

WORKERS

WWW.CPBML.ORG.UK

MARCH/APRIL 2016 £1



OUT OF THE EU!

A future for Britain... Why the EU is a disaster for trade unions... The need to control our borders

TiSA Even worse than TTIP

Housing A class need

Inequality Surplus value rules

plus News,

Historic Notes

and more

WORKERS



A future for Britain

AT LAST the EU referendum is at hand. On 23 June workers can make the most important blow against capitalism in Britain in 70 years by voting to leave.

Forget all the fluff about which politicians or personalities are for in or out. Overwhelmingly those representing the interests of capitalism – especially finance capitalism – are for staying in. Of course they are. Capitalists love it because it belongs to them – it was designed by them, for them, it serves only their interests and they are desperate for it to survive to continue that mission. Its very constitution enshrines the freedom of capitalism to rule, unfettered in every way.

The lie that the EU protects workers at all and that it can be improved from within – a lie shamefully peddled by unions such as Unite and by Frances O’Grady at the TUC – is so easily disproved that you have to wonder about their motives. (See articles on pages 6 to 14.)

Britain’s EU membership has exerted a slowly tightening stranglehold over workers here. Gradually, control over all aspects of our lives and our capacity to determine the future of our country – our fundamental democracy – is being handed over to Brussels by successive governments. If we voted to stay in the EU this diktat (remember Greece?) would be rapidly accelerated, not only for Britain but for all member countries. We owe it to ourselves and to them to leave. A vote for the status quo is impossible.

In spite of our weaknesses, the working class here has shown an underlying strength through its constant undercurrent of opposition to the EU. The capitalist class knows it cannot easily get away with what it wants. For them, this referendum is a huge gamble.

A decision to leave the EU would be a new beginning to self respect and independence for our class. We will be able at last to plan a future in which the distortions forced upon our economy by the EU can be steadily corrected. We can do the things we are good at, using the resources we have to hand. We can stop being “little Europeans” and begin to think globally – and hence trade, as equal partners, with Europe but also with the rest of the world.

Above all, we can make our own decisions and plan for a future. Governments come and go, but leaving the EU would hugely weaken capitalism and strengthen us.

Since its founding in 1968, this Party, the CPBML, has put the working class demand that Britain leave the EU. We will continue, in meetings, through *Workers* and our website (see our new page, cpbml.org.uk/leave), and by putting the argument in trade unions and with fellow workers, to outline why this is right – not with the romantic wishful thinking often expressed by the europhiles, but by using hard facts and material reality to show why this must be the only choice.

Out of the EU!



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

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

www.cpbml.org.uk @cpbml
Issue 193, March/April 2016

Contents – March/April 2016

News Digest

Unions mull local government pay offer, p3; Change needed in further education as strike goes ahead, p4; Academics to fight on pay, p5

03

Features

Why trade unionists should vote to leave, p6; No borders, no control, p9; You thought TTIP was bad? Take a look at TiSA, p12; Housing: a national issue, and a class issue, p16; Inequality, social justice and surplus value, p18

06

End Notes

Soviet planning versus capitalist chaos, p20; The 1916 Easter Rising: Out of empire and war, p22

20

Cover photograph shows steelworkers marching on the European Commission.



LOCAL GOVT	Unions mull offer
SYRIA	Siege broken
TRADE DEFICIT	Rising again
LIBRARIES	Westminster lobby
FE STRIKE	Change needed
TU BILL	The 'Spanish model'
ACADEMIC PAY	The fight is on
COLLEGES	Funding campaign
ON THE WEB	More news online
WHAT'S ON	Coming soon

Unions mull local govt. offer

UNISON, UNITE and GMB are now consulting their members in local government over the Local Government Association's two-year pay offer of 1 per cent a year, with higher rises at the bottom end to take account of the new National Living Wage. Will they take any notice of what the members are actually saying?

Following the fiasco over pay in 2014-2015, Unison, the largest of the three unions, surveyed its membership over what had gone wrong. The answer: pay rated something like fifteenth in members' priorities.

But the self-styled "activists" steamed on with their claim. An attempt to re-open the 2014-2015 settlement was brusquely swept aside by the employers without a squeak from the trade unions, because they knew it was just posturing. Instead almost immediately after the 2014-2015 agreement had been signed the 2016 claim was lodged, banging drums that this would give a greater lead into mobilising the members so that they would fight.

Unison also conducted a preliminary consultation exercise with its members in late 2015 and early 2016. The main finding: an overwhelming reluctance to support industrial action. Again, the decision was to ignore that finding and press ahead with another consultation.

No trade union is facing up to the realities of where local government is going and the mindset of the members. If the government gets its way the employment base for local government will have been cut by half between 2010 and 2020. So the greater fear over job loss still prevails. The argument to fight the cuts by fighting for wages has not been won.

If trade unions will not fight for wages, one of the fundamental reasons for their existence, it is no wonder that paralysis runs throughout the membership – reinforced by the pursuit of an industrial strategy reminiscent of the generals of the First World War. Members are not stupid. But equally they are not engaged with finding alternative strategies as to how to fight.

It is disingenuous to claim that all that is missing is a lack of leadership – that's the ultra-left sounding militant but in reality being defeatist. Workers are not so naïve as to believe that just because a national executive or a general secretary shouts "charge" then charge we do.

Workers have seen years of failed tactics and a failure by the members themselves to take responsibility for pay. A return to thinking is required. How do we determine a strategy to survive an employer-driven agenda to reduce the directly employed public sector by more than half?

The private sector grows as the public sector declines, very often with the same workers employed. How do we devise a form of guerrilla action to pick off these companies one by one? This is not going to be easy. Workers are going to have to come to terms with the fact that failure, defeat, loss, and victimisation will be the norm until we have rebuilt a trade union and class consciousness so sadly lost in recent years.

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

SYRIA

Siege broken

THE SYRIAN army has broken the siege of the Nubl and al-Zahra towns in Aleppo after four years. As Syrian forces and their allies complete the encirclement of Syria's largest city, Aleppo, the US government and its regional allies have signalled a sudden increased interest in ground operations in Syria, including US airpower backing Turkish and Saudi ground forces.

A panic-stricken Brookings Institution analyst, Michael O'Hanlon, urges the US government to commit 20,000 combat troops with "the right political model for maintaining occupation".

By contrast, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has condemned Obama's repeated statements that Syria's President Bashar al-Assad must be removed from office and replaced with a leader of whom those foreign leaders approve.

"The future of Assad must be determined by the Syrian people," rather than by foreign leaders, he said. ■

TRADE DEFICIT

Rising again

THE TRADE DEFICIT rose again to £4 billion in the final quarter of last year, reaching £34.7 billion for 2015. This pushed above the previous year's total, according to figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in February, outlining the vast amount by which imports exceed exports.

Sales of goods to nations within the EU fell £11.6 billion, while those to countries outside the EU rose by £3.5 billion. ■

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

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or email workers@cpbml.org.uk



Workers

Tuesday 9 February: Speak Up For Libraries held a rally at Central Hall Westminster, followed by a lobby of MPs. The campaign is a coalition of trade unions, local and national campaign groups, and the professional institute for librarians, CILIP.

ON THE WEB

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

Hospital doctors' dispute continues

The strike by junior doctors on Wednesday 10 February was met by government bluster as health secretary Jeremy Hunt imposed the new terms.

Unity as steel centres fight for survival

Britain's key specialist steel centres, such as Forgemasters in Sheffield, are fighting for survival with an alliance not only of trade unions and communities but now major employers.

Rail takeover shows extent of privatisation failure

The decision that Transport for London will take over all overland rail services into London is a recognition that privatisation has been a miserable and costly failure.

Stealth attack on national museum

Bradford's National Media Museum is reeling with news that an important archive is to be relocated to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London this summer.

Hospital in deficit? Just work for free

With the Princess Royal University Hospital in Kent running a huge deficit, its ruling Trust has asked staff to volunteer to work for nothing.

Plus: the e-newsletter

Visit cpbml.org.uk to sign up to your free regular copy of the CPBML's newsletter delivered to your email inbox.

Change needed in FE

MEMBERS OF the University and College Union (UCU) and Unison working in further education went on strike for the day on 24 February in colleges in England that have refused to make any pay offer for 2015-16. Yet despite what the trade unions are presenting as the defence of national bargaining, pay has been fragmented by devolution (supported by the trade unions) with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland splitting from the English colleges – and by colleges that offered 1 per cent and so removed themselves by a body swerve from the dispute.

What's left is effectively a minority trying to catch up on a 1 per cent offer. Is it an offer or an imposition by government? Local bargaining is becoming a fact of life and with government-driven area reviews of the catchment areas of colleges (see "Colleges", p5), the very survival of many FE colleges in their current format is now in doubt.

Had the employers offered 1 per cent across the board the unions would have taken it. Are the unions fighting the pay freeze with a consciousness that pay is for negotiation not imposition, or are they posturing because they do not know how to win?

A rally in central London of the "activists" and great and good speakers is no substitute for workplace organisation – and union members are in the minority in most colleges. Lodging a claim without any strategy leads to the annual ritual that becomes more divorced from the membership, sees a declining membership and the perception that trade unionism is irrelevant in these workplaces.

What needs to be changed? Don't start battles which members know they cannot win and will not achieve any material advance. Address the failure to recruit union members with strategies that talk to real concerns. Agree spheres of recruitment to end inter-union rivalry. Work out a strategy against casualisation, zero-hours contracts and fragmentation of work, jobs and skills – one which unifies rather than promotes sectarian leftism in the name of progress. Stop playing games with the members by presenting overwhelming votes for industrial action but refusing to publish the real figure of those balloted. ■

ANTI-UNION LAWS
The Spanish Model

THE TUC held its "Love your Union" week during 8-14 February against the Trade Union Bill. The cringe-worthiness of the campaign, general lack of serious politics and grovelling to the government left many trade unionists at a total loss.

One serious contribution came from the South Eastern Regional TUC seminar on the parallels between the Trade Union Bill and Spanish anti-trade union legislation.

David Davies, Tory MP, speaking when the Trade Union Bill was first mooted, spoke of it as more fitting to Franco's

fascist Spain than 21st-century Britain. The roots of his comments are now clear when compared with the "Spanish model".

Deeply rooted in Spanish fascist legislation – yet another reason to leave the EU – this model gives government and employers legislation to silence all trade union protest, remove civil liberties, and to persecute individual trade unionists both with financial penalties and jail sentences. The Spanish gagging law introduces blanket bans on trade union protest, makes breaches of the legislation an administrative police matter rather than a requirement for court action or appeal, and makes administrative fines prohibitive and effectively unchallengeable. ■

Academics to fight on pay

THE UNIVERSITY and College Union (UCU) and the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) have submitted a national pay claim for a 5 per cent pay rise for academic staff. After years of reticence there is now a renewed emphasis on pay across the sector. The background to the claim is a huge loss in value in the pay of academic staff since 2009 – indeed a loss in real terms of 14.5 per cent.

Even more telling is that over the past five years staff costs as a percentage of expenditure have fallen by 1.2 per cent. In contrast capital expenditure – typically on buildings – has increased by 8.2 per cent, annual surpluses have increased by 74.7 per cent across the sector and reserves are up by 57.4 per cent. So it is clear that student fees are not going towards paying the staff who are teaching them.

Another alarming trend is the growing divide between the pay of senior staff and the majority of academic staff. In 2014–15, 26 vice chancellors enjoyed a pay increase of more than 10 per cent. The average vice chancellor salary is now £272,432.

An important element of the pay claim is a demand to reduce the proportion of university staff working on casualised contracts. Widespread casualisation in the sector impacts on all staff terms and conditions and on the rate of pay. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency there are 75,000 staff on highly casualised academic contracts.

Although British universities like to trumpet their “world class” research, they keep quiet about how they treat their research staff, 67 per cent of whom are on fixed-term contracts. It is impossible to get a mortgage on a fixed term contract, and in London it even makes it hard to rent a flat. The public image of a worker on a zero-hours contract is someone working in a call centre. While students (and parents) accumulate debt, more than 21,000 university teaching staff are on zero-hours contracts.

For several years, university employers have dictated the timelines in pay negotiations. This year the claim has been submitted early, and preparatory meetings are planned across the sector to explain the pay claim. To overcome the strange British reticence about talking about pay, UCU has developed an interactive web tool that allows members to compare their own salary with that of their vice chancellor – and more importantly, with staff in other institutions. The website has already had thousands of hits and has generated a long overdue collective discussion. The end of February was planned as a national recruitment week for the union, with recruitment now clearly focused on the question of pay. ■

COLLEGES

Funding campaign



Sixth-form teachers from south London on the NUT's February 2014 march over pay, pensions, conditions and workload.

THE NATIONAL UNION of Teachers (NUT) has launched a funding campaign for the sixth-form sector, and is balloting members in sixth-form colleges for a one-day strike to coincide with a national demonstration in March.

The union is also proposing a national campaign of parental and public engagement leading to a national demonstration combined with the strike.

The move is a response to huge pressure on the sector, which has seen even larger cuts to age 16-19 funding than those faced by schools, with threats to pay, working conditions and employment. And students in this extremely successful sector are facing setbacks to their education.

Funding for 16-19 year olds already fell by 14 per cent in real terms under the coalition government. The Sixth Form Colleges Association says that 72 per cent of sixth-form colleges have already dropped courses – and 81 per cent have increased class sizes. And some sixth-form colleges are set to lose even more of their funding once protection against losses caused by the funding formula introduced in 2013 is withdrawn at the end of 2015-16.

The ballot has just begun. The NUT says it is vital to put pressure on ministers and MPs to tackle the post-16 funding crisis, including exempting sixth-form colleges from VAT on goods and services, as schools and academies are – VAT costs the average college around £300,000 a year. ■
• A longer version of this article is on the web at www.cpbml.org.uk.

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

MARCH

Thursday 10 March, 7 pm

“The EU – Why Trade Unionists Should Vote to Leave”

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

CPBML Public Meeting



Loss of sovereignty, privatisation, TTIP, attacks on wages, threats to peace – the EU has been a disaster for Britain, for the working class, and for trade unions. The coming referendum presents an opportunity to break free. Even if the TUC remains tied to the Brussels trough, we can make sure the real voice of British workers is heard. Come and discuss. All welcome.

MAY

The CPBML will be holding May Day meetings and rallies in Edinburgh, Leeds and London. See the advert on page 15 for details.



STAY INFORMED

• Keep up-to-date in between issues of **Workers** by subscribing to our free electronic newsletter. Just enter your email address at the foot of any page on our website, cpbml.org.uk

One of the big lies of the European Union is that it is some foundation of all progress at work – the right to effective c

Why trade unionists shou

WHY SHOULD trade unionists vote to leave the EU? The reasons are, or should be, broadly the same as anyone else's: because it's bad for Britain and bad for the working class. The European Union is a capitalist club, formed by capitalism for capitalism. It means us no good.

But while polls show most union members are against EU membership, their own unions are almost all for it. Why is this?

There is nothing at all in EU law that gives any more protection than national legislation to the right of trade unions to freely represent their members and bargain on their behalf. There is absolutely nothing extra to protect the right to strike.

Freedoms for business

In principle, EU law asserts the right to collective bargaining. But it acts only to protect the fundamental freedoms of business, enshrined in EU treaties: the rights to provide services, to establish a business, to move labour, to invest (and de-invest) where they want.

In Greece, the European institutions have intervened against the right to collective bargaining – reducing the role of trade unions in setting the national minimum wage, removing automatic indexing in line with price increases, and imposing a reduction in the minimum wage itself. Call that protection?

What are the pro-EU unions saying? Unite produced a leaflet for the last European elections, the one where about two-thirds of the electorate didn't vote. Headed "What has Europe ever done for us?", it makes 10 points...a handy crib



sheet – and a breathtaking collection of lies and half-truths. A proper dodgy dossier.

1. Protection at work. "You are safe in your work place from dangerous machines, chemicals or any other risks to your health," it says. You'd think that there was no history of struggle over health and safety until the EU came along. And even the EU's European Agency for Health and Safety at work says, "The foundation of the current health and safety system was established by the Health and Safety At Work etc. Act 1974." So, no thanks to the EU. In fact, few of us are actually safe in our workplaces unless we organise to make it so.

2. Holidays. "Europe is responsible for making sure you get 28 days paid leave a year," says Unite. A European Directive specified a minimum of 4 weeks' holiday including statutory public holidays. Our legislation has a minimum of 4 weeks plus statutory public holidays, ie 28 days. So the government could reduce the minimum holiday entitlement by over a week and a half any time it wanted to, in the EU or not.

3. "Hours of work – you and your colleagues aren't made to work more than 48 hours a week and aren't made to work more than 13 hours a day". Interesting. Actually, average hours worked per week declined from 56.9 in 1870 to 42.4 in 1990 without any help from the EU. And many, many workers do more than 48 hours a week. Even the TUC estimates that 3.4 million employed workers do more.

4. "Fairness at work – all workers get the same rights, it doesn't matter if they are full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent, in-house or agency." It's hard to know what this means. Which rights are they talking about?

5. "Sickness rights – you don't lose out if you are ill when on annual leave". This is true, but it was in good collective agreements before the EU stepped in.

6. "Equal pay – men and women must be paid the same for doing the same job." It's ludicrous to say that we have equal pay rights courtesy of the EU. What we have, we have courtesy of class struggle, most notably the Ford sewing machinists' strike of 1968, which prompted a panicked response from the government which came up with the Equal Pay Act of 1970. But men working



Monday 15 February: Steel workers from all over EU regulations banning government support for ind GMB came out in favour of staying in the EU.

full time in Britain still earn 14.2 per cent more than women. Including part-time employment, the gap is 19.1 per cent. Whatever "rights" capitalism says we have, they mean nothing unless we fight for them. And of course like holidays, hours and sickness rights, this doesn't apply to the 15 per cent of workers who are formally self-employed.

'In Greece the EU has intervened against the right to collective bargaining'

how good for workers. In fact, the EU is attacking the collective bargaining...

ould vote to leave



Europe converged on the European Commission in Brussels demanding action to save the industry. Industry while allowing cheap imports have brought steel to its knees. Extraordinarily, a week later the

7. "Maternity rights – statutory maternity leave if wanted". Britain introduced statutory maternity leave in 1975, no thanks to the EU. The only significant change said to be the result of a European directive is a reduction in the qualifying period.

8. "Parental leave – new parents are entitled to time off work to look after their children." But parental leave, unlike paternity leave, is unpaid. No wonder 90 per cent of men don't take it up.

9. "Discrimination – protection from you being discriminated against for you[r] age, gender, race, sexual orientation or if you are disabled." Protection? They must be joking. Black graduates earn 23 per cent less than white graduates according to TUC research.

10. "Healthcare on holiday – protection if

you get ill when you are on holiday, you won't have to pay for your healthcare". Actually NHS UK says, "... you may have to make a patient contribution to the cost of your care, unlike in the NHS." Britain also has negotiated reciprocal health agreements covering tourists with 16 countries outside the EU.

A boss but no exploitation?

So that's what the EU has done for us! Virtually nothing. Turn over the page and Unite general secretary Len McCluskey says the EU "gives us the laws and legislation that stop you being exploited by your boss and protect you on a daily basis." In fact, the day we stop being exploited by the boss is the day we expropriate the bosses and run

the country for our own benefit.

So much for the supposed benefits. Let's look at 10 things the European Union is doing for us that we'd rather it didn't.

1. It's negotiating – in secret – the TTIP treaty with the United States that would hand sovereignty over international trade and investment to transnational corporations, open up health and education to irreversible privatisation, and lower environmental standards.

2. It's also negotiating – again in secret – the TiSA treaty (see article, p 12) with the United States and 22 other countries that will do for services what TTIP will do for goods. It will ease energy regulation – making a mockery of climate change targets, harmonise environmental standards down (not up). It will allow companies to shift professional workers from country to country, and pay, for example, Indian workers Indian rates to work in Britain.

3. It is opening borders to cut wages and boost profits, along the way stripping countries of much-needed resources. Romania had 20,000 doctors in 2011 – by 2013, just 14,000. Along the way, it is allowing employers in Britain to recruit workers from EU member countries, and what's more, if they wish, to the exclusion of British workers. (To be clear, we define as British workers anyone working in Britain and established in Britain.)

4. The EU's austerity programme has enforced "structural changes" in the labour market in the countries that have taken up its bailouts – Ireland, Greece, Portugal, and Cyprus. In other words, it has forced through reductions in individual workers' rights and in the scope and effectiveness of collective bargaining. It's truly the anti-union Union.

5. The EU's competition law has prevented the government from supporting key industries such as steel even when threatened with total devastation. It has also prevented the government from supporting large infrastructure projects. In practice, governments like to hide behind competition law and disclaim responsibility.

6. The EU has enforced privatisation of public services such as energy generation,

Continued on page 8



July 2014: Protests against the EU-US trade treaty TTIP outside Europe House, the London headquarters of the European Commission and the European Parliament. A puppeteer on stilts with a “puppet” dressed as an NHS nurse highlight TTIP’s threat to public services like the NHS.

Continued from page 7

rail and the post. See, for example, EU directives 91/440 on transport, and 97/67/EC on mail. And once privatised, they have become the milch cows of foreign companies...often foreign *state* companies.

7. EU law does not help trade unions. Nothing whatsoever in the government’s current Trade Union Bill runs contrary to EU law. No salvation from Brussels here. But the EU may well introduce such law to apply all over the EU.

8. It’s worse than no salvation. It’s positively lethal. Listen to the leading British labour lawyer John Henty – dubbed “the barrister champion of the trade union movement” in trade journal *The Lawyer*. He says, “The EU has become a disaster for the collective rights of workers and their unions.” The bottom line is that in EU law Article 16 of the Charter of Fundamental Freedoms – “the freedom to conduct a business” – trumps everything else.

9. The EU is doing the US’s work in Europe. Some people seem to think that the EU is some kind of counterweight to the US, a social alternative to American imperialism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The US is an ardent supporter of the EU. Barack Obama and his officials are constantly

saying that Britain must stay in.

10. The EU is a force for war. The German-led break-up of Yugoslavia led to an estimated 140,000 deaths. Potentially even more disastrous was the EU’s promotion of the 2014 Maidan coup in Ukraine, brought about by the democratically elected government’s failure to sign an association agreement with the EU. The EU is a force for war because it seeks ever greater expansion on the one hand, and the imposition of its market-forces led model on the other.

Good to go

Now, two really positive reasons to leave.

The first is international solidarity. When we voted to stay in the European Economic Community in 1975 it was the worst thing the British working class has ever done to fellow workers of Europe. Never mind the consequences for us – for them it meant the political domination of the City of London, the centre of finance capital, and the centre of reaction. The City has been behind just about every EU directive on privatisation, every negotiating stance on TTIP and TiSA. That’s not conspiracy theory; it’s the way it works.

Take Britain out of the EU, and you take the City out of it too. That really would be an act of solidarity with our sisters and brothers across the Channel.

The second positive reason for leaving the EU is national liberation. Leaving the EU will be the first step – the essential first step – for workers here to start reclaiming our own country from capitalism.

If workers were exerting their own will, we would be planning for a future outside

‘Take Britain out of the EU, and you take the City out of it too.’

the EU in which the distortions forced upon our economy while we were EU members can be steadily corrected.

We should do the things we are good at doing: making, inventing, developing culture, educating, ensuring the health of our population, teaching English to the world. We should start catching and protecting fish again in our own waters, use our coal safely and cleanly, and stop being a source of unskilled labour.

We trade more with the rest of the world than with the EU. The EU takes 44.6 per cent of our exports, and the trend is down... in 1999 it took 54.8 per cent. Three-quarters of our imports from the EU are goods rather than services. Our industry and agriculture are being hollowed out. Our future is with the world.

The EU has been utterly negative for workers. Its dangers to peace are growing daily. Now we have a vital chance to reject this EU and all it stands for. A referendum vote to leave would mark the beginning of workers here asserting our right to plan our own future.

There is no reason why we cannot leave the EU and prosper. So let’s do it. ■

This article is an edited version of the speech given at a CPBML public meeting in London in February 2016. The full text of the speech, with hyperlinked references, is available at cpbml.org.uk/past-events

Free movement? In the EU it just means freedom for employers to lower pay and avoid training...

No borders, no control

THE 1957 TREATY of Rome, the EU's original treaty, laid down "the abolition, as between Member States, of obstacles to freedom of movement of persons, services and capital". Capital wants these freedoms to maximise its profits, pure and simple.

Judgements from the EU's European Court have ceaselessly upheld the right of employers to move labour from one country to another to lower wages and circumvent collective bargaining agreements.

Hence the Viking case, allowing a Finnish shipowner to reflag ships to Estonia. And the Laval case, where a Latvian company imported workers into Sweden to build a school, undercutting Swedish rates. And the Ruffert case, where a German company won a contract to build a prison in Lower Saxony, then subcontracted it to a Polish company, which brought in Poles at below the rate agreed for Lower Saxony.

The free movement of labour encourages the modern slavery of workers moving at the orders of cheapskate global employers, gangmasters and people traffickers. It adds to the huge number of the reserve army of the unemployed. And it defies the laws of economic gravity to think that you can massively expand the supply of labour without lowering its price.

Employers win, we lose

So while some countries are stripped of workers driven by unemployment to move abroad, in receiving countries like Britain wages are driven down, there is no need to invest in training, and enormous strain is put on services. Employers gain, and workers lose, every time.

Yet the friends of the European Union – in the TUC and some unions, as well as others proclaiming themselves as "left-wing" and "anti-racist" – ignore any evidence that free movement might be bad for workers everywhere in the EU, and bad for Britain.

There have been a string of reports from pro-EU think tanks about how migration benefits everyone. But in December these reports were blown apart by a detailed analysis published by the think tank Civitas.

The report, *The costs and benefits of large-scale immigration: exploring the economic and demographic consequences for the UK*, is in the public domain,



Workers

Jeremy Hunt feels he can attack junior doctors because he can import replacements from around the world.

available on the Civitas website. Its author is Robert Rowthorn, Emeritus Professor of Economics at Cambridge University. Anyone interested in the debate about migration should look at it.

Net immigration into Britain in the year ending March 2015 was 330,000 – while the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) assumes a high migration scenario will involve net migration at 225,000 a year. Taking into account the children born to future migrants, at this rate the British population would grow by 20 million over the next 50 years and by 29 million over the next 75 years. This growth would be almost wholly due to migration.

The EU's defenders have reduced the question of whether immigration is good for Britain to the economy – whether it boosts GDP. That's the most favourable ground for

the apologists because it ignores questions of who benefits from a change in GDP, and the net effect on social security when unemployed people cannot get jobs that go to immigrants.

Rowthorn puts the whole GDP discussion in focus: "There is widespread agreement amongst specialists that the overall fiscal impact of large-scale immigration is normally small as a proportion of GDP. The large positive fiscal contribution of some types of immigrant is largely or wholly offset by the negative contribution of others."

He looks at one much-promoted study from academics at University College, London, which estimated that over the period 2001-2011, migrants made a net fiscal contribution. "Their widely publicised claim that recent (post-2000) migrants from the [European Economic Area] have generated a large fiscal surplus should be seen in perspective. The estimated surplus of £22 billion over the period 2001-2011 is only 0.2 per cent of GDP."

Poaching

But where are the benefits (if they exist) coming from, and who is carrying the cost? Rowthorn points out, "the benefits of immigration, to the extent they exist, derive in part from the unrequited transfer of investments in human capital that were made in foreign countries before the immigrants arrived in the UK".

So what looks like a fiscal benefit is "merely a disguised transfer to the UK government from taxpayers and families in other countries", says Rowthorn.

In fact, successive British governments have used immigration entirely selfishly, at the expense of poorer nations. The theft of scarce, well-educated labour has cost poorer countries far more than they have gained from investment and aid. In 2011, Romania – just one example – had 20,000 doctors, by 2013, just 14,000.

Addressing a British Medical Association conference in June 2014, Terence Stephenson, chairman of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, said he was concerned that we chose "to remain so depen-

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

dent on doctors from overseas. ... Not just from former Commonwealth countries but also from the European Union. ... I think we should become self-sufficient.”

There is nothing progressive about annexing foreign labour. Isn't that just what the British Empire used to do?

In 2004 Blair opened the UK labour market to workers from the Eastern European nations joining that year (known as A8 countries). He didn't have to, and only Ireland and Sweden followed suit. All the other members took advantage of the accession agreements allowing member states to impose restrictions on the immigration from the new member countries for up to seven years.

Predictable

Suddenly, people from Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia could work in Britain – but not in Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands – on what appeared to them to be big wages. The result was predictable.

The ONS found that between 2004 and 2007 the number of those born in the Eastern European nations and working here rose by 423,000 – from 64,000 to 487,000 – while the number of British-born people in work rose by just 100,000, during a period of relative economic expansion.

Jack Straw, Home Secretary at the time, has since said: "...we thought that it would be good for Britain if these folk could come and work here from 2004. Thorough

Janossy Gergely/shutterstock.com



Breznice, Slovenia, October 2015: migrants heading for Germany as Merkel encouraged border

research by the Home Office suggested that the impact of this benevolence would in any event be 'relatively small, at between 5,000 and 13,000 immigrants per year up to 2010'." He now concedes, "Events proved these forecasts worthless....Lots of red faces, mine included." Apology not accepted, Straw. Too little, and far too late.

Since 1997, non-UK nationals as a proportion of workers has risen from 3.7 per cent to 10.3 per cent. EU workers accounted for almost the entire increase since the global financial crisis of 2007-08. In August

2015 the ONS revealed that non-UK citizens accounted for almost three-quarters of the employment growth in the past year.

In 2012 the government's Migration Advisory Committee said an extra 160,000 British-born workers might have found jobs if there had been no non-EU immigration between 2005 and 2010. That's just a guess, and probably a low-end guess too. According to the committee, there were in fact an extra 625,000 non-EU immigrants. There were also an extra 588,000 EU workers working in Britain.

The benefits of immigration?

JUST UNDER ten years ago, a large industrial estate was built with EU regeneration money in Shirebrook, Mansfield, in what was once the north Nottinghamshire coalfield. The estate became home to the vast HQ of sports equipment firm Sports Direct.

The HQ employs around 5,000 people, almost all of them agency workers recruited directly from EU member states. Working conditions there are notorious, with zero hours contracts the norm. A BBC investiga-

tion discovered recently that ambulances were called to the site 76 times in nearly two years – 36 of them to "life-threatening illnesses". Three of the calls regarded pregnancy difficulties, with one woman giving birth in the toilets at work. Former workers claim that employees are too frightened for their jobs to take a day off sick. Accidents in the warehouse have doubled in a year.

This ten-year EU "regeneration" project has contributed to Mansfield recently rank-

ing as the fourth poorest town in Britain, with high benefit dependency and rock bottom wages. Local GPs and hospitals face much increased demand.

This rise in local employment of migrant labour has not led to wages being spent in the local shops and businesses as money is remitted back to Poland and other countries – the town centre is full of empty shops. Effectively, there is an unlimited supply of low-skilled low-wage labour. ■



-crossing.

This high level of immigration from the EU makes it impossible for Cameron to hit his stated target of immigration in the “tens of thousands”. The EU will not allow Britain to set limits on immigration from Europe.

Restricting EU immigrants’ initial access to welfare benefits would have little impact on the level of immigration (nor on the social security budget). The main driver of migration is the difference in wage rates between Britain and these countries.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has pledged to push forward Turkey’s EU membership talks in return for securing Turkey’s help in stemming the migrant influx to Europe. That would grant 79 million more people free movement into the EU.

Lower wages

In their haste to justify migration, the so-called “left” even picks up the arguments of the employers such as that the migrants are filling jobs that British workers won’t take. Rowthorn remarks, “In rich countries many dirty, hard or low status jobs are increasingly occupied by migrants from poorer countries. These are said to be doing the jobs that native workers will not do. In practice this often means that suitable native workers will not do these jobs at the wages and condi-

tions that employers are willing to offer.”

Rowthorn disagrees. “There are few jobs that natives will not do if conditions are reasonable and wages are sufficiently high,” he says, citing evidence from Finland.

He concludes, “An econometric analysis by the official Migration Advisory Committee strongly suggests that immigration damages the job prospects of lower skilled natives when the labour market is slack...In addition, there is evidence that competition from immigrants may result in lower wages for low skilled local workers, including previous immigrants.”

He sums up immigration’s effects, “Even on optimistic assumptions, the economic and fiscal gains for existing inhabitants and their descendants from large-scale immigration are small in comparison to its impact on population growth.”

That impact is being felt in schools and hospitals around Britain. In August 2015, *The Telegraph* obtained previously unpublished government figures showing that 824,000 foreign nationals had registered for National Insurance numbers in 2014/15, up a third on the previous year, with 629,000 of them from the EU – and 150,000 of those from Romania alone.

The slogan “British Jobs for British

‘Calling for control over borders is no more racist than calling for control on the movement of capital’

Workers” was dubbed “racist” by many on the “Left”, assuming that British means white. They make a connection between migration and xenophobia, but the connection exists only in their minds. They deliberately confuse opposition to mass immigration with hostility to immigrants.

Calling for Britain to control its borders is no more racist than calling for Britain to control the movement of capital, or leave TTIP or NATO. And to be clear, we define as British workers anyone working in Britain and established in Britain. This definition has nothing to do with so-called ethnic origins.

The EU wants a Europe-wide border agency to police the EU’s external borders, removing member nations’ rights to police their own borders. Astonishingly, the TUC wants the EU to run our borders. It told the Home Office in July 2013 that “the UK should participate fully and ‘opt-in’ to existing European legislation [including Schengen!] on Immigration and Asylum.”

Advertising abroad

The EU goes further than giving citizens of European nations the right to work here. The European Commission’s EURES online scheme advertises hundreds of thousands of jobs across the EU. In July 2014 Cameron promised to stop British jobs being advertised there. In October 2015, when even the official statistics showed 1.77 million Britons unemployed, the site was still advertising 122,214 jobs in Britain.

We cannot control our borders while we are in the EU. Only when we leave the EU will we be free to decide what level of immigration we want. ■

The EU is preparing to hand over power to global corporations we aren't even allowed to see the deal being cooked up in secret.

You thought TTIP was bad

WALMART IS A huge US company that pays poverty wages and has made its owners incredibly rich – the founding Walton family has assets in excess of \$160 billion, more than the poorest 40 per cent of the US. It wants to make even more money. So it's backing the Trade in Services Agreement – TiSA for short – being negotiated by the European Union, the US, and 21 other countries.

In a submission to the US government at the beginning of 2013, it pushed for the agreement to ensure that there are “no restrictions on store size, number, or geographic location” and “no merchandise restrictions”, including the right to sell tobacco and pharmaceuticals. So Walmart in our national parks?.

The credit card company Visa is also interested in TiSA. It likes doing monopolistic deals itself – as a sponsor of the London 2012 Olympics, it was the only credit card that could be used to buy tickets. In its submission to the US government, it wants to ensure that governments have no say in such deals.

In fact the representations from large corporations are just the tip of the iceberg. TiSA is the most ambitious deregulation treaty being negotiated, dwarfing even TTIP in scale. Services constitute 78 per cent of Britain's GDP, and something like 75 per cent of the US's.

What's a service? Just about anything that you can't hold in your hand or load onto a ship. That means banking, insurance, transportation, medical treatment, design, education, culture, water supply, post, shops, restaurants...the list is almost infinite.

The scale of the services that TiSA could cover is mind-boggling. The US's intentions are clear: if any commitment to liberalise a sector has been made by any of

'The scale of the services that TiSA could cover is mind-boggling.'



Steve Kaiser (CC-BY-SA 2.0)

US police attack demonstrators in Seattle in 1999 during World Trade Organization Talks. TiSA measures to limit nations' ability to stand against the transnational corporations – and the talk they are going on...conveniently making protest impossible.

the TiSA countries, it should be incorporated in the overall agreement. That, says Public Services International, the global federation representing public services trade unions, brings primary and secondary schools into play, along with hospital and medical services, museums, roads, all construction... the list goes on and on.

One particularly sensitive aspect relates to data. Companies across the spectrum, and especially in telecoms, have been lobbying to ensure that TiSA will outlaw national restrictions on where data can be exported to and housed.

In the wake of the Snowden revelations about US government snooping, countries like Brazil are looking at laws to compel Google, for example, to house all data on

Brazilians in Brazil. TiSA would outlaw all such legislation, making our own data protection laws impotent.

Secrecy

At the time Walmart's submission was being made, TiSA was more than obscure: hardly anyone outside the top corporations and the inner sanctums of government knew it was being negotiated, leave alone what it was dealing with. Some unions did know it existed, and the general thrust, but since they had no idea what was actually being discussed they could do little.

That all changed in June 2014 when the Wikileaks website released a draft of the secret Financial Services Annex to TiSA. The draft indicated TiSA's ambitions

ns to say how we must trade in services – all services. And
secret, let alone change it.

ad? Take a look at TiSA



is aimed at imposing even more extreme
s are so secret that no one even knows where

**‘The trade union
movement has been
slow to react.’**

to institutionalise deregulation in banking and insurance – the sectors that brought the world to the brink of economic collapse in 2008 – and prevent governments from tightening rules on the finance sector.

But more than that, Wikileaks’ release gave the world the first glimpse of how TiSA was going about its business. In the words of a penetrating analysis by a New Zealand law professor, it showed how the

finance industry “has captured global rule making” – and what’s more, is doing so in secret.

Secret is an overused word. In this case, it means what it says. As Wikileaks reported, “The cover sheet records that the draft text will not be declassified until 5 years after the TiSA comes into force or the negotiations are otherwise closed.”

That’s not all. The draft also says, “This document must be protected from unauthorized disclosure...It must be stored in a locked or secured building, room, or container.” Not even members of US Congress will see it until they vote on it, and even then they won’t be able to amend it.

Since June 2014, Wikileaks has released a stream of negotiating documents covering domestic regulation, maritime trade, market access, professional services, the “movement of natural persons” (people), air transport, telecoms, electronic commerce, government procurement and more.

We now know the full extent of TiSA’s ambitions. We no longer have the excuse of ignorance.

EU takeover

The trouble is, within the European Union the national governments aren’t involved in the talks. As a trade agreement, it is being negotiated on our behalf by the European Commission because the EU has “exclusive competence” over its member states’ international trade – an exclusivity supported by, of all organisations, the TUC in its submission to the Department of Business, Industry and Skills one month before PSI called for withdrawal.

In the light of TTIP and TiSA, as well as the crushing austerity measures imposed on, for example, Greece, the TUC’s submission is astonishing. “EU states combined offer a far more attractive package to international partners than the UK does alone. This has become particularly clear in relation to the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the EU and USA,” it said.

The TUC went on: “...it is important for the UK to be part of EU trade negotiations due to the principles of human rights and sustainable development which guide

1: Take it or leave it

IN THEORY, TiSA (and TTIP) can be stopped by just one member state saying no, or even by the European Parliament. It has to be approved by all 28 member state governments (the European Council) and, probably, by all 28 national parliaments.

But the vote will be take-it-or-leave-it: neither the European Parliament, nor the Council, nor the national parliaments, will be able to make any changes. So in practice, expect heavy arm-twisting. ■

them.” It must be joking.

Since then the TUC has produced literature attacking TiSA and similar agreements but not once has it challenged the sole right of the EU to negotiate these agreements. Not once has it acknowledged that human rights and sustainable development are inherently threatened by all these free trade agreements.

The PSI union federation did raise the alert in September 2013. Its general secretary, Rosa Pavenelli, called on affiliates “to urge their national governments to withdraw from talks on this proposed Trade in Services Agreement and to mobilize workers and communities against this deal which is an assault on the public interest”.

And overall, the trade union movement has been slow to react. Even today, the website of the PCS union mentions TiSA only once (without any explanation of what it is). Other unions have been more active. Unison produced a briefing document in March 2015 that sets out its opposition to TTIP, TiSA and CETA (a free trade agreement between the EU and Canada).

In a sorry example of the lack of joined-up thinking in the trade union movement, the GMB is opposed to TiSA, but has just declared itself in favour of staying in the EU. In a statement in October last year, it

Continued on page 14

2: An attack on developing countries

UNTIL RECENTLY, international trade agreements were handled through the World Trade Organization. But because all countries participate equally in WTO negotiations, the leading imperialist nations (and the corporations which set their policy) haven't had it all their own way.

The WTO's General Agreement on Trade In Services, known as GATS, was set in 1995. In 2001 the WTO set about revising its agreements in the so-called "Doha Round", launched in Doha, Qatar. And these agreements have stalled as developing countries have simply said no to the US and the EU.

So the US and the EU have tried

another tack: negotiate agreements with your friends outside of the restrictions of the WTO, and attempt to get your new standards imported back into the WTO – or at least establish them as de facto global rules.

BRICS excluded

China saw what was happening straight away, and asked to be part of the TiSA talks. But none of the so-called BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are included in the TiSA talks – after all, that would move things too close to the WTO model, which so far has failed to deliver what imperialism wants.

One key difference between GATS and TiSA is that under TiSA, countries will have far less power to restrict market access to foreign companies, especially in areas not covered by GATS, such as domestic regulation or e-commerce.

Another is that in GATS, countries are only required to give equal market access to foreign companies if they have explicitly agreed to. In TiSA, they will be required to give equal access only if they don't have specific rules to the contrary for a specific sector.

The overall effect of TiSA would be to prevent developing countries from building up their own industries – especially in new technologies and services. ■

Continued from page 13

called on the EU trade commissioner to oppose TiSA – in the full knowledge that squadrons of pigs would have to be flying above Brussels for that to happen. Hypocrisy is second nature to some.

In July last year the lecturers' union UCU, supported by the teachers' unions NUT and the NAS/UWT, successfully

moved a motion on TiSA and CETA at the Education International meeting in Canada, noting "that these agreements seek to go far beyond traditional tariff reductions by imposing constraints on what governments can do behind their national borders, including the promotion of regulatory coherence and convergence across countries irrespective of national priorities."

It's an odd fact that unions can recog-

nise the importance of national boundaries and national priorities on some issues, but ignore them when it comes to the EU overall. What do they think the "exclusive competence" of the EU on trade and commerce means?

Sovereignty

To get a hint about what deregulation can mean for national sovereignty, look at the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). In 2004, the US wanted to ban Internet-based gambling. A WTO panel ruled that it could not. "Members' regulatory sovereignty is an essential pillar of the progressive liberalization of trade in services, but this sovereignty ends whenever rights of other Members under the GATS are impaired."

In other words, national sovereignty is subordinate to trade treaties. And this is only a hint of what is to come, because the whole rationale for TiSA is that GATS is too weak! (See Box 2, "An attack on developing countries".)

Don't think that national sovereignty is only about what national governments can do. It applies at all levels of government, down to parish councils. So councils trying to limit the number of fast-food restaurants or apply policies to keep high-street chemists could find themselves running foul of TiSA.

The corporations really do want to be able to control every aspect of our lives. ■



Asda in Keighley, West Yorkshire. Asda owner Walmart wants to be able to set up supermarkets anywhere, regardless of local needs or opposition.



CPBML MAY DAY MEETINGS 2016

OUT OF THE EU! REBUILD BRITAIN!

The workers of Britain have been fighting the European Union with one hand tied behind their backs.

Our unions – which should be the fighting organisations of the working class – have largely swallowed the EU myths. Most have sought meekly to secure their own place at the Brussels trough.

There have been honourable exceptions. But in their official literature, most tell us how wonderful the EU is. If it were just up to the TUC, we would have joined the eurozone years ago. Like Greece, our economy would be run by Germany.

While survey after survey shows huge opposition to the EU, union members have neglected their own unions. That must change.

The referendum is the most important vote in Britain for forty years – since the last referendum on membership. On its outcome hangs the foreseeable future of Britain. Will we strike out on our own, set our own priorities, and run our own country? Or will we surrender to capital?

Come the referendum, workers will have the opportunity to take a giant step on the road to creating a truly independent and prosperous Britain.

The alternative is to edge towards the eurozone and Schengen, to accept the EU's privatisation agenda, its TTIP attack on public services and industry, and to become party to its warmongering.

Workers of all lands, unite! Destroy the EU!



EDINBURGH

**Speakers, music and discussion
Monday 2 May, 6.30pm
Word Power Bookshop
43 West Nicolson Street
Edinburgh EH8 9DB**

LEEDS

**Speakers and discussion
Sunday 1 May, 7.30pm
Sovereign Suite
Cosmopolitan Hotel
Lower Briggate
Leeds LS1 4AE**

LONDON

**Speakers, social, and refreshments
Sunday 1 May, 7.30
Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London WC1R 4RL**

SEE CPBML.ORG.UK FOR UP-TO-DATE NEWS OF ALL CPBML EVENTS



The new Housing and Planning Bill cultivates and exploits families, in order to strengthen the class power of a tiny m

Housing: a national issue

FOR ALL ITS variety British society has coalesced into one working class, whether owners or renters of housing, living side by side. The housing “reforms” passing through parliament are an attempt to break the unity and the democratic local institutions that are an expression of the will of the people.

The Housing and Planning Bill was rushed out in the run-up to Christmas while attention was elsewhere. It is economically a sham, but politically cunning. The crisis has in essence been fabricated so that foreign capital can hold sway and occupy the land we have built on.

The present combined dictatorship of central government, tax dodgers and speculators goes against the grain of thinking in this country, where local democracy is valued as a principle but has not been adequately defended for decades. Now, the Housing Bill attempts to finish it off by imposing the government’s will on everything from rents to regeneration.

The Bill aims to uproot sections of the settled working class, cutting them off not only from their homes, friends and family, but also from places of work, schools and familiar health and community services. It will end affordable and secure rented housing. It threatens to denude cities, London in particular, of teachers, nurses, transport and

communications workers, and thousands of others working in public services.

Under what has become known as “Pay to Stay”, social housing landlords will be given powers to access tax records of tenants to see who counts as having “high-pay” (the government’s term). And if the combined income of a household is as little as £30,000 (£40,000 in London), they will be liable to pay rent at 80 per cent of market value. In many London boroughs this will more than quadruple rents.

On the false economic pretext that these workers are getting undeserved benefits, the aim is to make people move out and to break up communities. That paves the way for the end of social housing and the reappearance of slum housing ghettos.

Never has there been such necessity to fight for pay to meet the cost of a decent roof over one’s head. The Living Wage won’t come anywhere near it. Pay rises of more than 25 per cent would be required – a point made by disparate bodies from the RMT trade union to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Desperate to stay below the government’s “high pay” category, some workers are considering taking the defeatist route of accepting a pay freeze or turning down promotion in order to stay in their homes.

The Bill bans local authorities from offering secure tenancies. New tenants, including those with the right to inherit a tenancy, can expect only two to five years of stability before facing eviction. In this way surplus population can appear to be soaked up, while in reality being kept on the move.

The Bill also caps the Local Housing Allowance; according to Shelter, eight in ten

single people aged under 35 depend on that. Local authorities say this will price young people out of tower blocks, which are then likely to remain empty.

Higher rents won’t necessarily mean better housing provided by housing associations and local authorities. The government has hinted it will reduce funding if Pay to Stay is not implemented; it may in any case assume that rental income will rise. And in a seemingly contradictory move, low-paid housing association tenants will have their rent cut by 1 per cent. Previously rents rose according to a formula in line with the Consumer Price Index plus 1 per cent. The rating agency Standard & Poor’s says housing associations are in danger of bankruptcy unless they drastically reduce services such as maintenance.

Where’s the opposition?

The Bill has passed through the Report Stage in the Commons with a shameful lack of opposition. Even though the government has a slender working majority of only 17, amendment after amendment has fallen. One attempt to prevent private landlords from letting property unfit for habitation was voted down by a majority of 93. Where did that come from? Not just the Conservatives.

The reforms have been hailed by housing minister Brandon Lewis as a “new dawn”, transforming “Generation Rent” into “Generation Buy”. The very opposite is happening. Six in ten Londoners are predicted to be renting by 2025. Home ownership is presented as the only option – and yet millions of workers cannot afford that and their number is growing. The promised “Starter Homes” are not the answer. Even at 20 per

‘The aim is to make people move out and to break up communities.’



the crisis in housing, blighting the lives of British
minority...

e, and a class issue

cent discount they would require a salary of £77,000 to £100,000 in parts of London – roughly that of an MP.

The attack is not confined to individual renters: the housing system itself is being driven to the edge. Starter Homes will replace Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, which guaranteed a proportion of social housing in exchange for planning permission.

Builders have now been promised automatic planning consent on allocated land. They can make a direct application to government, bypassing local authorities. Councils would be directed to waive policies which clashed with Starter Homes. Public brownfield sites, including existing estates designated for demolition, are to be seized by compulsory purchase for homes at market rent, regardless of local opinion. Council planning decisions are already being overturned, most recently in Leicestershire.

Calls to restrict the re-sale of council homes under the Thatcherite Right to Buy (RTB) scheme were defeated in the Commons. RTB has been a disastrous policy since 1980, decimating housing stock. Property sharks have snapped up council homes; 290,000 have been lost. Some 40 per cent of those family dwellings are now multi-occupancy private rentals, let by the room.

Around 380,000 people are on council waiting lists. Councils are now desperate to buy back at full market cost the homes they sold at cut price. Since 2012 they have spent £27.3 million doing so. Stock shortage, exacerbated by net immigration, together with the government's Help to Buy mortgage guarantee scheme, have

contributed to an increase in rents and house prices. These are predicted to rise by 6 per cent on average across the country during 2016, according to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Evidence for this is most clearly seen in East Anglia, where Help to Buy take-up has been greatest. Estate agents say prices there have risen 25 per cent in 10 years.

The Bill's extension of RTB to housing associations is to be funded by a levy on councils that will go straight to the Treasury rather than be reinvested locally. Under a deal struck by Communities Secretary Greg Clark and the National Housing Federation, the sale of housing association stock will create a taxpayers' subsidy of £1.2 billion for builders to clean up brownfield sites for private homes, but will force councils to sell off a minimum of 22,000 higher value properties to fund the discount.

Collusion

The sell-off of social housing and the much-vaunted Starter Homes, which can be sold on after five years at a profit, amounts to a bonanza for speculators. Housing associations are colluding by increasingly turning away from the purpose for which they were set up – to meet the needs of key workers excluded from ownership. Some, like Metropolitan, have started to build for sale only. MPs and town halls permit these policies virtually without a murmur, other than to quibble about how they are going to implement them.

Calls for rent controls in response to the Bill also fizzled out. Due largely to net migration, the UK population is set to rise by 9.7 million over the next 25 years (ONS figures).

Private landlords are rubbing their hands, as are house builders and speculators.

Tax inducements to take in lodgers and Buy to Let schemes are intended to persuade ordinary workers to profit from other workers' misery by turning their homes into a business or becoming a landlord. This is the perverted logic of this government.

Anything goes with housing policy right now rather than admit to the real cause of the housing shortage. Calls to manage the influx from abroad, including the super-rich, continue to be resisted in public debate. Accusations of xenophobia greet trade unionists who point to the takeover of Britain by foreign capital and who express the need to reclaim our cities.

Cameron presents nothing but token policies to limit mass immigration, the opposition even less. The British working class is being displaced, yet the TUC seems to think that the government doesn't understand and that it is all a mistake.

The Housing Bill demonstrably does not address Britain's need for affordable homes. There could be opportunities for the country to unite in opposition. But that would mean struggle – for wage rises to pay rents or mortgages and to bring councils and employers into support.

A national housing demonstration is planned for 13 March in London. Housing is a national issue and it is a class issue. It is about creating a civilised Britain. It is not the preserve of minority groups. We can't put our faith in parliament. Although some decent politicians may work with us, workers themselves need to come out of a long lethargy and turn their whimper of complaint into a roar. Only their will can kill this Bill. ■

You can't buck economic laws. It's not an accident that capitalism works. It's the way capitalism works – and why we call for the abolition of capitalism.

Inequality, social justice

THE FORCES that help to prop up capitalism are varied and not always obvious. For example some people make socialist sounding noises but objectively try to disarm workers by raising the question of wealth as if it belonged to the realm of classless morality. Wearing socialist garb, they conclude that the capitalist mode of production is quite good and can remain but the capitalist mode of distribution is no good and must be abolished.

This priests-and-vicars mode of thinking, with its appeal to equality and fairness, does not get us an inch nearer to understanding what is needed for the future new organisation of production and exchange required to rebuild Britain as needed and desired by the working class.

In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels wrote that simply waiting for justice to triumph against the unjust capitalist mode of distribution would be a very long wait. He went on to say that when workers call for equality, the real content of our demand is for the abolition of classes in society, rather than the unattainable aim of equal opportunities under capitalism.

Nothing fair about it

Equal opportunity promoters invariably fail to highlight that we workers produce surplus value, filched as profit by the employers, in return for selling our labour power for wages and a lifetime of trying to defend living standards. How fair an exchange is that? What equal opportunities can arise here?

Alongside the pretence of equal opportunities lies the accompanying distortion that socialism is about enforced equality. In reality a key feature of socialist transition is the recognition that there are varying levels of skill and competency among groups of workers within the framework “from each according to his ability to each according to his work”.

This is an important socialist principle. If different skills between various sets of workers were not to be recognised, not only would unnecessary social tensions arise, but also part of the process of socialist economic planning – namely, measuring value created per unit of varying levels of skilled labour – would become impossible.

Along with equal opportunities, it is



often claimed that all would be well if legislation were passed to abolish existing economic laws, such as the capitalist price mechanism, and to introduce new ones such as price controls. But like the laws of natural science, economic laws exist independently of the will of man and we must discover, understand and carefully harness them.

Unlike judicial law, you can't simply abolish the existence of an economic law. When Gordon Brown was Labour Chancellor he said there would be no more boom or bust under British capitalism. He thought that the economic law of the anarchy of capitalist production and the

resulting capitalist trade cycle had been banished. He was wrong.

Servants or demons?

The key to planning is to harness economic laws by first understanding their nature and then restricting some which are known to be destructive to British workers while using others as yet unused or suppressed. Economic laws can become willing servants of the working class rather than master demons.

The worst illusion for the working class to overcome is that the maximum capitalist profit gives us the best result we can hope for. This is core ruling class thinking. From their class perspective it is important to nurture belief in certain economic laws involving the “free market” and to pretend they are eternal, not capitalist, laws. Their slogan “There is no alternative” is a good example of their thinking.

They knowingly give full vent to a particular set of economic forces in order to serve their class objective of maximising profit, happy to destroy Britain's industrial base in the process – thus preventing the possibility of it being used for the socialist

‘Unlike judicial law, you can't simply abolish the existence of an economic law.’

Capitalism doesn't distribute the results of labour equally.
 Division of classes in society...

and surplus value



Steve Allen/shutterstock.com

but who are politically united in their desire to crush working class resistance.

Planning for *our* class

In rejecting such ruinous thinking the challenge is how we as British workers can fit the requirements of our class interests into national planning, so that our own interests become the sole purpose of planning. This is a perfectly reasonable question to ask and is implicit in the comment, "Well what would you do then?" which invariably crops up when workers discuss the need to replace capitalism.

A significant development in working class thinking in recent years has been its recognition of the importance of a national currency. It's a small but important development. The next step is to better appreciate the link between currency and national planning, all of which obviously necessitates leaving the EU.

As far as socialism is concerned, the reason why a national currency and thereby money is important is because it is an immediate practical way of measuring the value of the work done in the economy once things have begun to settle down post-revolution. The reasoning behind this has been set out in *Workers*, first in March 2013, in an article headed "Socialism and finance", and then in March/April 2015, in the article "Bolshevik finance".

The Bolsheviks proved that not only can you have industry without capitalism but you need and can have money and banking without capitalism. "Use industry against capitalism. Use money against capitalism" was the Bolshevik political shorthand of the day.

A sound currency and banking structure was considered a key part of economic recovery in the 1920s and throughout the spectacular economic growth in the 1930s that made the Soviet Union a major industrial economy. This was done in the teeth of fierce internal opposition by idealists and leftists who wanted immediately to abolish money.

The EU prevents socialism

What of those who promote the European Union as a corporate vehicle to facilitate the simultaneous growth of socialism in a

'The EU harnesses the economic laws of capitalism, the law of the anarchy of production being a prime example, to prevent socialist developments taking place.'

number of countries? This is a utopian fantasy rolled out to hide reactionary intent. Not only is it impossible for the EU to mimic the socialist processes needed to develop a country, it is designed precisely to prevent it.

The EU harnesses the economic laws of capitalism, the law of the anarchy of production being a prime example, to prevent socialist developments taking place at all – whether in one country or simultaneously in various EU countries. It also wrecks nation states by removing the national structure and border protection that socialism needs in order to develop.

From a working class perspective socialist planning has to occur at a national level. In the context of rebuilding Britain, our currency and the amount of it in circulation each year will be an extremely important interim way of measuring value created within national planning.

The importance of a national currency also no doubt explains why the enemies of British workers were so keen to foist the euro onto us.

Having failed with that idea, the same bunch North and South are united against the idea of an independent Britain, and are now trying to prevent us from leaving the EU, while colluding to arrange the break-up of our country by dividing the British working class. ■

reconstruction of society. How often have British factories closed on the basis of short term price movements influenced by the country's "invisible hands" manipulating the cost of supply, only for it then to be proudly announced 'why waste money on something that is not profitable,' to justify a sale or closure.

What these capitalist spokesmen themselves realise, even if many workers do not, is that there is really no need for an exploiting class to organise production and distribution – they have become superfluous and a hindrance to British social development. Therefore in an attempt to sabotage progress and prevent their own redundancy, the ruling class has since 1979 embraced certain economic laws they realised would wipe out large swathes of British industry, in the hope this would negate workers' need and desire for change.

Now in 2016 British workers find themselves confronting a group of economic adventurers and financiers who are overwhelmed by their own contradictions, who have very little understanding of where British capitalism is heading economically

They called it the ‘Great Breakthrough’ – the launch of the Soviet Union grew, within a year the capitalism world was plunged

Soviet planning versus capitalism



Editing a newspaper on a collective farm. The picture is taken from *The Land Without Unemployment*, published in Britain by Martin Lawrence in 1931.

TWO CONCEPTS, two class concepts, have dominated all thinking since the dawn of capitalism: what is good for the working class (the overwhelming population of the world) or what is good for the capitalists (a tiny speck of a minority of the world's population).

Which shall it be: planning, to enable people to free themselves from ignorance, poverty, unemployment, disease etc, or the free market with its greed, stupidity, bigotry, exploitation, ignorance, unimaginable wealth together with incomprehensible poverty and degradation? The clash between these ideas created the politics, economics and wars of the 20th century, and also the European Union – capitalist club and bulwark against communism.

And of course you can have planning

under capitalism but planning is a class question. The test is: For whom and in whose interest?

A planned economy

The Great Breakthrough was the launch of the first five-year plan in the Soviet Union in 1928. It was the deliberate, scientific attempt to move the frontier beyond capitalism and to try and build the first planned socialist economy in the history of the world.

The USSR – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – was established after the defeat of a 14-nation intervention that caused the collapse of civil society, brought famine, disease and barbarism, and killed and impoverished millions of people.

What was the USSR? Under Stalin's direction, more than 60 distinct nationalities

and dozens of smaller national groupings gained freedom of language and cultural development, and equality in such matters as military, administrative, industrial, educational and technological development. The Soviet Union united and developed its peoples as never before.

Civil war in the Party

Enemies of communism, Left or Right, said this was a workers' revolution in the wrong place at the wrong time with no prospects of success. In the Soviet Party there was an incomprehensible cacophony of factionalism and windbagging – of ego and self-interest versus class unity and cohesion. The Opposition, Left and Right, had to be defeated before the Party could move on – to build socialism.

A number of questions had to be settled: Can you build socialism or not? Do you strive to change the world or hand power back to capitalism as Trotsky suggested? Do you build socialism on a sixth of the globe or lose it all? Do you survive or die?

Stopping the civil war in the Party meant being able to move on, to build socialism. The need was to “remake everything: to organise things so that everything should be new, so that our false, filthy, boring, hideous life should become a just, pure, merry and beautiful life”, as the Soviet philosopher Blok described the meaning of the Russian Revolution.

1928 and the first Five Year Plan crossed the frontier from the capitalist world into uncharted lands of building socialism. This meant crossing the barrier in our heads from capitalist culture to something new, leaving behind the past and seizing the future.

Meanwhile, 1929 saw the greatest failure of capitalism in the world until the recent banking crisis of 2007-2008. The leading capitalist countries' economies collapsed, while the Soviet Union was building. The economies of the USA didn't recover until 1940 as world war loomed.

Collectivisation

To take the USSR from the 16th century into the 20th century, agriculture had to be collectivised, resulting in a brutal civil war in the countryside as the rich peasants fought the

Soviet Union's first five-year plan in 1928. While the Soviet Union fell into slump with the Wall Street crash...

Capitalist chaos

socialist revolution and withheld food, creating famine and starvation, and challenging the very survival of working class power and control.

Many mistakes were made, but the policy was ultimately vindicated: the USSR could feed itself, capital was raised to assist industrialisation, and the peasant of the 16th century became the Soviet citizen and worker of the 20th century.

Every attempt at building socialism has followed some kind of planned model – in China, Cuba, Eastern Europe and Vietnam. Success depended on the objective conditions of the level of development, the starting point of productive forces, the level of underdevelopment, the scale of interference and reaction, internal and external.

Quality of life

Stalin described how socialism would further develop workers and enhance the quality of life: "First of all, to shorten the working day at least to six, and subsequently to five hours. This is needed in order that the members of society might have the necessary free time to receive an all-round education. It is necessary, further, to introduce universal compulsory polytechnical education, which is required in order that the members of society might be able freely to choose their occupations and not be tied to some one occupation all their lives. It is likewise necessary that housing conditions should be radically improved, and that real wages of workers and employees should be at least dou-

2: The Stalin constitution

Article 118. The citizens of the USSR have the right to work, that is, the right to be allotted assured employment, with remuneration therefore, in accordance with its quality and quantity...

Article 119. The citizens of the USSR have the right to leisure. The right to leisure is assured by the shortening of the working day of the huge majority of workers to seven hours, the fixing of a yearly holiday for manual and clerical workers without loss of pay...

Article 120. The citizens of the USSR

have the right to material maintenance in their old age, in illness and incapacitation. This right is guaranteed by the wide development of social insurance of manual and clerical workers at the expense of the State, by free medical assistance...

Article 121. The citizens of the USSR have the right to education. This right is ensured by the general compulsory elementary school education, by the fact that all education, including that provided by the universities, is free... ■

bled, if not more, both by means of direct increases of wages and salaries, and, more especially, by further systematic reductions of prices for consumer goods." (from *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*)

So what do we need in Britain today? Capitalism is seeking to destroy all threads which bind us together as workers, all our historic strengths, all our weapons of resistance. By us saying no to this, this is not for us, we start putting up the barricades against their attack.

In all sectors of Britain workers should identify and demand the establishment, more likely re-establishment, of the core infrastructure for the progressive and civilising society that we need and want:

1. Planning for need not bureaucracy.
2. Industry for employment, real skills, real work, constructive and useful work, real training.
3. Core industries to make Britain self-sufficient, self-reliant and independent – steel, coal, gas, nuclear, chemical, utilities etc. Plan for manufacturing, engineering, textiles etc – what do we need to make and where? A new integrated transport infrastructure. End the idiocy of an island with no fleet and no fishing industry.
4. A plan for agriculture and the countryside.
5. A housing plan to resolve homelessness and bad housing.
6. A complete transformation of all services – healthcare, education, finance, etc.

You can add to the list.

If we are to survive here then we need to be clear: working class power to rebuild the mess capitalism has left us after all their years of failure is essential. It means reasserting Marxist thinking in our own ranks – in the unions, in the wider working class. A belief and confidence in ourselves as we once again push the capitalist frontier aside.

That is the great breakthrough we as a class must make in Britain. ■

1: The five-year plan

1928 SAW the first Five Year Plan, crossing the frontier from the capitalist world into uncharted lands of building socialism. Its achievements were unprecedented:

Building industry where there wasn't any. Coal, Metals, transport, textiles, defence, oil, construction etc.

Building education – schools, nurseries, universities, vocational education, technical education, art and literature, adult education, post-work education.

Obliterating illiteracy, lifting the cultural

level. Building parks, theatres, museums, libraries, sports facilities, training artists, musicians and writers, establishing innumerable newspapers in dozens of languages and media outlets.

Building a health service, providing pensions, workers rest homes, holidays etc.

Agriculture was 1.5 times greater than in 1917; **industry** 7 times greater than 1917; **incomes** 4 times greater than in 1917. ■

This article is an edited version of a speech given at a CPBML public meeting in November 2015.

In World War One, groups of brave Irishmen struck to leave and the war. It became known as the Easter Rising...

1916: Out of empire and

THE 1916 EASTER Rising in Dublin stubbornly troubles the present. Prompting strong feelings, it has been widely categorised as dismal failure and tragic folly, daring adventure and noble sacrifice, while its participants have been classified as everything from dangerous lunatics to national martyrs.

But with the passage of time, the Rising obstinately refuses to diminish but shines through as a most extraordinary, challenging event; its scale and significance weirdly out of kilter with its actual size. Many of its intimations are still unrealised.

Unlike most of the other 20th-century moves out of empire and into nationhood, it did not occur at the end but in the very midst of the cataclysm of World War One. Britain's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity.

This was the first open revolt by workers against the carnage of inter-imperial conflict, showing they could strive for social and economic advance rather than being dragged into the great slaughterhouse of capitalist competition. The sacrifices of the Rising proved of long-term benefit to Ireland, whereas 49,500 Irishmen died in the futility of the Great War (many from nationalist backgrounds) fighting for the British Empire.

Occupations

On Easter Monday 1916, intent on starting a rebellion against British rule in Ireland, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army gathered at prearranged meeting places and occupied a number of strategic buildings in the inner city area of Dublin around the General Post Office (GPO) that commanded the main routes into the capital and enjoyed a strategic position in relation to the major British military barracks. Taking the British military by surprise, the properties were taken virtually without resistance. The rebels set about making them defensible.

A Proclamation was read to the public

“If we lose Ireland, we have lost the Empire.”

outside the GPO. A sparse crowd offered a few perfunctory cheers. The proclamation established an independent Irish Republic and provisional government to administer temporarily its affairs. Ireland's “national right to freedom and sovereignty” was asserted, as was “the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland”.

History

The leaders claimed: “Ireland through us summons her children to her flag” and could thus “prove itself worthy of [its] august destiny”. The Rising was linked to Irish history: “the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom...in arms...six times during the past 300 years”.

The Proclamation suggested that the Rising was not just a political event but also foreshadowed social and economic change, providing a vision of a free Irish state which would oversee the welfare of all its citizens, as the republic would guarantee “religious and civil liberty, equal rights and opportunities” and would “pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation ... cherishing all the children of the nation equally”. There was also a commitment to introduce universal suffrage.

The leaders of the uprising were not unprepared. James Connolly had published studies of the European insurrections of 1830, 1848 and 1905 in the socialist press. The Rising attempted to occupy key parts of Dublin but failed to take Dublin Castle (the seat of British government), the train stations or the two docks.

There were assemblies outside of Dublin, but many dispersed in confusion, though there was an attack on the Royal Irish Constabulary barracks at Ashbourne, County Meath and 700 volunteers mobilised under Liam Mellows in County Galway.

The British military onslaught, which the rebels had anticipated, did not at first materialise. When the Rising began the British authorities had just 400 troops in Dublin to confront roughly 1,200 insurgents, so they began to amass reinforcements.

As the week progressed, the fighting in some areas did become intense, characterised by prolonged, fiercely contested street battles. Military casualties were highest at Mount Street Bridge. There, newly



Birth of the Irish Republic by Walter Paget, depicting Connolly is depicted lying injured on the stretcher.

arrived troops from Britain made tactically inept, frontal attacks on determined and disciplined volunteers occupying several strongly fortified outposts. They lost 234 men, dead or wounded while just 5 rebels died. British soldiers were alleged to have killed 15 unarmed men in North King Street during intense gun battles there on 28 and 29 April.

“If we lose Ireland, we have lost the Empire”, said a British general later. So the British authorities drafted reinforcements into the capital. By Friday 28 April, 1,600 rebels (more had joined during the week) were facing 18-20,000 soldiers.

Artillery

The GPO was entirely cut off from other rebel garrisons. Next day it came under a ferocious artillery attack which also devastated much of central Dublin. The troops did not attempt a mass infantry attack. The new strategy compelled the insurgent leaders, based at the Post Office, first to evacuate the building and later to accept the only terms on offer – unconditional surrender.

All seven signatories of the proclamation were executed by the British military on the charge of committing treason in warfare. James Connolly, who had been wounded in the fighting, was executed sitting down in a

the British Empire

war



...cting the GPO during the shelling. James
er.

chair. Though initially largely unsympathetic or indifferent to the Rising, Irish public opinion switched and became more sympathetic due to manner of their treatment and the executions. Eventually the executions were halted, though there were several thousand arrests.

The Rising prompted the rebirth of the Irish nation. In military terms a failure, it influenced to varying degrees the thinking of later generations. As the poet W. B. Yeats noted, everything was “changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born.”

Though many had greeted the Rising with a lack of sympathy or bewilderment, within three years everything had changed and most Irish people had turned their backs on the British Empire. They elected a rebel parliament that sat in Dublin instead of Westminster, tempting Britain to declare it illegal – leading to the War of Independence against Britain from 1919 to 1921, and the eventual creation of the Irish Free State.

The sacrifice of the Easter Rising propelled Ireland a few steps down the road to freedom. The ideal of 1916 is not yet fulfilled. Partition remains. The EU exists, stealing sovereignty from the Irish republic. The Easter Rising still has meaning. ■

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

6 SIX CALLS TO ACTION

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

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

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

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

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

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

3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation

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

4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

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

5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

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

6: Build the Party

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

Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
- Send an A5 sae to the address below for a list of publications, or email us.
- Subscribe to *Workers*, our bimonthly magazine, either online at workers.org.uk or by sending £12 for a year's issues (cheques payable to Workers) to the address below.
- Sign up for our free email newsletter – see the form at www.cpbml.org.uk
- Follow us on Twitter.

CPBML

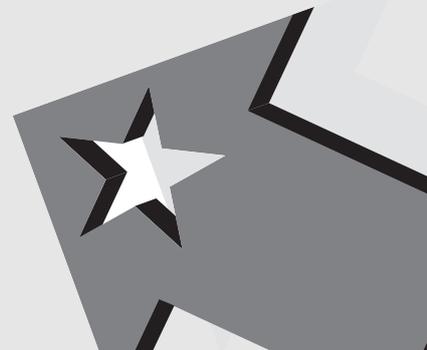
78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

email info@cpbml.org.uk

twitter [@cpbml](https://twitter.com/cpbml)

www.cpbml.org.uk

phone 020 8801 9543



Don't bail out the banks again

'Falling for the same trick twice in a decade would not only be a repeat disaster but also a farce...'

IT IS PLAIN that the capitalist world is in an absolute mess and that another financial crisis is brewing. After the global collapse of 2008, the financiers' addiction to phoney profit did not cease, but has continued with even more debt being taken on. Today's breed of finance capitalists are inherently greedy and poor learners. To them, if there is excessive debt in the system, they think "let's take on even more and go crazy".

Between 2007 and 2014, global debt far outstripped economic growth, rising from \$142 trillion to \$199 trillion. Many foolhardy creditors are belatedly wondering if they will ever get their money back, let alone see any interest accrue. No surprise then that once more the world of capitalism is awash with the signals and tremors of impending financial crisis.

There are growing concerns that all will not end well. And in that event we must not be fooled into bailing out the banks again. Falling for the same trick twice in a decade would not only be a repeat disaster but also a farce.

One of the myths peddled by Cameron and Osborne is that the astronomic debts we have been saddled with in Britain were caused by the previous government's excessive spending. In fact they are due simply to the decision to bail out the banks, no matter at what cost – a decision made by Labour and supported by all parliamentary parties, including the Conservatives.

Speculative booms when they go bust have a habit of bringing down the whole economy. Marx and Engels pointed out in 1848 that these recurrent crises are endemic to capitalism – each one increasingly putting capitalism on trial. Now they are becoming more frequent and more intense. In recent

decades we've seen the 1987 stock market crash, the Asian "tigers" collapse, the dot-com fiasco and the mother of all crashes, the 2007–2008 credit crunch.

We now have the prospect of a Chinese stock market collapse with its echoes of the 1929 Wall Street crash. Apparently anyone who can has been speculating in stocks and property. Seemingly the measures capitalism takes to respond to one crisis merely sow the seeds for the next.

Financial crises will wipe out more parts of the real economy unless we change tack. Therefore British workers must get our thinking clear before the event. Iceland let its banks fail and is now recovering. In Britain banks are held sacred: steel can go to the wall, but a bankrupt bank must be saved at all costs.

Organised voices must be raised now, well in advance of the next calamity. In the middle of the crisis, confusion of thought will be a convenient background to roll out the old faithful, pouring our money into the banks.

Sitting back while our society decays around us is not an option. The situation will only get worse. What will be left for our children and grandchildren if we do? We are not protestors calling for another betrayal from a Labour government. We are the ones seeking solutions to end decline and begin rebuilding.

No more crippling expensive bail-outs to banks. No more handouts to speculation-added institutions. No more excuses to be made for yet more decades of budget deficit reductions and attacks on social provision such as health, education and welfare. Use a crisis positively to boost the real economy, restore industry and build a future for working people. ■

STICKER OFFER

Show your support for leaving the EU. We have a limited number of special LEAVE stickers available at no charge – but do please either send a stamped SAE to Workers, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 8EB or go to cpbml.org.uk/stickers to order online (£1 to cover costs). Please say how many you'd like.

VOTE TO
LEAVE
THE EU

VOTE TO
LEAVE
THE EU

VOTE TO
LEAVE
THE EU

BADGES OF PRIDE

Get your full-colour badges celebrating May Day (2 cm wide, enamelled in black, red, gold and blue) and the Red Flag (1.2 cm wide, enamelled in Red and Gold).

The badges are available now. Buy them online at cpbml.org.uk/shop or by post from Bellman Books, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB, price £2 for the May Day badge and £1 for the Red Flag badge. Postage free up to 5 badges. For orders over 5 please add £1 for postage (make cheques payable to "WORKERS").

WEAR THEM – SHARE THEM



May Day badge, £2



Red Flag badge, £1