

# WORKERS

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JULY/AUGUST 2019 £1

WHAT PART OF THE EU'S FREE MOVEMENT OF CAPITAL DO REMAINDER UNIONS LIKE SO MUCH?

# THE EU: A DISASTER FOR TRADE UNION RIGHTS

**Steel** Save Scunthorpe!

**Rail** On the brink

**Sovereignty** What we need

**Euro** Propped up by us

**EU and unions** The real cost

**Swiss** EU blackmail

**Leavers** Learning to organise *plus* News, Book

**Scotland** SNP wreckers fail

Reviews, Historic Notes

**Academies** Teachers fight

and more

# WORKERS



## Now finish the job

THE LATEST attempt by would-be Brexit wreckers was defeated in Parliament in June. But the job is not yet done. They will try again. We have to keep the pressure on untrustworthy Westminster politicians of whatever party.

On 12 June the Labour Party led an attempt to tie the next prime minister's hands by ruling out no deal on leaving the EU. It was defeated by 11 votes, 309 to 298, after eight Labour MPs voted with the government and 13 abstained, cancelling out 10 Conservative rebels who voted with Labour.

The pro-EU conservative MP Oliver Letwin told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that he thought the latest defeat meant Parliament had exhausted the options for preventing a no-deal exit. Perhaps. But the only certainty is that the ruling class and pro-EU forces inside and outside Parliament will not rest. They will do whatever they can to reverse the historic Leave decision.

Listen to Keir Starmer, Labour shadow for Exiting the EU: "...this House will take every step necessary to prevent a no deal." Or Philip Hammond, currently Chancellor of the Exchequer: "Parliament will not allow a no-deal exit from the EU." Both speak for MPs, but not for the British people.

We've seen lies and delay – many times. We've been told parliament is sovereign over the people, like the kings of old with their divine right to rule. We've seen the government's negotiating position undermined by MPs openly promoting a second vote, even

calling for Article 50 to be revoked, and by Corbyn and others trotting off to cosy up to EU leaders.

Nearly all Labour's MPs have played a shameful role in this saga. Elected on a manifesto that promised to honour the referendum vote and act in the national interest, they have done neither.

The eight Labour MPs who voted to support the government and defeat the wreckers on 12 June should be saluted. What are the others playing at by putting the interests of the EU before those of their country?

On the positive side there has been a resolute response from British people. Whenever people have been given a chance to express their views it's clear that parliamentary niceties cut no ice. We want out, and cleanly. As a result of that clarity, May's would-be successors seem for the most part to understand that willingness to face up to the EU is a prerequisite for the job.

The establishment fears that whoever wins the Conservative leadership will do what most of his party members and the country want – leave the EU.

We'll see further dirty tricks, whoever becomes Prime Minister. And more of the vicious attacks on those in the labour movement who dare to speak out for Brexit and against the EU.

The pro-EU forces will not let this rest; nor should the forces for Brexit. Finish the job and get on with working on a future for Britain, so far put to one side as we struggle to get what we voted for. ■



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

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

[www.cpbml.org.uk](http://www.cpbml.org.uk) [@cpbml](https://twitter.com/cpbml)  
Issue 213, July/August 2019



## Contents – July/August 2019

### News Digest

Swiss reject EU blackmail, p3; Teachers fight academy plan, p4; Brexit jobs petition launched, p5

03

### Features

Workers pay the price of the European Union, p6; What does Britain need for independence? p8; Propping up the euro, p11; Leavers groups: learning how to organise again, p12; British Steel must be saved, p14; How privatisation is pushing rail to the brink, p16; Brexit wreckers thwarted in Scotland, p18

06

### End Notes

Book Review: Why nation isn't a dirty word, p20; Historic Notes: 1688 – A modern revolution, p22

20



<b>SWITZERLAND</b>
<b>NO DEAL</b>
<b>LIBRARIES</b>
<b>EDUCATION</b>
<b>MIGRATION</b>
<b>NORTH SEA JOBS</b>
<b>SHIPPING</b>
<b>E-NEWSLETTER</b>
<b>ON THE WEB</b>
<b>WHAT'S ON</b>

EU blackmail
In good shape – official
Essex protest
Teachers fight academy
More occupations open
Union attacks waiver
Brexit petition launched
How to subscribe
More news online
Coming soon



Walters-Storyk Design Group

The Swiss parliament chamber, Bern.

## Swiss reject EU blackmail

AS *Workers* goes to press, the European Union has said it is standing by its ultimatum to Switzerland: agree to the proposed Framework Agreement covering all aspects of the country's relations with the EU by 30 June, or face being cut off from the single market.

The EU is being forced into a hardball approach to Switzerland because with Brexit still unresolved it cannot afford to be seen as weak. It is now threatening to cut off Swiss companies' access to European stock exchanges unless Switzerland rolls over.

But the Swiss are showing no signs of capitulation. Even though government negotiators had previously recommended the Framework Agreement, the Swiss Senate decided to send it out for consultation. In June its parliament gave the government a clear mandate to extend negotiations with the EU – and the government said it would block EU shares from its powerful stock exchanges if the EU went ahead with its threat.

It's not the first time the EU has threatened Switzerland with financial isolation. Last year it gave a deadline of 31 January for the Swiss to agree, then extended it by six months.

The problem for the EU is that Switzerland is run on democratic lines, with voters able to enforce referendums on any issue, provided a petition receives sufficient support. And the government has already said it won't agree anything that parliament would vote down, or which would fall in a referendum.

Unlike in Britain, the trade union movement is unanimously opposed to the Framework Agreement, which would dilute existing controls on the movement of labour designed to ensure that EU firms cannot undercut Swiss terms and conditions. Who will blink first? ■

## NO DEAL

### In good shape – official

BRITAIN IS in good shape for a No Deal Brexit, according to Mark Sedwill, head of the British civil service. He said on 13 June that preparations for leaving the EU without an agreement were now quite advanced. So, fears of "crashing out" and of "cliff-edges" are out of date. Forecasts of economic doom are not realistic either.

In early March Sedwill said "No Deal" would trigger a 10 per cent spike in food price, send businesses to the wall, damage the police's ability to keep people safe and plunge the economy into recession.

But the government has reached many formal and informal agreements with EU countries in the run up to 29 March and since. These include measures to preserve the flow of trade include customs procedures at the Channel ports, landing rights for aircraft, permits for Eurostar and driving permits for hauliers. ■

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

## FLEET AUXILIARY

### Action over pay

NEARLY 700 Royal Fleet Auxiliary sailors, members of the RMT union, are to take industrial action from 2 July in a dispute over pay. They have been offered a pay rise of just 1.5 per cent.

They will be working contracted hours only, turning down requests to come back early from shore leave, and refusing to cater for social events such as officers' cocktail parties – though there may be exemptions for members whose ships are involved in humanitarian relief or military action. ■

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





## ON THE WEB

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

### Britain voted Brexit – again

The working class has told the pro-EU ruling class to carry out our 2016 instruction to leave the EU through the vote in the EU elections.

### Bristolians campaign for better trains

Like many cities Bristol needs better public transport. Bristolians have been doing something about that with a long running campaign for an improved local train service.

### Report shows 21 per cent cut in local government spending

Local government spending on services has fallen by more than a fifth over 10 years, according to a new report.

### NHS training body still looking outside Britain

The body responsible for educating and training the NHS workforce in England is still fixated on importing labour from abroad.

### Tube union wins maintenance victory

The RMT suspended strike action by maintenance and engineering workers after London Underground said it would withdraw planned cuts.

### Plus: the e-newsletter

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

Photo courtesy Save Our Libraries Essex



Essex County Council is facing fierce protests against cuts to its library service. A demonstration in Chelmsford on 8 June is the latest action to keep the pressure on the council. For more on this story, see [cpbml.org.uk/new/libraries-essex](http://cpbml.org.uk/new/libraries-essex).

## Teachers fight academy plan

TEACHERS AT Waltham Holy Cross primary school in Essex have begun strike action over government plans to force it into the hands of a controversial academy trust.

More than 20 teachers walked out on 20 June in the first of five planned days of strike action. The school's Interim Executive Board has been forced to close the school to pupils on the strike days.

News of the strike plan came as it was revealed the incoming trust, NET Academies, has been referred to the government's Standards and Testing Agency (STA) after an external moderator from Essex County Council monitoring a SATS writing assessment raised concerns about the level of help provided to pupils by teachers.

But the STA has taken no further action, to the ire of parents who have been campaigning against the school's removal from local authority control.

The school had been rated inadequate by schools inspectorate Ofsted in March 2018. The inspectorate's draft report was littered with errors including the name of the headteacher and the number of nursery classes.

Reading the final report, parents didn't recognise the school they knew and held in high regard. They were furious when they were told that their school was to be forced to become an academy, run by NET, a large multi-academy trust which has been rated as one of the worst in England by the Education Policy Institute.

NET's board is made up largely of lawyers, accountants and management consultants – and no teacher.

The Trust has proposed shorter break times and an extension to the school day. It denies plans to sell an estimated £11.6 million worth of land to a property company.

The decision has been fought by a parent body turned active to defend their school. The union says that significant improvements have been made since the inspection and has called for an urgent reconsideration of the decision in order to avoid the strike action. ■

## MIGRATION

### More occupations open

THE GOVERNMENT'S Migration Advisory Committee is ploughing on with plans to denude countries that need their highly skilled workers more than we do rather than train our own here.

Amid a supposed skills shortage, economists on the Committee have called for migration rules to be relaxed for vets, web designers, psychologists and architects from outside Europe.

The official government advisers want 9 per cent of jobs in the labour market to be covered by the Shortage Occupation List,

compared with 1 per cent at present.

Professions listed for the first time are occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and archaeologists. Some occupations already listed will be extended to cover all roles including medical practitioners, civil engineers, artists (!) and mechanical engineers.

And in a further kick in the teeth for unemployed workers in Britain, employers will not have to demonstrate that these listed jobs cannot be filled here – and will be able to advertise them exclusively abroad if they wish. ■

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

## NORTH SEA JOBS

### Union attacks waiver

SHIPPING UNION Nautilus has hit out at a Home Office decision to extend an immigration waiver that allows offshore wind construction companies operating in British waters to employ workers from outside the EU and the European Economic Area.

The union says the decision undermines job opportunities and training in the sector – by allowing companies to pay non-European workers, who are often out at sea

for 12 hours or more a day, less than the minimum wage. These workers can be paid as low as £4 an hour.

Nautilus general secretary Mark Dickinson said his union’s concerns relate to “the lack of any credible evidence to show that there is any shortage of UK maritime professionals to take these jobs”, and because of evidence that the waivers have resulted in the use of foreign labour paid well below UK rates.

“Sadly, the government has now given no fewer than four ‘temporary’ concessions, even though there is nothing to substantiate the case for exemptions,” said Dickinson. ■



Ms Jane Rix/shutterstock.com

Shipping in Southampton harbour, one of Britain’s busiest.

## Brexit jobs petition launched

TRACTION IS developing around campaigns to use Brexit to boost employment, wages and conditions among British seafarers. In particular, unions want to ensure that shipping between UK ports – known as “cabotage” – is carried out by UK crews.

In the latest development, a petition has been launched calling for the introduction of a “Jones Act”. As the petition explains, the Jones Act (formally known as the US Merchant Marine Act of 1920) protects US jobs and standards in the industry.

Specifically, the act says that all goods carried by water between US ports must be carried in US-flagged and built ships, crewed by US citizens and permanent residents, and owned by US citizens.

One campaigner is calling for signatures on the petition after being urged to by his son, who is the Chief Officer on a North Sea supply ship. He notes that there are British-flagged ships without any British crew on board.

Unions in the industry – the RMT and Nautilus International – have long favoured having a similar law in Britain. Not so the UK Chamber of Shipping, which is more concerned with opportunities to make profit abroad than with employing UK officers and ratings.

Brexit should provide the opportunity to enforce laws to protect UK employment – but that appears to be the last thing on the government’s mind. When it introduced legislation earlier this year to revoke EU control of UK cabotage, it made it clear that nothing would actually change.

In January, junior minister Nusrat Ghani was explicit at a Commons committee meeting: “It is important that people understand that, despite revoking EU legislation, the UK will still operate a liberal cabotage regime. That means shipping companies registered in EU member states will still be able to operate in the UK as they do now, so very little will change.” ■

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

## WHAT’S ON

### Coming soon

#### JULY

Friday 19 July to Sunday 21 July

#### Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival



The annual festival commemorates the Tolpuddle Martyrs, six farm labourers deported to Australia in 1834 for the crime of forming a trade union.

It costs £40 for the music part of the festival on Friday and Saturday. Sunday is free. See [www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk](http://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk). Meet us there: our *Workers* sellers will be at Tolpuddle on the Sunday.

#### OCTOBER

Monday 14 October, 7.30pm

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

CPBML public meeting: “Next steps in Britain’s fight for freedom”

This meeting, two weeks before Britain’s latest planned departure from the EU, will be an ideal opportunity to discuss the struggle to come. All welcome.

Thursday 24 October, 7.30pm

Upstairs, Britons Protection, 50 Great Bridgewater Street, M1 5LE

CPBML public meeting: “British independence: essential for our future”

Without real independence, Britain will always be at the mercy of the forces of globalisation. Come and discuss. All welcome.





**It's become a mantra, endlessly repeated by Remainer unionists. What price would that be? And how about acknowledging the price of Brexit?**

# Workers pay the price of Brexit

ON 6 JULY 2017 Michel Barnier, the EU Brexit negotiator, addressed the EU's Economic and Social Committee. His words were duly noted and passed on to unions in Britain by the TUC delegate to the committee under a title saying that Barnier "spells out the truth" about Brexit.

Barnier's address, wrote Unite's Martin Mayer with doe-eyed devotion, was "clinical in its analysis" and "impressive in its clarity". And he dubbed as "fatuous" Theresa May's statement that "Brexit means Brexit". The TUC's love affair with the EU was still going strong, despite the referendum.

At the meeting Judy McKnight, ex-TUC General Council, ex-General Secretary of the prison officers' union, and described as "Leader of UK Workers Group members" although she is and was actually retired, repeated the worn old refrain that "workers must not pay the price of Brexit".

The TUC was campaigning back then for Britain to stay in the single market for as long as possible, under a transitional agreement, to "keep workers' rights safe". Now it has hardened its stance, calling for Britain to remain in both the single market and the customs union.

## Treasury parrots

The Fire Brigades Union, for example, which in June suspended executive member Paul Embery for two years for speaking out in favour of Brexit (see back page), parrots every Project Fear statement put out by the Treasury. The union attacks the World Trade Organization for being "neoliberal" – but of course fails to say that the EU and the US were trying to negotiate the TTIP treaty because the WTO isn't neoliberal enough.

Nowhere do these euro-enthusiasts talk about the fact that the EU constitution all the key principles of neoliberalism in stone, effectively unchangeable – the free movement of goods, services, capital and "persons" (this includes companies). That's something that the bankers and transnational capitalists haven't managed to get into

• This article is an updated version of one published in *Workers* magazine in September 2017. Given the continuing confusion and reaction in trade unions, we thought it worth revisiting.

a single national constitution outside the EU, not even the US. In particular, they see the European Court of Justice as the guardian of workers' rights. Yet it is anything but that.

Successive ECJ judgements have made it perfectly clear that the rights to free movement – of goods, labour, services and capital – come first. The right to strike in pursuance of what it calls social policy (jobs, pay, conditions, pensions) cannot, according to the Viking judgement\*, "automatically override" these fundamental rights.

## Lower costs are 'pivotal'

More fundamentally, said ECJ Advocate General Poireres Maduro on 23 May 2007, "the possibility for a company to relocate to a Member State where its operating costs will be lower is pivotal to the pursuit of effective intra Community trade". There's the EU, in a nutshell: it's a fundamental right for a company to move from country to country in search of lower and lower labour costs.

The EU's fundamental rights are all about the market. It's a far cry from "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" or "Liberty, equality, fraternity". In effect, the EU acts as a superstate whose constitution embodies the freedom of capital and capitalisms in a way unheard of in any other.

The first price that workers pay is that they must allow outsourcing and privatisation of national industries and services.

The second is that they cannot strike to stop work being outsourced to a cheaper country. The ECJ made the reasons for that very clear: "Without the rules on freedom of movement and competition it would be impossible to achieve the Community's fundamental aim of having a functioning common market."

And of course there is the cost of the free movement of labour. It's beyond doubt that it has hit unskilled workers in Britain particularly hard. It has lowered pay rates, and according even to the official Migration Advisory Committee, damaged the job prospects of lower skilled natives when the labour market is slack.

It's not just the unskilled. Without free movement how could the government have erected the massive tuition fees barrier to the training of nurses, midwives and other health professionals while understaffing runs



Razvan Orendovici (CC BY-SA 2.0)

## Oppressive architecture, oppressive law: the Eurozone

through hospitals like a plague? And the laws of supply and demand are clearly operating in other areas too, such as academic pay.

The TUC not only backs this free movement but, astonishingly, thinks that Britain's migration policy should be handled on our behalf by Brussels. "It is ... more effective for migration flows to be managed through EU legislation rather than member states creating patch-work laws to deal with the issue," it told a government inquiry into EU powers in 2013.

The odd thing about the TUC's blather on "workers' rights" is that you might expect trade unions, of all bodies, to know that it is first and foremost through the existence and activity of unions that workers can establish and defend any rights that they have.

There is nothing – not a single sentence – in the draconian Trade Union Act 2016 that runs counter to EU law. Nor in the even worse bits that David Cameron's government was forced to drop as the bill made its way through parliament.

Items that would not have bothered the

ions: “Workers must not pay the price of Brexit.” What price of staying in the EU?

# of the European Union



European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

EU included the proposed requirement for pickets to give their names to the police – an idea that Conservative MP David Davies objected to violently. “What is this? This isn’t Franco’s Britain,” he said, referring to the 40-year fascist dictatorship in Spain.

Yet the EU is supposed to guarantee “workers’ rights”!

And when collective action fails or is absent, the only recourse is often to an employment tribunal. Yet when the government introduced huge fees for employment tribunals in 2013, and Unison brought a legal challenge, it was primarily to English law based on Magna Carta and enshrined in 1297 that the Supreme Court turned in 2017 to rule the fees unlawful.

Back in 2015, Unite published a particularly biased leaflet called *What has Europe ever done for us?* (incorrectly equating Europe, a geographical fact, with the EU, a political construction). Among its outrageous claims was the oft-repeated notion that the EU “is also responsible for 3.5 million jobs in the UK.” The implication is that we would lose these jobs with Brexit. This is utter non-

sense, though a number of politicians have said the same thing, and keep on saying it.

Claims that three million or more jobs depend on Britain being in the EU appeared following the publication of a report by Dr Martin Weale in 2000 for the National Institute for Economic and Social Research.

But the report did not say that these jobs would be lost if we left the EU. Far from it. It suggested that withdrawal may actually be beneficial. It was the fault of politicians like Nick Clegg, John Prescott and Stephen Byers that the findings of this academic report were twisted.

Weale was furious at this distortion, describing it as “pure Goebbels” (a reference to Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda) and saying, “in many years of academic research I cannot recall such a wilful distortion of the facts”.

## Nothing to admire

What, then, does the EU offer workers in the way of rights? Its defenders talk admiringly about working hours legislation – but what’s to admire?

It is true that the EU brought in its Working Time Directive in the 1990s, incorporated into British law in 1998. But look closer. Brussels mandated a minimum holiday of 20 days – including public holidays. British law states that the minimum is 20 days excluding public holidays, making our minimum 28 days.

So any government could cut statutory holidays by a full eight days without contravening any EU law. Not that you would hear this from the TUC, which continues to push out stories talking about, for example, 7 million people’s holiday pay being at risk.

“There is no guarantee that [the government after Brexit] would keep paid holiday entitlements at their current level, or at all,” claimed the TUC in a typical act of gratuitous scaremongering, turning a blind eye to the lower holiday pay rights in most of the EU.

British maternity leave is another area where TUC alarmists have been trying to sow suspicion. Yet British law mandates up to 52 weeks of maternity leave, with Statutory Maternity Pay for up to 39 weeks. EU law? Pay and leave of up to 14 weeks.

And then there is health and safety. The TUC acknowledges that the government

**‘It is only through unions that workers can establish and defend any rights that they have...’**

says it will transfer all existing health and safety protections from EU law to British law. But it adds, “there are no guarantees for what happens afterwards” – as if permanent future guarantees were possible.

“It should be written into the [Brexit] deal that the UK and EU will meet the same standards, for both existing rights and future improvements,” said Frances O’Grady, TUC general secretary.

This really is fatuous. It would leave Britain unable to improve its health and safety legislation unless the EU agreed to do the same, necessitating a negotiation with 27 member states. It would give Brussels sovereignty over workplace legislation in Britain, which is no kind of Brexit at all.

Back in 1988 the TUC waved the white flag and assumed that the only improvements in legislative protection for workers would come from Brussels. It’s still waving that flag, even though the EU itself acknowledges on [europa.eu](http://europa.eu) that “Responsibility for employment and social policy lies primarily with national governments.”

The truth is that our rights as workers have always existed only so far as workers have been prepared to fight for them and defend them. As long as we tolerate the employing class and the capitalist system, any rights we have will always be “at risk”.

But for now the urgent risk is that we fail to finish the job of the 2016 referendum. Nothing is so imminently threatening to the wellbeing of workers in Britain than allowing the independence process to be derailed. ■

\*See “Why trade unionists should vote to leave”, [cpbml.org.uk/Brexit](http://cpbml.org.uk/Brexit), which also contains a link to the ECJ’s Viking judgement.

The genie of independence is out of the bottle, and the fight for  
Britain needs to achieve that aim...

# What does Britain need



Workers

Marchers on their way to Westminster on 29 March this year – the date when we should have left the European Union.

AN EPIC struggle is gripping this country between those of us wanting an independent Britain and those who don't. It is a struggle which could lead to the demise of both the Conservative and the Labour Party.

That struggle could – indeed must – change the role of Parliament, for Parliament has stood against the democratic decision made to Leave in the 2016 Referendum. Many people are of the same mind as Cromwell was in 1653 when he said to the Rump Parliament: “You have sat too long for any good you have been doing lately... Depart, I say; and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!”

National independence is defined as the right of a nation or people to determine its own form of government without influence from outside. For more than four decades

• This article is based on speeches given at the CPBML's May Day meeting in London and a CPBML public meeting in London held on 19 June.

we've had the constantly growing power of the EU, which puts its four freedoms of movement – goods, capital, services and labour – above the control of national governments. These are the four freedoms that capitalism wants for the whole world: globalisation is a whole planet built in the image of the EU.

No significant role for national governments then, and Parliament has been content to cede more and more power without even asking us. This perfectly suits international capitalists, who like to by-pass nation states, by-pass the people and thus by-pass any democratic check on their activity.

Remember that some of the greatest supporters of these EU freedoms of movement have been British. It was Thatcher who as her first act in office relaxed exchange controls and allowed money to flow out of Britain. And Tony Blair was keen to preside over all this too.

**The fight is here**

The epic struggle of these forces for and against British independence is taking place on home soil. Those for independence lost round one when we joined (confirmed in the 1975 referendum), won round two by never joining the euro.

If you take the long view of history, that decision to leave the Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1992 will come to be seen as even more important than the 2016 referendum decision. Britain still has a national currency. Italy is currently looking at “mini Bots” – mini bills of treasury – as a first step on a long road to recover its national currency.

**‘Globalisation is a whole planet built in the image of the EU...’**



ght has already started. Time, then, to consider what

# for independence?

By their consistent reject of the euro the British people showed the beginnings of the first requirement for independence – a clear understanding of what the EU is about and its role in facilitating global capital. When the CPBML opposed joining the EU we called it an employers' club. That's still true, and now far more understand it. But more need to.

The decision of June 2016 requires us to extract ourselves from the EU – a much harder job than not joining something. It's no good sitting back and waiting for it to happen. We must organise ourselves as a people to deliver the outcome.

It is beginning in Leavers' groups across the country (see "Learning how to organise again, p12). The flowering of grassroots organisation up and down the land has been the greatest achievement so far of the post-referendum period, and a fine mark of the demise of the old politics. The Brexit Party has played a crucial role too, in demonstrating the will of the people for independence.

## Under enemy control

But we have let most of our unions fall under the control of enemies of independence. These unions suppress debate about independence. How is the trade union movement going to respond to the developing "no platforming" of pro-Brexit views within the trade unions?

Paul Embery, a member of the Fire Brigades Union executive is not the first to be removed from a union position because of his views on the EU (see editorial, back page). Members must respond, defend democracy and remake their unions. Put officers there to serve the members, not to formulate policy on their behalf.

EU membership damages the capacity for self-determination – manifested in a country's ability to feed itself, make things and make its own laws.

There are stark examples out there. Since Romania became part of the EU in 2007, 3.7 million Romanians – a quarter of the population – have left, leaving mostly the very young and the old behind. And Bulgaria currently heads the world list for the fastest rate of population shrinkage. Greece has lost 26 per cent of its GDP since 2007, the

*Continued on page 10*



**Made in Britain: the McConnel Agribuggy sprayer seen at the Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh, June 2019.**

## Agriculture and industry

MODERN FARMING relies on industrial production. We can grow food but can we make a tractor? New Holland Agriculture, based in Basildon, Essex, is one of the world's most successful and advanced agricultural machinery manufacturing brands and produces tractors at the UK's only volume tractor plant. Its Basildon site now employs over 800 employees and manufactures some 20,000 tractors per year, with 90 per cent of production exported to more than 120 countries.

After experiencing difficulty recruiting skilled people in the 25-40 age group with manufacturing skills, New Holland Agriculture developed a £3.4 million training programme to raise employee skills levels to the internationally recognised World Class Manufacturing standard. An employer setting an example – paying to train its own workforce instead of importing cheap labour.

But making a tractor, like all manufacturing processes, requires energy. For true self-reliance, our energy supply should be reliable, affordable, safe and clean.

Energy dependence leads to political

dependency and insecure supply. Just as Britain tries to leave the EU, we will become more dependent on foreign electricity imports. It is estimated that by 2030 electricity imports would be 67 terawatt-hours annually. That's ten times the amount originally projected back in 2012.

Yet our nuclear energy policy is in disarray thanks to EU rules about investment and government reluctance to take control of it (see [cpbml.org.uk/energyscience](http://cpbml.org.uk/energyscience)).

So our capacity for self-determination is hamstrung by finance capital, which does not invest in industry, and by the high and rising cost of energy.

Making a tractor also requires steel. Government is sitting back while the Scunthorpe steel plant is closed (see page 14). This simply means we must get steel from somewhere else, and we lose direct control over quality and availability.

Steel is an essential product; and the issue of quality is important for our future. Specialist applications in instruments, tools and nuclear plant demand the finest quality. Steel is an energy-intensive industry requiring a dependable power supply. ■

*Continued from page 11*

largest fall in modern history not linked to a war or revolution.

But what has EU membership done for Britain's ability to determine its own future? Can we feed ourselves, make things here, keep the lights on and keep warm?

Despite all the impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy, there is still capacity in British agriculture. Latest government figures suggest it now produces just under 50 per cent of the food we eat.

Do we need to import as much? We are not going to be growing bananas or citrus fruits any time soon. But for most other fruit and vegetables, we could do it. From British wine and British lentils and chickpeas, some changes to the climate can have benefits.

## Understanding

Could we do it without using more land? Throughout Europe modern agriculture has damaged the soil structure and fertility – as it has done here. We have the scientific understanding to improve soil quality. So even without using more land we could produce more and waste less.

Reliance on cheap labour has done much damage. Farms need mechanisation and a finance industry which will support investment in farm machinery.

Some things are more important than Brexit, say environmentalists. Well, let's extract ourselves from the EU model of freedom of movement for goods, capital, services and labour and we'll make a giant leap forward for reducing CO2 emissions and demands on the water supply.

On a world scale we need to make things closer to home, shorten supply chains, invest in energy saving equipment and shift fewer workers from place to place.

**'Extracting ourselves from the EU will be a giant leap forward for reducing CO2...'**

Monkey Business Images/shutterstock.com



**Training opportunities have been cut to the bone.**

## Fill the jobs here!

DO WE HAVE the education and skills to be an independent country? The Migration Advisory Committee wants a huge expansion of jobs in the labour market to be covered by the Shortage Occupation List, meaning that many more jobs would be open to migrants both within and outside the EU (see article, page 4).

Many employers are just wringing their hands, desperate to maintain the flow of easy, cheap labour from EU countries with high levels of unemployment.

Others are looking to the future. For example, tech agency MMT Digital in Rutland has set up links with nearby De Montfort and Nottingham Trent universities

to bring in students on placements. But positive approaches like this are all too rare.

Even so, there's no doubt that the endless delay and fudge created by Theresa May's repeated and futile attempts to push through her "withdrawal" agreement has made it hard for employers to plan.

And her government's continued enthusiasm for importing workers from abroad – as shown by the unnecessary waiver for the offshore industry (see page 5) and the rise in net migration from outside the EU – shows that even with Brexit we will have to fight to ensure there's work for British people here. ■

The risk to the planet is the model of globalisation based on the free movement model of the European Union.

Never in our lifetimes has change been so swift, or so fundamental. The future is bright, and it is ours to grab. We have a people ready to build, and much building that needs to be done. We have the resources and the economic, industrial and artistic muscle to thrive without the EU, spending

the billions we will save for the protection and prosperity of those who come after us.

Trials aplenty lie ahead. But they are the trials that come with independence, with adulthood as a people. If we can break free of the Treaty of Rome then there's no reason why we can't break free of economic enslavement too. We are shaking off the dirty rags of social democracy, the idea that others should act, and even think for us. ■

**Britain has been helping to keep the ailing currency afloat – using our pensions as collateral...**

# Propping up the euro

THE EURO CURRENCY was created with British capital, which continues to support it. And that capital came from British workers. It's a strange story, worth recounting, with an ongoing importance.

In 1999 Gordon Brown, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, sold Britain's gold reserves. It's often mentioned that the gold price rose sharply and never fell back – it's now more than four times the 1999 price. Less publicised is how the proceeds of the sale were reinvested.

Over a third of the proceeds were used to help launch the euro. What Brown did was to purchase the new euro currency in 2000 to help underwrite international market confidence in it. Brown then told us that he kept Britain out of the euro. No, the British working class did that. Brown helped to create the monster.

## Deception

This type of deception continues to the present day. The City of London currently acts as a clearing house for euro transactions. In effect the City insures commercial euro transactions and euro-denominated banks against adverse movements in interest rates.

This facility is provided through derivative financial instruments known as "interest rate swaps". Without them costs would rise for European banks and companies transacting in euros. Many banks would become insolvent leading to the likely collapse of the euro currency.

The City needs access to collateral to be able to offer this level of insurance. In other words, access to very large chunks of capital that can be used as collateral in the event of an insurance claim due to an unanticipated increase in the rate of interest.

And the collateral the City uses is part of our accumulated pension fund savings. These are valued at over £2 trillion, roughly

**'The proposal will need insurance – the working class's pensions...'**



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equal to Britain's annual gross domestic product.

No other EU country has anywhere near this amount of accumulated pensions capital or anything similar. At best some have about 6 per cent of GDP. This is because EU countries pay their pensions from annual tax receipts rather than building up funding in advance – our arrangement is one that the EU frequently tries to undermine.

So the capital tied up and set aside for pensions for British workers is used to support the euro. In effect the value that British workers have produced over the generations is applied against us in favour of the euro currency and its attaching oppressiveness.

The EU now wants to take matters further. A *Financial Times* columnist said recently, "I concluded some time ago that a fiscal union is not sufficient to guarantee the future stability of the euro. What it requires instead is a full capital markets union."

## Ambitions

Recent comments from the European Central Bank underline that view. During an International Monetary Fund conference an ECB speaker said that a safe asset would also help the EU's geopolitical ambitions.

The ECB speaker went on to say that

the safe asset is "he who shall not be named". That was a reference to the aim of mutualising euro debt by issuing a euro bond covering all euro participating countries. That move would completely liquidate what remains of those euro countries' own sovereignty and fiscal controls.

And just like the launch of the euro in 2000 the euro bond proposal will need insurance underwriting and capital liquidity to attain market confidence. Well let's put a name to that liquidity – it is called the pensions capital of the British working class.

## Crisis

The ECB speaker went on to say that such assets are needed as collateral instruments in financial markets to replace national sovereign bonds in bank portfolios. Without safe assets, the eurozone will remain prone to crisis.

Central to EU/British negotiations has been to figure out how a capital markets union can be covertly brought about using British workers' pension savings and without us noticing. It is time for British workers to take control of the wealth they have created and to use it to underwrite their own country's development instead of the expansionist, anti-national aims of the EU. ■



Parliament's failure to act on our vote to leave the EU has country...

# Learning how to organis



AFTER THE REFERENDUM of 2016 activity to support Leave lapsed, as if the job were done. That has changed. Since the traitorous “Withdrawal Agreement” last year new groups have formed and old ones revived. With no organisation capable or willing to represent them, people are learning once more how to organise and finding new ways to do so.

That was unexpected, above all by the political class. The lesson now learned is to trust no one.

One result of that awakening was the success of Brexit Party candidates in the EU elections in May. The new MEPs are well aware that they were elected solely to help leave the EU – and not to join the EU political establishment.

Henrik Overgaard-Nielson is one of three Brexit Party MEPs elected to represent North West England. A Danish national who has lived in Britain for 20 years, he was co-chair of the “No” campaign during the Danish referendum on the Maastricht Treaty.

He decided to stand as a Brexit Party candidate because he did not want to see a repeat of the experience of the people of Denmark. They rejected the Maastricht Treaty but were made to vote again and the result was overturned.

## Union rep

Henrik and other Brexit Party candidates spoke on 4 May at a rally in Fylde, near Blackpool. Henrik is a dentist; early in his speech he said that he was a trade union representative. The audience burst into applause. They appreciated someone taking on the task of representing their colleagues.

The TUC and many trade unions appear to have turned their backs on the working class and our needs. That has been happening for a while, but the Brexit vote and its aftermath have brought it to the fore.

Working people haven't given up on trade unions – or more specifically they haven't given up on the need for organisation. But events like the removal and banning of FBU official Paul Embery (see “Stop shutting down debate”, back page), are a reminder of the task ahead.

**Left: demonstration organised by a Leavers group in Manchester, May 2019.**

# sparked democratic activity and debate across the

# se again

**‘The TUC and many trade unions appear to have turned their backs on the working class...’**

Leavers of Britain is one of the notable organisations thrown up in the past months. Anyone, anywhere, can organise and advertise an event through the website. This can be a social meet-up for Leavers in an area, a street stall with leaflets, a protest or a debate.

Leavers of Britain (LoB) grew out of Leavers of London. Started by Lucy Harris, the idea was for social gatherings as a support for Leave voters, especially those that felt isolated or ostracised. Their regular social events resulted in a large number of people willing to do more.

When circumstances called for protest, outside Parliament for example, Harris was able to ask for support and could rely on willing helpers to materialise. As Leavers of London grew, she had the vision to set her sights on the whole country. And so Leavers of Britain was born with an ethos of do it for yourself, but you can learn from the energy of others.

## Learn a democratic style

Many new Leavers groups were clear from the start that they wanted to be active. Parliament and the rest of the establishment wanted to overturn the referendum decision and keep Britain tied to the EU.

Members of these groups wanted to ensure a clean break from the EU. They wanted to act and take responsibility as they were tired of waiting for politicians or others to do so. To most the idea of organising purely social gatherings didn't strike a chord.

LoB isn't a campaigning organisation and wasn't intended to be so. But it is serving a purpose in stimulating action and debate.

Harris, as director of LoB, said that groups should not be the key organisers of local marches. So those in Nottingham on 13 April and Manchester on 11 May were organised by working with non affiliated groups and billed as "March4Democracy".

These were successful opportunities for Leavers to be visible. People relished them and had the same sense of a joyous gathering and celebration as the national Leave Means Leave rally on 29 March. The message: politicians might be dragging their feet but "we voted to leave and we will leave".

## Way forward

This organisation and its members are still trying to find a way forward. There is much discussion both within a national group and across regions. So for example the success of March4Democracy changed views on whether LoB groups should organise wider events. Group organisers are talking to one another and appreciating the mutual support. Many find being part of a national group (or "branding") useful but some are saying that they will not be instructed on how to work.

The progress and developments within LoB encapsulate the challenges for everyone in trying to find new ways of democratic expression. We will have to find means of overcoming any disagreements and setbacks – the more so as visions for Britain post-EU will differ widely.

The gain is the increase in class activity. As one of those involved said, "We all want real democracy – instead of the sham that is parliament. We need to find a way of working democratically within our groups."

Harris was approached by the Brexit Party to stand as one of their candidates in Yorkshire & Humberside at the EU elections – and was successful. So although LoB is cross party and not affiliated, its activity could have been construed as support for a political party during an election.

The real risk was a challenge by the Electoral Commission or charges of fraudulent use of funds. So Harris asked groups to either stop all activity or change their branding. Many agreed but some dug their heels in and refused to do either.

There's also been debate about the march in Castleford on 23 June. The organ-

ising group has used the slogan "Kick out Cooper" – Yvette Cooper, the local MP has been instrumental in trying to stop Brexit despite 70 per cent of her constituents voting to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum.

Harris thought the slogan too negative and aggressive. She preferred the focus to be on commemorating the third anniversary of the referendum result by demanding Brexit and democracy. The march went ahead but Leavers of Britain and at least some of the northern groups will go their separate ways.

Warrington4Brexit has done a fantastic job organising Leavers in their area. The group pre-dates LoB. But it made the mistake in announcing that it was boycotting the March4Democracy in Manchester, because of objections to one speaker. But they did not first take views across their group and reach agreement.

People from the group and others from Warrington attended, though some stayed away. But sadly the group has been weakened, hopefully not permanently. That's another hard won lesson.

## Learn – and update

Trade unions developed in struggle as workers sought to protect each other. They were not imposed from outside; they created a democratic way of working. Much of that has been taken for granted – at the cost of losing their purpose and their democracy.

There are lessons for the future of unions in the energy and openness of Leaver groups. And those involved in leaver groups can learn from trade unionists about working together for a common purpose. The challenge is to relearn our understanding of democracy. ■

**‘Many new Leavers groups were clear from the start that they wanted to be active...’**



**The collapse of British Steel will be disastrous for its 5,000 workers and 20,000 others in the supply chain. Steel workers and their unions are the only ones who can secure its future.**

# British Steel must be saved



John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk

**Sign outside the Scunthorpe steelworks, now threatened with imminent closure.**

THE COLLAPSE of British Steel will be disastrous for its 5,000 workers and 20,000 others in the supply chain. Steel workers and their unions are the only ones who can secure its future.

Scunthorpe, where most of the British Steel workers are employed, would suffer as Redcar has done after its steel works closed. And the loss will cause significant damage to British industry too.

## Silence

After the initial dismay at the announcement, things have gone quiet, waiting for buyers to emerge. That silence is a risk. British Steel and its future should be brought to the attention of the government and its new ministers. The question is what Brexit is for and how to use the opportunities. Steel is one of the biggest.

The EU's demands for British Steel to pay £120 million under its flawed emissions trading scheme added to the company's

difficulties. May's negotiating team left British firms liable to pay out under this scheme until 2021. This was despite the EU's refusal to issue companies their rightful quota of free licences, holding that threat over the British parliament until it accepted the "Withdrawal Agreement".

In 2016 the government allowed Greybull Capital, a private equity firm with a history of failures (most notably Monarch Airlines), to take over at British Steel. Greybull promised to inject "risk capital" to save the company. Instead, it has extracted £9 million in management fees from the

**'Greybull's exposure to risk is, in reality, very limited...'**

company and charged more than £33 million in interest since 2016.

Greybull put in just £20 million of its own money, mostly in the form of high-interest loans. That includes £15 million from a subsidiary in Jersey on which Greybull stood to make a 9 per cent return. Meanwhile it also put £40 million into a failing French steelworks.

## At our expense

Business journalist Ben Marlow observed in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 26 May, "in true private equity fashion, by positioning itself as a senior creditor it both minimises its losses and gives it a place at the front of the queue if any money is recouped during insolvency, possibly at the expense of the taxpayer."

Marlow concluded, "The firm and its ilk are fond of reminding folk that they provide 'risk capital' but by going to such lengths to protect their own exposure the risk, in reality, is actually very limited. Employees, suppli-



# 0 workers and 20,000 others in the supply chain – and it

# ved

## Why Scunthorpe must stay open

THE VALUE embodied in British-made steel is one of the main reasons why the Scunthorpe works should remain open. Although current export prices of British Steel are comparatively expensive, that's not the whole story.

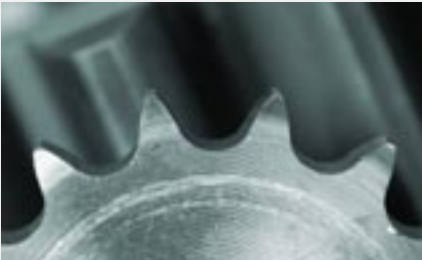
Using home-produced steel improves Britain's economy and balance of trade. In comparison, importing steel at whatever price will further worsen Britain's balance of trade. This is simply because the money used to pay for the import of steel leaves our economy. And users of steel in British industry are at the mercy of changes in world prices.

The pricing position is exacerbated by one of the methods British accounting applies to fixed capital investment in plant and machinery. This is by reference to the rate of return on capital deployed. Capital deployed in fixed assets such as a steel making plant gives returns bit by bit each year. The capital embodied in for example new steel facilities is tied to the longer term.

But capital invested over the longer term circulates slowly. The slower its circulation, the smaller capital's annual rate of profit compared with less capital-intensive activities. It's more attractive for capitalists and financial markets to aim for quick gains, like those made in buying and selling failing businesses. And unlike capital investments those add nothing to the wealth of the country.

The financial media make well

publicised comparisons between capital-intensive and less capital-intensive enterprises. They conclude that the latter activity is the more efficient use of capital! And politicians repeat that mantra. This just shows how superficiality has brought about Britain's declining industrial base.



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There are ways to address this blight. The rate of return over the cost of production should become the more accurate accounting measure, rather than the rate of return on the capital invested. In other words, the value which has gone into producing a unit of British steel which is then used to complete a finished manufactured British product for use in our country should be priced in an economically meaningful way. That would have to take into account that the value in the fixed capital embodied in the steel industry is released bit by bit.

In this respect an initial subsidy for our steel industry would be an effective start up method. The value of the subsidy plus the value added for labour in making steel is

released incrementally during the working lifetime of the steel-making plant and machinery. Therefore, the capital deployed (subsidy) is not lost or written off, instead a part of it and the labour increment added in producing steel is released each year for the benefit of British society.

That principle has a wider application, potentially to all our capital-intensive, high-value manufacturing and research. Leaving the EU and its state aid rules behind is not the whole answer. The British government has historically used what state aid is "permitted" to a far lesser degree than other EU member states – Germany in particular.

A government closer to industry can be made to pay attention to the needs of the country in a way that the EU will never do. And that was what legal experts effectively said when giving evidence to the House of Lords EU Internal Market subcommittee on 20 June.

It is therefore a matter of acknowledging that Britain's method of financial reporting needs to be amended. But as well as proper accounting, the uplifting social effect that meaningful work brings to people's lives is so significant that it cannot be expressed by a mere figure in a set of accounts.

British manufacture for our own use, a sound understanding of value and a new method of financial reporting is an integral part of Britain becoming an independent country out of the EU. ■

ers, lenders, and the taxpayer stand to lose far more. It is this sort of ruthless, one-sided approach that gives capitalism a bad name."

The Institute for Public Policy Research thinktank has concluded that closure would cost far more than keeping the plant going. That's £2.8 billion in lost wages over the next ten years, £1.1 billion in lost government revenue and extra benefit payments, and a reduction in household spending by £1.2 billion over the same period.

Saving British Steel will take determination. So far, the government has promised to pay wages and suppliers until a buyer can

be found. But more is needed, urgently, to ensure continued steel making at Scunthorpe. Otherwise Britain will have just one plant, Port Talbot, running blast furnaces and we will have to import the high quality steel that Scunthorpe produces.

This government has consistently failed to support the steel industry. And that looks unlikely to change outside the EU, unless they are forced to do so. Labour and some of the unions call for nationalisation, knowing that won't be an option until we leave.

As ever it will be down to the British Steel workers along with others in the

industry and their unions Community, GMB and Unite to lead the way out of this confusion. For a start they have to counter the lie that steel is a sunset industry and it's not worth saving in Britain.

Look around any city. You will see steel everywhere – not to mention the need for new power plants and railways.

We urgently need a proper industrial strategy for Britain, a national plan for independence which can meet the needs of our country. And it will have to be implemented properly, not stay on paper like the government's current pretence at a strategy. ■

**As most of the rail unions know, the future of their industry from the EU can provide the freedom to run our railways i**

# How privatisation is pus

TRAIN DRIVERS at the recent Aslef conference in Leeds overwhelmingly voted down a motion intended to reverse their long standing policy of opposition to EU membership. The 77 to 3 majority effectively reaffirmed the union's pro-Brexit position, along with the argument that Aslef should not support Brexit until after the election of a Labour government – an argument sadly finding favour in other unions.

As the Aslef Vice President explained, nothing had changed since the policy was originally adopted, with the EU still a capitalist trading bloc that is beyond any reform.

Aslef's clarity is in sharp contrast to the confusion displayed at the recent conference of its sister rail union, the TSSA. It passed resolutions for properly funded social services, expanded public ownership, increased living standards and trade union rights. And then, remarkably, saw the solution to these issues as remaining in a capitalist EU – which is all about increasing privatisation and attacking the rights of workers (see "Paying the price of the European Union", p6)!

Of course the future of the rail industry is intimately bound up with the issue of Brexit, something that both Aslef and the RMT understand, and the TSSA doesn't.

## Public ownership

No British government will be able to return the railways to public ownership and control without infringing the EU's directives which require competition. This is shown by the French government's failure to protect the state-owned SNCF from private passenger trains even on inter-city routes, despite

**'No government will be able to return the railways to public ownership without infringing the EU's directives...'**



mattbuck (CC BY-SA 2.0)

**A sight from the past: Cross Country Intercity 125 heading along the sea from Dawlish to Exeter - new Hitachi engines. Most of Cross Country's fleet is now too susceptible to salt to run on the lin**

intense opposition from the trade unions.

The dire state of the railways in Britain is multifaceted – illustrated not least by the two-year-old, outdated franchising schedule on the Department for Transport (DfT) website. As one rail pundit put it: "Can't be arsed, too embarrassed, or just overlooked".

The DfT has plenty more to be embarrassed about after the failure of Stagecoach, the first company to win a franchise, now awarded to Abellio, owned by the Dutch state railway NS. It takes over in August, adding still further to the massive chunk of Britain's passenger trains already run by foreign state-owned rail corporations.

British-owned Stagecoach has threatened to leave the rail industry, saying it can't make enough profit. It faces major financial problems with its South West franchise, and it looks like the company will be forced to demerge its rail and bus businesses.

Not that Abellio/NS haven't got their own problems. Their record in running Scotland's train services has been woeful, although the Scottish administration has been too timid to remove the franchise from them. The company has also been criticised for delays and cancellations caused by cut-backs to their Greater Anglia services. Back in the Netherlands, rail staff recently took strike action in defence of their pensions.

## Profit

SNCF's British subsidiary Keolis is meanwhile doing very nicely out of the British taxpayer-funded railways. It recently a rise in pre-tax profits of 15 per cent, attributing that to the award by the Welsh government of the 15-year Wales franchise.

Stagecoach remains a minor partner in the Virgin Trains West Coast franchise but is barred from bidding along with its Virgin

... is intimately bound up with Brexit. Only independence  
... in the national interest...

# Shipping rail to the brink



... now 22 of the 125s are in storage, replaced by  
... when seas are high, unlike the 125s!

partners for the franchise replacement, which includes running the first trains over the new HS2 route. Virgin, Stagecoach and their new French state partner SNCF are currently pursuing a legal claim against the DfT, as is Stagecoach over the East Midlands franchise.

Virgin, perhaps seeing the writing on the wall, is also attempting to stay in the game by running trains in competition with the new West Coast franchise. It plans to use "open access" to start a new service between London and Liverpool using redundant trains from the East Coast.

The proposed new service would require passengers to have a seat reserved in advance, with no walk up and go arrangement. This is a model borrowed from the airlines that Virgin has very publicly advocated to Keith Williams, who is leading the rail review. The company has been ridiculed by

## 'Passenger numbers are rising to record levels...'

many in the industry for failing to understand the nature of Britain's railways.

The flaws in the privatised passenger train model is further shown by Virgin's proposed use of 30-year-old trains displaced by new trains on the East Coast route. Under British Rail, older rolling stock were "cascaded", displacing even older vehicles, or used to strengthen existing services.

But in the privatised and fragmented railway world, perfectly good trains are now rusting away in sidings, and are likely to be scrapped before long. New Eurostar trains are displacing the original ones but instead of allowing other operators to get their hands on these trains, in use for less than 25 years (and in some cases, barely used at all), they are being sent for scrap.

This is at a time when passenger numbers are again rising to record levels. The Office for Rail and Road (ORR) just announced that 1.759 billion passenger journeys were made in the 12 months to the end of March 2019, another record high following a short period of slight decline.

## Overcrowding

Overcrowding is now commonplace, not just on peak hour commuter trains, but more often on inter-city long distance services. The Cross Country franchise in particular is crying out for more trains to alleviate severe overcrowding on services that link most major cities outside of London.

Yet most of its current fleet is unable to run past Exeter when the tide is in as their electronics are too susceptible to salt water!

Twenty-two of the highly successful British Rail-era InterCity 125 High Speed Train engines and over 200 BR inter-city coaches – which don't have any difficulties with high seas – are now mothballed following the introduction of new Intercity Express Programme (IEP) trains built by Japanese firm Hitachi on the Great Western franchise.

The Hitachi trains are also now running

on the East Coast main line, and 14 more will be added, with over 100 coaches, at the end of this year.

While trade unions and passengers would rightly argue that there needs to be much greater investment in new trains, the industry is struggling to keep up with demand. British Rail would have sensibly used the older valuable assets to plug the gap until new vehicles are available. At least Abellio got something right in bagging nine of the IC 125s for service in Scotland.

But the madness doesn't end there! Despite the lack of train capacity to meet demand, three-year-old trains are about to be taken out of service on the South West franchise because of the complexities of the contracts that surround the recent re-franchising of those services. As things stand, they too may well find their way to a scrap heap very shortly.

The German state-owned company Arriva looks set to give up its Northern franchise. Industry insiders apparently believe that the company is going to go bust before the end of the year. This comes after the mayors of Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region demanded that Secretary of State "Failing" Grayling terminate the contract as soon as possible following criticism of Arriva's management of the local train services across the north of England.

Both TSSA and RMT have backed the mayors' call. They point to the cancellation of 23 per cent of services due to driver shortages, 15,800 service cancellations, 18,696 part cancellations, 28,198 short formed trains, and a whopping 258,266 occasions when a train failed to make a scheduled station stop!

A paltry pay offer by Northern to the unions will almost certainly result in industrial action unless the offer is rapidly improved. Strikes will cripple the company, and drive the nails into Northern's coffin.

Grayling has at least had a setback at the hands of rail workers and their unions. In the face of threats of industrial action, both the RMT and TSSA won an inflation busting pay increase for the majority of staff, and the TSSA is currently considering the best offer in eight years for its manager members. Despite confusion over Brexit in some quarters, organised labour is alive and kicking! ■



# The Scottish National Party's minority administration in Edinburgh Brexit and the struggle to achieve sovereignty and independence

## Brexit wreckers thwart

WHILE EFFORTS in the British parliament to halt our exit from the EU are being roundly defeated, pro-EU fervour has continued unabated in Scottish political circles. They can be seen to be fulfilling the role that one of their former leading members described as being "a fifth column for the EU".

Those were the words of Jim Sillars – who campaigned for Brexit in the 2016 referendum and contributed to the estimated result that over 30 per cent of Scottish National Party members voted to leave the European Union.

### Off to Brussels

Trips by Scottish ministers to engage in direct talks with the EU have become more frequent. Scotland House in Brussels – funded by the British taxpayer – has become a hub for what amounts to an already separate foreign policy. But, after years of inaction, the British Foreign Secretary took the unprecedented step in mid June of refusing Foreign Office support for Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's trip to Brussels.

Sturgeon used this visit to promote the idea of Scottish "independence" along with and EU membership. Foreign Office opposition to the visit was because of its objection to "the Government facilitating a visit that is focused on undermining the UK's integrity, rather than any of her [Nicola Sturgeon's] devolved responsibilities."

The SNP administration still slavishly follows EU rules on support to ailing industries. There has been six months of inaction in the case of the "Caley" railworks in Glasgow, where Gemini Rail is ceasing operations.

The railworks have been a national asset since 1856, and a strong local campaign has developed to save it. Yet the SNP administration continues to hold back assistance citing that the EU "state aid rules mean that it is not possible to take over the site."

Similarly in the case of the wind farm fabrication works at the BiFab site in Fife. Over 500 highly skilled jobs are threatened, yet a campaign to achieve renewed orders through public procurement has been turned down citing EU rules against state aid.

Meanwhile, the site is in the hands of EDF. It has placed orders for the production of the offshore wind farm with the Italian company Saipem, which in turn would

manufacture the products at its yards in Indonesia where wages and safety conditions are much lower. Another five platforms for the wind farm went to Navantia, the Spanish state shipbuilding company.

This follows the awarding of contracts for 100 turbine jackets to Belgian steel constructors Smulders and United Arab Emirates fabricators Lamprelli. The offshore wind farm in question is Neart na Goaithe. It is to be located 10 miles off the Fife coast, is worth over £2 billion and would generate enough electricity to power a city of half a million people.

The British government is also slavishly following EU rules in the case of British Steel where over 5,000 jobs are threatened, including those at the Roslin site in Midlothian.

Then there are the jobs at Rosyth and Clyde shipyards, in jeopardy because the construction of Navy support ships have been forced to go to international tender – again under EU rules. The ships were deemed to be non-military, thereby excluding them from having to be built in Britain.

All of the above renders the SNP quest for "independence" meaningless: they are already in hock to the EU.

Meanwhile, an unusual spat has blown up between the SNP administration in Edinburgh and the Irish government. Threats were issued to Ireland to refrain from entering the waters within 12 miles of the islet of Rockall.

On the face of it this seemed to be a claim of sovereignty over Rockall by Scotland. The UK established its sovereignty over it in 1955, a claim never accepted by Iceland, Denmark and Ireland. Ireland and the UK have already established an Exclusive Economic Zone agreement and Rockall is placed within the UK's EEZ.

Possession of Rockall considerably

**'The SNP is still slavishly following EU rules on support to ailing industries.'**



Workers

**Separatist march, Galashiels: fewer than half the population of the town are in favour of the colours of a foreign flag.**

enlarges British territorial waters. It lies 200 miles from the nearest inhabited island in the St Kilda archipelago which itself is about 40 miles off the north west coast of Scotland.

Scottish separatists see their threat as a move to establish their claim to extensive territorial waters rich in fish and potential energy reserves for an "independent" Scotland. Oil and gas exploration continues apace in the seas west of Shetland for example.

The European Union's energy policy has long been one of coveting such energy reserves. Is this another case of Scotland acting as a fifth column for the EU?

The North Sea oil and gas industry is

Edinburgh is trying to contribute to the attempt to foil independence for the whole of Britain. But it's not doing well...

# ed in Scotland



claimed 5,000 were there – seemingly unaware of the irony of diluting the deep blue saltire with

making a modest but steady recovery from the downturn that began in 2014. Exploration is gathering pace again, with prospects of up to 20 billion barrels of oil and gas still available.

BP has revived its interest and has increased its stake in the waters west of Shetland with the Alligin field and the giant Clair field. Hurricane Energy has started operating another field there, the giant Lancaster field, estimated to contain over 500 million barrels of oil and gas.

Another aspect of work in the North Sea is the task of decommissioning. More than 2,400 oil and gas wells need to be plugged and abandoned by around 2025 as they

cease to be economically viable. The Aberdeen-based company Well-Safe Solutions has recently doubled its workforce to over 100 to take on such work on the Ketch and Schooner gas fields.

## The euro again

Meanwhile, the SNP is focusing on its separatist project, with one of its MEPs reviving his advocacy of the euro currency. During the EU election campaign Alyn Smith praised the euro, urging its adoption in a separate Scotland.

Nicola Sturgeon then said she was “more confident than ever that a separate Scotland would be welcomed back into the

EU.” To that end the SNP administration has issued a plan to distribute a “household guide to independence” to every home.

Its website has announced a major campaign for Scotland to break away. To build towards that goal a series of marches and rallies trumpeting the separatist cause have been held throughout Scotland.

Just days after the SNP introduced a Bill to lay the path for a second “breakaway” referendum, a march and rally was held to make it look as if momentum was building in favour of separatism. That is despite polls showing the majority for British unity holding up in Scotland.

## Exaggeration

To save face, the numbers of people attending have been greatly exaggerated. The campaign for British unity in Scotland. “The UK – A Force for Good” – counted the numbers present using video and found that despite the claim of 5,000 on the march in Galashiels on 1 June, only 2,122 attended.

In mid June a separatist march in Oban had 1,757 people on it, not the 7,000 claimed. The biggest exaggeration was in Glasgow in May, where 12,799 marchers were counted but 100,000 were claimed.

Several more separatist marches and rallies are planned for the summer and autumn. The campaign for unity will oppose them and count their numbers, with the videos made available to media companies – which are gradually beginning to quote the correct figures for these events. Another aspect of the marches is the proliferation of EU flags and saltire flags with EU stars that are on display.

The trade unions are hardly any better, with Nicola Sturgeon invited as keynote speaker to the Scottish Trade Union Congress annual conference. The Labour Party in Scotland has now adopted a policy of demanding another Brexit referendum and campaigning to remain in the EU.

But who do they speak for? The Scottish Labour Party was beaten into fifth place with only 9 per cent of the vote in the European elections. And the Brexit Party surprised everyone by coming second. Remember that 1,018,322 in Scotland voted to Leave the EU, in 2016. Only 594,553 voted for the SNP in this year's European election. ■



An Israeli academic makes an impressive case for nation of protecting freedom – but goes badly wrong when writing

# Nation isn't a dirty word



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**Eurocorps opening a session of the European Parliament**

*The virtue of nationalism*, by Yoram Hazony, hardback, 285 pages, ISBN 978-1-5416-4537-0, Basic Books, 2018, £25 or less. Kindle edition available.

YORAM HAZONY, an Israeli philosopher and academic, makes the case that sovereign nation states are the best form of political organisation for defending freedom. It's an interesting and thought-provoking read, though not without some serious flaws.

Nationalism in his view "is a principled standpoint that regards the world as governed best when nations are able to chart their own independent course, cultivating their own traditions and pursuing their own interests without interference."

Hazony contrasts this to imperialism, which he describes as wanting to bring the world under a single political regime in the name of peace and prosperity. That takes decision-making away from independent national governments in favour of international bodies.

Hazony argues that after the fall of the Soviet Union the debate between nationalism and imperialism became relevant again.

Western politicians turned to two great imperialist projects: the European Union and the US world order.

In his words, the EU "has progressively relieved member states of many of the powers usually associated with political independence". The US is little different: nations that do not abide by international law are coerced, mainly by American military power. As he says, "This is what empires do. They offer peace in exchange for the renunciation of a nation's independence..."

## Euphemisms

These projects have many euphemisms: "new world order", "ever closer union", "globalisation", "the international community", "working class internationalism", "global cosmopolitanism", "subsidiarity", "no borders", "world citizenship", "the end of history", and so on.

Under the Maastricht Treaty decisions are taken by EU officials. There is no barrier to the constant reduction of the authority of the member national states other than their self-restraint, which does not exist.

The EU bureaucracy, backed by

**"The EU has progressively relieved member states of many of the powers usually associated with independence..."**

European courts, has consistently extended its powers over member nations in economic policy, public health, communications, transport, the environment, and many other areas. Hazony describes the EU principle of subsidiarity as "nothing other than a euphemism for empire...the nations of Europe are only independent insofar as the European government decides that they will be independent."

The EU does have a powerful central government, despite pretending the opposite. Its directives are legally binding on member states. "Transnationalism" and "pooled sovereignty" are therefore not brilliant new political theories. They are simply a return to Europe's imperial past and the EU has become "a German imperial state in all but name."

Hazony suggests that "liberal-imperialist ideas have become among the most powerful agents fomenting intolerance and hate in the Western world today." As evidence for this he cites the abuse and denunciation heaped upon the British public and its elected leadership for our determination to seek independence from the EU.

He explains that from a liberal point of view, "the unification of Europe is not one legitimate political option among others. It is the only legitimate opinion to which a decent person can subscribe."

The unrelenting theme from those decrying the Leave vote was its moral illegitimacy. From that flowed false allegations: only the aged supported leaving the EU, disenfranchising the young. Or only the uneducated had supported it, diluting the views of those



# states as the best way ng about Israel...

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who really do know better. Or it was a protest vote and no one wanted to actually leave. And so on.

In the wake of those angry pronouncements were demands to ignore the vote – by a second referendum, by Parliament, by Court actions and in many other ways. Anything, as long as the one legitimate opinion could prevail.

## Another agenda

But Hazon also has another, and not so hidden, agenda on Israel: opposition to a two-state solution with Palestinian self-government.

Hazon cites the call for the destruction of Israel – a call all too common on the self-styled left. His argument runs like this: “In taking up arms in the name of their own national state and their own self-determination, the Jews, as many Europeans and others now see it, have simply taken up the same evil that led Germany to build the camps. ... Many in Europe increasingly see such national independence and self-help as illegitimate, and thus is moving them towards a systematic rejection of Israel’s legitimacy.”

At this point, he starts playing fast and loose with the principle of what constitutes a nation – in particular the (implicit) denial that Palestinians have legitimate rights too.

As one reviewer noted, “Remarkably, for a book that talks about Israeli nationalism so much, the word ‘Palestinian’ appears a grand total of once in its text: when the author asks in frustration why the world keeps haranguing Israelis about Palestinian statehood.”

The routine accusation is that nationalism is bad because Hitler was inspired by nationalism. As Hazon notes, that is “a simplistic narrative, ceaselessly repeated”.

But he dismisses the idea by a remarkably unimpressive sleight of hand, claiming that Germany wasn’t a nation. “Nazi Germany was, in fact, an imperial state in every sense, seeking to put an end to the principle of the national independence and the self-determination of peoples once and for all.” So nations that act like aggressors are no longer nations? That’s unconvincing. And what does it say about Israel itself? That’s an avenue Hazon doesn’t go down. ■

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**A revolution that paved the way for modern Britain is often reactionary and backward looking. The opposite is true...**

# 1688: A modern revolution

REVOLUTIONS ARE MADE by people. They rarely happen in a straightforward way and the results are often uncertain. The removal of James II in 1688 is such a case.

Called the “Glorious Revolution”, it is usually portrayed as a peaceful restoration of ancient liberties and a religious conflict. The alternative view is that it created a new type of state and contributed greatly to the modern world. Neither a coup d’état nor a foreign invasion, it was a popular revolution that led to ideological change.

In his book *1688: the first modern revolution* Professor Steven Pincus uses original sources to show how the conflict was about who rules rather than religion. He argues that the changes brought about were truly revolutionary and positively influenced the future of England and Scotland.

After restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Charles II and later James carried on in much the same way as earlier Stuart kings. Political discontent was widespread, and not only due to the Catholic king’s lack of religious tolerance.

## Support

William, Prince of Orange, invaded England in November 1688, with the encouragement of some politicians and possibly to forestall the return of an English republic. William received overwhelming support once he landed. Within a few weeks James was gone, allowed to escape into exile.

Pincus points out that “... unlike James and his advisers, the revolutionaries imagined that England would be most powerful if it encouraged political participation rather than absolutism, if it were religiously tolerant...and if it were devoted to promoting English manufactures rather than maintaining a landed empire.”

This political participation was wide and deep. The nationalist sensibility that James II challenged “...led the English to insist that ultimate political authority lay in the nation –

though they disagreed whether the nation meant Parliament or the people more broadly defined.”

Allegiance was to English liberty, religion and law and not to a particular king – beliefs shared by all social classes. The transformation of the English state and society in the 20 years afterwards was only possible because of the civil wars and other ideological events in the 1640s and 1650s that transformed conceptions of state, religion, and society.

Conventional historians reduce the revolution to an anti-Catholic crusade, anti-papist versus papist. Other scholars focus on the central role played by a small group of Whig opponents of James II.

Pincus challenges both. “Both groups deny that the revolutionaries had any transformative political or social agenda. Both groups, then, depict 1688-89 as a conservative revolution, a revolution in defense of Protestantism against a Catholic king.”

The revolution was not about religion, not about identity politics, unlike the Duke of Monmouth’s rebellion of 1685 which was very much anti-Catholic. It was a long step towards a more secular society, in which disputes about religion were less significant than debates about economics and politics.

For many historians the people are mere spectators of their country’s history. Pincus says that view merely follows establishment Whigs in insisting on English popular political passivity, even if they differ on whether the revolution was an aristocratic coup d’état or a foreign invasion.

In contrast he shows that the English were in reality extremely well informed about foreign affairs by the end of that century thanks to “...new institutions like the vastly expanded post office, the increasingly ubiquitous coffeehouses, and the ever proliferating committee rooms of trading companies”.

Restoration English men and women were not xenophobic. Instead they placed foreign news within sophisticated ideological frameworks. They were eager to learn about European politics because they understood it and thought it affected their lives.

In 1688 England was ripe for change. People rose up against James II’s regime across the country. It did not stop there, as Pincus recounts, “Popular uprisings, then, spread throughout England, Wales,



Welcome Collection

**William III and Mary being presented with the crown**

Scotland, Ireland, and North America with bewildering rapidity in the autumn of 1688 and winter of 1689. In some cases, townspeople rose up against their governors; in others, aristocrats and gentry coordinated with their tenants and local yeomen to defy loyalist elements.” Almost half of William’s “invasion” force was British.

## Activity

William’s manifesto, the Declaration of Reasons, was widely distributed. He gave supporters 3,000 copies each to put into “the hands of the generality of the nation”. The nation was active. Public debate over the nature of the revolution was contested, “[it] had spawned important changes in party polemic and English political culture. On constitutional and religious matters the political center of gravity had shifted.”

Pincus argues that the revolution and the debates were about the economy’s future as well as about the nature of the state. He cites many supporters of the revolution who put forward radical economic policies of backing industry and welfare. A result was “the rage for social legislation, ‘salutary laws for the welfare of the public’, that became possible only after the revolution.”

**‘The revolution was a long step towards a secular society...’**

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own of England.

Ways of thinking had changed too. For the first time the nature of wealth was explained as a product of work – well before Adam Smith in the 18th century and Karl Marx in the 19th.

For example, the philosopher John Locke wrote, “if we rightly estimate things as they come to our use, and cast up the several expenses about them, what in them is purely owing to nature, and what to labour, we shall find that in most of them 99/100 are wholly to be put on the account of labour.” Many others expressed the same idea.

Pincus claims that the revolution of 1688-89 was a bourgeois revolution in a cultural and political sense. It “...represented the victory of those who supported manufacturing, urban culture, and the possibilities of unlimited economic growth based on the creative potential of human labor.”

Marx considered that the Glorious Revolution was “the first decisive victory of the bourgeoisie over the feudal aristocracy”. This book helps us to understand more about how that happened and the impact on our nation. ■

1688: the first modern revolution, by Steven Pincus, is published by Yale University Press.



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## ABOUT US

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**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.

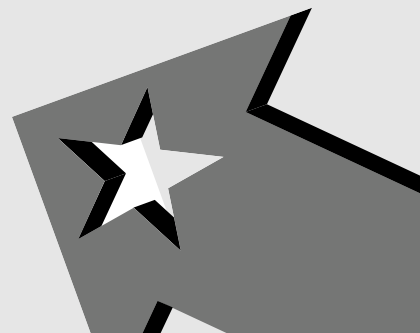
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# Stop shutting down debate

**'This is not the first time trade union officers have been hounded out after expressing views on Brexit which are uncomfortable for national executives.'**

AS BRITAIN edges its way towards leaving the EU, the efforts of the establishment to block the implementation of our decision are becoming increasingly desperate. We've all had to witness the anti-democratic antics in parliament, so far unsuccessful but by no means finished. The opponents of British independence will stop at nothing.

Shamefully, these efforts have been supported by the majority of trade unions, in spite of claiming to represent the interests of their members.

With honourable exceptions such as RMT and Aslef, they have shown willing to exhibit contempt for the many trade unionists who voted Leave. They have sided with the pro-EU establishment, for the rule of Britain from abroad.

This has been extended to the suppressing of union officers who speak up for Brexit. In the latest, outrageous, example, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has high-handedly acted against one of its own executive council members.

In mid June Paul Embery, executive council member for London, was hauled before a hearing, then removed from office and debarred for two years. His offence? He spoke at a Leave Means Leave rally in London on 29 March – the day we should have left the EU – in passionate support of Brexit. The firefighters' union, which argued for Remain in the 2016 referendum, has a policy of opposing a No Deal Brexit.

The speech was made on a Friday evening, in his own time, in a private capacity. Footage of the speech, available on YouTube, shows that no mention was made at the rally of Embery's role in the FBU.

This is not the first time trade union officers have been hounded out after expressing views on Brexit which are uncomfortable for national executives. In April 2016, the chair of the Scotland and Northern Ireland regional committee of the Musicians' Union (an unpaid, elected post) was ordered to "consider his position" (effectively an ousting) after he spoke at a Grassroots Out

rally in Glasgow.

The officer, a nationally known composer whose work has been performed at the London Proms, had held his post for 15 years.

The Musicians' Union's policy on the Referendum had been one of welcoming open debate, but on the very day of the rally the Executive announced it had unilaterally changed the union's policy to campaign to Remain in the EU.

Paul Embery had been an FBU official for 20 years. In his speech at the rally in March he said that the divide in Britain wasn't between Leave and Remain, but "between democrats and anti-democrats".

At the hearing he was accused of "acting in a way prejudicial to the interests of the union". This is how the FBU's leadership defines speaking up for British independence and democracy.

There has been a swift response from FBU members, with hundreds of messages of support including from some who don't necessarily agree with his pro-Brexit views but are shocked by the stifling of open debate.

The London Regional Committee of the FBU issued a strongly worded statement on 21 June saying that the action is wrong and "goes against the entire ethos of our union." It demands Embery's immediate reinstatement.

The attempt not only to overturn the Leave vote but to stop people from campaigning against the decision, or even from speaking up for Brexit, is a dangerous development in British political life. Many academics, civil servants and other professionals speak privately of how they feel their jobs could be threatened if they say what they think.

In certain circles it has become acceptable to label any who voted Leave as racist and xenophobic – and hence not deserving of consideration or discussion. That kind of thinking is creeping into trade unions too. Trade unionists cannot allow this anti-democratic suppression of debate. They must respond, and strongly. ■

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