they sell goods and services either between their own subsidiary companies or in deals with other companies.

The UN said that the companies trading minerals in Congo were "the engine of the conflict" there, which killed millions. Burgis points out that "the resource curse can still bite where there is peace – abetted by the global institutions charged with alleviating Africa's poverty and a financial system that drains away the proceeds of the continent's natural wealth."

The World Bank reported that the IMF "promoted aggressive privatization of significant mining and hydrocarbon assets for short-term financing of the [government's budget] deficit. This did nothing to ensure the creation of competition, efficiency gains, development of a domestic private sector, or environmentally and socially sound development strategies for the extractive sectors."

Burgis explains why British governments give aid. It is not altruism: "foreign aid... constitutes a significant share of many resource states' income – effectively subsidizing private oil and mining companies with taxpayer funds from donor countries."

In 2002 China's trade with Africa was worth \$13 billion a year; by 2012, it was \$180 billion. Lamido Sanusi, governor of Nigeria's central bank from 2009 to 2014, said, "So China takes our primary goods and sells us manufactured goods. This was

also the essence of colonialism. The British went to Africa and India to secure raw materials and markets. Africa is now willingly opening itself up to a new form of imperialism."

The UN ranks countries on their human development and on their GDP per head. By relating the two, you can see whether a country's growth improves its people's welfare.

Cuba comes out as the best in the world. Of the ten worst, five are African resource-rich states: Angola, Gabon, South Africa, Botswana and Equatorial Guinea.

We are often told that the cause of Africa's poverty is corruption. Burgis's version is that it is "a failure of leadership". But the cause of Africa's poverty isn't corruption, it is capitalism.

Burgis calls the treatment of Africa a new kind of empire – financialised colonialism. But this isn't new: it's still imperialism. The City of London and its allies in Hong Kong, Singapore, the British Virgin Islands and elsewhere exploit whoever they can, wherever they can, across the world.

We are also told by Burgis and others that globalisation now runs the world. No, again, we must call it by its proper name – capitalism. ■

The Opium Wars against China in the mid-nineteenth century climax to a most disgraceful chapter in the history of the

Britain's imperial wars for

EXTRACTED FROM poppies, opium is a highly addictive drug, though it can serve as a medicine. By the end of the 17th century, non-medicinal drug use of opium had appeared in China, particularly around the port of Canton (now known as Guangzhou), where most foreign merchants traded. In the mid-18th century the British East India Company had secured trading rights for opium after gaining control of Bengal from the Moghul emperors. Profits from opium exports were to help the British Empire pay for spices from the East Indies. For traders, a supply of addicted consumers meant a business boom.

Though the emperors of China were worried about the spread of foreign influence, they were also desperate for revenue. Foreign merchants were tolerated, as they bought Chinese tea and silk, though their movements were strictly controlled. They were allowed to settle in Macao, a Portuguese settlement since the 16th century. With Portugal's decline as a maritime power, the East India Company became dominant there.

Banned

The spread of opium-smoking eventually disturbed the Imperial Court in Beijing. In 1729 an edict banned opium smoking and its importation, except under licence for medicinal use. There were heavy penalties for dealing in the drug. Initially the East India Company kept to the ban, not wanting to jeopardise its influence, and opium smokers in China were limited to supplies from the Portuguese or freebooters.

The Chinese increased controls on opium throughout the 18th century. To evade the ban, the East India Company farmed out transport to "country ships", private traders whom the company licensed to take goods from India to China. It did not risk sending opium in its own ships for fear of losing its lucrative tea trade.

Opium was grown by poppy cultivators in India, especially in Bengal, effectively under British control like most of India at the time. To bring the opium into China, the country traders sold it to smugglers along the Chinese coast. The gold and silver the traders received from these sales were then turned over to the East India Company.

In China, the East India Company used the gold and silver it received from opium smuggling to purchase goods that could be sold profitably in England. There was tremendous demand in Britain for Chinese tea, silks, and porcelain pottery, but there was little demand in China for Britain's manufactured goods.

As Britain did not have enough silver to trade with the Chinese Empire, the British Empire used the profits of the opium trade to pay for Chinese products.

The amount of opium imported into China at first increased gradually from approximately 200 chests a year in 1729 (about 12 tons) to 1,000 chests in 1767, before surging to 10,000 a year between 1820 and 1830. By 1838 the amount had soared to 40,000 chests, over 2,500 tons of opium extract.

For the first time the balance of payments began to run against China and in favour of Britain. Such a massive network of opium distribution had formed, that by the 1830s millions of Chinese were hooked. This caused significant damage to the health and productivity of the nation. At this point the British Empire decided to force the issue of increased trade rights, stressing the opium trade.

The Qing ruling dynasty attempted to enforce tighter opium restrictions. In spring 1839 Chinese authorities at Canton confiscated and burned the opium. In retaliation, the British occupied positions around the city. This trading conflict escalated into the first Opium War between Britain and China from 1839 to 1842. During the war the Chinese could not match the technological and tactical superiority of the British forces. A British naval fleet arrived in June 1840, attacking along the Chinese coast.

'The British Empire used the profits of the opium trade to pay for Chinese products.'



Above: an 1843 painting glorifying the destruction by British naval vessels of Chinese war junks in Anson's Bay in 1841. Right: nineteenth-century photograph of Chinese opium smokers.

The outcome of this war was not to legalise the opium trade but it halted Chinese efforts to stop it. In 1842 China agreed to the Treaty of Nanking and had to pay a large fine. Hong Kong island was ceded to Britain. Five other ports, including Canton, were opened to British residence and trade.

Imports

In the second Opium War (1856–60), the Chinese government was again defeated by the British and the French. This time it was forced to legalise the opium trade, though it did levy a small import tax. Opium imports to China had reached 50,000 to 60,000 chests a year, continuing to increase for the next 30 years.

The peace was as wicked as the war. With the Treaty of Tientsin (1858), China had to open 11 more ports to trading and allow foreign ships including warships to navigate freely along the coast and up the Yangtze River. The British were given trading rights in the ports of Canton and Shanghai and in

ury were the nasty British Empire... or opium



1860 more land to extend the Hong Kong colony.

Foreigners were allowed to travel to the interior for the first time. Christians gained the right to spread their faith and hold property, thus opening up another means of western penetration. China's right to rule in its own territory was increasingly limited. The Chinese refer to this period as the time of unequal treaties – one of national degradation and humiliation.

The importance of opium in the West's trade with China declined from the beginning of the 20th century. China also signed a treaty with India to end the import of opium by 1917. But opium smoking and addiction remained a problem for China in subsequent decades. Opium smoking was not finally eradicated until after the accession of New China led by communists in 1949. ■

6 SIX CALLS TO ACTION

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

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

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

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

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

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

3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation

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

4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

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

5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

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

6: Build the Party

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

Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
- Send an A5 sae to the address below for a list of publications, or email us.
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Credits for capitalists

'What isn't discussed is just what a pernicious con this "benefit" really is...'

SHOULD BRITISH workers demand the right to working tax credits? The government's push to reduce them is being greeted with howls of outrage from many. The press is full of examples of people who risk impoverishment when the credits are cut back, which, of course, will be the result in the immediate term.

But the basic problem is that workers are failing to fight for better wages – so tax credits have been allowed to become a lifeline for far too many workers. The employers have been happy, of course, since the tax credit system acts as a giant handout for them.

The current system of tax credits was started by Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown in 1999. Brown launched it with slogans such as "Tackling poverty and extending opportunity" – an admission that many were working for poverty wages, and a deliberate discouragement to wages struggles. Now, the system of credits, including child tax credit (the latter payable to both the working and non-working) has become fiendishly complicated. Around seven million workers are eligible, with around five million actually claiming – a huge number. The cost to other workers is currently around £30 billion.

What isn't discussed is just what a pernicious con this "benefit" really is. Bear in mind that you have to be working over 16 hours a week to be eligible. So a worker goes to work, but the pay is so low that they can't live on it or raise a family. So instead of fighting in a trade union together with their fellow workers to force the employer to raise wages to a level which will be enough to live on, the worker claims a top-up in the form of working tax credit. This top-up is provided by other workers through taxation.

So one set of workers pays another set of workers to make it possible for them to work for a wage which is so low they can't survive on it. What a brilliant wheeze for the

employers! They don't have to pay a decent wage, because workers will subsidise them not to. And what's more, the workers whose pockets are being picked are campaigning for the continuation of this daylight robbery.

Add to this the system of housing benefit – in 2013-14 this cost around £23.8 billion, money that went straight into the pockets of landlords.

When the Thatcher government legislated to abandon rent controls and other regulation of the private rental sector in 1989, concern was expressed in parliament that housing benefit costs would rocket as, inevitably, rents went up. The housing minister Sir George Young responded "Housing benefit will underpin market rents...If people cannot afford to pay that market rent, housing benefit will take the strain." So that's ok then!

Recently a London landlord, Andrew Panayi, was ordered to pay back £70,000 after he was found guilty of renting out a storage basement as self-contained living accommodation. He had been charging £975 a month in rent.

How could Panayi charge so much for a lightless hole in the ground? A combination of no rent controls and housing benefit, of course. So workers are pouring money into landlords' pockets to enable them to charge what would otherwise be unaffordable rents. Panayi rents out 180 properties. His company Ploughcane had net assets of £17 million in 2013, and made an operating profit of £2.3 million. A landlord's dream

Workers must learn again the lessons we have conveniently forgotten. For those who can't work because of illness or disability, society must support a decent and dignified life. But for others, it's been too easy to avoid fighting for wages by claiming for tax credits and housing benefit paid for by other workers. Fight for the right to work, and for the dignity of a decent wage! ■

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