

WORKERS

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ENERGY FOR AN INDEPENDENT BRITAIN

Inflation War on workers

Net Zero The price

Football Money rules

Mining Dig for Britain

Farmland What's it for?

Ukraine Stay out!

State power Fusion theory

plus Historic Notes,

CPBML New statement

News and more

WORKERS



Stay out of Ukraine!

IMPERIALISM ALWAYS carries with it the danger of war. When imperialism is in crisis the world becomes a more dangerous place. We're seeing this now. As *Workers* goes to press, Russian troops have moved into eastern Ukraine, and the situation has become increasingly volatile.

A febrile atmosphere has been created in which even the smallest spark could set off a massive conflagration. Like playground bullies, NATO (primarily the US and Britain) and Russia have been squaring off, roaring threats and trading insults. All are to blame.

In all this, the particular responsibility of the working class in Britain is clear: it is to fight for peace and seek to stop attempts to drag this country further into the mire. The CPBML denounces the British government's warmongering – a sign of things to come as it implements a "defence" strategy to take military power all round the globe.

We have previously said that the fall of socialism in the Soviet Union would lead to the untrammelled establishment of capitalist trading blocs, and that trading blocs can become warfighting blocs. That is now happening.

The answer, we say in our 2021 Congress statement (see page 20), lies at home: "The politics of opposition to war must be seized by the

same people who, against establishment opposition, forced us out of the EU: the honest, concerned mass of working people."

The beleaguered Johnson government, supported by the Labour Party, has been playing its irresponsible part in the crisis, stoking up the danger of war in Ukraine by sending in heavy weapons and covert forces, by a disinformation campaign, and by rejecting diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict.

The withdrawal of British embassy staff from Kiev, announced on 24 January, was yet another cynical attempt throw fuel on the fire. As was the claim by the Foreign Office over the following weekend – without producing any details – that Russia was planning a coup in Ukraine.

The propaganda war waged by Whitehall fits perfectly with the government's "Global Britain" strategy – while distracting from the government's multiple failures. Notably, it distracts from the failure to take forward the cause of Britain's independence. (And it also feeds into the fake narrative that roaring inflation here is the result of tensions in eastern Europe – see back page.) It's a risky game to play.

Britain has no interest in interference in eastern Europe. No good will come from British intervention. Stop interfering. Stay out! ■



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Richard Whitcombe/shutterstock.com



A solar farm in South Wales.

Farmland power grab

A PLAN TO build a huge solar farm on prime agricultural land on the border of Lincolnshire and Rutland is being challenged by an impressive local campaign group determined to fight it all the way.

Two companies – Canadian Solar and Windel Energy – want to construct the Mallard Pass Solar Farm, a massive project that would cover more than 2,000 acres (3 square miles) either side of the East Coast Main Line near Essendine – eight times the size of the largest existing solar farm in Britain. The distance from one boundary to another would be almost five miles. Although the project looks like a Canadian/UK joint venture it now appears that the finance is coming from China – the project involves the large-scale importing of Chinese solar panels.

The companies launched a local public consultation on 4 November last year, with a closing date of 16 December. They might not have anticipated the rapid response and organisation of local people opposed to the plan.

The Mallard Pass Action Group is organising rapidly on a number of fronts. Since the beginning of this year alone the group has generated articles in the local press, media interviews, and an aerial video showing the extent of the proposed land grab.

One local MP, Alicia Kearns, has now made a strong statement opposing the project. A national petition has been launched, which notes the need for agricultural land to maintain food security. Banners and signage have been produced ready for the next phase in the fight. Every village has a lead representative and team to support them with door-to-door activity.

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

SCOTLAND

Freeports condemned

THE RMT union has reacted angrily to the joint announcement from Westminster and the SNP government of two “green freeports”. It says the projects are fatally flawed “because they will be operated in private not public interests “. Bids are being invited to run the freeports.

Eight freeports were announced for England in March 2021, but as the RMT notes, they have yet to create a single job. The union says that “it looks like Scotland's Green Freeports would hand tax breaks, public subsidy and more strategic control of Scotland’s ports network to employers who have seen profits increase during the pandemic, in return for vague assurances over trade union consultation and de-regulation.”

The RMT is demanding that trade unions must be involved in designing the bidding process “so that Green Freeports and a just transition powered by ScotWind and other green projects are demonstrably different to the dodgy de-regulation underway in England”.

FACTS MATTER

At *Workers* we make every effort to check that our stories are accurate, and that we distinguish between fact and opinion.

If you want to check our references for a particular story, look it up online at cpbml.org.uk and follow the embedded links. If we've got something wrong, please let us know!

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession call us on 07308 979308 or email workers@cpbml.org.uk



ON THE WEB

A selection of additional stories at cpbml.org.uk

South Yorkshire bus drivers win big rises

More than 560 Stagecoach bus workers in South Yorkshire have won a 10.7 per cent pay increase from May after walking out on indefinite strike following the company's refusal to improve its pay offer. The pay deal with their union – Unite – will see Sheffield drivers' hourly pay increase from £10.50 to £11.60. Hourly pay for their colleagues in Bamsley and Rotherham also goes up.

Statues and statutes

The decision to find the Colston 4 not guilty should not be misused: there should be no further restrictions on our right to protest, nor misrepresentations of the way to combat racism. Capitalism uses racism to divide the working class. We must make sure that our opposition to racism is not also used to divide us.

Scientists unite against EU 'punishment'

Researchers and research organisations from nations inside and outside the EU have joined forces in a bid to break the political standoff preventing Britain and Switzerland from becoming associate members of the EU's Horizon Europe programme. Britain has greater scientific impact than any EU country, and its absence from collaborative European programmes is being keenly felt.

Plus: the e-newsletter

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

Workers



UCU march, Glasgow city centre, 14 February.

UCU steps up action

STAFF AT a total of 68 universities were on strike in February after university employers refused to withdraw cuts to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) or accept the University and College Union's (UCU) compromise proposals which would have seen staff and employers both pay slightly more to protect benefits and resolve the pension dispute.

Despite the USS confirming that the UCU's proposals are viable and implementable, the employers' organisation Universities UK has said it will formalise its own proposals on Tuesday 22 February. These are expected to result in a 35 per cent cut in the guaranteed retirement income of members.

The dispute is over a 20 per cent pay cut in real terms over the past 12 years, unmanageable workloads, pay inequality and the use of exploitative and insecure contracts, which are rife across the sector. Altogether, more than 50,000 staff are expected to walk out, with well over a million students set to be affected.

The final day of this round of strike action, Wednesday 2 March, was called to coincide with the student strike organised by the National Union of Students. The students are supporting UCU's industrial action and their union is calling for better working conditions, pay and pensions for staff.

The UCU action had re-started last December (having been interrupted by Covid in March 2020), when staff at 58 universities took three days of strike action. Following a successful rebalot over Christmas, staff at ten more universities will join this latest wave of strikes. Since December, staff have been engaged in action short of a strike (ASOS), which involves working strictly to contract, not covering for absent colleagues, not rescheduling lectures or classes cancelled due to strike action, or undertaking any voluntary activities.

In retaliation to the wave of action, employer representatives have authorised withholding the pay of staff taking ASOS. Six universities are claiming they will deduct a full day's pay for each day of action short of a strike. The UCU has warned that this may lead to even more strikes being called. ■

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

INFLATION VAT on energy

THE CURRENT energy price rises are part of the government's attack on the working class. There is a good case for a VAT holiday for domestic energy. VAT is charged at 5 per cent on the supply of electricity and gas to households, magnifying the cost of subsidies to renewables, system balancing costs, and also the rising price of natural gas. Since so much of the VAT take is a tax on a tax (green levies in this case) there is a case for zero rating, or at least a significant rate reduction.

The government opposes this, claiming wrongly that it would disproportionately benefit the well-off. In fact, energy levies and taxes are regressive, since energy costs form a larger part of expenditure in a low-income household than in a high-income one. A VAT cut would indeed benefit high-income households, but it would benefit low-income households much more.

Nearly two-thirds of Britain's final energy consumption is accounted for by commerce, industry, other services, and the public sector. High energy prices are a central element in accelerating inflation. They will squeeze both employment and investment in the longer term. ■

COVID-19

Mandate mania

OVER 10 BILLION coronavirus vaccinations have been given worldwide, an unprecedented programme in both speed and scope. Some governments have sought to press harder, not necessarily those with the lowest vaccination rates.

Eleven countries, including Italy, Austria, and Greece, have made Covid-19 vaccination mandatory for sections of their population according to age.

Other countries have made vaccinations compulsory for certain professions or introduced rules to restrict unvaccinated people from aspects of public life.

Over 80 per cent of the population of Canada are fully vaccinated, well ahead of

the World Health Organisation goal of 70 per cent. But in January Canada introduced vaccine mandates for all federally regulated workplaces and employees including truck drivers crossing the border to the US.

This led to effective and widely publicised protests demanding an end to the vaccine mandate for truck drivers.

More than two weeks of blockades at border points between the US and Canada had significant impact on supplies and production. And the centre of Ottawa, the Canadian capital, was paralysed.

Then prime minister Justin Trudeau declared a national public order emergency. He has introduced powers including seizing vehicles and freezing the bank accounts of protesters – and individuals who have donated financial support via Internet crowd-funding platforms. ■



Portsmouth High School, part of the 23-school Girls' Day School Trust.

Independent school strikes

TEACHERS IN 23 independent schools run by the Girls' Day School Trust voted overwhelmingly to strike after their employer said it would withdraw from the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Some 1,500 teachers were expected to be involved in the action.

The first strike day, on 10 February, saw high levels of involvement, with picket lines outside schools. Five more strike days were due between 23 February and 3 March. More than 70 per cent of the trust's teaching staff belong to the National Education Union, and on a turnout of 84 per cent, 95 per cent voted to strike – the first in the trust's 149-year history.

Independent schools have been rushing to opt out of the pension scheme since the government changed the rate used to calculate the liabilities of public sector schemes. As a result, employer contributions rose from 16.48 per cent to 23.6 per cent in 2019.

Independent schools have to meet this increase themselves, unlike state schools where the government is (so far) still funding it. Under the trust's proposal, teachers would be at least 20 per cent worse off when they receive their pensions. Like all teachers, they have already suffered a decline in real pay over several years, with increases below inflation and a pay freeze throughout the last academic year. Losing the Teachers' Pension Scheme would be an even bigger financial blow.

The trust's finances, meanwhile, show a healthy annual surplus. It can afford to pay, but instead has threatened to "fire and rehire" its teachers to force through the change in contracts. This added to the teachers' anger leading up to the vote. ■

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

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

The CPBML is back holding in-person public meetings (hurray!) as well as continuing our series of online discussion meetings via Zoom.

MARCH

Tuesday 8 March, 7pm

Online discussion meeting (via Zoom)

"Why Britain needs a modern railway network"

With the government cutting funding not just for HS2 but across the network, where does that leave Britain's transport infrastructure? For an invitation, email info@cpbml.org.uk.

Tuesday 22 March, 7.30pm

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

In-person CPBML Public Meeting: "A working class needs modern industry"

Can a working class without real employment create progress? How important is the development of advanced modern industry? Come and discuss. All welcome.

APRIL

Tuesday 12 April, 7pm

Online discussion meeting (via Zoom)

"Keep land for food"

Leaving the EU and its disastrous Common Agricultural Policy gave Britain the opportunity to steer agriculture towards what surely should be its prime objective: to feed the people. Instead it has abandoned food targets. For an invitation, email info@cpbml.org.uk.

MAY

Sunday 1 May, 7.30pm

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

In-person CPBML May Day Meeting: "Real Control for Real Independence"

A meeting about how the working class must lead in the fight for a future for Britain – based on ideas coming out of the CPBML's latest party congress statement. Come and join the discussion. All welcome.

Other in-person meetings will be announced in due course. To keep up-to-date as things change, make sure you're signed up to receive our electronic newsletter.

What would it take for Britain to secure energy supply and

Energy security – essential



Workers

Out of action, permanently. Bradwell nuclear power station in Essex during decommissioning. Yet nuclear is vital to Britain's future.

BRITAIN, LIKE any nation, needs to have energy security. That means ensuring industry, services and the people of our country have the energy they need. At the moment we're far from that goal.

These are political questions. They reflect wider current issues for the British working class. What's a nation? And why does nationhood matter? Are society and politics about class? Or something else? And who decides on what's essential and how to pay for the cost?

It's helpful to talk about energy supply and security separate from climate change. There is of course a strong relationship both in reality and in people's thinking – but they are not the same thing.

Energy is at the heart of modern life. Since the mid-19th century, that's been

about electrical energy in particular. Some arguments about energy supply and choices, when pared back, amount to a rejection of industry and technology.

Demands that energy production is "clean" are not rooted in reality and not materialist. And that almost magical view obscures the debate about what can be done.

Working class and energy

Two views are foisted on our class, clouding debate and decisions. That makes it hard for us to tackle problems on energy – or even to set out clearly what they are.

The first is that energy use is dirty and polluting and must be cut, which quickly leads to "we are all doomed" pronouncements. Disagree and you are branded a cli-

mate charge denier.

Secondly, that we (Britain) must depend on others to provide solutions and act – "we can't do anything alone". This undermines thought about specific, local initiatives. Paradoxically it often goes along with the idea that somehow individual self-denial will "save the planet".

At worst, promoters of these wrong ideas take a deliberate ideological stance: anti-people, anti-Britain, anti-industry, anti-working class, anti-life. They are a small minority.

Many people repeating these ideas have real concerns, but are sometimes unclear about causes and solutions. The debate on energy within our class must be honest and open; not patronising or rejecting differing views out of hand.

Why is it important?

Capital for independence

After all who wants pollution and the dangerous, unhealthy work usually associated with energy production?

And the false narrative on “climate emergency” – designed to create panic – is everywhere; it seeps into people’s thinking.

Nations

As concerned workers how do we counter this? Firstly, recognise that nation states exist and are the best (or least bad) political structure for workers under capitalism.

Transnational, global capitalism is the true polluter – acting only in the interest of profits. It is a false friend to anyone concerned about pollution, the environment and energy security.

The complexity and interconnection of modern industry, technology and science does not justify the globalist mission of destroying nations and their independence.

Nations need control of their energy supply and they need to make their own decisions about improving the quality of the environment, reducing CO2 emissions and cutting pollution.

Second, we should challenge assumptions that climate change necessarily means uncontrolled disaster. There’s a quasi-religious priesthood emerging which evangelises the idea. We’ve all heard the preaching – “everyone is guilty”, “think of the poor people whose homes will be wrecked”. They are the true deniers – they don’t accept the capacity of people to make change.

Control

Third, we should assert wherever we can that control of Britain’s own energy supply is a fundamental necessity for our nation to thrive. We can start with simple things – for example gas storage capacity is far too low as a result of bad political and economic decisions, and can be changed. In the transition period we will still have to rely on fossil fuels. So government must plan for that, even allow new oil and gas exploration until we don’t need it. This begins to attack the philosophy of dependence.

The specifics of electricity generation and energy supply matter. We have to ask what’s stopping development of the best mix to ensure supply and to make it as

clean as can be.

There are many existing and potential sources of energy. None of them are perfect, unlimited and clean.

Renewable: offshore and onshore wind; nuclear; solar; tidal; hydro – these current technologies are capable of further development, some more than others.

Renewable solutions, except nuclear, don’t provide the energy density of hydrocarbons and are not suitable to provide baseload. All have issues that limit their use: for example tidal isn’t producing results and has other environmental impacts. And hydro is maxed out in Britain.

Gas turbines, oil from coal and biomass burning are all limited in the long term – they produce CO2 and pollution, to differing degrees. But there are still exploitable oil and gas resources available in Britain.

Clean burn coal (killed by the EU and energy market), hydrogen and nuclear fusion all are some way in the future.

All forms of generation can be enhanced and made more efficient by storage technology such as batteries or pumped storage (although that can’t easily be scaled up). Hydrogen produced by surplus electricity is a form of storage. More storage capability is desirable, but it is not the answer to energy security.

Interconnectors (cables and gas pipelines) are in theory ways of sharing the generation load, as the National Grid does. But there’s no security where imported energy is outside national control. That has become very clear this winter with gas supplies.

Market failure

At present financial markets and competition determine investment and priorities for energy companies. Their decisions are made for profitability and not need. That’s why “market” solutions to managing energy security – and emissions – are bound to fail.

Energy markets – electricity pricing by competition, carbon offsets so loved by the EU – have turned out inherently inefficient in practice, and feed speculators.

For example, smart meters are touted as helping to manage energy consumption and to save the planet. But they are not

‘Nations need control of their energy supply, and they need to make their own decisions about improving the environment...’

promoted so you remember to turn the lights off. It’s become clear recently they are in reality the precursor to differential energy rates at different times of day.

High prices are not a way to secure our energy supply – even if the aim is to price energy so high that consumption is cut radically. And that’s unwise too, because it overlooks energy for industrial processes and hydrocarbons needed to make other products. Or are we to import all steel, plastics and pharmaceuticals?

Planning

Leaving aside the unrealistic systematic and extensive reduction of overall energy use, what might a national plan for electricity generation and energy security look like?

Move away from a single or few types of established technology – that is, plan for the future. Invest for the medium and long term in developing current sources and in technology that’s not yet mature and cannot yet be scaled up. But don’t cut current sources prematurely.

In particular, ramp up nuclear development. Not only rebuild Britain’s design and construction capability for large scale nuclear, but also promote small scale reactors (which is already happening) and other innovative ideas.

Reduce dependency on interconnectors and pipelines, especially to plug anticipated gaps.

Continued on page 8



Continued from page 9

Adopt better measures than CO2 emissions for making decisions on energy sources. Taken over an installation's lifetime, energy in versus energy out shows wind power, for example, as far less of a sustainable solution over the long term. And above all, decisions should be based more on national need and less on the financial returns for private investors (or overseas governments).

If that appears radical, it is. We are constantly told there is a "climate emergency" and a "looming energy crisis". Yet the solutions being touted are the same as ever: use less, pay more, trust the market.

Ruling class view

Capitalists are thinking how to reboot capitalism – we're still in the wake of the 2007-2008 crash. One idea is that the digital age can be harnessed for a "great reset".

At heart this means the destruction of productive forces, and not their expansion – leading directly to hyping climate change impacts and other doom-mongering.

Replacing gas boilers and internal combustion engine vehicles before truly viable alternatives exist will destroy some industries and expand others, but will leave its own giant, wasteful carbon footprint. Closing viable coal mines, or not developing new oil fields, just makes us dependent on global markets.

Options

Human ingenuity and capability are the ultimate source of value and technological advance. The question is how to harness them to provide energy and deal with the impacts of climate change.

Zero carbon, zero storage

CLOSURE OF the Rough gas storage field in 2017 made Britain increasingly dependent on others for our basic energy supply. Twenty miles off the Yorkshire coast, Rough had for 30 years cushioned Britain from the volatility of supply, holding 70 per cent of the country's gas reserve.

Centrica (British Gas), which owns the field, was unwilling to stump up £1.6 billion to make necessary upgrades, and the government refused to cover the costs with a subsidy. Accordingly, the facility was allowed to close five years ago, despite dire warnings within the industry.

Approaching this winter Britain had one week's reserve of gas, in stark contrast to countries like Holland and Germany, with reserves of two and four months respectively.

Successive governments have insisted "the market will provide". Well, yes, if we're prepared to pay any price. And, as everyone is aware, the cost of imported gas has rocketed. Gas exporters will go where the pickings are richest.

So huge liquid natural gas tankers, many from West Africa and the USA, are diverting from China to sell in Europe, and particularly here. In January of this year, as British prices rose, one such tanker doubled back through the Panama Canal,

adding \$400,000 to its costs.

These highly polluting journeys (tankers don't run on batteries) are due in no small way to the government's obsession with moving to net zero carbon, relying on as yet underdeveloped technologies and intermittent renewables.

Dependence on gas has soared precisely because renewables require reliable back up. Alternative sources of power will be found, perhaps hydrogen or even the holy grail of nuclear fusion, but they are not yet viable for the needs of a modern economy.

During the transitional period until newer sources of energy become readily available, Britain will have to rely on conventional sources. The country's nuclear estate is not fit for purpose, coal has been closed down, so gas, and gas storage has to be an integral part of the current mix.

Seeing the eye-watering price gas is commanding, Centrica has discovered that it does in fact have the £1.6 billion needed to resume conventional gas storage, but wants to recover the costs via users' energy bills.

The government must give up its illusory goal of instant carbon net zero – or face voter backlash at the unsustainable cost of heating and lighting our homes. ■

Workers by hand and brain – the people of Britain and other countries – will have to tackle those issues and resolve them. It's not just about paying for "net zero" (though we will through taxes and lower living standards), but about taking an active part in all this.

In short, workers are the answer, not the problem.

Planning and control are essential for energy security and dealing with climate impacts. We have to address the energy mix in short, medium and long term, as well as continuity of supply. That requires direction of finance and investment, skills development and research.

This needs to happen at national level, where decisions can be made and

influenced. Or do we step back and let global finance capital or other transnational bodies decide? And then we must ask where, in reality, does energy rank in British government policy? What's being done, rather than just promised, and is it effective?

Exaggeration about climate change and belief that we must rely on other countries or global capital will undermine effective action. Given where we are in the public debate, these issues will have to be dealt with before Britain can make progress on energy. ■

• This article is based on the introduction to an online CPBML discussion meeting in November 2021.

Are gas prices rising because Russia has turned off the tap? The culprit is closer to home...

Price of net zero fantasy



Two ships involved in the Nord Stream 2 project, seen in Mukran harbour, northern Germany, September 2020: support vessel *Artemis Offshore* (red, foreground), and pipe layer *Akademik Cherskiy*.

IN LATE 2021, the British government paused development of the Jackdaw and Cambo oil and gas fields off Scotland as a result of its commitment to the globalist “green” agenda – fully in line with the EU Green Deal policy. This increases our dependence on foreign supplies.

The government announced in December that new oil and gas projects would have to face a “checkpoint” to determine if they were compatible with net zero. But Shell at least has not given up, according to reports in January.

Households and businesses still need gas for fuel. The US exported liquefied

natural gas to Europe at a record high level in December 2021, while continuing to block the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project linking Russia to Germany.

In the same month Germany reversed Russian gas supplies eastwards back to Poland. Analysis from media organisation RT said, “This is the only fact that both Russia and European countries agree on. As to why, the reasons are murky.” RT claims that at least part of the reason for that change is failure to renew contracts.

Russia’s state energy company Gazprom supplied 50 billion cubic metres to Germany in 2021, 10 per cent more than in 2020. It has called the Western claims of an energy blockade “lies” and “fake news”.

Engineered

Thierry Bros, a member of the EU-Russia Gas Advisory Council, commented that the latest energy crisis “was engineered by the International Energy Agency (IEA) net zero scenario and the EU Commission Green Deal that pushed shareholders to force companies to reduce upstream capital

expenditure.”

The IEA is part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the free market economic policy-making partner organisation of NATO. In June 2021, the IEA in collaboration with the World Bank and the World Economic Forum demanded that comparatively richer countries such as Britain increase annual “clean energy investment” in poorer countries.

The IEA said that “...to put the world on track to reach net-zero emissions by 2050” this funding must rise sevenfold from under \$150 billion in 2020 to \$1 trillion by 2030 – annually. IEA executive director Fatih Birol claimed that “there is no shortage of money worldwide”!

Yuri Afonin, deputy leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, said in October 2021, before the crisis fully emerged, that “huge funds were invested in the European ‘green’ energy, including state funds, its massive propaganda was carried out, but it is already obvious that this energy could not justify all the hopes placed on it.”

He continued, “...now Europe needs more Russian energy resources – not only gas, but also coal. Meanwhile, in previous years, against the backdrop of a reduction in coal supplies to European countries (due to their enthusiasm for ‘green’ energy), Russia largely reoriented to Asian markets.”

Independence

If Britain is to be an energy independent country and not left at the mercy of the global capitalist agenda, we should assert our independence by demanding that Jackdaw, Cambo and the rest of our gas and oil fields, as well as our coal fields such as Whitehaven and Aberpergwm are developed and exploited to the full.

Approval in February for the relatively small Abigail field is a first step, which has attracted a predictable response from opponents of oil and gas extraction. We need to ensure it goes ahead. New exploration is not a short term answer, but failure to exploit available resources will commit Britain to energy dependency in the future, just as surely as will failure to develop new nuclear capacity. ■

‘Households and businesses still need natural gas for fuel...’

The government has released its “fan-led” review of football, the most pressing issue facing the sport: ownership and control by

Football – it’s a game of r



Workers

Arsenal's Emirates Stadium, February 2022, with fans watching the Premier League game against Brentford.

THE OWNERSHIP of football clubs in Britain, especially in the English Premiership, is attracting attention once more. This follows the purchase of Newcastle United, one of the country's best supported football clubs, by what is effectively the government of Saudi Arabia. Football fans will need to be more active about this trend: vigorous campaigns in the past have not resulted in lasting change.

In 1973 Pink Floyd wrote a song called *Money*, which satirised capitalism, and capitalists. It included the line, “think I’ll buy me a football team” – about an American capitalist buying an American football team. Nearly 50 years on and there are eight US-based owners of English premier league teams, compared to four British. How has this happened, and why?

During lockdown the European Super League (ESL) scandal erupted. Last April, twelve of Europe's wealthiest clubs, includ-

ing six from England, attempted to break away from their domestic football federations. They wanted a kind of footballing EU, just as that organisation was reeling from Britain finally implementing our 2016 vote to leave.

The widespread outcry against the ESL was welcome, and rapidly put paid to the plan. This showed the power “ordinary” workers, this time in the guise of football fans, really have – although that lesson has often to be relearned.

Branding

Yet there is no essential difference between the concept of the ESL and the inauguration of the Premier League in England 30 years ago. The top clubs in the Football League decided to break away, re-brand themselves and solicit external financing. This is now so successful that it is a major brand in its own right, and is copied

throughout Europe.

Opening up the English professional game to capital investment soon created more change. The long tradition of clubs controlled by families and local business gave way to first British, and then foreign finance capital.

Huge amounts of cash flowed into the Premiership clubs from coverage by Sky TV (itself overseas owned) and the related advertising. This turned ownership of a top football club from a loss-making hobby into a massively profitable enterprise.

In 2003 the floodgates opened. The Russian/Israeli capitalist Roman Abramovich was able to buy Chelsea FC after becoming fabulously wealthy from the Soviet people's painfully-accumulated assets. Chelsea duly won 18 trophies in as many years; far more than in their previous 98 year history.

Later that year the US Glazer family

all, but it fails to deal with what is clearly the most
foreign billionaires...

money

began their debt-funded takeover of Manchester United, completed two years later. These moves and other sales snuffed out locally owned clubs. One of the last was Arsenal, founded in the toolroom of the massive Woolwich Arsenal munitions factory in 1886. Its ownership was in play for over a decade until 2018 when US billionaire Stan Kroenke took full control.

The recent Saudi purchase of Newcastle United brought the ownership issue back into focus. But we should not overlook that local ownership of Newcastle ended in 2007 with the sale to a British capitalist, Mike Ashley, and that most of the foreign capital in the game is American.

Fans were right to object to the “human rights record” (whatever that is) of the British ruling class ally Saudi Arabia. But are we to support our clubs being owned instead by anti-union US businessmen, or for that matter equally anti-working class British capitalists? What can we demand of owners and the football authorities?

An end to foreign cash!

The first demand of football fans should be no more foreign money in the ownership of the British game. This dominant pattern of ownership in the top division is spreading and should stop.

That alone is not enough. Provision for at least partial fan ownership is enshrined in a number of European countries, notably Germany and Spain. Very few British clubs are owned by their fans, even in part, and none in the top divisions in England or Scotland.

A second demand is that a minimum of half the shares in all clubs should be owned by registered, ticket-buying fans organised in independent bodies. That’s already one of the aims of the Football Supporters Association (FSA).

Football fans had hoped that the Financial Fair Play protocol would help. Brought in over ten years ago by UEFA, the sport’s European governing body, it was designed to curb both leveraged buyouts and owners so wealthy they could run at a large nominal loss. Both types of financing undermined other clubs’ ability to compete.

This seemingly good idea was toothless from the start. And it does not appear

to have discouraged the mischiefs it was aimed at. UEFA are now changing the rules, but informed commentators don’t believe that will make any improvement; fans should be sceptical too.

Our third demand is that the governing body of the sport at federation (multinational) level, should not allow clubs to live beyond their means. They should be self-sufficient. If this is carried out across federations no one club will gain advantage.

Where are the fans in all this? Newcastle’s first game after being bought by the Saudi Public Investment Fund, the sovereign wealth fund of the Saudi state, was at Crystal Palace. Fans “unveiled” a banner listing the characteristics of their new owners – terrorism, beheadings, civil rights abuses, murder, censorship and persecution – in a mock Premier League Owners’ Test.

The fans did not directly make the fundamental point, that Saudi Arabia is so close to Britain’s ruling class because it was virtually created as a country by Britain’s ruling class. But it was enough to incite the police to consider a prosecution of the fans for daring to criticise Britain’s closest ally.

Then there’s the government’s recent “Fan-Led Review” of how the game is run. The review is misnamed. It was initiated by government and conducted by an expert panel led by an MP, Tracey Crouch. But there was some engagement with fans and fans’ organisations, some of which gave a guarded welcome to the outcome.

Ownership

The review’s report briefly touched on ownership issues, but only in the context of the largely discredited ownership tests. It does not deal with foreign or fan-based ownership.

The recommendation to create a new regulator, the unamusingly named “Independent Regulator for English Football” (IREF), is out of the Thatcherite playbook: sell off cheaply (that is, steal) what workers have created and when eventually protests get too loud to ignore, establish a “regulator” to make the appropriation acceptable to the expropriated.

The present owners aren’t going to

‘The first demand of football fans should be no more foreign money in the ownership of the British game...’

take much notice. Despite the review and the ESL debacle, the “Big Six” clubs in England are refusing to sign up to a new Premiership owners’ charter. They are reported to be pressing on with plans to gain automatic entry to the top European club competition, the UEFA Champions League.

The charter they rejected simply says entry to competitions should be on “current sporting merit”. That idea, rather than a US-style franchise system, is at the heart of football across the world and is cherished. That was one of the reasons behind the reaction to the ESL last April.

FSA leader Kevin Miles said this development was evidence that football cannot be relied upon to regulate itself, and “... these clubs have regard for sporting integrity and sporting merit only when it suits their own interests”.

Professional football is a multinational industry, with its own long established trade union for players. But more than that it has been created by, funded by, and is loved by millions of working people, a part of our culture.

Like every other aspect of our lives and our economy, our industry, education, our health services and our culture, it has been kidnapped by capital. It is forced to turn a profit rather than simply be the vehicle for skill, endeavour and enjoyment that its founders meant it to be, and its current supporters want it to be.

In the end, it’s about ownership – theirs or ours. Because as the capitalist portrayed in the song *Money* goes on to say, “Money, it’s a crime, share it fairly but don’t take a slice of my pie.” ■

Food production is a public good. And it's time to end the conservation...



Workers

Hill farm, Upper Wharfedale, Yorkshire.

What is farmland for?

IN OCTOBER 2021 the parliamentary Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee report into the development of agricultural policy was extremely critical of the way that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (Defra) was managing the transition from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The committee described it as a haphazard process with unintended consequences.

In January 2022 the Public Accounts Committee was even more damning; it bluntly said the government was endangering Britain's food security. It also pointed out the lack of coherence in government's spending of the £2.4 billion on agricultural schemes it plans during each year of this parliament.

Productive farmland is under threat. Major companies are ramping up their "environmental" investing, as reported by the *Financial Times* in February. Savills, the estate agent, said, "There isn't a company left in the UK not under pressure to reduce

its environmental impact and its path to net zero. Farmland is part of the answer. It is no longer about food production."

The rush to purchase farmland to offset environmental targets has already pushed the price of farmland in Scotland up by nearly one-third since the start of the pandemic.

Energy policy is also directly affecting farmland too. Solar farms take up lots of space. One of the largest is Mallard Pass beside the East Coast main line on the Leicester/Rutland border (see page 3). It will cover nearly 2,200 acres, roughly the area of Birmingham Airport.

Local people have quickly organised opposition, setting up an action group that questions the justification for taking prime agricultural land and also examines other aspects of the proposal.

No return to the CAP

Understanding about the threats to our food security is growing, but it's not yet

clear what can be done. No one is calling for a return to the EU's CAP. That created many of the problems of soil degradation now seen in Britain and all over Europe, as well as butter mountains, horse meat scandals, and a system of payments that rewarded the biggest landowners.

The EU has moved on since 2016. Proposed changes to the CAP look as if they will lead to a reduction of food production – similar to the British government's plans. Under the banner of a green agenda, that's effectively a return to the infamous "set-aside" regime which paid farmers not to produce food for 20 years from the late 1980s.

Such plans will increase food imports by both Britain and the EU from areas with less control of pesticides and lower animal welfare standards, and will generate more unnecessary transport emissions. Trying to hit "green" targets in this way brings no benefit, only detriment, to climate and the environment.

false division between food production and nature

First, we need a wider awareness of what is wrong with the schemes to replace the CAP. In particular the threat they pose to small-scale farms and to tenant farmers.

In England, the government has adopted the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme [see Box]. Its stated aim is to improve the environment by paying farmers for environmental benefits rather than subsidies based mainly on the amount of land farmed.

The government's mantra is "public money for public goods." Amazingly food production is not included as one of the "public goods" of this scheme! There are few details yet about exactly how ELM will operate and only small scale Defra pilot projects. Yet the whole scheme is meant to be fully up and running by 2024.

Minette Batters, the National Farmers' Union president, said in a *Daily Telegraph* interview in January, "This is a government that writes the press releases and then develops the policy. We don't have the details; we don't know what is expected of us. We don't know what money we are going to get for what we are doing."

Too few people in Britain appreciate how much of our food is produced by tenant farmers. The risk of the new scheme is that small owner occupied and tenant farms on tight margins could go out of business.

Around a third of agricultural land in England was rented according to Defra figures for 2017, the most recent year for which figures are available. About half of all farm tenancies, those granted before September 1995, have lifetime security. Older tenancies granted before July 1984 also carry succession rights for up to two

generations.

Newer tenancies, called Farm Business Tenancies (FBTs), are far less secure; they can vary in length and have no succession rights. In time the newer type of tenancy will become more prevalent. This is important for the way that the ELM scheme is being administered.

George Dunn of the Tenant Farmers Association said in evidence to the PAC that many tenants in FBT agreements will not be able to participate in long-term environmental ELM schemes as 9 in 10 new tenancies are for five years or less.

The devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have yet to finalise their schemes. But the risk of landlords not renewing tenancies in order to gain access to grants is already evident. Larger landowners will buy up small farms, inflating prices, to apply for the schemes.

Tenants

The National Farmers Union in Wales recently highlighted the need to protect tenants. And reported in *The Times* in early February, it talked of a private equity company systematically cold calling farmers in Wales offering to buy all their farming land to plant trees. They are aware of twelve farms in Carmarthenshire alone which have been recently sold to such "investors".

Regardless of climate change policy, there is little apparent "public good" in paying subsidies that invite financiers and large landowners to take land out of food production.

In January the PAC recommended that Defra "...should urgently explain...showing its forecasts both for changes in land use and resulting changes in payments to farm-

'There is little apparent "public good" in paying subsidies to take land out of food production...'

ers, how it expects its farming programmes to affect food production and farm productivity in England."

This is an immediate, pragmatic demand which could unite farmers and food consumers in an important alliance. That would be a start towards a radical overhaul of the proposed farm payments system, placing food production and food security as the primary aims of agricultural policy.

All of the other environmental public goods can be compatible with food production if existing methods of sustainable farming and existing best practice in agroecology practised in Britain are extended.

Farmers are already saying this. The British public understands it too, according to Minette Batters. In her *Daily Telegraph* interview she spoke of the support of "the vast majority of the British people" for the farming industry, "They want to buy more British food. They value self sufficiency and food security. We are an island nation with 60 million people, so why would we not take food security as seriously as defence? They understand that."

Another beneficial change in policy would be to move from "land sparing" (separating productive and conservation farmland) to "land sharing". Farmers point out that the government frequently talks about "land sparing" to meet environmental targets. That overlooks the track record of British farmers in combining food production with nature conservation.

Farmers argue that "land sharing" is a better concept, already being achieved on many farms. A study by Michael Lee, deputy vice-chancellor and professor in sustainable livestock systems at Harper Adams University, supports this. He argues that British farms can be both productive and beneficial to the environment. ■

ELM explained...

There are three elements to the Environmental Management Scheme, which applies to England.

Sustainable Farming Incentive: accounts for the bulk of the money, focused on supporting farmers judged by Defra to be working the land in an environmentally friendly way.

Local Nature Recovery: gives farmers funding for creating, managing, and restoring woodland, wetlands, peatlands and other habitats.

Landscape Recovery: supports clusters of farms to work together on large projects, including peatland restoration and the planting of forests.

Defra identifies six sets of 'public goods' for the scheme: clean air; clean and plentiful water; thriving plants and wildlife; reduction in and protection from environmental hazards; mitigation and adaptation to climate change; enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment. ■

The British state is drawing together previously disparate eradication of opposition to globalist capital by their grave

One strategy to bind us



Adrian Pingstone (public domain)

Government Communications HQ, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: one of the hubs of the government's offensive cyber capability.

WHATEVER HAPPENS in Ukraine there is a puzzling question: What on earth has the British government been up to?

After all, Ukraine and Britain do not share a common border. Ukraine is not part of NATO. And trade with Ukraine can be fairly described as negligible, accounting for 0.1 per cent of British imports and exports according to official figures.

The only answer that makes sense is that the government is trying out its so-called Fusion Doctrine, introduced in 2018 as a "whole-of-government" effort to go beyond the traditional security services and unite all security-related issues under one leadership guided solely by government strategy.

In particular, the doctrine takes account of the importance of the Internet in the propaganda war. All the old tricks of disinformation are being updated to include coor-

inated "attacks" and diversions on social media. The idea here is to shift public opinion – in Britain and "adversary" countries – through mass posts on Twitter and Facebook.

Significantly, the Fusion Doctrine is not a party political project, not the result of some off-the-wall election promise. It came from the very heart of the civil service. Its author is Mark Sedwill, career diplomat and civil servant, former Cabinet Secretary and, in 2018, National Security Advisor. The doctrine represents the considered opinion of the ruling class.

Global

The approach is not unique to Britain. Variants of the policy are being implemented across the world, wherever capitalists and their political allies want to tell other peoples what to do. China, Russia

and the US are all at it. The EU would like to be as well, though its ambition is not matched by any kind of ability.

But the kind of coordination involved, the breaking down of old boundaries, is a tough trick to pull off. Most importantly, how do you know whether it works or not, short of a real war?

In this context, the stoked-up crisis over Ukraine starts to make sense. It has provided an ideal test bed for the new structure, especially in relation to news management and social media. And, of course, it's also a handy diversion for a government mired in scandal and incompetence at home.

When the Royal United Services Institute, an ultra-establishment think tank, carried an assessment of the Fusion Doctrine's first year, it pointed out how complex the challenges were: "...one

security strategies. Its aim is the permanent e-diggers – the working class...

all

could argue that the really hard work lies ahead,” wrote its author, William McKeran. Added complexity comes from the government’s intention to farm out more work to private companies, and also to what it calls “third sector” partnerships (meaning think tanks and institutes).

The doctrine led, among other things, to General Sir Nick Carter, then Chief of Defence Staff, launching the government’s new Integrated Operating Concept in 2021 with the message that “old distinctions between peace and war, between public and private, between foreign and domestic and between state and non-state are increasingly out of date”.

The military is “no longer safe at home”, said Carter, and the “nature of war remains constant: it is visceral and violent....and is always about politics”.

This approach has been faithfully continued by his successor, Admiral Tony Radakin, in a message delivered four days before Christmas: “Our forces need to be out in the world ...we have the opportunity to unlock the potential of UK armed forces to be more effective; to modernise; to be more lethal; and to be more diverse. And to become Global Forces for Global Britain.”

The Integrated Operating Concept is part of a web of new concepts and projects that together move the military into an “active” dimension – in other words a military suitable to be integrated with global capital’s intentions.

As part of this the government moved to bundle all digital and data elements of its activity into one, with the publication of its Data Strategy for Defence in September 2021. The strategic context outlined is one where claimed adversaries are changing, “undermining the international rules-based

order by competing in ways that do not necessarily involve military confrontations...Therefore, the distinction between war and peace has become increasingly blurred.”

And it has added new weight to a number of Internet-based strategies, such as the National Cyber Force. Announced in November 2020, it represents a consolidation of offensive cyber activity in Britain. A specialist unit, it is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Defence and GCHQ.

Also part of this web of disinformation is the 77th Brigade, a combined Regular Army and Army Reserve unit, specialising in “non-lethal” forms of psychological warfare, using social media including Facebook and Twitter.

Intervention

Formed in 2015 by the Cameron government, it is essentially a spying unit that monitors Internet traffic for any information exchange between perceived enemies, analyses it, then intervenes to shift the balance in capitalism’s interest (defined, as always, as government or state interest). It has a catchy name for this on its website: “counter-adversarial information activity”.

As a revealing article in *Wired* magazine in November 2021 showed, this is about changing opinions here and globally. Its author, Carl Miller, visited the brigade and describes a sign on a wall: “Behavioural change is our USP [unique selling point].”

In another aspect of the Fusion Doctrine, the government has conducted a consultation over “modernising” the current counter espionage laws “to reflect modern threats and modern legislative standards”. It wants to create new offences, tools and powers to detect, deter and disrupt what it defines as hostile activity. And it says this will improve Britain’s ability to protect official data.

The idea is to reform the Official Secrets Acts of 1911, 1920, 1939 and 1989, and along the way set up a Foreign Influence Registration Scheme. This, according to Home Secretary Priti Patel, is “to empower the whole national security community to counter the insidious threat we face today”.

Even so, the government has seemed

remarkably relaxed about Russian oligarchs laundering their money in the City – perhaps because it sees it as “inward investment” (some of it investment in the Conservative party).

But critics have said that by removing the “public interest” defence the new proposals, if enacted, would severely impact serious investigative journalists and whistle blowers, who would be pursued through the courts to reveal sources. *The Times* newspaper, in an editorial, called the proposals “the greatest threat to public interest journalism in a generation”.

Disturbed by these developments? Feel like protesting? The government is one step ahead of you with the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill.

That bill seeks to increase police powers and to curb rights to protest still further. Late amendments introduced by the government include provision to arrest or charge citizens for failure to comply, with threats of hefty fines and imprisonment of up to 51 weeks. Police will also have new powers to deploy stop and search to avoid “serious disruption”, powers that can be used “whether or not the constable has any grounds for suspecting that the person... is carrying a prohibited object”.

Keep quiet

Even a demonstration loud enough to cause distress to a single passer-by can be enough to trigger some of these new powers. Keep quiet and stop complaining – that’s the message to workers.

If all these new military/police developments present a picture of a trajectory of dictatorship, that’s no accident.

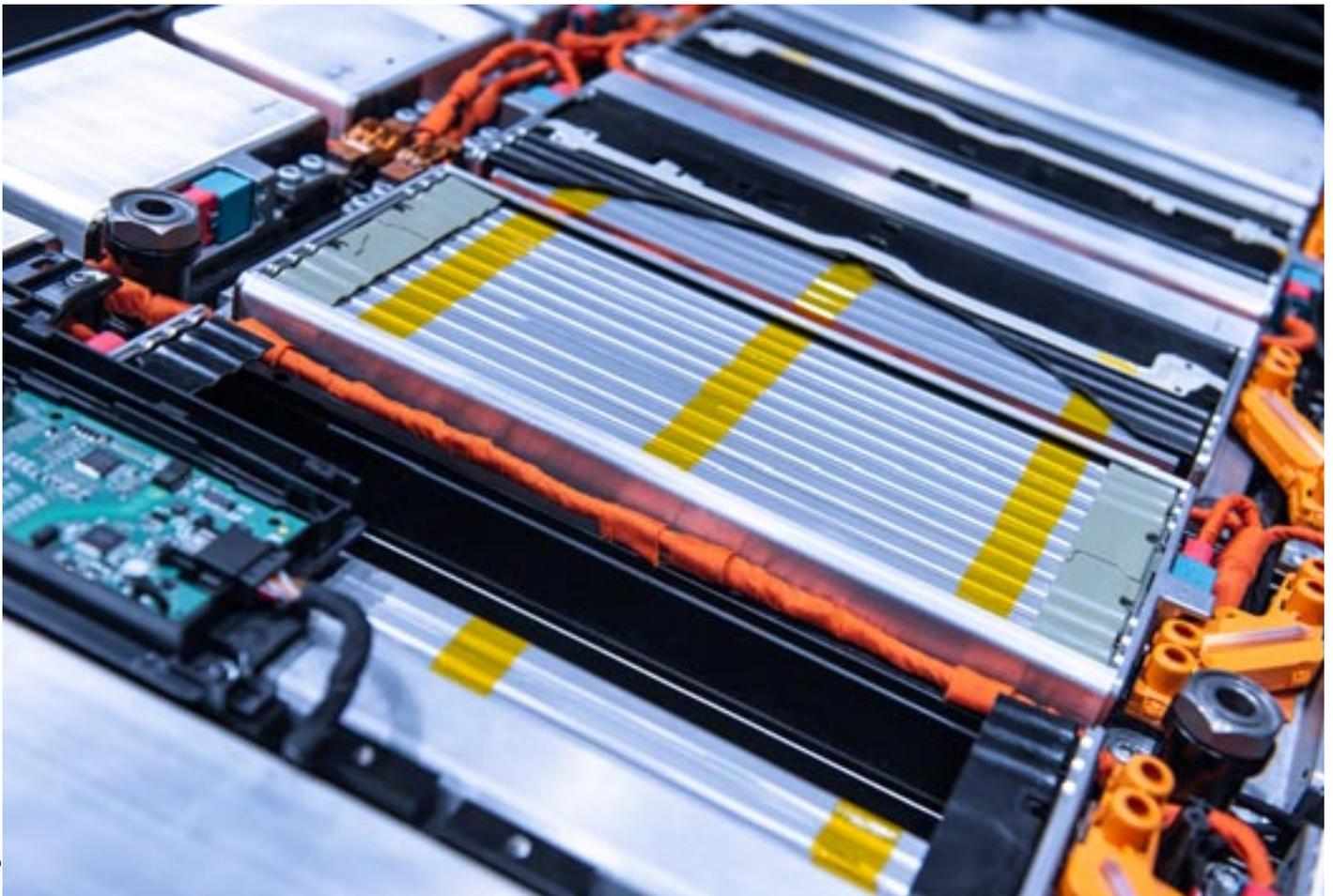
As the CPBML statement, Real Control for Real Independence [see page 20], points out, capitalism worldwide – and particularly in Britain – is facing the worst debt crisis in history. And history shows that when finance unravels in a major way “either workers take control or the call for military war and a British domestic war on workers becomes generalised”.

That reality is taking shape before our eyes. For workers the choice is stark. Either we live in an independent Britain deciding our own future, or we become slaves to international capital. ■

**‘All the old tricks
of disinformation
are being updated
to include social
media....’**

Modern life is inconceivable without metals, and the explosion of technology has led to an increase in technological sovereignty. What's not to like?

Minerals and the future:



Sergeii Chernov/shutterstock.com

Electric vehicle battery pack – and everything in it needs to be extracted from under the ground.

THERE'S A SAYING that's familiar to every miner and every physical scientist: everything we consume is either grown or mined. Yet clearly it is not familiar to everybody, because wherever and whenever there is a proposal to open a new mine, there are calls to stop the development on "environmental" grounds.

And yet there is more reason than ever to mine for raw materials. Recycling existing things can't meet all our needs, particularly for electric vehicles but also for everything from laptops, 3D printers, solar panels, wind turbines and satellites to smartphones.

Smartphones, for example, contain two-thirds of the elements of the periodic table. If these materials are not to be obtained (where possible) from Britain, then where from?

In the 1980s the notion that Britain could be downgraded to a service economy decimated industry. Today it is an ideologically anti-industry minority and a free-market government with no real commitment to domestic production, that stands in the way of mining in this country. Yet modern life demands it.

The rock strata on which Britain stands and the waters surrounding this island still possess rich reserves – not only of coal, but an array of minerals requiring sophisticated and sensitive methods of exploration and extraction. The extractive industries, including oil and gas, directly employ around 60,000 people, and many more in the supply chains, working with hand and brain.

Electricity for clean industry still needs coal, and it can be produced without the

carbon footprint involved in transport from abroad. The same goes for other traditional types of mining, still carried on to a greater or lesser extent in parts of Britain – tin-tungsten, copper, zinc, lead, silver and gold.

Security

A secure domestic supply of such metals – where possible – is vital to an independent Britain as it moves (or should move) towards production of electric vehicles and large-scale electrification.

Aside from being a possible energy source, shale is used in the manufacture of ceramics and the ubiquitous Portland cement. It can also contain graphite, from which graphene can be extracted, potentially replacing plastics and silicon in a huge array of uses.

Exploitation of Britain's mineral riches means jobs, skills and
e?

the new dig for Britain

Graphite can be used in numerous applications. But it is the ultra-thin graphene – essentially, one atomic layer of graphite – first produced from it by two Russian researchers at Manchester University, using good old Scotch Tape, which stunned the public in 2004.

Millions of times thinner than a human hair, flexible, impermeable, transparent, and lighter than glass, graphene possesses the properties of both metal and non-metal. It requires careful handling, wearing lab suits, gloves and masks, but it has the power to transform production across the world, from simple electronics, solar panels, sensors, touchscreens and chargers, to the quantum computers of the future.

Graphene also brings within reach biomedical applications such as DNA sequencing and enhanced imaging for targeted drug delivery and brain penetration. Groundbreaking application to industrial processes includes wastewater filtration, nuclear energy, petroleum engineering and corrosion prevention. Graphene coating may signal a rust-free world.

It is in Manchester, too, that the Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre, working with Highways England, is examining ways to use the unparalleled strength of graphene (200 times as strong as steel) to construct more durable roads.

A British university may have opened the doors to a seemingly brave new world, but it is China, where the state has no hesitation in funding innovation, which is leading most of the research into the tricky technique of

‘Graphite can be used in numerous applications, but it is the ultra-thin graphene which stunned the public in 2004...’

Mike Peel (CC BY-SA 4.0)



The National Graphene Institute, part of the University of Manchester.

separating graphene from graphite by mechanical exfoliation. China has ten separate research zones and over 2,000 companies working on the technology.

And after a long period of public disillusionment following media hype, British technicians at Ammanford in Wales are working on a way to make it usable – affordably – in plastics, by means of a plasma process.

Jobs

Mining means skilled jobs and revival of local economies, and it is carried out from John O’Groats to Land’s End. Silica sand mining is carried out at 32 active sites, 26 in England, five in Scotland and one in Wales. There are some 300 mineral workings at limestone and dolomite sites in Britain, including 86 in the South West and 35 in Wales.

In Devon the Hemerdon project is one of the largest tin-tungsten reserves in the western world and one of very few outside China. The North Yorkshire Moors are set to be home to the world’s largest potash mine for crop fertiliser, while its new organic derivative polyhalite (polysulphate) is mined exclusively along the north-east coast under the North Sea. Much of the rock salt used for de-icing our roads in winter comes from the same source.

Cornwall, with its virtually unlimited geothermal energy, is a hotspot for the mining of metals. 400 years of copper and tin mining in the Redruth area came to a close in 1998. As with coal, this was not for lack of raw materials deep underground, but through capitalist economics – putting company profits today before the needs of the

country tomorrow.

Now, as demand for high-grade tin rises in tandem with decarbonising policies (tin prices have doubled in the past year to over \$30,000 per tonne), there is local support for reopening the extensive South Crofty mine. A spokesman for owner Cornish Metals said the re-start now under way would create 275 direct, highly skilled and well-paying jobs, with each job generating further jobs in the wider economy.

Lithium

But it is lithium that is attracting the biggest interest in Cornwall and the South West, which urgently need reliable year-round jobs. The region’s reliance on tourism has been a weakness. The recent production of lithium for Britain’s new electric age could change all that.

Lithium is the lightest metal (lithium batteries are just a third of the weight of nickel-hydrogen batteries), with a high-density charge. In addition to use in electric vehicles (and they need a lot – 50 to 60 kilos of it in a single car battery), it is starting to be used for large electric grid-size batteries serving wind and solar energy.

The bad news is that world demand for lithium is set to outstrip supply. The good news is that there appears to be plenty of lithium in Britain, making its extraction a matter of national industrial security.

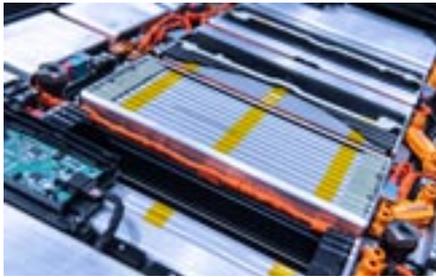
Until very recently the quantities were considered to be too low to be of commercial value, and everything had to be imported. That is set to change. Lithium is in the news, especially following the announcement in January of the start of a second stage of drilling at St Austell.

With the sale of petrol and diesel cars ending in 2030, Britain cannot avoid the global race for battery production. Workers need affordable cars.

In 2009 China decided not to compete with Western internal combustion technology, but to leapfrog straight to electric vehicles. By contrast, it has taken over a decade to convince the British government to invest in battery production here.

With declining sales in favour of the state-subsidised Chinese market, and lack

Continued on page 18



Continued from page 17

of confidence in British independence, the government allowed Honda Swindon, for example, to close in 2019. Subsidies for Jaguar Coventry, where the marque's first new all-electric car was to be produced, were cut back...and production moved to Slovakia. But Britain is now free of the state aid rules which bound it as a member of the EU. MPs no longer have an excuse to ignore the needs of the British people.

At present, three out of four lithium car batteries are made in China. Burgeoning demand for electric vehicles and the promise of domestically produced lithium is beginning to attract companies into building so-called "gigafactories" (the term really just means a huge factory) to scale up lithium-ion battery production in Britain.

Independence

The union Unite and the Faraday Institute estimate that seven gigafactories will be needed by 2040 to avoid dependence on China's state-sponsored refining and recycling supply chains. Work on the first of these, targeting commercial vehicles and sports cars (in competition with the Chinese-owned Lotus), started in September 2021.

Built by Britishvolt on a site in Northumberland that was formerly Britain's largest coal-fired power station, the gigafac-

'At present, three out of four lithium car batteries are made in China...'

The great lithium hunt

WORLDWIDE, LITHIUM occurs in brines (salt lakes, salt pans), produced mainly in South America (the Atacama desert in Chile, for example) or in Western Australia, and shipped to China for processing.

There is almost no commercial lithium production in Europe, and little prospect of large-scale production. But Britain has seen a significant increase in research and commercial exploration in the last two years, leading to new data on the feasibility of production.

Studies have concluded that lithium may exist in large quantities not far beneath the surface. Extraction from geothermal and oilfield brines is also looking feasible, and of increasing importance.

Following laboratory-scale lithium production, the company Cornish Lithium, in partnership with The Natural History Museum (leading the field-sampling together with the Camborne School of Mines, Exeter University) and engineers from Wheal Jane Mines in Cornwall, formed a consortium.

Named Li4UK, the consortium secured public funding to the tune of 76.6 per cent. Using low carbon technology (power-assisted processing by natural geothermal heat), it has been re-evaluating the area's potential for extraction of lithium

and other vital metals such as tin, copper and cobalt.

A separate company, Northern Lithium, aims to extract from hot saline brines within the Weardale Granite of County Durham, while a priority target, also identified by Li4UK, is Glenburchat in Aberdeenshire.

On 18 January 2021 the consortium announced successful production of lithium carbonate both in Cornwall and in Scotland, thus putting Britain at the forefront of developments in the European battery industry and renewable energy storage.

Cornish Lithium expects its work to lead to a larger processing plant, to be operational by 2024. As many as 200 skilled local jobs, with training and apprenticeship schemes, are envisaged at this point. Meanwhile the jobs available are limited to technical specialists.

Producing lithium uses a lot of water, but industry has provided a solution, reducing water usage by recycling battery materials. In January, waste management company Veolia announced its intention to build a pioneering EV battery recycling plant in the West Midlands, processing 20 per cent of retired electric car batteries by 2024. ■

tory is expected to bring 8,000 jobs to a run-down part of the North East, 3,000 of them directly and the rest from the supply chain across Britain.

In Sunderland Japanese carmaker Nissan, partnered by Chinese company Envision, recognised the superior skills of local workers for the building of an electric battery gigafactory, with promise of 6,200 jobs at its plant and in its supply chain, including 75 jobs in R&D.

Bentley, employing 4,000 at its Crewe plant, has announced its first electric vehicle for 2025. Ford is planning a £230 million investment at its Halewood plant, beginning in 2024, for all-electric vehicles to be sold in Europe.

Ironically, due to an EU blunder in the Withdrawal Agreement, electric vehicles exported to the EU have to contain at least 40 per cent of components made in Britain or the EU, rising to 55 per cent by 2027. That makes it attractive for British vehicle manufacturers to source materials here, rather than from China, particularly batteries, which account for 50 per cent of the cost of electric cars.

Schools must flag up careers in mining to young people. Employers must provide training. The material conditions for Britain to be virtually self-sufficient in minerals and metals lie beneath our feet, and in the expert hands of the people who live and work here. ■

HS2, funded by public money, has no target for the use of British steel...

Steel betrayal



Blast furnace, Port Talbot.

TRANSPORT MINISTER Andrew Stephenson has admitted that HS2, Europe's largest construction project and funded by public money, has no target for the use of British steel. And the *Daily Mirror* has revealed that the government bought almost 3,000 tonnes of steel from foreign manufacturers in 2019/20 – despite the same products being available from British producers.

Five large steel contracts last year used foreign steel that could have been supplied by domestic steelmakers, including a new cancer research facility in Manchester and a neonatal intensive care unit in Liverpool. And

1,500 tonnes of steel worth £1.45 million was imported for cell doors, gates, windows and reinforcements at HMP Five Wells, a new prison in Wellingborough.

Alarm

The lack of government action has alarmed the Unite union, which represents thousands of steel workers. It has also led to growing uncertainty about the long-term wellbeing of Britain's steel industry.

Having left the European Union, it is now far easier for the British government to ensure that British products are used in publicly funded infrastructure projects. Yet it is

'Now is a particularly critical time for the British steel industry...'

failing to do so.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "The government must immediately develop clear targets on UK steel usage on publicly funded construction projects. In the case of HS2, UK producers should have a paramount place in producing steel for the project. Surely that is economic common sense?"

The union points out that now is a particularly critical time for the British steel industry, with order books not being full and rising energy costs in danger of making British steel uneconomic to produce.

Foundation

Unite national officer for steel Harish Patel said: "Steel is a key foundation industry and it is absolutely essential that it receives practical support from the government. That should start with ensuring that government funded projects always purchase UK steel whenever possible."

Alun Davies, national officer at steel union Community, commented: "These revelations are shocking and show a total disregard for the steel industry in this country. A commitment to buy British is an investment in Britain."

He went on: "Contracts should not be awarded solely on the basis of cost, but must properly take into account the social and environmental benefits of sourcing locally.

"Buying Britain's steel supports thousands of jobs and livelihoods, benefits our economy, provides value to the taxpayer and is better for the environment."

Now Britain has left the EU, immediate and decisive action is needed to take full advantage of that situation by buying British and protecting steel jobs and the steel industry. ■

The CPBML has published the political statement from its 19th congress last November. It concentrates on the challenges for the working class in a world of

A way forward for workers



Workers

Demonstrating in London for a proper Brexit, 29 March 2019.

THE STARTING point for the CPBML's 2021 congress statement, entitled "Real Control for Real Independence", is the fact of Britain's departure from the European Union. "It is an immense achievement," the statement notes, "a victory won despite the united opposition of the establishment – the City, the CBI, the political parties, the archbishops, not to mention the media and most of the trade union executives." And won by workers.

But now a new fight faces us: real independence, the "complete opposite of the phoney independence offered by the SNP or Plaid Cymru". Real independence "is about asserting control, not handing it back to the EU", as the separatists want.

Globalism

That fight will not be easy. It means going against the globalist plans of imperialism worldwide. "Finance capitalism seeks a world where it can operate without hindrance, an approach summed up in the new phrase of Global Britain." They mean a world where capital created here can migrate at will, and they are happy to grant

global capital "the liberty to shift in and out of Britain as it feels fit."

Not just the free movement of capital, but of labour too. The statement notes how the capitalist class has no intention of controlling migration, citing "the effective abandonment of a cap on immigration, the explicit abandonment of any requirement to show that jobs cannot be filled by skilled labour here, the massive extension of 'pilot' schemes for seasonal workers."

In effect, global capitalists want to carry on as if Britain had never left the EU, shifting goods, services, capital and workers across borders without hindrance. "Forget the patronising talk of the 'left behind' – millions are to be deliberately dumped in the flight to the so-called free market."

The statement identifies three key dangers for the working class. The first is the possibility of the break-up of Britain – which if permitted would result in a constitutional upheaval that would weaken the historic unity of the British working class. "A united Britain is our best defence against predatory global capital."

The second threat is the "onslaught on

living standards driven by a mounting legacy of debt, not created by the Covid-19 pandemic but now even more severe".

The statement continues: "This all makes the current period highly dangerous. History shows that when finance unravels in a major way (not just in a normal periodic slump) either workers take control or the call for military war and a British domestic war on workers becomes generalised."

War

War, then, is the third threat. The statement was written before the current (manufactured) crisis over Ukraine, and does not actually mention the country, but it does define the era we have entered.

"We said that the demise of socialism in the USSR would lead to the untrammelled establishment of capitalist trading blocs, and that trading blocs can become warfighting blocs," the document asserts. "That is now happening. The people must intervene in order to prevent the current provocations from escalating into war."

What is needed is for the same people who forced through our escape from the EU – "the honest, concerned mass of working people – to form a new coalition against war. Out of NATO! The struggle will be harder than leaving the EU, but just as essential."

The central section of the statement concentrates on a future for Britain. Independence, it says, requires that workers assert the right to work, skill, housing, education and health. "Above all, the right to be a truly productive nation, a nation where things are made." Because a working class must have modern industry, based on control over the technologies essential to the economy.

Alongside that, the statement deals with issues of energy security and food security – both shamefully neglected by this government and its predecessors going back many decades. The environment, too, is an area where freedom from the EU opens up the prospect of great gains – "but only if control is taken away from capital".

And the statement also tackles what independence should mean for health: "train enough health professionals here and

9th congress, held
working class...

ers

‘The fight for independence must make a new Britain, not a re-creation of the old...’

stop trying to get them from among EU and non-EU workers”.

Covid-19 is still with us, and there are some vital lessons to draw from it. “When the Covid-19 pandemic began, few of us could have had any idea of the extent to which it would transform thought in Britain (not to speak of the rest of the world). Even now we probably underestimate the lessons workers are drawing from it. Very little in Britain will be the same again.”

Chief among these lessons are that social planning is essential to life and that over-reliance on long supply chains is a threat to health and life. The “predictable and lamentable” actions of the European Union have, for a while at least, silenced some of those who still dreamt of overturning the referendum. Above all, the statement notes, the referendum vote “was an affirmation that decisions affecting Britain must be made in Britain”.

A new Britain

The fight for independence must make a new Britain, not a re-creation of the old. The working class, though, has yet to accept that it must be the agent of change.

Hence the statement’s conclusion: “Our task as a Party is as it was when we were founded: to change the ideology of the working class. Always materialist in approach – how could it be otherwise in a class whose existence is defined by work that changes material reality? – workers have still to grasp that they must be the agents of change.” ■

- The full text of the statement is available online at cpbml.org.uk/real-control.

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ENOUGH! STOP THE TAKEOVER OF BRITAIN

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Michael Faraday never went to a public school, nor to a university. The scientist has ever been more influential...

The genius of Michael Faraday

MICHAEL FARADAY was born in London, the son of a blacksmith. Through his brilliant, enquiring and persistent approach he became one of the greatest and most influential scientists ever.

Faraday spent his working life at the Royal Institution, for many years as director of its laboratory and professor of chemistry. He came to science through books and lectures and he valued scientific education. Early on, he founded the celebrated RI Christmas Lectures, still running today.

Apprenticed as a bookbinder, Faraday had an inquisitive mind. He was largely self educated, taking the opportunity to read the books he handled. His interest in science led him to attend lectures by Humphry Davy, the most famous scientist of the day. Davy was looking for an assistant at the RI; he appointed Faraday, impressed by his notes of the lectures.

Although later Davy became jealous of Faraday, blocking his election to the Royal Society, he was at first generous and open to his assistant. Faraday was involved with and shared in the development of the famous Davy miners' safety lamp, the invention of which has saved so many lives.

Unparalleled

The scale of Faraday's achievements is probably unparalleled. In effect he created the sciences of electrochemistry and electromagnetism, and was a pioneer in other areas such as optics. Many of his discoveries led to practical applications in his lifetime. Other work laid the theoretical foundations for the revolution in physics of James Clerk Maxwell and later Albert Einstein. Both recognised and celebrated Faraday's contribution.

One of the early tasks Davy set Faraday

'Faraday put his scientific ability into practical service in many ways...'

was to investigate the discovery by the Danish scientist Hans Ørsted in 1820 that an electric current could deflect a compass needle. Typically Faraday built and tested apparatus to understand exactly what was going on.

Others were bemused by the phenomenon, but did not make the same leap as Faraday. He passed a current through a wire suspended beside a magnet and saw that it made the wire move. This discovery, sensational at the time, is the principle of the electric motor.

Faraday invented and improved scientific equipment, including a forerunner to the Bunsen burner, and some of his important work was directly applicable, but he was far more than an empirical technician.

Electromagnetics

At the time of his first motor experiments, Faraday was already thinking that the magnet exerted force through a field around it. He carried out further investigation into electromagnetic properties. That gave him the insight for an experiment in 1831 showing how an electric current in one wire could create a current in an adjacent wire – electromagnetic induction.

He followed this up with other experiments – moving a magnet through a wire coil or passing a wire coil over a magnet both generated electricity. It's hard to overestimate the significance of that breakthrough.

The discovery opened the way to generate electricity, previously only available from batteries, and enabled the practical use of electric motors for power. Faraday himself saw the implications, building the first electrical generator soon after.

Faraday contributed many more experimental and theoretical insights into electricity. He showed that static electricity and electrical impulses in animal nerves were part of the same phenomenon as electricity from a battery.

His demonstration that electrical charge is only on the surface of a conductor helped to explain that electricity was a force and not a fluid – and gave rise to the Faraday cage, which blocks electromagnetic fields. He built and tested the first one himself.



Wellcome Trust (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Michael Faraday, born 1791, died 1867: he transferred

Faraday used iron filings to show the force field around a magnet, familiar now to generations of schoolchildren. He correctly theorised that an electromagnetic field surrounded all conductors. Not widely accepted until after his death, this is one of the key steps in understanding and harnessing electromagnetism.

All along Faraday was curious – patiently testing and theorising about what he saw in a wide range of chemical and physical phenomena. For example his work in electrochemistry, the study of the interaction of electrical charge with chemical change, developed quantitative laws and pioneered the development of efficient batteries.

Faraday wanted to share his ideas in an understandable and inspiring way. He gave many of the RI Christmas lectures himself. One of the most famous was in 1848, "The Chemical History of a Candle". In six lectures, with demonstrations (some of which

university. But no

Faraday



ormed science.

he suggested could be performed at home), he explains the light from the candle, combustion, the production of water and CO₂, the composition of air and how respiration in animals is chemically similar.

Practice

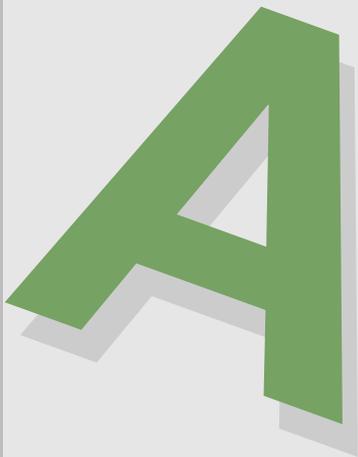
Faraday transformed the knowledge and application of chemistry and physics through experiment, discovery and theory.

And Faraday put his scientific ability into practical service in many ways. One, echoing his early work with Davy on the safety lamp, was an investigation into a serious, fatal mine explosion at Haswell Colliery, County Durham, in 1844. With geologist Charles Lyell, Faraday made a systematic study, concluding that coal dust was a major cause, the first time dust was linked to explosions. He also showed how ventilation could reduce the risk.

But it took nearly 60 years for mine owners to act on those lessons. ■

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Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.



ABOUT US

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

All our members are thinkers and doers. We work together to advance our class's interests. Every member can contribute to developing our understanding of what we need to do and how to do it.

What do we do? Rooted in our workplaces, communities and trade unions, we use every opportunity to encourage our fellow workers and friends to explore how Marxism can be applied to Britain now. Marx's understanding of capitalism is a powerful tool – the Communist Manifesto of 1848 explains the financial crash of 2007/8.

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

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

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

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

So why join the Communist Party? What distinguishes Party members is this: we accept that only Marxist thinking and the organised work that flows from it can transform the working class and Britain. We learn from each other. The real teacher is the fight itself, and in particular the development of ideas and confidence that comes from collective action.

Want to know more? Interested in joining or just in taking part? Get in touch by phone or email. If you just want to know more, come along to our next online or in-person discussion group, or join a study group.

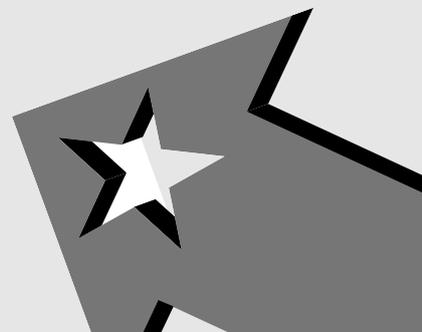
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The cost of living (with capitalism)

'The real reason for soaring prices is that our governments have believed there's no reason to produce anything here. Everything can be imported via the world market. The triumph of globalism.'

THERE'S MORE than something rotten in Britain. And a lot of it is exemplified by the coming rises in energy prices. They'll hit households in April, when the regulator Ofgem will allow energy companies to grab another £693 a year from customers paying by direct debit.

It's even worse for the poorest of households, those paying through meters or prepayment cards, where Ofgem is hiking the cap by £798. But then, the less money you have the more you have to pay for things. That's the way capitalism has always worked.

What exactly is Ofgem regulating? Not the energy companies. It says it is raising the cap because of record increases in world gas prices, then insults our intelligence by adding that the uplift is "because energy companies cannot afford to supply electricity and gas to their customers for less than they have paid for it".

Ofgem made this fatuous statement on the very day that Shell announced profits for 2021 virtually quadrupling from the year before (up from \$4.85 billion to \$19.3 billion). A day later, the Big Issue newspaper published analysis showing that the big six domestic energy suppliers had made over £3 billion in profit between them.

Delve a bit deeper and you will discover where a lot of the money is coming from. (Clue: not from the capitalists.) British Gas announced in July last year that its profits for the first half of 2021 had soared to £172 million, from £78 million in the first half of 2020. How did it pull off that trick?

It came from workers. As *The Guardian* reported, "cold weather prompted customers working from home to turn their heating up". And although businesses tend to pay more for energy overall than households – they pay 20 per cent VAT rather than the 5 per cent that households pay – higher tariffs before VAT mean that the energy companies get more out of homes than offices or factories.

Why are we paying any VAT at all on domestic energy? It is, after all, a tax on a basic necessity. At least the government had the excuse while Britain was in the EU that it couldn't change VAT rates. Not any more.

And just in case you were wondering, rising

prices are not Vladimir Putin's fault, whatever else might be. Last year Russia's exports of gas around the world rose. And in any case, only 5 per cent of Britain's gas comes from Russia.

No one is actually demanding that the energy companies charge less for their product than they pay for it, though that might be a good way of clawing back some of the exorbitant profits they have been making. But Ofgem seems to think its role in life is to make things comfortable for the energy companies' shareholders. It calls this "regulation".

Other prices are rocketing, for a variety of apparent reasons, according to apologists for capitalism. A shortage of computer chips from China has limited car production, hiking the cost of second-hand cars by over 20 per cent. (Now, who buys second-hand cars? Not the capitalists.)

Food prices have been going up, because supermarkets have been restricting discounting, according to one analyst quoted by the BBC. (In other words, prices have been going up because they've been going up.)

Behind all this is the real reason for soaring prices. It is because our governments have believed that there's no reason to produce anything here. Everything can be imported via the world market. The triumph of globalism.

But the global market does not serve Britain. Instead, the market puts Britain at its mercy. It is no accident that the Chinese annual inflation rate was 0.9 per cent in January this year (down from the previous month), but then China is a country that sees a benefit in production.

The rise in prices here will hit some sections particularly hard, especially those on benefits or pensions. But the truth is that the rises constitute an assault on the entire working class, a huge transfer of wealth from workers to capitalists. Designed or not, that assault is being aided by the government.

Workers organised in unions will recoup some of the losses, proving that they are better off when they unite and fight. But until workers raise their sights and fight the system of capitalism, not just its effects, we'll always be playing catch-up. The system is rigged. ■

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