

WORKERS

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DITCH THIS DEAD PARLIAMENT!

TRADE Real freedom

EU ARMY Here already

ENERGY Blackouts ahead

RAIL Nationalisation needed

SCOTLAND SNP failure

UNIONS Rep Interview

BUSES More chaos

UNIS Salaries soar

FREEDOM Next steps

plus News, Book

Review, Historic Notes

and more

WORKERS



Only one option

THANKS TO the parliamentary farce (yet another one!) on Saturday 19 October and the passing of the Letwin amendment, this issue of *Workers* will go to press with Brexit undecided. All options are in the air. But for the people of Britain, those who live and work here, there is only one option.

Boris Johnson's proposed treaty is not acceptable and never will be. It commits Britain to continued subjection to the European Court of Justice. It deprives Britain of an independent capability on tax, trade, foreign policy and defence. It effectively allows Northern Ireland to be split from the United Kingdom simply because the EU demands it. And it commits us, too, to paying at least £39 billion.

Many people are understandably wearied, and want the Brexit issue to be over. Looking at the deal through tired eyes, some have convinced themselves that it is palatable. But they are not actually looking at the deal, just listening to others.

To those people we say, don't take anyone's word for it (Karl Marx's motto: "Doubt everything"). Look at the Withdrawal Agreement yourselves. Read the Political Declaration. Then make your mind up. It's tough reading, but it's much easier than living under the EU.

And of course there would be the transition period, when Britain would effectively become a colony of the EU, subject to decisions but not allowed to be involved in them. Does anyone seriously think that the transition period would end at

the end of 2020?

Just wait: in a year's time, with much left to be negotiated – no comprehensive free trade agreement as per Johnson's deal could be negotiated by then – there would be another "cliff edge", renewed talk about "crashing out". And, as night follows day, another extension. (That's if Westminster doesn't opt for never-ending extensions anyway.)

A second referendum? That would be a denial of democracy. It would also damage, mortally, the concept of a referendum itself – when over the past 15 years the use of referendums over Scottish separation, English regionalisation, and proportional voting has shown how valuable they can be in asserting the will of the people against the machinations of the establishment.

No deal has always been the option for Britain. No deal means no strings, and the EU's strings are in fact chains. But even if the EU's internal politics, parliament's own disunity, and the naked opportunism of Westminster's constituent parties result, miraculously, in no deal – in Brexit, in other words – the job will be only half done.

Leaving with no deal will be an important, and vital, step on the road to independence. But we will need to go much further (see feature, page 6). Brexit has blown away many of the cobwebs stifling politics in Britain, but the main obstacle remains: the people must stop leaving politics to the politicians and claim the governance of their own country for themselves. ■



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Schools starved of funds

THE TRUTH behind the government's "end of austerity" rhetoric will out. In spite of announcing additional resources for public services, including education, new research suggests that sufficient resources have not been allocated.

Analysis by the School Cuts coalition of unions calculates that more than 80 per cent of state schools in England will have less funding per pupil in real terms in 2020 than in 2015.

Ministers announced plans last month to invest an extra £7.1 billion in schools over the next three years, but the coalition says there will still be a shortfall of £2.5 billion next year.

Their report adds: "School costs are estimated [to rise] at 2.9 per cent for next year, significantly higher than the minimum funding increase of 1.84 per cent, so roughly a third of schools will have to make further cuts."

Luke Sibieta of the Institute of Fiscal Studies commented: "The government has committed to extra funding of £4.3 billion per year in today's prices, which will be enough to reverse cuts on average. However, that won't fully come in until 2022. It's therefore unsurprising to see analysis showing that most schools will have lower budgets in real-terms."

- Chancellor Sajid Javid's pledge to invest £500 million into youth services is actually £380 million less than has been cut since the Conservatives came to power, according to analysis of figures published by the Department for Education, the *Daily Mirror* reports. In real terms £880 million has been cut from youth services in England since 2010. Half of councils have been pushed to cut spending per young person by over 75 per cent.

BREXIT

Peterloo commemoration

PROTESTERS FROM all over the North West marked the bicentenary of the Peterloo Massacre with a march through the centre on Manchester on 19 October calling for democracy to be upheld and the EU referendum result implemented.

After a one-minute silence to honour those slain in 1819 they went to St Peters' Square, the site of the massacre, to hear speeches from Brendan O'Neill (editor of Spiked-online), Paul Embery (trade unionist and journalist) and a Brexit Party MEP.

The event was organised by Leavers of Manchester, and drew participants from all over the North West. A spokesperson said: "Our forefathers fought for the right to vote. They demanded that the vote of a mill worker should have the same value as the vote of a mill owner. Today we demand that each of our votes has the same value as that of a Gina Miller." ■

HOLIDAY PAY

Never mind the guarantee

RECENT RESEARCH by the Resolution Foundation think-tank suggests that more than a million workers in Britain do not receive any of the holiday pay they are guaranteed by law. The report says as many as one in 20 workers did not receive any holiday pay despite being entitled to at least 28 days a year.

It also found that some workers are unable to calculate whether they are receiving the right level of pay as almost one in 10 do not get a payslip. HMRC has identified 200,000 cases of workers not receiving the minimum wage. ■

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession call us on 020 8801 9543 or email workers@cpbml.org.uk



ON THE WEB

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

Swingeing cuts to youth services revealed

New analysis shows that councils' spending on youth services in England has been reduced by 69 per cent in a decade. Data collated by YMCA England and Wales reveals that the average local authority spend on youth services fell from £7.79 million in 2010 to a planned £2.45 million next year.

Austrian unions celebrate victory over Mercosur free trade deal

Austrian trade unions are claiming victory after the Austrian parliament rejected the planned free trade agreement between the EU and the Mercosur group of countries.

Cancel Dutch ScotRail contract, says RMT

With rising anger at the service failures of Abellio ScotRail, members and supporters of the RMT union marched through Glasgow to the company HQ and on to the Scottish Government offices.

RMT union member "no platformed" for supporting Brexit

A pro-Brexit RMT activist has been "no-platformed" by two prominent journalists, who are among the darlings of so-called "left" EU supporters.

Plus: the e-newsletter

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Workers



Demonstration in Glasgow, 20 September 2019, calling for ScotRail to be taken into public ownership.

Rail nationalisation ruled out

THE REFORM of Britain's railways was one item mentioned in the Johnson government's recent Queen's Speech. Perhaps predictably, the government is to publish a White Paper to implement the findings of the review of the rail industry led by Keith Williams, and progress the next HS2 Bill.

So the government has committed to implementing a review that it says it hasn't seen yet! Williams will not report until next month, but industry cynics believe the outcomes were determined from the outset.

The review was instigated after the infamous timetable meltdown caused by the lack of a "single controlling mind", something Williams has already said he will remedy. The other factor that led to the review, the failure of the franchising system, is also to be tackled with so-called "concessions" (a term favoured by the EU) replacing franchises, with financial incentives or penalties to improve performance. Further public ownership has already been ruled out.

The RMT's General Secretary Mick Cash attacked the announcement, saying, "As we suspected all we are getting is the current failed rail franchising model re-packaged and re-branded."

Mick Whelan, ASLEF General Secretary, commented: "I suppose we should be happy that a Tory Prime Minister has finally admitted what those of us who work in the rail industry have always known – that privatisation has failed."

"The railway is a natural monopoly and it should be run as a public service, not for private profit. In a way that works for passengers, for businesses, for taxpayers, and for those [of us] who work in the industry as drivers and station staff."

The Railway Industry Association has also warned against changes that lead to a pause in work or a hiatus in longer-term investment, and called for an end to boom or bust funding.

Williams and Boris Johnson are also championing further fragmentation of the industry, dressed up as greater local decision making. It is fragmentation as a result of privatisation that has so damaged the ability of the railways to meet the needs of its passengers, and only renationalisation can remedy that. Leaving the EU would at least remove the barriers to reintegration and public ownership. ■

ECONOMY

Post-Brexit boom

A NEW STUDY suggests that Britain will achieve a science and technology boom over the next two decades. It would create around 2.7 million new jobs and generate billions of pounds' worth of output.

The Market Leaders Report *Mapping the UK's post-Brexit Economy* was commissioned by the French bank PNB Paribas.

The report wanted to look beyond the

short term impact of Brexit. There has been far less research into Britain's return to prosperity after leaving the EU.

The Centre for Economics and Business Research conducted surveys of more than 1,500 businesses, mapping the results onto models of output and employment. Businesses with above-average revenue and employment growth for the past three years are much more likely to say that they have benefited from Brexit. ■

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

LOCAL GOVT

Liverpool in crisis

LIVERPOOL'S MAYOR, Joe Anderson, has said that Liverpool City Council is facing its "worst financial crisis since the Second World War," with central government having driven a 63 per cent fall in the local authority's budget since 2010.

Council leader Richard Kemp said "the fact is that this council suffers like others from a year-by-year approach to finance from central government," and asked: "If the government can agree 40 year plans for financing nuclear submarines why can't we regularly have a three- or five-year funding settlement?"

The council has a projected shortfall of £25 million for 2020/21. ■



The University of Edinburgh: top of the high-earners table.

Top uni salaries soar

A REPORT by the Taxpayers' Alliance reveals that 4,423 university staff were paid more than £100,000 a year in 2017-8. The number is up more than 10 per cent on the previous year's tally of 3,947.

The figures exclude Oxford and Cambridge, which failed to provide the proper data.

Data from the Office for Students published in February this year had already revealed that almost half of vice chancellors and principals earn salaries and other remuneration well over £300,000 (the average for 2017-2018 was £293,000).

Now we know that, for instance, 335 staff at Edinburgh University received over £100,000, with 118 earning over £150,000. The LSE paid 117 more than £150,000. On average Russell Group universities paid 185 staff more than £100,000 and 63 over £150,000.

Vice chancellors said that staff numbers overall had increased by 2.3 per cent over the year before. Meanwhile, the average incomes of lecturers have been cut in real terms. Conditions have also worsened to include zero hours contracts and casual working (easier to dispense of at short notice to save money), with faculty budgets cut to the bone.

But while top salaries blossom (and partly because of them) universities are increasingly saddling themselves with debt. With tuition fees for UK students capped, says an analysis from Moody's credit agency, universities can only balance their budgets by increasing the number of overseas students, especially from Asia.

This way universities can repay their debts and "continue their borrowing and building", says Moody's. The building boom on campuses is partly to create new facilities, but also, more significantly, to create on-campus accommodation which overseas students generally prefer.

It is little mentioned nowadays that applications for university from British students are declining, and anyway student fees of £9,250 a year are apparently not enough to fund university ambitions. Competition has driven runaway capital spending. Moody's cites the example of Southampton University, which has issued a £300 million bond to partially fund development costing £621 million.

The UK had 458,520 overseas students as of 2017-2018 (about a quarter of them from China), at 18 per cent one of the highest proportions in the world. The USA has 5 per cent. The proportion here will have to grow, says Moody's, if the sector is avoid decline.

These two reports show just how far universities have allowed themselves to be moved towards market-led businesses calculating profit and loss. It's far from what was once seen as their core function - to provide higher education to British young people. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 19 November, 7.30pm

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

CPBML public meeting: "The EU empire's surge towards a European army"



Every proper empire needs an army, and the EU certainly wants to become an empire - and entangle us in it as well. Come and discuss. All welcome. Free entry.

HOUSING

New starts down

HOUSE BUILDING across England has fallen to the slowest quarterly rate for three years, according to official figures from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Between April and June, there were around 37,220 new homes starting to be constructed across England, a drop of 8 per cent year-on-year and 2 per cent lower than at their peak in March 2007.

The number of houses completed by developers, local authorities and housing associations rose to the highest level in 11 years, by 8 per cent over the year to 173,660, but new starts are dropping. ■



Despite the chaos in Parliament, fundamentally nothing has become ever more hysterical – and coldly calculating...

Next steps on the road



Workers

THE ESTABLISHMENT wants to sabotage Brexit completely. Even if it happens, they will try anything to lock us back into the EU's rules and regulations. So where do we start? This would be a good step: throw the MPs out of Parliament and lock the doors.

Here's a history lesson for those ultra-sensitive MPs who get so upset by straightforward language in Parliament. It's 20 April 1653. Cromwell is berating the Long Parliament (which had sat since 1640).

"It is high time for me to put an end to your sitting in this place, which you have dishonoured by your contempt of all virtue, and defiled by your practice of all vice; ye are a factious crew, and enemies to all good government; ye are a pack of mercenary wretches and would, like Esau, sell your country for a mess of pottage, and like Judas betray your God for a few pieces of silver.

"Is there a man amongst you that has the least care for the good of the Commonwealth?

"Ye sordid prostitutes have you not defil'd this sacred place. . . Ye are grown intolerably odious to the whole nation. . . So, take away that shining bauble and lock up the doors.

"In the name of God go!"

What have MPs in this long parliament done to earn the respect they demand from the people? It seemed to start well when Parliament voted by a huge majority to call a Referendum and the Cameron government promised to implement its decision. Then in February 2017 MPs voted to trigger Article 50 by the very large majority of 384, setting withdrawal at 29 March 2019 whether or not we had a Withdrawal Agreement in place.

Then they set about denying democracy. Parliament failed to allow us to leave on 29 March 2019 and May had to ask the EU for an extension, granted until 31 October 2019.

Boris Johnson was elected to leadership of the Tory party by a large majority on a platform of Brexit by 31 October 2019, deal or no

Liverpool leavers in front of Manchester Town Hall – marching for democracy on the Manchester Peterloo anniversary demonstration, held on Saturday 19 October as MPs in Westminster were once again perverting democracy.

as changed. We still haven't left, and the opposition has

to independence

deal. All hell broke loose. Johnson had to be destroyed!

A squalid court case led to the Supreme Court's blatant overthrowing of the High Court decision that it is wrong for a court to interfere in political decisions. Unanimous. The Supreme Court thus morphed into a political court, a mirror of the European Court of Justice. And the Commons passed the shameful Benn Act, surrendering the government's room to negotiate with the EU.

Since the 2017 election, 1 in 10 MPs have changed party affiliation (some more than once) denying their constituents representation by the party they voted for, and its 2017 election manifesto. Lib Dems say "Bollocks to Brexit", defy the people's decision and revoke Article 50.

There is now no pretence of honour among MPs. As Geoffrey Cox, the attorney general, said in a magnificent Cromwellian speech on 25 September: "This parliament is a disgrace! It has no moral right to sit on these green benches", calling it too cowardly to face the electorate.

The reality is that Parliament has set its face against the people. So now it's time for the people to respond in kind, by setting our face against Parliament. The people alone are sovereign, and have expressed their will in the biggest democratic vote in our history.

Only if a foreign power tries to rule over it can Parliament, fighting for national independence, claim sovereignty on behalf of the people. But now we see Parliament claiming sovereignty on behalf of the people in order to support a foreign power.

General Election?

What will change with a general election? There will be one, in spite of the blockers who fear the wrath of the electorate.

The CPBML has never believed in the probity and honesty of Parliament in upholding democracy. Representing the people comes down to "Vote for us every five years, then we ignore you and do what we want."

But when threatened by a foreign power the situation changes, so clearly we must use every tool at hand to gain our freedom, including a general election. The people must find a way to insist on Brexit. Brexiteers are even now preparing this work, analysing constituency by constituency, candidate by candidate – to work out the best way to use your

vote. Each candidate must know we will hold them to account.

Will any politician get us out? And after an election, whatever happens, then what? This parliament is dead. But the next one? Will we forgive and forget the shambles, the plots, the treachery, and allow this to happen again? Will we, as we have so often done, sit back and put our trust in politicians to do what we demand? Never again!

Only we the people can force Britain out of the EU, and we'll have to deal with Parliament, for there will be lots more problems to tackle.

When we finally leave the EU, there will be even more difficult times. The EU and the transnational corporations that are its masters won't give up, and will continue to work against our independence after we've left.

We'll have to face that. But we'll have gained our freedom from the EU, and be able to tackle our problems ourselves, in our own country, with our own people.

Pressure

Let's change our thinking, abandon any trust in politicians. Keep the true people's voice alive, resounding. We must apply more and more pressure. Leavers' groups around the country are going out to leaflet, talk to people, point out the truth of what the EU really means.

Let's be specific. We have seen headlines highlighting the "Ghost towns of Latvia" – the emptying out of countries through freedom of movement. We know there is an EU foreign policy and army developing, and a new era of integration, with "eurodistricts" cutting across borders and denying democratically elected governments.

We see how the EU operates, how the Commission is chosen, and how the EU elite chose Ursula von der Leyen. We see how the EU parliament operates – it can't introduce, amend or repeal legislation, and MEPs are allowed by European judges to hide their expenses.

The EU is in decline. In 1973 when we joined, 38 per cent of the world economy was in the EU, now it is 16 per cent. The prediction is that 90 per cent will be outside of it in 30 years' time. Leaving will be joining the growing part of the world economy. We won't have to join the euro or bail it out of the predicted crash. We can save £1 billion a

month, the cost of a further extension. We can regain our fishing grounds.

Instead of relying on skilled labour from the EU, we will have once again to train and upskill workers, with jobs made available here rather than being advertised first abroad. The scandal of stealing doctors and nurses from EU countries, while failing to train our own, can be stopped. Without the reserve army of labour from EU countries, wages can be improved – indeed, with the decrease in economic migrants from the EU, they are already improving. The future is bright for the young.

Leaving is the beginning of taking control. It won't come all at once but it means we will be able to enforce our will and vision for what we want our country to be, and it will mean a real stake in government.

According to the current polls, 80 per cent of voters, both leave and remain, put Brexit as their number 1 priority. So we have to deal with it before we can deal with other issues. Whatever happens this week, this month, or next year, it won't go away.

The Labour Party leadership avoids the number 1 issue, instead producing a ridiculous shopping list. Most of the list is not allowed within the EU, for instance renationalisation of the railways.

There was large opposition to the EU-US free trade deal TTIP. So why do so many seem to think we need a free trade deal with the EU? We can trade freely without free trade deals. We can decide for the first time in over 40 years what we need to produce and make and what we want to buy.

We can determine our own rules on animal welfare – banning live exports. We can opt for locally produced food, and we can deal with pollution – cities, roads, air, water.

We can decide for ourselves how to improve our country. There will be lots of disagreements and lively debate. We need planning in each sector by those who work in it. Read the analysis from Fishing for Leave for clarity about how to organise fishing once out of the EU.

Take up the challenge: Do you want to live in an independent country or not?

Let's make every effort to enforce our will to achieve the freedom we demand. ■

• This article is an edited and shortened version of a speech given at a CPBML public meeting in London on 14 October.

Brexit is about far more than trade and who makes our law, our defence and to whom our military owe allegiance. Inside

Every empire needs an a

Etienne Ansotte/European Commission



European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, all smiles with Claudio Graziano, Chairman of the European Union Military Committee, the EU's top military body. The UK is a member.

BORIS JOHNSON has left Theresa May's Remainer deal intact on defence matters. It would keep us in the EU through three commitments: the European Defence Agency, the European Defence Fund and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). All bind us into the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.

May made these commitments in June 2017 – behind Parliament's back – after our decision to leave the EU. Nothing that Boris Johnson announced on 17 October changes this.

These commitments add up to the European Defence Union (EDU), which is structured so that the EU would have an army without any visible difference in member state militaries. The government has tied us into these measures and has prevented any proper scrutiny of what it has done. This would not be leaving the EU.

The European Commission's list of competences states that the EU has the power to implement a Common Foreign and

Security Policy, which includes a common defence policy. Britain would lose national competence in defence. The Ministry of Defence's Director-General of Strategy, Angus Lapsley, has said that "defence is no longer a member-state preserve in the EU". He also said, "We like the EU Global Strategy."

A defence union

Arnout Molenaar, a senior defence advisor on the staff of Federica Mogherini, the previous EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said in April this year that after putting all the structures in place, the EU must now deliver on its promises and implement initiatives such as PESCO and the European Defence Fund.

Ursula von der Leyen, former German defence minister and now the incoming president of the European Commission, said in July, "just two or three weeks ago, for the first time, we were able to give the green light for a European command capacity in

Brussels. That is the first time that military and civil instruments would be commanded together, where these commands would come from one single command office. This is a major step forward. It was unthinkable a short while ago, but it's precisely the right approach to have if we want a European flavour to our defence policy."

She has form on this. At the Munich Security Conference in February 2019, von der Leyen said, "Germany is in favour of adopting the majority principle in European foreign policy decisions." She and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair both said that the EU would wish to pursue interventionist policies in Africa, a continent, she said, where NATO has no real interest. A

'The government has tied us into these measures...'

ws. It is also about who we owe loyalty to, who controls
de the EU, that allegiance is above all to the EU...

army – especially the EU

European empire needs a European army.

The obligatory continuation of the EU's 2011 Defence and Security Procurement Directive would force the government to stop giving contracts to British companies and make it buy instead from the cheapest company in the EU. This would take away our strategic shipbuilding capability and destroy British jobs and skills.

Our defence, security, aerospace and space industries employ 374,000 people. Our maritime industrial sector alone employs 111,000 people and contributes £13 billion to the economy. The only way to ensure that these industrial assets stay in Britain is to pull out of the 2011 EU Directive. The Conservative 2017 election manifesto pledged to take account of the domestic gains from investment and jobs in these industries. Instead, the May government issued a shipbuilding strategy in line with the EU Directive.

Veterans for Britain, an organisation of retired senior officers of all three services, and others has worked hard to raise these issues over several years. It has written letters to the press, set up an excellent website (<http://veteransforbritain.uk>), spoken at conferences and lobbied parliamentarians.

But most MPs and Lords have ignored the information provided. When Lord Bridges, a former minister in Cameron's government who voted to Remain, raised these concerns in the Lords recently, he was derided and told to sit down and shut up.

The threat

On 2 September a conference was held at the Royal United Services Institute on "EU Defence Union – the threat to democracy, industry and alliances". It examined the consequences for the UK if the defence and security sections of May's Brexit "deal" and its associated Political Declaration on the Future Relationship were approved.

Lord James of Blackheath attended and as agreed he raised this in the House of Lords four days later. He said that although the problems that might arise from leaving the EU without a deal were well publicised, there is far less awareness about what will happen if we do not leave without a deal. He said the most important of these is the European Defence Union.

He said, "...the British public...know nothing about it officially. Can we please have a proper account of what it entails? Is it true that the government have entered into private agreements with the European Community that they will, on completion of remain or whatever it is to be, transfer to the European Union in Brussels the entire control of our entire fighting forces, including all their equipment?"

Loyalty to EU

Lord James went on to ask about armed forces being asked to take an oath of loyalty to the EU and not the British Crown, about preparations for the transfer of command and control centres, and for the EU to take control of British intelligence services.

At this point, Lord Blunkett, former Home Secretary under Blair, intervened in mid-sentence with what seemed a threat: "...I appeal to him to conclude, because it is not in either his interests or the interests of the Committee for him to continue."

Later Lord James was approached by former Defence Secretary and NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, who, incandescent with rage, demanded to know his sources for the statements he had made. His sources are available to anyone who visits the Veterans for Britain website. All Lord James added was to call on the government to come clean on their intentions so that the public can make an informed choice.

'Most MPs and Lords have ignored the information provided...'

Since then, other members of the House of Lords have demanded that Lord James resign immediately, and have told him to retract his comments and say no more on these matters. But it's too late as video footage of the speech has received wide public distribution on Twitter.

The attacks on Lord James are because this is the first time the EDU has been raised in such a public political forum. According to former Admiral Roger Lane-Knott, James's speech breached a pact between the Tory and Labour parties, made as long ago as 2015, to say nothing about the EDU.

Everything is linked to everything else in the EU; it is an organisation which is all about integration and not cooperation. The government could and should pass a statutory instrument withdrawing us from all these arrangements. The May government made these agreements under royal prerogative, days after our referendum decision should have ruled them out. ■

CPBML public meeting



London

Tuesday 19 November, 7.30 pm
**"The EU empire's surge towards
a European Army"**
**Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25
Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL**

Every proper empire needs an army, and the EU certainly wants to become an empire – and entangle us in it as well. Come and discuss. All welcome. Free entry.

The chaos in bus services looks set to continue with the g
Transport Committee report. 'Regulated competition' – the

Waiting for a good bus s



tupungato/shutterstock.com

Buses in Wolverhampton, West Midlands.

TRANSPORT UNION RMT has expressed its anger, frustration and disappointment following the government's response in October to the House of Commons Transport Committee's report (published in May 2019) on England's bus services.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash called the government's response a missed opportunity to address the massive decline in the bus industry. Routes have been cut, thousands of bus drivers have lost their jobs and bus journeys have fallen by 300 million in five years as the private companies "cherry pick" which routes to run, leaving communities cut off and isolated.

Cash explained: "Government has failed to take action to address the excessive and unsafe hours in the industry...[and] to legislate to bring local bus driver hours in line with long-distance drivers. This shows that the Government cares more about the private bus companies' profits than the safety of passengers."

He pointed out that the government's

proposals for a national bus strategy cannot be delivered under the current deregulation and privatisation: "The bus industry needs to be renationalised, and run as a public service, not for profit. Local authorities need national ring-fenced funding to enable them to run the bus services"

Backbone

The humble and much maligned bus is the backbone of Britain's public transport network. Around 3 million people travel by bus in Britain every day, allowing them to connect with friends and family as well as accessing education, employment, health and leisure facilities. The bus industry supports around 250,000 jobs. It is vital to the economy and to ensure the mobility of much of the country's population.

Over 60 per cent of all public transport journeys are made by bus. Twenty per cent of men and 30 per cent of women do not have a driving licence, and many who do don't actually drive. Twenty-five per cent of

households don't own a car, and that proportion is much greater in London.

Around half of the 4.36 billion passenger journeys made on local buses in England in 2017/18 were in London which, since bus deregulation and privatisation in 1986, has had a different regulatory regime from the rest of Britain. Services and fares are specified by Transport for London (TfL), and operators bid to run TfL contracts. Under this model, TfL keeps the passenger revenues.

Outside London, bus companies are free to run whatever services they wish, setting fares and timetables. This system was introduced with the Transport Act 1985, which was designed to cut costs and encourage a more "commercial" approach.

'Some authorities have withdrawn subsidies totally.'

Government rejecting key recommendations in a detailed report – the EU's old refrain – is still being imposed...

Public transport service?

Local authorities then overlay the commercial network with what they deem to be socially necessary bus services that private companies won't provide.

Faced with falling funds some authorities, particularly in rural areas, have withdrawn their subsidies totally. Others have seen deep reductions, such as North Yorkshire (78 per cent), Somerset (51 per cent), Leicestershire (57 per cent), Shropshire (60 per cent), West Sussex (64 per cent) and Central Bedfordshire (75 per cent).

When deregulation began in 1986, some local authorities reduced support on the naive expectation that more services would be commercially viable. At various times over the past 30 years local authorities have had different priorities on local bus support, depending on political outlook and competing pressures for funding.

Withdrawal threats

The private companies sometimes threaten to withdraw from routes to get local authorities to underwrite their operations, a tactic that has become less effective as cuts in local government finances have bitten deep.

It is notable that outside London, Arriva (a subsidiary of the German state-owned railways DB) is the only significant foreign player with 15 per cent of the market. Much of the remainder is currently the preserve of British companies First Group, Stagecoach and Go-Ahead. In the London market, around 50 per cent of bus services are provided by foreign companies, including the Paris transport authority RATP.

First Group has 21 per cent of the action outside London, but pulled out of the capital a few years ago because it believed it couldn't make enough money!

In the early 1980s, South Yorkshire was famous for its cheap bus fares which prompted a large increase in bus use. 1981 fares ranged from 3p up to 10p for 6 miles (allowing for inflation, 10p would be 38p at today's prices). After deregulation and privatisation in 1986, those fares rose by 3 or 4 times within a few years, and bus usage slumped. Typical fares now are around £2 to £3, nearly ten times as high in real terms.

Local bus fares in England increased by 71 per cent between March 2005 and March 2018. Bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (86 per cent) than in non-

'Many drivers are barely above the minimum wage...'

metropolitan areas (61 per cent), both well in excess of inflation.

For many elderly and disabled people, the bus is a vital lifeline. Concessionary journeys (elderly, disabled, and youth concessions) make up around 34 per cent (1.51 billion passenger journeys) of all local bus passenger journeys in England.

Fights for pay

Pay, along with health and safety, is a big issue for bus drivers. Bus drivers have seen privatisation and deregulation drive down wages to the point where many are barely above the statutory minimum wage.

As a result, the Unite union – which represents the majority of bus drivers – has fought a number of disputes with employers across the country in the past year. More than 2,000 Arriva bus workers in 11 depots in the North West took strike action last October over pay, paralysing local bus networks in the North West and successfully closing the gap in pay that existed with other Arriva colleagues. There have been other pay skirmishes across the country.

Both Unite and RMT are worried about the health and safety of drivers. Driving a bus often involves long hours, congested roads, and verbal and physical assaults, all of which lead to stress.

Training and competency is also an issue. At the beginning of October a 19-year-old Stagecoach bus driver who had passed his bus driving test only 3 months earlier crashed a double decker bus in Devon. He had never driven the route before, one that was described by the local RMT official as "a challenging road full of twists and turns".

The Transport Committee report somewhat timidly urged the government to explore how recruitment and retention in the bus industry can be improved. The committee recommended the government consult on whether legislation governing bus drivers' hours in Great Britain is still fit for purpose, or whether it should be amended, for example

as is proposed by the Bus Drivers (Working Hours on Local Routes) Bill 2017–19.

The government responded by offering consultations but said that taking action "would risk imposing unreasonable burdens on the industry", and that it has no current plans to make changes to drivers' hours legislation. The message is clear; safety will not be improved if it threatens the profits of the bus operators or results in further subsidies being necessary.

Not surprisingly, the government has given a lukewarm response to several recommendations by the Transport Committee that seek to improve the funding regime in the bus industry. It has been equally unwilling to agree targets to encourage car users to switch to buses and other public transport.

It has even rejected the call by the Transport Committee to ensure a more consistent approach to concessionary fares for young people. Concessions are vital for enabling them to use the buses.

Public ownership rejected

Notably, the government has ignored the part in the first recommendation of the report that refers to allowing local authorities to set up publicly owned companies – a return to the municipal bus companies that existed in the past.

A long-running call for other parts of the country to be able to regulate their bus services in the same way as London was endorsed by the Transport Committee, and the government has agreed to this – but with significant barriers for local authorities to overcome. The model being suggested by the government is based on franchising – and yet the same government is about to end the failed franchising model for passenger services on the railways!

Inevitably the dead hand of the European Union has played its part in influencing the continuing drive for privatisation and competition. In the words of the EU's own website, "the main objectives of European public transport policy are to provide...passenger transport services through regulated competition". As with the railways, only leaving the EU will allow Britain to take the opportunity to reverse that policy and return the bus services to public ownership and control, which the RMT is calling for. ■

What's so good about free trade agreements? They make the ability to plan. So why did the idea surface in Boris Jo

Independence and trade

FOR DECADES we have been told that global free trade – where goods can be imported and exported without restrictions or tariffs – is the route to prosperity. Impressive international institutions have been constructed around it, notably the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization – and, of course, on a more restricted level, the European Union.

Just about everyone, it seems, wants to negotiate one of these treaties. (Though Austria, for one, has just rejected the EU's proposed free trade deal with the Mercosur group of South American countries.) Boris Johnson certainly does – his EU deal deleted generalised references to a UK–EU free trade area from Theresa May's deal, but substituted them with an explicit requirement for a UK–EU Free Trade Agreement.

When official bodies look at the impact of free trade agreements, the first thing they look at is Gross Domestic Product, or GDP. In the topsy-turvy world of economics, GDP is a measure of national economic activity based not on how much is produced, but on how much money changes hands.

For example, an official analysis of the EU–Singapore Free Trade Agreement, now ratified after a major hiccup when the regional government of Wallonia in Belgium threatened to veto it, says it could be expected to boost the UK's GDP (if we remain in the EU) by £65 million a year.

That all sounds fine and dandy (if scarcely worth the time spent negotiating the deal), but look closer. That same analysis also references another analysis from the European Commission which suggests that net exports from the UK could rise by £296 million year but net imports into the UK from Singapore would soar by £607 million a year.

All of this leads to one simple question: How can the economy be better off by doubling the trade gap with Singapore? The answer is that the economy, the real economy, isn't better off at all.

The financiers and traders who handle the flows in and out of Singapore get richer. It doesn't matter to them which country benefits. But Britain, the Britain of real people living real lives, gets poorer.

There has been little public discussion



John Fielding (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Felixstowe Docks, which handles 48 per cent of Britain's container traffic – in 2017 some 3.85 million

about the negative effects of global free trade. But the Department for International Trade does know (or should know). And back in 2018, realising the increasing significance for government policy of free trade deals – and perhaps more urgently recognising the strength of opposition to the EU–US TTIP free trade treaty – it commissioned a study of public views on the issue.

That study, carried out by BMG Research, is not complete (at least, not in published form), but the “first wave” of research is available online. It shows majority support for free trade agreements in Britain – but also suggests stunningly low levels of knowledge about what they mean.

BMG Research showed that no fewer than 58 per cent of respondents did not feel knowledgeable about how Britain trades with the rest of the EU, and fully 65 per cent

about how we trade with the rest of the world. When asked four simple questions about trade (“Do we import more food than we produce here?”, for example), only 18 per cent answered more than three of the four questions correctly.

Ignorance encouraged

Over the years our ignorance has been fostered by parliament and the media, which consistently confound two very different things: the freedom to trade with another country, and modern, globalised free trade deals. But we will have to learn quickly, because the future of Britain and the health and wealth of the population depend on how we trade.

One of the key questions posed by the analysis of the EU–Singapore Free Trade Agreement is this: if GDP is boosted by £65

the rich richer, workers poorer, and they rob countries of Hanson's EU treaty?

e



n units, equivalent to standard 20-foot containers.

million a year in a deal that adds more than £300 million to our trade imbalance, is Britain better off?

And, of course, the answer to that all depends on what you mean by better off. Here GDP tells you even less about the economy as it affects workers than measures such as the Consumer Price Index.

James Goldsmith, who set up the Referendum Party in 1994, pointed out 25 years ago that over the previous two decades France's GDP had soared by 80 per cent, but unemployment in the country had risen from 420,000 to 5.1 million.

Now look at today's Britain. UK GDP has almost doubled since 2000 – up from £1.09 trillion to £2.11 trillion in 2018. Yet the proportion of the population in poverty has “barely changed”, according to the Social Metrics Commission, which has developed

its own measure of poverty.

What has changed is the proportion of Britain's wealth in the hands of the very richest, the top 0.1 per cent of households. After falling pretty steadily since 1900, that proportion has almost doubled since 1985.

So the next time someone tells you that global free trade makes us richer, ask them who the “us” is. Because free trade has enriched a handful of individuals while impoverishing whole areas of Britain.

Services and standards

And as if the havoc wrought in Britain and around the world by the application of free trade in manufactured goods were not enough, the new breed of free trade agreements go much further – they affect services, investment, and the movement of people too.

The maintenance of standards is essential to any modern civilised society. Standards exist in areas as varied as food quality, medicines, professional qualifications, electrical wiring. Indeed, organisations such as the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) spend a lot of their time working to harmonise standards so that, for example, something considered safe in one country will also be considered safe in another.

Harmonisation is a time-consuming business. There is, though, a neat way around it, pioneered by the EU. If standards are too difficult to harmonise, simply declare that one country's standards must be accepted in another.

That is precisely what has happened in health and education, where the UK is obliged to accept as qualified doctors or teachers anyone who trained in any country in the EU – with some dire consequences.

The global free traders would like to see this kind of short-cut applied globally. That thinking is behind, for example, calls for the EU and the US to mutually recognise agricultural standards – which would mean having to accept chlorinated chickens and hormone-fed beef without any question.

And they want to go further, taking nations out of the equation altogether by putting the governance of this free trade into the hands of binding arbitration run by international lawyers, so-called Investor-State

‘They want to take nations out of the equation...’

Dispute Settlement.

That provision in the draft EU-US TTIP treaty helped to make TTIP notorious – and may yet re-surface in any UK-US trade agreement. Though negotiations over TTIP are still blocked following Donald Trump's election as US president, the EU is keen to get them re-started.

People

But the modern free trade deal is not just about goods, or services, or investment, or standards. More and more it is about people as well. Free movement of people everywhere is what the transnational monopolies want.

These global companies want any free trade deal to allow them to shift their workforce from any country to any country – and what's more employ them at the rate of the lowest-paying country.

In a twisted way, it makes perfect sense. After all, apart from natural resources labour power – especially skilled labour power – is the source of all wealth. In the modern world, the key commodity is people.

Listen to Karan Bilimoria, the founder of Cobra beer, talking to the website politico.eu in August last year: “Whenever you talk about any free trade deal, it's not just about tariffs, it's about the movement of people as well. You can't run away from that.”

Bilimoria repeated the age-old employer lie that unemployment in Britain is so low that “we need a foreign workforce, EU or non-EU, to enable us to function as an economy and grow and prosper”.

According to the Office for National Statistics, there are around 1.3 million people unemployed in this country, 3.8 per cent of the working population. On top of this more than 800,000 people were reckoned by the ONS to be in “involuntary” part-time employment – that is, they wanted a full-time

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Made in Britain?



Workers

IT'S A FUNNY old world when you can look at a 100 per cent British wool men's suit in Marks and Spencer and discover that it has been manufactured in Cambodia – thanks to the EU. M&S is simply utilising the EU's "Everything But Arms" scheme, introduced in 2012, which allows companies in the poorest developing countries to export food and manufactured goods to EU markets without tariffs or limits on quantity.

With its usual pious nod to morality, the EU says that the scheme "can be withdrawn in case of some exceptional circumstances, notably in case of serious and systematic violation of principles laid down in fundamental human rights and labour rights conventions".

In practice, such safeguards are (and not accidentally) toothless. Human Rights Watch, for example, documented a series of abuses in 2016 in Cambodian factories producing garments for brands including M&S.

The British campaign group Labour Behind the Label has documented the low wages of garment workers in Asia. Its

website lists the living wage and the minimum wage for a number of countries. Cambodia's living wage is calculated at 1,630,045 riel (£321.32) a month, whereas the minimum wage is just a third (34 per cent) of that.

It's just one of many examples that show that outsourcing manufacture from developed to developing countries is generally a lose-lose situation for workers.

In the 1960s Marks and Spencer sourced 99 per cent of its products from Britain. Even in the 1990s that figure had only fallen to 70 per cent. Then in 1999 M&S cut the proportion of British-made clothes to a third, a move that on its own led to the loss of 8,000 textile workers' jobs here.

The company wasn't operating in a vacuum. Trade policy, since 1973 under the direction of the EU, saw the phasing out of the Multi Fibre Arrangement which had given tariff protection to UK textile manufacturers. Little wonder that in 1995 M&S stopped saying how much of its clothing is made in Britain. ■

Continued from page 13

job but couldn't find one – the numbers swelled by raising the state pension age.

But that's not enough for the global free traders. Tell them two million or more people can't find full-time employment and they'll just say, "Not enough!" After all, lower unemployment means upwards pressure on wages and tends to reduce profits.

And there are other benefits from importing labour – particularly skilled labour – from abroad. After all, why spend a lot of money training people in Britain when you can import them for nothing from abroad and, in many cases, pay them less?

That's the kind of logic that has seen

free movement strip countries like Romania of their skilled professionals. Why give bursaries to British students to become nurses when you can just lure them in from the world's poor countries?

'Why spend money training people in Britain when you can import them for nothing?'

The average doctor trained in sub-Saharan Africa practises there for just 6.5 years, according to research published in 2013. In 2008 Liberia had 1.37 doctors per 100,000 people, as against 250 in the United States. That's where the free trade in people leads.

What the free traders have in common is a disregard for the interests of the British people. For them, money is king. It's the kind of attitude that has led the SNP administration to cap the number of Scottish students at Scottish universities – because English and non-EU foreign students bring in a rich income stream from fees while Scottish students pay nothing.

Trade freely

One of the four simple statements tested by BMG Research (see above) was this: "Without an agreed trade deal, countries cannot trade with one another." No fewer than 62 per cent of those questioned either answered incorrectly or said they didn't know. The fact is, countries don't need trade deals, free or otherwise, to trade with each other.

Even the concept of one country trading with another is a dubious shorthand for what normally happens: a company in one country sells a product directly to a company in another.

If you want to know what a global free trade area would be like, take a look at the European Union – and imagine that it runs the whole world. No individual country would be able to control imports, the economy, population, or even its health and education systems.

The gap between rich and poor would widen further. Workers across the world would be pitted against each other as real wages plummet. Everyone would be "free" to travel the world in search of work.

For most people this would be a hell on earth. But a tiny minority, the transnational capitalists, would be delighted.

The alternative is a trade policy built around independence, trading on the basis of equality between nations. It is a policy that respects the needs of nations and the people who live in them. And it's a million miles from the "free trade" vision of the transnational companies. ■

How do new reps in trade unions see their role – and the future of Britain?

Collectivism and unions

MAKING THAT decision to be a union rep is never easy. Yet every day new reps come forward. *Workers* magazine talks to a young person just starting the role as a union rep for Unite in a large, prestigious manufacturing company based in Britain but with facilities in more than 50 countries.

She already knew that the role could be a thankless task, but this new rep thought the chance to achieve good outcomes and victories for members was going to be rewarding and would easily outweigh any negatives. It would be a chance to reverse injustices and take pride in the collective. On a personal level it would be a form of “self esteem”. Putting it in simple terms, she said, “It’s just a matter of principle.”

And not surprisingly, the discussion moved on to Brexit as well...

You’ve just completed the first stage of the reps course. What came across as the principal role of a rep?

Organising is still paramount, there were some shared experiences from other new reps. The Birmingham bin workers’ strike [against victimisation] was one as an example. We debated “What is acceptable and what is not from an employer?”

Is it much easier to be a rep in a large manufacturing workplace than in a small workplace?

There is still a lot of fear in small workplaces and reps can struggle to overcome this. Occasionally they only have the law on their side rather than power through numbers. There is obviously strength in numbers in a large workplace – but there is also an inherent risk of apathy.

In our large workplace we have reps and senior reps, and a reps convenor. The convenor then sits on the national negotiating committee, which represents all the workers from all the sites within the company. The structure works.

How do you ensure that reps are not out of touch with the workers they represent?

In our large workplace we always feed back to the members the details discussed in regular meetings with the employer and during negotiations. The members’ views are sought before the meetings, during and after



Workers

Unite section of the 2014 TUC march, London

in an attempt to ensure their thoughts are aligned with those of the reps.

How do you discuss the two-class nature of Britain in interactions at work, especially during recent times with Brexit being a prominent issue?

I think the bankers seem to be in control. We need to stand up and control the money system. The bankers cloud the issue for ordinary workers. We argue among ourselves instead of directing our anger at them. The poor have paid for the crash of 2008 and for too long the working class have not fought their real enemy.

Does the Labour Party really represent the class?

Many workers who used to vote for the Labour Party will no longer do so because they now understand that the Labour Party does not represent their needs any more. They do see the need for “self determination” and also see the national liberation struggle that is going on against the EU.

I would probably agree that the Labour Party and its leader represent a view from London and the South East and not from a northern perspective. Corbyn is London centric. There is a loss of support for the Labour Party particularly in places such as the former mining communities. There’ll be no more “rubber stamp” voting. We asked to leave the EU and it has still not happened

and in fact the Labour Party is actively working against it despite the democratic vote.

How political should unions be?

In theory the unions should align with the Labour Party – but that party does not represent the working class. Unite should be all-out pro-Brexit.

Are the current unions really part of a collective of thought?

Union structures are not currently part of collective thought that includes the working class generally. What are they afraid of? Following Brexit their job is still secure as we will still have members to support!

Are other forms of collective thought going on in Britain at the moment, aside from the main political parties?

All people want is work and a fair wage. They want the safety net of the “cradle to grave” NHS principle. They want to be heard not herded. They are currently using whatever party speaks what they think.

Finally just to return to your role as a rep – will Brexit ignite your members to think more clearly about Britain’s future?

It’s simple. People voted for Brexit and the government should get on with it and not let Parliament and a crazy bunch of undemocratic MPs get in the way. And I’ve just told you what my members want. ■

Beset by failure in running Scotland, the SNP party conference forward her plan to hold a second referendum on Scottish independence

‘Independence’-obsessed



RMT Scotland

RMT demonstration at the Scottish Parliament, 2 October 2019. EU regulations make public rail ownership illegal.

WITH ALL the SNP's legal moves against Brexit fizzling out or falling on stony ground, it has been forced by the success of Brexit arguments to reveal its more extreme positions – such as breaking up Britain without a referendum, adopting the euro, rejoining the detested Common Fisheries Policy and advocating a hard border between Scotland and England.

‘The Scottish Trades Union Congress has failed to hold the SNP to account...’

And all of this while its minority administration in Edinburgh has been presiding over failure in their day job, with educational standards falling, chaos in the NHS and refusal to support workers in threatened industries, citing EU regulations on state aid.

Notably the Scottish Trades Union Congress has failed to hold them to account on any of this.

Legal action

In September, the SNP administration intervened in and supported two legal cases aimed at thwarting the Brexit process. At the Court of Session in Edinburgh their leading MP in Parliament at Westminster, Joanna Cherry, and 75 MPs and members of the House of Lords, brought a case claiming that the suspension of Parliament was unlawful. It was an

attempt to stop progress towards a clean break with the EU.

The SNP administration also supported a similar case at the High Court in London by anti-Brexit campaigner Gina Miller. The reasoning for the interventions was voiced by leading MSP, Mike Russell, who said “the democratic wishes of the Scottish people and the Scottish Parliament should not be allowed to be brushed aside as if they did not matter”

This thinking does not take into account the fact that more Scots voted for Brexit in the 2016 referendum (over a million) than voted for the SNP in the 2017 general election.

And reaction against such thinking from those who favour British unity can be summed up by the words of MSP Jackson Carlaw: “It is the latest in Nicola Sturgeon's desperate attempt to halt

Failure in October leader Nicola Sturgeon was forced to bring independence in 2020...

Failed SNP fails in its day job

democracy and agitate for independence at the same time. The SNP has been wasteful enough of taxpayer's cash on legal matters in recent times. Hardworking Scots do not want to fund this charade."

Failure in political argument seems to tempt the pro-EU lobby to resort to legal means. Yet another anti-Brexit case was brought to the Court of Session in Edinburgh later in October.

Interference

This one was kicked out, with the presiding judge, Lord Pentland, pointing out that the orders sought "would unquestionably interfere to a major extent with the proposed proceedings in Parliament." He concluded: "It is a cardinal principle of constitutional law that the courts should not intrude on the legitimate affairs and processes of Parliament."

Despite this we have probably not seen the end of well-funded legal actions against Brexit and progress towards British independence.

It is this very progress that will pull the rug from under the marching feet of the separatist movement (their exaggerations in the numbers marching are well documented in previous *Workers* articles). It has been the European Union that has attempted over recent decades to degrade the nation states of Europe and encourage regionalism, federalism and break-aways.

Often this has been achieved by targeted funding combined with high visibility public acknowledgements. So it has been encouraging to see the government advocating that UK government-funded projects in Scotland will be branded as such and that UK national policies that benefit those living there will be clearly seen as being British ones.

False credit

Too often the SNP has taken credit for developments for which they have not been responsible.

For too long the administration in Scotland has been running a separate foreign policy with expensive offices in the EU and around the world. These links to the influences of foreign powers should

'The administration has been running a separate foreign policy with expensive offices in the EU...'

cease with Brexit. After 20 years of devolution – now past its sell-by date – it is worth pointing out that Holyrood is a subsidiary arm of the British state and not its equal. Yet it frequently claims status.

An example of the SNP administration claiming kudos would be the forthcoming United Nations climate conference scheduled for Glasgow next year. The British government is determined that it is seen as a British-flagged event organised by the whole country – preventing the SNP claim that it has succeeded in "bringing the world to Scotland". It is estimated that it will be attended by 30,000 delegates and up to 200 world leaders.

Attempts to make Scotland look better than the rest of Britain have resulted in building up a large annual deficit. That deficit has been estimated to be running at 7 per cent of GDP, while for the UK it runs at 2 per cent.

A glance at recent spending in Scotland shows that in 2018–19, public

spending was 13.6 per cent higher per head than the UK average. At the same time the revenue collected was 2.6 per cent lower. Only the existence of Britain makes this affordable. But it does not augur well for so-called "Scottish independence".

Around a tenth of Britain's population is in Scotland, and it has a tenth of its economic growth. But it is responsible for more than half of the increase in total annual government borrowing. So in the absence of subsidy it receives as part of Britain – about £10 billion annually – how could a separate Scotland possibly sustain such a level of expenditure?

Deficit

It would fail the requirements for euro and Schengen membership that are now a must for new states seeking EU membership. Its annual deficit of 7 per cent of GDP is way above the 3 per cent limit that would trigger the EU's medicine for excessive deficits. That would mean a severe austerity regime if it actually managed to join.

With two failed banks, both bailed out by the British taxpayer, Scotland would fail to find a central bank, another condition of membership.

Those intending to vote for the SNP or give support to the separatist movement should have a close look at the recent fate of Greece – and its youth unemployment rate of 40 per cent. Far better to turn to a far more noble independence cause, that of building an independent Britain. ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's regular series of London public meetings in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1R 4RL, will continue on Tuesday 19 November (see notice, page 9).

M As well as our regular public meetings we hold informal discussions around the country 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. Send an email to info@cpbml.org.uk or call us on 020 8801 9543.

Yes, it's possible to produce energy without using nuclear that will be a reversion to pre-industrial levels of production

Blackouts ahead as ene

THE DEMOLITION of a further four of the cooling towers at Ferrybridge C power station in West Yorkshire, which took place on Sunday 13 October, was fêted by local media as a tourist attraction, with crocodile tears at the loss of a highly visible landmark on the M62.

With one tower already down in July, this was a vivid reminder of the parlous state of energy policy in this country, where certainty of supply is sacrificed on the altar of "greener" power. Sky News reported the event as a milestone, though in terms of energy policy, millstone would seem more appropriate.

The station is owned by SSE, itself a hybrid of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the Southern Electricity Board, following privatisation in 1990/91. SSE, with a growing interest in renewable energy, deemed Ferrybridge C uneconomical, and closed it down in 2016.

Speculative

Three of the towers remain, on the off chance that a gas-fired station may be built on the site. In other words an admittedly old but still fully functioning unit which has provided us with reliable energy for 50 years has gone, and a speculative gas-fired station may or may not replace it.

Meanwhile, at the even larger neighbouring Drax station, the Government's Planning Inspectorate ruled that the decision to replace coal fired units with state of the art gas turbines should be blocked because of their impact on climate change. This despite the newer turbines being cleaner and more efficient than the old ones.

Fortunately, on this occasion, the Secretary for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Andrea Leadsom, overruled the Inspectorate on 7 October and gave the go-head for the gas turbines, noting that there would be substantial battery

'For the foreseeable future renewables will not be enough.'



A shadow of its former self: Ferrybridge now produces a mere 68 MW of power, less than 5 per cent of its former capacity.

storage, and that the plant would be engineered to allow carbon capture equipment to be fitted.

Welcome as this development is, amid the shrill cries of Extinction Rebellion and others for pre-industrial levels of energy production and consumption, the government has yet to grasp the nettle that for the foreseeable future renewables will not be enough, and that a mix of fossil fuel and nuclear will be vital. Otherwise, there will be an increased risk of repeats of the blackout on 10 August, which brought chaos to airports, roads and railways, and left a million homes across the country in the dark.

This was the result of two power outages at the same time, one at the

German-owned Little Barford gas-fired power plant, the other at the Danish-owned Hornsea offshore wind farm. These combined to produce a severe drop in the intensity of energy supply – too little to keep the network flowing smoothly. It also emerges that in the three months prior to the blackout there were three near misses, when grid frequency dropped to dangerously low levels.

Renewables

This is becoming more of a problem since we started to become increasingly reliant on renewable energy. It presents greater challenges to a National Grid which was designed to accommodate fossil fuel power plants. Of course there is a place for

power or fossil fuels. But at the moment the price tag for
on and consumption. No central heating, anyone?

Energy policy fails



... of its previous 2 GW capacity. Photo Workers.

renewables as part of the mix in a modern energy policy, and huge strides have been taken in recent years, not least in offshore wind farms, but renewables on their own are not a silver bullet.

As a chartered engineer with 39 years in the electricity supply industry put it in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* this October, "... Renewable generation – solar, wind and tidal – is, by definition, non-synchronous and it is technically impossible to operate our electricity transmission system solely on non-synchronous generation. There is a real danger of system instability and consequential widespread blackouts once non-synchronous generation exceeds around thirty per cent of total generation at any one time.

The National Grid report on the recent blackout referenced lack of inertia (in electricity terms, kinetic energy) in the system. This resulted from insufficient large synchronous generators (nuclear, coal, gas) being connected, said the engineer.

Politicians (Rebecca Long-Bailey, the shadow energy minister among the most strident) call for renewables to provide most of our energy mix by 2030, and at the same time wail about the blackout which their policy would make worse!

The holy grail of zero emissions, whether by 2050, or 2030 as some Greens and Labour zealots propose, is a sop to people's genuine concerns about climate change and pollution. It adheres closely to the EU agenda, which dictates that it alone will determine a member state's natural resources and how they are to be harnessed and deployed. Little wonder that Norway has resisted the lure of EU membership.

Fundamentalism

The debate in Britain about fossil fuels is bedevilled with sophistry and Old Testament levels of fundamentalist thinking. Coal was branded dirty, polluting and evil, and ruthlessly purged from our energy mix to the point where it can probably never return. True, coal was dirty, but we devised methods of cleaning it, such as carbon capture and scrubbing. We exported these to the world, but failed to deploy them at home.

Oil and gas, thought not to be so high on the scale of evil as coal, are also viewed with suspicion. (It would be instructive to learn how the executives at the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, who have ended sponsorship from BP and Shell, travel to work and play. Bicycles and rowing boats perhaps!) And this pseudo-scientific approach has damaged the recognition that nuclear power is the most carbon free of synchronous providers in the energy mix.

If cutting edge engineering can continue to give us access to fossil fuels on the bottom of the sea bed, and scientists can demonstrate how they can be extracted and used more cleanly, then we really can't afford to turn our noses up if we wish to continue to grow a modern, industrial economy.

How Norway does it

IN 2010, A huge new oilfield was discovered in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea, west of Stavanger. With an expected lifetime of 50 years, total earnings could be in the region of £125 billion. In the ten years it will take to get to full production, jobs will have been created to the tune of 150,000 person years. Because Norway has kept and developed in-house expertise in this field, it has come on stream four years after getting the go-ahead, and two months ahead of schedule.

Development costs are high, at £7.5 billion, but the break-even oil price of \$20 per barrel compares favourably with Brent crude, currently trading at around \$60 per barrel. When production is at peak, cost will be below \$2 per barrel. These are eye-watering sums, but since it is free of EU shackles the Norwegian state is the major investor. Norway has ensured that its people are the main beneficiaries, both in terms of jobs and affordable and reliable energy. Seventy per cent of linked contracts have gone to Norwegian companies, a marked contrast to the outsourcing commonplace in Britain. ■

The Brexit impasse has compelled millions of us to rethink our view of politicians and self-proclaimed experts. We could use some of that contempt in the minefield which discussion of energy policy has become.

The last word goes to the engineer quoted above: "...Given the need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the only option is to increase significant nuclear build rapidly. Both Labour and Conservative governments have been unwilling to commit themselves to this, which has led us to the problems we now face. It is unfortunate that politicians and environmental campaigners are ignorant of the technicalities of energy supply, or wish to ignore them. MPs may have the power to change the laws of the land, but not to change the laws of physics". ■

Joseph Stiglitz has won a Nobel Prize for Economics and as a powerful critic of capitalism – but he still seems wed

Can capitalism be progr

People, power and profits: progressive capitalism for an age of discontent, by Joseph Stiglitz, hardback, 400 pages, ISBN 978-0241399231, Allen Lane, 2019, £20. Kindle edition available, paperback edition due in April 2020.

NOBEL PRIZE-winning Joseph Stiglitz, chief economist of the Roosevelt Institute, effectively attacks free-market fundamentalism in this book. But in the end he argues to save capitalism rather than replace it.

As he observes, “Leaving the economic and political agenda to be set by the corporate interests has led to more concentration of economic and political power, and it will continue to do so.” As a result, he says, the economy and democracy of the USA has become devoted solely to the 1 per cent elite.

The USA has not invested enough in people, infrastructure, R&D or technology. The level of gross investment is far lower than that of many other developed countries. Stiglitz says it’s easy to understand why many Americans turn against the establishment and reject the economics of globalisation. The elite promised that everyone would benefit from lower taxes for the rich and financial market liberalisation.

Deregulation

He continues, “The disparity between what was promised and what happened was glaring...after Reagan’s reforms, growth actually slowed. Deregulation, especially of the financial market, brought us the downturns of 1991, 2001, and most grievously, the Great Recession of 2008. And lower taxes did not have the energizing effect that supply-siders claimed.”

Stiglitz comments, “...globalization was supposed to create a stronger economy to better serve our citizens; but then we told our people, because of the globalization that we had created, they had to have cut-backs in wages and public programs.”

Finance became an end in itself and banks wanted rights without responsibilities. US economic policy allowed them the freedom to exploit others and engage in excessive risk taking, but to avoid the consequences.



Global Justice Now (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Anti TTIP demonstration, London, 2014. “Trade agreements simply advanced corporate interests at the expense of workers in both developed and developing countries.”

Stiglitz notes that “in the first three years of the recovery, 91 percent of the growth went to the top 1 percent of the country. Millions lost their homes and jobs as the bankers who had brought on all of this basked in their millions in bonuses.”

He criticises so-called trade agreements, explaining that “trade agreements simply advanced corporate interests at the expense of workers in both developed and developing countries...If TPP [the Trans-Pacific Partnership] and other recent agreements are not centrally about trade, what are they about? They are about investment, intellectual property, regulations, a host of issues that are of concern to businesses.”

Private is not better

He decries the almost religious belief that private firms are always better than public enterprises, calling it “wrong and dangerous”. For example, “Private...prisons are interested in maximizing their profits, which may entail curtailing expenditures on training or even food and being little concerned with rehabilitation.” Profits of private prisons increase when more of those who are released return to prison. The public

interest is the opposite, in more former prisoners returning to society.

There are many other examples: “New York State public mortgage programs performed far better than did the private programs in the 2008 crisis. By most accounts, the privatizations of UK railroads, US production of enriched uranium, or Chile’s or Mexico’s roads have not gone well.”

Again, “Administrative costs of government retirement programs are a fraction of those in the private sector. Countries with public health systems have lower costs

“In the first three years of the recovery, 91 percent of the growth went to the top 1 percent.”

established himself
ded to it...

ressive?

with better outcomes than America's profit-driven system."

He shows that "many if not most of our society's problems, from excesses of pollution to financial instability and economic inequality, have been created by markets and the private sector. In short, markets alone won't solve our problems. Only government can protect the environment, ensure social and economic justice, and promote a dynamic learning society through investments in basic research and technology that are the foundation of continued progress."

And only government can ensure full employment, which he rightly states is vital to society: "because our economy has failed to produce good jobs, with decent wages, individuals have essentially given up, and this despair leads to social diseases like alcoholism and drug dependence."

Stiglitz opposes the idea of a universal basic income, because "I remain unconvinced that it solves the inherent economic problem, the deficits to dignity of widespread unemployment."

Conflict

Stiglitz shows that there is a conflict of interests between a minority and the majority: "The majority now worries about how it can be protected from abuses by a minority that has attained power and is now using that power to perpetuate its control."

But how to change this? As Stiglitz says, "while the economics is easy, the politics is not...if we are to achieve the necessary economic reforms, we need to reform our politics." Indeed, defeating the transnational corporations will not be easy.

He ends by repeating that "we have to save capitalism from itself. Capitalism – together with a money-oriented democracy – creates a self-destructive dynamic, which risks simultaneously destroying any semblance of a fair and competitive market and a meaningful democracy."

But when we talk of saving ourselves from some danger, do we usually start and end by trying to save that danger? Surely, it is best to get rid of the danger, not embrace it? So, we need to get rid of capitalism, not embrace it. ■

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Two hundred years ago, 18 people were killed and hundreds part in a peaceful rally calling for the reform of a corrupt parliament.

1819: The Peterloo Massacre

ON 16 AUGUST 1819 80,000 men, women and children – peaceful and unarmed demonstrators – converged for a meeting in the centre of Manchester. Walking in impressive contingents from surrounding towns and villages they gathered on open land in St. Peter's Field.

Throughout industrial Lancashire, a combination of clever organisation and widespread publicity had combined to produce the biggest demonstration ever seen in the country. Some contemporary newspapers claimed there were far more than 80,000 people present.

Yet, just after the start time of 1pm, the local magistrates sent in soldiers from the 15th Hussars together with volunteer cavalry from the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry to arrest the main speaker Henry Hunt and disperse the demonstration.

Imprisoned

The event was immediately labelled the "Peterloo" Massacre by James Wroe, a journalist at the *Manchester Observer* newspaper, in punning reference to the battle of Waterloo four years earlier. The name has deservedly stuck. Wroe was himself imprisoned for a year and his newspaper closed down by the authorities in retaliation.

The meeting at St Peter's Field was called in support of "the most speedy and effectual mode of obtaining Radical reform in the Commons House of Parliament". This demonstration was a Lancashire rally, not just a Manchester one. After a long period of economic hardship and political suppression the working class had many grievances; no

'It took a century and more for the ruling class of our country to concede some aspects of parliamentary reform...'

wonder the meeting was well supported.

Plans were made. Each surrounding village was given a time and place to meet, from which its members would proceed to bigger towns before all were to coalesce in Manchester behind numerous bands and self-designed banners.

Alarm

Before the rally, the government established "A Committee in Aid of the Civil Powers", which considerably heightened alarm. Previously the government had alerted Yeomanry Corps around the country, including the cavalry of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry.

There had been a two-year build-up of hostility between the yeomanry and the populace. Quietly, prior to Peterloo, they had sent their sabres to be sharpened. Also, a proclamation in the Prince Regent's name condemned, though did not ban, seditious assemblies and the practice of drilling. A few days before the St. Peter's Field meeting Henry Hunt, the principal speaker and prominent radical, checked with the local magistrates that it was legal and could go ahead. They told him it could.

The demonstrators brought "no other weapon but that of a self-approving conscience". As the crowds reached central Manchester, they were in good humour. Once they were packed inside St. Peter's Field, Hunt arrived and mounted the platform. He was known as "The Orator" for his stirring speeches at mass meetings.

Yeomanry sent in

Immediately the magistrates ordered Manchester's corrupt and much feared deputy constable to arrest him. To help him they sent in the yeomanry, who clattered into the crowd and arrested Hunt who was physically abused as he was led away. The magistrates now sent in the 15th Hussars too. The crowd fled trying to avoid the flashing blades and horses' hooves.

Within 20 minutes the field was empty save for bodies and the discarded debris of the rally. The troops rallied in front of the magistrates' building and gave three cheers. Later the Prince Regent sent a message commending their "preservation of the public tranquillity". The chief magistrate William



George Cruikshank's famous cartoon of the massacre. "Chop em down my brave boys: give them no quarter! --- & remember the more you kill the less your courage & your Loyalty."

Hulton wrote to the Home Secretary Lord Sidmouth praising "the extreme forbearance of the military".

Peterloo was the scene of the worst violence ever to occur at a political meeting in Britain. 18 died and at least 654 people required medical treatment. A quarter of the casualties were women. Afterwards the magistrates claimed they had read the Riot Act, the formal procedure necessary to order the dispersal of a crowd, but no one heard them. And they certainly did not allow the statutory hour for the gathering to leave. Hunt was sentenced to two-and-half years' imprisonment for "seditious assembly".

Despite the loss of life and subsequent protests, Peterloo did not immediately affect the way parliament was run. Towards the close of 1819, a further and more drastic set of repressive measures was passed called the Six Acts which (1) equipped the magistrates with more drastic powers in dealing with offenders, (2) prohibited drilling and the use of arms, (3) strengthened the laws against blasphemous and seditious libel, (4)

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...ssacre. The speech text reads: "Down with 'em!
...rter they want to take our Beef & Pudding from
...oor rates you'll have to pay so go at it Lads show

gave the magistrates the power to search private houses, and to confiscate weapons, (5) restricted still further the right to hold a public meeting, and (6) subjected the periodical pamphlets published by the radicals to the newspaper tax, with the object of preventing cheap publications.

Suffrage

It took a century and more for the ruling class of our country to very gradually and very reluctantly extend the suffrage and concede some aspects of parliamentary reform through acts in 1832, 1867, 1884, 1918 and 1928. Generations of rulers were probably surprised at their ability to preserve the dominance of capital and to contain the potential of working people during this journey, even with universal suffrage.

We are still discovering today in the battle raging for Brexit and independence, how we must defeat the rotten corruption in the parliamentary edifice that still strives to hem us in. We are still learning from the past experience. ■

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ABOUT US

As communists, we stand for an independent, united and self-reliant Britain run by the working class – the vast majority of the population. If that's what you want too, then come and join us.

All our members are thinkers, doers and leaders. All are expected to work to advance our class's interests. All must help to develop our understanding of what we need to do and how to do it.

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

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

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

We distribute *Workers*, leaflets and pamphlets online and in our workplaces, union meetings, communities, market places, railway stations, football grounds – wherever workers are, that is where we aim to be.

We hold public meetings around Britain, in-depth study groups and less formal discussions. Talking to people, face to face, is where we have the greatest impact and – just as importantly – learn from other workers' experience.

We are not an elite, intellectually superior to our fellow workers. All that distinguishes Party members is this: we accept that only Marxist thinking and the organised work that flows from it can transform the working class and Britain. The real teacher is the fight itself, and in particular the development of ideas and confidence that comes from collective action.

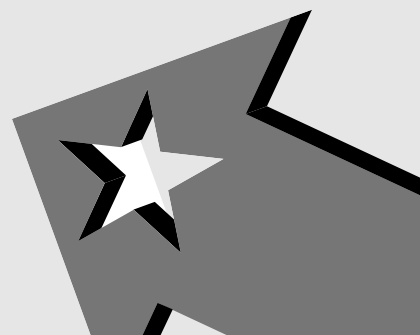
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No good guarantees from the EU

'The referendum of 2016 has transformed politics in Britain, forcing people to consider the nature of democracy... It's time, too, for deeper consideration about the concept of trust...'

OPPONENTS OF Brexit have attacked Boris Johnson's EU deal on the basis that it doesn't give "guarantees" on what they call "workers' rights" or the environment. True, it doesn't. And unlike Theresa May's ill-fated deal it removes commitments to abide by EU standards on these issues from the legally binding Withdrawal Agreement, slipping them into the more advisory Political Declaration.

But nowhere do these complainers look at the nature of these guarantees. Which is wise, because they guarantee nothing. When you get a guarantee from a shop you make sure you read the fine print. In the case of EU guarantees, there's no fine print at all, because they are worthless.

We have written before on the EU and workers' rights, most recently in the two previous issues, so to be brief: trade union organisation is the most effective defence for workers against impositions by the employers, and the EU has never, ever, extended trade union rights in Britain. In fact, it has a history of restricting them.

Our statutory minimum for holidays is 8 days more than the EU minimum, our maternity pay and leave far better than the EU minimum. If a government wants to start a bonfire of rights, it doesn't need to wait for Brexit. It's not doing it because it knows British workers won't put up with it...which is the best guarantee of all.

On the environment the EU's guarantees are equally hollow. It sets standards, then works with industry to undermine them.

A future issue of *Workers* will deal in more detail with the EU and the environment, but just consider vehicle emissions. The EU set "stringent" standards – and then allowed car manufacturers to rig their testing so that they could claim emissions far lower than those found in real-life usage.

That has cost Volkswagen an estimated 30 billion euros. More importantly, it has cost lives and damaged health, since people have been exposed to much higher levels of CO2

and NOX emissions than would otherwise have been the case.

Volkswagen has been fined, of course. That's what the EU does...it fines transgressors. (The EU doesn't keep the fines; it returns them to member states, which quietly pocket the money.)

But fines don't deter large companies. The EU fined Google \$2.7 billion in 2017, and \$5 billion the following year. No problem. It is now threatening water companies with fines for polluting rivers. No problem there either. The water companies will treat those fines just as they have treated fines from national administrations – as part of the cost of doing business. And, of course, it's a cost that simply gets passed on the consumers.

One of the great achievements of the EU, we are told, is that it has set "stringent" standards for river quality which protect our inland waterways. It has indeed set standards, but as was revealed earlier this year, our river quality is now worse than it has been since national records began over 20 years ago. Some protection! (No surprise, really: the Common Agricultural Policy encourages agricultural pollution.)

The referendum of 2016 has transformed politics in Britain, forcing people to consider the nature of democracy. Parliament, for example, is now seen by many not as the embodiment of their idea of democracy, but as a menace to it. It's time, too, for deeper consideration about the concept of trust.

If we think that we can sit back and trust a state dedicated to the pursuit of profit to guarantee our rights at work and in the environment, we are deeply mistaken. That goes for the British state as well as for the would-be EU federal state.

In reality, the EU guarantees nothing except that it will seek to erode national sovereignty and transfer power from states to transnational corporations. And that guarantee is set in writing – effectively, set in stone – in the Lisbon Treaty. ■

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