

MAY DAY 2022

May Day is for celebrating new beginnings. Last year we celebrated on Zoom. That you are here tonight in person is proof of our collective resilience. We pay tribute to British medical science and the scientists who made the first vaccine against Covid-19 available to the world.

Now Britain is a sovereign nation again, free of EU rules, free of the imperious European court – our government’s excuse for not bothering to run the country properly.

We should be able to celebrate Britain forging ahead in the interest of the people who made Brexit happen and caused Parliament to have a nervous breakdown – something still to savour.

We should continue to celebrate this one thing: that workers have shown they can still collectively force change and open up opportunities – to put it no stronger than that.

Possibilities and opportunities are still with us - rebuilding Britain to be self-reliant is a work in very slow progress. It is happening but must be speeded up.

No going back

Reviewing the year past, we can see that opportunities have been squandered (by the government), but the direction has to be forward, to workers exerting control.

Not as clean a Brexit as we wished, viz. N Ireland, fishing, defence, and British scientific participation in the Horizon programme

The EU remains punitive and spiteful

And of course we are ruled by reluctant Brexiteers who won’t carry out the people’s will unless coerced.

A year ago [we wrote](#) (somewhat biblically) in *Workers*: “A sort of eternal vigilance is now upon us.”

That’s true. Everything they do now, they do in plain sight. Stripped of the support of fellow rulers – with the removal of that layer of EU bureaucracy – the direct antagonistic relationship that Marx talked about between ourselves and our ruling class has been reinstated. We are obliged to deal with our own Establishment/bourgeoisie.

But has the significance of this new direction really sunk in?

Why are there so few signs of our class taking control?

What happened to holding the government's feet to the fire?

We have spent decades depending on politicians to do stuff for us. Do our thinking for us. While they looked to the EU to think for them. Parliament is incapable of laying the foundations for the future of the country. The working class must do that.

We still have strong unions like the RMT, Unite, the GMB, and professional organisations, some Leave groups, and new campaign groups beginning to challenge policy beyond the bread and butter issues; though with a shortage – literally – of bread and butter in many homes, those defensive struggles are vitally important too.

So we got Etonian Johnson – the best of a rotten lot – who never fails to remind us that he's for the free market, capitalism let rip.

And we got Kwasi Kwarteng [business and industry] who echoes his boss, calling capitalism 'a beautiful thing'.

And we got Chancellor Sunak, poster boy for finance capital.

These people represent a class which believes it controlled Britain before the EU and has now got that control back to carry on profiteering as usual. In their own class interest.

A government hell bent on saddling us with debt not seen in most people's lifetimes. Debt exacerbated by the cost of war.

Two central ideas came out of Brexit – in essence good ideas, had workers been power to interpret them in their own interest.

1. Taking control - its meaning manipulated to suit the capitalist class – take BACK control (the implication that Westminster would take back the control it assumed it previously had), as opposed to TAKE CONTROL – the historic task of the working class, "the last fight" [as the [Internationale](#) puts it]

2. Global Britain. The idea (utopian?) that people could exert control in the national interest and at the same time look outward, beyond the confines of the EU in cooperation and trade with countries friendly to us.

Offshoring and so-called "free trade" agreements that trample on nations' economies make this dream impossible. In the hands of finance capital globalism is absolutely toxic.

What about real independence, sovereignty over the different aspects of our working lives and the places and communities that sustain us?

Unite provided a forward-looking example in its [demand to government](#) for technological sovereignty and security. Sovereignty over tech materials.

An example of a union thinking beyond the traditional defensive trade union demands. Perhaps a first?

Free of EU rules restricting state aid, there should be an industrial renaissance. Production a priority – the source of a country's wealth

A year ago it looked as though the Tories were moving away from their dogmatic opposition to public ownership when they nationalised the Sheffield steel company [Forgemasters](#) [taken over by MOD].

Fast forward to April this year, and we see the real intentions for steel of our globalist government.

Despite steel being available here, and sourcing locally being of environmental benefit, the government looked to the free market and foreign suppliers for steel for infrastructure such as the HS2 rail project.

The Sanjeev Gupta investigation by the Serious Fraud Office currently underway is a reminder about the vulnerability of our steel industry, when it is dependent on free market finance capital [Greensill], itself built on a mountain of debt, becoming insolvent.

Ideologically driven environmentalists join forces to undermine industry of all sorts, even when that industry is wanted by local people. For example, blocking coal mines producing coking coal, essential for steelmaking [[Woodhouse Colliery](#) in Cumbria given go-ahead by local councillors, delayed by activists]. But you can't build machinery for renewables without steel.

Government's record since Brexit has been marked by disregard for voters' demands for national control.

Instead, Britain has been put up for sale. The buyers are foreign monopolies and corporations, speculators, private equity companies, taking over farmland and housing, high streets, markets and pubs, GP practices, and even children's homes.

Scarce land is priced at ten times inflation. Land banking by developers (speculators) is rife. Shortage of land leads to building of tower blocks and lower standards. Grenfell-type cladding is still in place.

Social housing has collapsed. Private landlords means rising rents and rising benefits to offset low wages: taxpayers paying landlords.

The [sell-off of microchip companies](#) threatens jobs and national security, a complex area to scrutinise. Johnson calls it an "open and dynamic market economy".

His free market dogma extends to the rail industry, water, gas and electricity.

Industrial revival of a sort is happening, because capitalism has discovered Climate Change and Transition to Zero Carbon Emissions. Johnson is very excited about this.

Even supreme capitalist [Glencore](#): its thermal coal mines responsible for the most polluting fossil fuel, is diversifying by investing in metals needed for transition.

Britain the envy of the world. Temperate climate. Rich in farm land, rich in [metals](#). The latter unseen below ground, so not always appreciated.

Guarded welcome to the return of large-scale production for the new electric age, such as the lithium processing and recycling [gigafactories](#), manufacturing hubs employing thousands, directly or in the supply chain, which by virtue of size, present

Opportunities

We have the opportunity to organise, unionise, demand decent pay and conditions, exert collective control en masse.

Unions must hold government and employers to account on numbers and safety and quality of new jobs and pay. Demand jobs for local people.

They all talk the talk. Here is what they promise:

- 90,000 jobs in offshore wind by 2028.
- 10,000 in solar power
- 12,000 in hydrogen industry by 2030
- In total 480,000 new, clean, jobs by 'end of decade'.
- Promise of £100 billion private sector investment
- Shell alone – £25 billion
- BP to invest £2 for every £1 they make here.

Competition to raise the stakes, but will they walk the walk?

Green policies: net zero emissions policy is taking food out of production, taking precedence over lighting, heating and food on the table. [Fertile land](#) is earmarked for wind farms and solar panels on an industrial scale.

The government's Net Zero Scrutiny Group says more work to be done before we can have a public debate about that, and Labour agrees, the opposition Whip clamping down on participation in organised campaigns to debate the issue.

No Labour whips here to pull us out of discussion, so let's talk about that. It's good to talk.

Unity is essential to achieving demands of working class. Right across the UK. But some areas are pulling in a different direction.

Some positive news is that the government has accepted the necessity for a mix of nuclear, gas and oil, with new oilfields opening up, together with the less reliable renewables. But they just can't help themselves: key contracts have been awarded overseas, with work on a wind farm off Scotland [going to Dubai](#).

All part of the global plan, just with Britain left out.

And the moratorium on fracking is to be reviewed by the British Geological Survey. Science will determine whether there is potential in geothermal energy. And if there is, that should be added to the mix.

[Digression: hopefully no hysteria over earth tremors. California, on the San Andreas Fault, lives with daily – sometimes several times a day – tremors of 3.5 on the Richter Scale. Has benefited economically from fracking. One day there will be The Big One; doubtless they'll blame it on fracking....]

Education and training

We need to force government and employers to skill the upcoming generation of workers.

We should be more ambitious. Workers must be funded to progress from one skill level to another till they realise full potential – stop the waste of human resources.

Why restrict skills to ability to make turbine blades, say, but import the turbine itself from, Denmark or Germany? Britain can do more than provide components. Self-reliance means making a whole machine, not just its parts. It means constructing an

entire hub – or ‘ecosystem’ – for production.

The country voted for British young people to be prioritised for quality, well paid jobs and careers. This has been totally disregarded.

Instead there’s a modern day slave trade going on – a trade in workers who must cross the globe to fill the pockets of employers here, EU-style ‘freedom of movement’ foisted on workers everywhere.

If one definition of imperialism is filching other countries’ resources, the British government is once again aggressively leading the field, ahead of other wealthy countries such as USA and Canada.

The World Health Organization has a [‘red list’](#) to prevent developed nations recruiting from regions with undeveloped health systems. Nepal is on the list, but the British government is targeting it all the same.

And now Filipino nurses are invited to come here even without experience. Opportunities are stolen from the next generation here

The toppling of statues of historical imperialists doesn’t begin to address the war on British workers we experience today.

According to the Home Office’s [own report](#), more migrants are coming to Britain than before Brexit. Priti Patel has a visa for every type of work within the Global Marketplace.

She calls it taking control.

The biggest growth in migration is in skilled workers.

A curious form of inverted colonialism is going on. Worse than in the nineteenth century, because many foreign workers must leave their homes and children behind. [in worst case scenarios, passports are impounded by employer]. Where once the British managerial class was willing to suffer a certain amount of inconvenience – putting their furniture into storage, packing the kids off to boarding school, before sailing off into an oppressively hot sunset – now they are sitting comfortably in front of a screen, while their ‘slaves’ are recruited at the click of a mouse.

And if those slaves are refugees? The more desperate the better. Ukrainian? Great! The NHS needs you! Employers love refugees and asylum seekers, migrants of all kinds, if they reduce the wages bill.

Witness NHS England CEO Amanda Pritchard’s breathless [instruction to employers](#):

“accelerate recruitment plans....bringing forward the arrival of internationally recruited nurses”.

And Professor James Buchan, Health Foundation, [very excited](#): “There are potential economies of scale for the employer.”

This is about business, not health.

You have to laugh at the totally inappropriate seductive language of [the ads](#): “Nurses! whether you enjoy city living, stunning coastlines or a peaceful countryside setting, Devon offers it all.”

The NHS staffing crisis is exacerbated by pandemic, but not caused by it. It is deliberate, dating back decades. An excuse to avoid the expense of investment.

A third of GPs plan to quit in next five years, many relatively early in their careers [[GP Worklife study](#) by Manchester University], citing “insufficient time to do the job justice”. A waste of investment in training.

More than ever started training last year. 4,000 places per year = 50 million patient appointments.

Staffing is still a problem. How can this be solved? It is a service, not a business. Pay-back contracts in return for training?

Ukraine

There has been little or no debate in Parliament about Britain’s role in the Ukraine conflict. Actually we shouldn’t have a role, but Johnson was so quick off the mark dispensing weaponry in our name, and Labour was so quick to offer support that we were committed before we knew it.

And before we knew it, consideration was being given to air attacks on Russian targets – mercifully rejected.

Then there was talk of a Russian nuclear strike, and British boots on the ground.

Now Liz Truss says it will be a ten-year war, so we’re sending 8,000 troops to the border. What does she know?

She incites the use of British weapons inside Russian territory and Putin threatens Britain with retaliation. What did she expect?

This is whipping up hysteria. Now supposedly it is World War III.

So quickly are nations sucked into imperialist war.

And for what? All to be pressganged into finance capitalism's competition for markets. Is this the real meaning of Global Britain?

To those who say we must do something, we say deal with our own imperialist ruling class, waging war against living standards at home. Refuse to participate in their war games. Only the Russian people can deal with Putin.

Nato is the armed wing of imperialist blocs, notably the US and the EU. It is not our friend. It is an imperialist organisation in its own right, provoking aggression. It is responsible for decades of slow burn provocation, the build-up of forces on the borders of the rival Russian sphere of influence. We cannot fulfil our plans for an independent Britain, we are not safe from attack, until we withdraw.

Out of Ukraine!

Leave Nato!

Look at Germany now – screwed – having pursued a policy of dependence on Russian oil and gas and decommissioning nuclear

Let's celebrate Britain's escape from that particular entanglement.

It seems the government does have an independent plan for the short to mid-term when it comes to oil – independent of Russia– as an interim measure to keep the lights on while transitioning to renewables. Opening up of six North Sea oilfields complemented by small modular nuclear reactors for a low carbon future, such as the RR reactor, in addition to Hinckley Point C and Sizewell C.

800 apprenticeships at Hinckley.

[XR](#) accuses oil companies of “destroying life”. Yet oil – the substance, not the companies – has provided the standard of living its opponents were born into, and still has a role in the development of clean modern industry.