

# WORKERS

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MAY 2014 £1

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JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

MAY DAY SPECIAL COLOUR ISSUE

# WORKERS



## Yet another inquiry

THE INVESTIGATION by Bruce Carr QC into trade unions has begun. Claiming to address Unite's so-called "leverage tactics" during the 2013 Grangemouth fiasco – when some Unite staff imported US-style tactics with personal and confrontational actions such as camping on the company director's lawn – Carr is expected to recommend making some industrial action or tactics illegal. Surprise, surprise.

There is a whole industry of reviews and investigations into the trade unions dating back to Tudor times or the Combination Acts of 1795 or the Tolpuddle Martyrs in 1834 or the alleged Sheffield Outrages of 1866-67. Pick any decade within the past 500 years, and there is bound to have been some legal review of trade unions.

This is at least the fourth review commissioned by the current government into trade unions since

2010. Its remit is to look at "extreme tactics", "leverage tactics", "inappropriate or intimidatory" actions in trade disputes. Recent reviews have resulted in changes to employment law, employment rights at work, trade union facilities etc to the detriment of workers.

The goal behind the Carr investigation is not to stop the silliness of a handful of Unite staff but to outlaw any strike action held to be against the public interest. Boris Johnson's clamour to ban strikes on London's tube system springs to mind.

The Carr report is due in May, with expected legislation to be part of the Tories' election manifesto for 2015. Expect also Boris Johnson to be part of the team riding that old war horse of union bashing whenever an election is coming. Capitalism – whether represented by Tory or Labour – never stops waging class war. ■

## Lost in Wales, dreaming of the EU

THE CAPACITY of the trade union movement for self-delusion, especially when its representatives meet in TUC bodies, is staggering. The Wales TUC is marking May Day with a meeting in the Welsh Assembly "highlighting the contribution of the European Union to workers' rights and the broader Welsh economy".

Yes, the same European Union that has blighted an entire continent with unemployment. Whose free movement of labour has pushed wages down in this country, and seen jobs in Welsh factories advertised exclusively in Poland. The meeting's backers even think the EU has brought us a shorter working week. What world are they living in? ■



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Workers



**National Union of Mineworkers delegation including the NUM President Nicky Wilson (centre) giving support to the 'Work Together' stall at the STUC in Dundee in April.**

## Unity at Scottish TUC

THE SCOTTISH TUC in Dundee in April saw the National Union of Mineworkers, ASLEF, Community, USDAW and GMB, with help from CWU and Musicians' Union delegates, Work Together and United with Labour, organising a standing-room-only fringe event. Powerful calls for working class unity came from ASLEF's Kevin Lindsay, Agnes Tolmie (past President of the STUC) and Neil Findlay (MSP).

The conference itself was addressed by TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady, who stressed the value of trade unions throughout Britain working together. But a highlight was the NUM speaker who reminded us of the unity of the Miners' Strike 30 years ago and the urgent need now to fight for self sufficiency in energy – pointing out that 43 per cent of our energy production is dependent on imported coal. Most of the imported coal is “dirty” – in contrast to our own high-quality anthracite. These massive reserves under our feet should be subjected to clean coal technology and mined.

A speaker supporting the Communication Workers Union's condemnation of the privatisation of Royal Mail made clear that the European Union and its directive lay behind such sell offs – with the Singapore government and hedge funds now the biggest shareholders in Royal Mail. ■

**If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or email [rebuilding@workers.org.uk](mailto:rebuilding@workers.org.uk)**

## GREECE

### Shackling the unions

UNDER THE pretext of “austerity” the International Monetary Fund and the European Union are trying to further shackle and undermine Greece's trade unions.

The Greek government is being pressurised to make strikes illegal unless they are supported by a majority of those called on to take action and to increase strike notice to employers.

The International Monetary Fund and the European Union also want a change in the law to allow workers in industrial disputes to be locked out, something which was banned by the socialist government in 1982, and to cut time off for representatives of civil service unions. ■

## ECONOMY

### Worse than expected

BRITAIN'S CURRENT account deficit was larger than expected in the final quarter of last year, official figures show. The deficit in the three months to December was £22.4 billion, only marginally lower than the all-time high of £22.8 billion for the previous quarter.

Economists had expected the deficit to narrow to about £14 billion in the final three months of the year. Wrong again.

The current account deficit for the year was £71.1 billion, 4.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, the highest since 1989, the Office for National Statistics said.

Osborne talks about recovery, yet there has been no productivity growth since 2007, exports are down and Britain is running record trade deficits. ■

## EUROBRIEF

### TTIP under scrutiny

THE EU-US free trade agreement, known as TTIP, is coming under increasing pressure as more and more people start to realise what it entails. Top of the list of concerns is the provision for Investor State Dispute Settlement, or ISDS.

An article in *ComputerworldUK* by journalist Glynn Moody in April sets the tone. "The fact that corporations are regularly placed on the same level as entire nations, and can sue them for alleged loss of future profits, probably came as something of a shock to most people, as it did to me when I first encountered the idea," he said. "It sounded like the deranged fantasy of some corporate lobbyist, but surely not something that any country would actually accept."

Moody has been doing some digging, in particular into a report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The report shows that most ISDS cases have been taken against companies in EU nations. "That's an important shift, since it shows that ISDS is no longer simply a way for Western countries to bully developing ones, but that the weapon has now been turned against many EU countries, mostly by other EU countries," he writes. "This suggests that companies are becoming aware of and more comfortable with ISDS as a way of extracting money from EU governments."

Most cases globally are actually taken by US companies. That is why an appearance by EU Trade Commissioner Karel de Gucht in an obscure EU committee is particularly interesting. He went before the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament in April to explain what he's getting up to – he's the lead negotiator on TTIP.

Asked why he was negotiating an agreement with ISDS – which makes companies rich at the expense of taxpayers – he started backtracking. "[ISDS] is not a point of my religion," he said. "If the United States agreed to simply drop it and have all the existing agreements so be it, but they don't. I already submitted it to them and they don't."

What kind of a negotiation is it if one side doesn't appear to have any sticking point? Why not tell the US to get lost? And, of course, for us in Britain, why let the EU negotiate for us? ■

Pete Jenkins/www.petejenkins.co.uk



Eastbourne, April 2014. Journalists voting at the NUJ's Delegate Meeting.

## All change for journalists

JOURNALISTS assembling in Eastbourne before Easter for their biennial delegate meeting started the afternoon before with a conference on the future of journalism. It was an apt beginning, because their industry is in the middle of intense change, with no end in sight.

The National Union of Journalists is a small union, with not much more than 30,000 members paying full subscriptions. But having seen what has happened to the print unions, which were swallowed by Unite and are now a shadow of their former selves, NUJ members are increasingly united in their desire to stay as an independent journalists' union.

Of course size matters, and so do economies of scale in running a union. In addition, large-scale redundancies in local newspapers together with contractions at the BBC and national newspapers are eroding the union's traditional membership base.

Staff numbers at the Nottingham Post, for example, have been reduced to 48 from a high of 249. Cuts like that mean, as one member from the PR sector explained, that many press releases are appearing in newspapers with no subediting or checking, and not one word altered.

Another unwelcome development is the intensification of work for those journalists still in full-time employment. That, perhaps, was reflected in the fact that half the branches in the union were not represented at the meeting. And many of the delegates were retired, freelancers or working outside the traditional chapels (office branches) where the core strength of the union lies.

How else to explain that there had to be a card vote on a proposal from the union's 60+ body to change the rules to give retired members the right to attend and vote at meetings of their former chapel(s)? Chapel representatives at the meeting were aghast. The motion was eventually defeated. ■

## COAL

### The massacre continues

TWO OF the three deep mines left in Britain face imminent closure. Kellingley near Selby in North Yorkshire and Thoresby in Nottinghamshire, both owned by UK Coal, face a phased rundown to final closure in 2015.

At immediate risk are 1,300 miners' jobs, with 2,000 going by 2015. By then Britain's deep mine workforce will be less than 700, an industry obliterated since 1984 when it employed over 250,000 (see Feature, page 10). The third remaining deep mine, Hatfield in South Yorkshire, is owned by a Russian coal company.

The government is loaning the company £10 million for the "managed

closure" of the mines, perhaps intended as a 1984-85 Miners Strike thirtieth anniversary present.

The Chief Executive of UK Coal welcomed the government's "support". He said, "This proposal offers the best opportunities for our workforce, our customers and our suppliers. Without the support to close the business on a phased basis to 2015, we would be announcing an immediate insolvency and 2,000 job losses."

What a choice the employer and government offer the miners: murder or suicide. Meanwhile, coal is needed for electricity generation. Government statistics show coal imports rising by 38 per cent in 2012, the last year for which figures are available, coal production falling to an all-time low in that same year. ■



## TRANSPORT

### Action in London

STAFF WORKING for Transport for London are to take industrial action over a pay freeze and cuts in pension provision. The main union at TfL, TSSA, reported before Easter a ballot return showing that nearly 80 per cent of its members were ready to take industrial action.

The RMT and Unite, which also have members at TfL, are ready for action alongside TSSA, though no date has been set. Among the grievances are the non-payment of an increase of 0.5 per cent agreed in 2012.

Meanwhile, as *Workers* went to press

RMT members on London Underground were due to walk out on a 48-hour strike from 9pm on Monday 28 April, followed by a 72-hour stoppage from 9pm on Monday 5 May.

The action is over job cuts, ticket office closures and safety. The RMT says talks have been “wrecked by a combination of management intransigence and the introduction of additional measures that actually worsened the original toxic package”.

Unlike the stoppages in February, the TSSA will not be involved in the current round of tube action. It says progress has been slow “to say the least” but believes strongly that much more is to be gained by continuing negotiations. ■

## Unison fight for public health

UNISON IS fighting cuts in public health provision which could mean exposing people in Britain to a sharp increase in diseases such as TB. The cuts follow from the implementation of European Union directives aimed at easing the free movement of labour.

Following these directives in 2002, the then government agreed to change the entry regulations into Britain from countries with major incidents of pulmonary TB (and other potential pandemic threats – H1N1, Ebola virus, SARS etc). This meant abandoning screening when people arrive in favour of “self-funding pre-entry certificates” from countries deemed at risk.

But the new rules have only just been implemented, and some 50 staff at Heathrow and Manchester are now at risk of redundancy from the cuts in pre-entry certification. They include radiographers, doctors, nurses and administration staff, all highly skilled and experienced. Unison, representing 95 per cent of those affected, is campaigning to reverse these potentially disastrous cuts in public health provision.

The EU’s strategy was to shift the onus of care from the entry countries to the countries of origin – irrespective of whether those countries of origin had the ability or medical capacity to provide such checks accurately or to a medical standard, as required in Britain. Now the government plans to withdraw all on-entry TB screening from Heathrow and Manchester Airport.

This decision has nothing to do with public health, as shown by the Home Office identifying that it has the “potential for savings”. In 2009–2010, 48,089 X-rays were performed on entry. Statistically TB cases in Britain are seeing a massive increase with rates among citizens not born in Britain 20 times as high as British-born citizens. There is substantial evidence that passengers are arriving from countries which require pre-entry certificates with falsified certificates, either supplied from non-medical practitioners or simply works of fiction.

There is also evidence of TB carriers arriving from EU countries that do not require the pre-entry certificates, for example Latvia and other East European states. Those who clamour that such checks are “racist” are putting the health of the population, irrespective of origin, at risk and intentionally or not encourage decisions made on the grounds of financial expediency, and even fraud. ■

## SICK PAY

### Ready for the shake-out

FROM 6 April employers will no longer be able to reclaim statutory sick pay from the government, a change estimated to save it about £50 million a year. Ministers hope it will encourage employers to “shake out” long-term sick employees claiming benefit.

Coupled with employers moving towards non-payment of sick pay for between the first three and seven days of short term sickness absence, it means that sickness and ill-health will now be further weapons to intimidate workers.

The term “presenteeism” has been coined to describe workers who attend work when it is detrimental to their health but who are scared of losing their jobs if they go sick and don’t attend. ■

## WHAT'S ON

### Coming soon

#### MAY

**Thursday 1 May. Leeds, London and Edinburgh, various times (see p6 for details). CBPML May Day meetings.**

Celebrate 100 years of historic working class struggle and plan for the future with the CPBML.

**Thursday 1 May. London. May Day March and Rally. Assemble Clerkenwell Green 12 noon.**

For many years London’s labour movement has allowed itself to be a minority in this annual event. With the RMT calling for a major mobilisation of its members to mark May Day as a sign of respect for its late General Secretary, Bob Crow, things may change. The march moves off at 1pm for Trafalgar Square and speeches at 2.20pm.

#### JUNE

**Wednesday 4 June, 7.30pm. Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. “Britain one nation: say no to division”**

CPBML public meeting. With the Scottish referendum only months away, discuss why the British working class must stay united. All welcome.

## PORTS

### Global competitors

THE BRAND-NEW London Gateway, on the north bank of the Thames near Thurrock in Essex, benefited from the winter storms because in its more sheltered location it took business away from its more exposed rival, Felixstowe. But Dubai-based DP World, which runs London Gateway, does not yet recognise any unions – though Unite has won the right to approach the workforce.

When fully operational London Gateway will be able to handle an annual total of 3.5 million containers, more than Felixstowe’s current 3.25 million.

Why another port? Global competition is the answer. Felixstowe and Thamesport are owned by Hutchison Port Holdings, the world’s second-largest container operator and part of a Hong Kong-based group.

DP World, the world’s fourth-largest container operator, owns London Gateway and half of Southampton. Britain’s Associated British ports (APB) owns the other half of Southampton and 20 other ports including Grimsby and Immingham. ■

# CPBML/Workers

## MAY DAY MEETINGS



**Thursday 1 May, 6.30 pm**

**Speakers, music and discussion**

**Word Power Bookshop,  
43 West Nicolson St, Edinburgh EH8 9DB**

**Thursday 1 May, 7.30 pm**

**Speakers and refreshments**

**Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL  
(nearest tube: Holborn)**

**Thursday 1 May, 7.30 pm**

**Speakers and discussion**

**The Cosmopolitan Hotel (formerly Golden Lion),  
Lower Briggate, Leeds LS1 4AE**

# 1914 – 2014: 100 YEARS OF BRITISH WORKERS AGAINST CAPITALISM

The government wants to spawn four years commemoration of the futility, horrors and bloodshed of the First World War. This is a calculated threat to intimidate British workers and the workers of the world. We cannot ignore or be intimidated by this threat of war.

Throughout the last 100 years British workers have never been cowed. Unemployment, poverty, lock-outs, hunger, homelessness, wars, persecution and imprisonment, closures and decline, casualisation, discrimination, blacklists, governments of every hue: workers have seen them all come and go. We still remain undefeated despite everything

capitalism has thrown at us.

Workers are thinking beings; workers are magnificent at organisation; workers are the saviours and future of Britain; workers are the only creators of wealth in Britain. We celebrate the last 100 years as the failure of capitalism. We celebrate the last 100 years for the tenacity of workers to resist, struggle and rise ever again.

We invite you to celebrate 100 years of historic working class struggle and plan for the future with the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist).

**Celebrate May Day with the Communist Party. All welcome**

**Teachers will have to develop their school-based organisations into fortresses if they are to win...**

# School-based struggle

THESE ARE unusual, strange times for school teaching unions, particularly for the leading one, the National Union of Teachers (NUT). As the certainty of the old terrain of industry-wide, national determining of pay and conditions disappears, teacher trade unionists are unsure how to handle the new situation and often resort to posturing, kidding themselves that the old ways are still operating.

Over a number of years there have been a number of national or regional one-day strikes in response to government efforts to worsen teachers' pay, pensions and conditions.

## Young teachers in the lead

Most of these strikes have been conducted by the NUT, occasionally with the NASUWT (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers) and ATL (Association of Teachers and Lecturers) on board. Most strikes have been well supported, always involving huge numbers of young teachers disaffected at government plans, which is a healthy sign for the future. And at its Easter National Conference this year, the NUT called for another strike in June.

The government wants to dismantle the national pay system for teachers, ending prescribed pay scale points, extending performance-related pay (PRP) to all pay scales and implementing school-based pay determination. Now Ofsted is talking of including how schools are implementing PRP as part of its inspections.

The image projected is that government is withdrawing. But behind the smoke-screen the government is out to demolish national arrangements and is bludgeoning school governing bodies into accepting their plans and becoming no more than their rubber stamps.

Teacher trade unionism has to box clever, adapt and advance to much higher levels of organisation than just strike deliverers. Perhaps there is a case for further one-day strikes to marshal opinion and keep solidarity, but only in the context of a wider conflict where there is a fight school-by-school to stop PRP, maintain pay rates and defend pension provision.

Where government declares matters



Workers

London, 26 March: another huge turnout by predominantly young teachers.

**'Teacher trade unionism has to box clever, adapt and advance to much higher levels of organisation than just strike deliverers.'**

are being devolved to schools, we must develop our school-based organisation into fortresses and use our local strength to get governing bodies to reject PRP and worsened conditions.

We will need to create negotiating

structures inside every school and win the argument on pay, PRP and conditions, setting agreeable policies at school level. It will mean winning over governors and parents, involving members in a much more active way at each place of work. To achieve strong school-based actions, teacher unions must harness the enthusiasm of their young members.

## We decide

We should decide what we will do and not do as part of our teaching, enact it as an action programme and then make school governing bodies authorise it with policies on conditions of service. It will be an extremely popular strategy and draw more teachers into being a part of the union.

If Ofsted does interfere in pay and conditions, it will be the nail in the coffin for that institution. Teacher unions will then necessarily have to consider non-cooperation with its inspections if the agency is seen as partial and simply an arm of government. ■



Only the working class has the ability, the will and the org before, and it must do it again...

# May Day – a time to cele



MAY DAY is a time of peace, a day for the workers of the world to celebrate their common interests. And this year it takes place at a time when peace has rarely seemed so threatened.

The flashpoint now is Ukraine. Nearly sixty years after the defeat of fascism in Europe, imperialism has once more brought the threat of war to the very borders of Russia.

But not everything is going imperial-ism's way. The counter-revolution in Ukraine is fast becoming a disaster for its main backers, the US and the EU. Also Syria has not yet fallen to the forces of feudalism, and indeed the government there appears to have been reclaiming lost ground.

Amid the threats of war, British work-ers this year can indeed celebrate one sig-nal victory – that evening last August when the pressure from the people led to MPs defeating the government's motion to take military action in Syria.

That vote not only stopped British imperialism in its tracks, it led directly to the US abandoning its own interventionist plans. At the time commentators said that MPs had signed away British influence in the world. On the contrary: for the first time in history Britain stopped the US launching an imperialist war. That's real influence.

President Assad is still the bogeyman. US and British politicians have been lining

up to denounce the planned elections in Syria, but even they have been giving up on the idea of winning. All they can do is prolong the ghastly war there, despite the dreadful human cost.

Things have changed since March 2011, when – driven by weakness or lack of clarity, or a bit of both – Russia and China allowed the US and Britain to drive a resolution through the UN Security Council authorising the use of force to “protect civilians” in Libya.

That resolution led to direct military involvement and the overthrow of the gov-ernment. The current disaster in Libya, with the country being torn apart by armed groups, should be a lesson for any-one who thinks US, British or French bombers can be instruments of progress.

Libya is no longer under what most of us would call government. The mandate of the current Congress (parliament) ran out in February, but it is still sitting – with-out most of its members. Elections are due some time this summer, but no date has been set. British Airways, Alitalia, Lufthansa and others suspended flights to the country last month after rockets hit the runway at Tripoli.

Question: What is formerly vocal for-ign secretary William Hague saying about all this? Answer: Nothing. That's the same William Hague who said in July 2012 that Libya was “a tremendous success story”.

In the past year, though, Russia and China have stood firm against UN-atho-rised intervention to topple the Syrian government. And in the current Ukraine crisis China, India, Brazil and South Africa have refused to be drawn into a US-orchestrated condemnation of Russia.

Ever since the coup that ousted Victor Yanukovych in February, the self-pro-

claimed government in Kiev has been unable to assert its authority in large swathes of the country.

Crimea has left to join Russia, and Russian president Vladimir Putin has emerged stronger than ever. The special forces sent from Kiev to eastern Ukraine have killed some of their own citizens, but far from reasserting control have so far achieved little more than the delivery of extra firepower to locals resisting Kiev, as many troops either defect or hand over their weaponry.

The European Union, having stoked the Kiev coup by encouraging the idea that Ukraine should partner with the Brussels-based bloc, is now exposed as powerless to do anything constructive. Its High Representative on Foreign Policy, Catherine Ashton, is a woman who has risen without trace, a nobody put in charge of a foreign policy that even most EU members ignore.

## Gosh!

Ashton revealed her calibre in a leaked telephone call in March with the Estonian foreign minister, Urmas Paet. When Paet told her that the snipers in Maidan Square were probably part of the opposition, her response was, “Gosh!” No wonder no one takes any notice of her.

NATO is increasingly being seen for what it has always been: expansionary and aggressive. For decades we were told that NATO has kept the peace in Europe in the face of the “aggressive” Soviet Union. Then in 1994, not even three years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO fighters were flying sorties over Bosnia, leading to a bombing campaign the next year.

And in 1999, without even the fig leaf of UN authorisation, NATO launched a wave of bombing against Yugoslavia, dropping 14,000 bombs. So much for peacekeeping.

Now NATO's Supreme Commander, US Air Force General Philip Breedlove, is stirring the pot with talk of 40,000 Russian troops on the border “ready to go” into Ukraine. On 9 April he even released a set of satellite photos taken by commercial imaging company Digital Globe purporting

**‘The EU, having stoked the Kiev coup, is now exposed as powerless.’**



organisational ability to stop imperialism. It has done it

# Celebrate the working class



**Barricade outside administrative offices in April, Donetsk, eastern Ukraine.**

to show evidence of this – photos promptly labelled by the Russian military as having been taken in August last year.

Note: Ukraine is not a member of NATO. But that doesn't put the alliance off its stride. It is looking for war, partly as a means of regaining a role for itself. Given peace, just about everyone will conclude that NATO is an expensive waste of time.

But not everyone. "The electorate need to understand there is no point in having hospitals and schools and welfare unless the country is safe," said Britain's third most senior army officer in a blatantly political intervention at the end of March. So let's strip our hospitals and schools to keep NATO on life support.

## Imperialism's weakness

The combined manoeuvrings of the United States and the European Union

have failed so far to foment civil war – though not for want of trying. Doublespeak reigns. US Secretary of State John Kerry calls the government of Ukraine legitimate, meaning the mixture of reactionaries and fascists who staged the coup.

US representatives talk darkly – but with no proof at all – about the Russian-speakers seizing buildings in eastern Ukraine as being too organised for anyone but the Russian government to have organised them. US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland told a congressional panel that the building seizures in eastern Ukraine were "very carefully orchestrated, well planned, well targeted moves". She warned of consequences if the "aggressive actions" went unchecked.

The Ukrainian parliament voted in March to set up a 60,000-strong National

Guard recruited from military academies and activists in the Kiev coup – though given its track record of ineffectiveness so far, whether it actually manages to set up something on this scale has to be in doubt.

But the ambitions of the rulers in Kiev are clear. In charge of the National Guard will be the new security chief, Andriy Parubiy, a founder of the neo-Nazi Social-National Party of Ukraine. His deputy, Dmytro Yarosh, is the leader of the paramilitary Right Sector. On such scrapings from the barrel of reaction rest the hopes of the US.

## Still armed, still dangerous

In South America, where election after election has yielded governments opposed to US hegemony, the US is desperately trying to foment counter-revolution in Venezuela. In April President Maduro told the *Guardian* newspaper that the US was trying to replicate the Ukrainian counter-revolution in Venezuela by blocking roads to the capital in the hope of removing the elected government. Here, as everywhere, working class unity will be the key to success in the fight against reaction.

The relative weakness of imperialism should give heart to all workers throughout the world. But its weakness does not mean it is any less vicious, nor any less dangerous. The US is still the world's premier holder of weapons of mass destruction.

This summer will see attempts to use the centenary of the outbreak of World War One to glorify the armed forces, and generals in particular. We will be told it was a great sacrifice, but one that had to be made, and one that was made willingly. The old, old lies, remade for the Internet age with mobile apps.

We say that only the working class can be a force for peace, in Britain and throughout the world. Where it fails to live up to its potential, as in 1914, disaster ensues. But when it exerts its will, as the Russian working class did in 1917 in the midst of the slaughter, it can enforce peace. That's the real message for May Day. ■

**Britain's coal industry is to be reduced to one deep pit and drags its feet and the opposition remains silent, it falls to**

# Britain needs coal. Why

UK COAL announced in April that it is to close its last remaining two deep mines, at Kellingley in Yorkshire and Thoresby in Nottinghamshire, with the loss of 2,000 jobs. That decision highlights the whole issue of energy security for tomorrow's Britain.

The economic assets of state-owned British Coal remaining after the government's closure programme were privatised in 1994. The English mining operations were merged with RJB Mining to form UK Coal plc. At that time only 15 pits remained in production. Today UK Coal's operations are reduced to Kellingley and Thoresby deep pits plus six opencast mines: Potland Burn and Butterwell in Northumberland, Park Wall North in County Durham, Lodge House in Derbyshire, Huntingdon Lane in Shropshire and Minorca, near Measham in Leicestershire.

UK Coal has been on the brink of insolvency for some time; it has desperately but unsuccessfully tried to find a buyer for the company. It required investment to the tune of £60 million but ended up begging the government for a subsidy to avoid immediate collapse. It got a loan of £10 million from the government and a further loan of £5 million each from two private companies: Hargreaves Services, which transport UK Coal's product, and Harworth Estates, 25 per cent owned by UK Coal.

**'Neither Russian gas nor gas from the Middle East is a guarantee of energy security.'**

The purpose of those loans is not to invest, but to enable a "managed closure programme" leading to the total closure of both pits by the autumn of next year. This potentially sounds the death knell for the British coal industry, not just deep mines but opencast as well. UK Coal does not have the resources to rehabilitate the

opencast sites after they are exhausted.

Without a British coal industry, those power stations remaining open will rely on imported coal, mainly from Russia, Colombia and the USA. US coal mining companies are looking for new markets and are targeting Britain because of the US success in developing fracking as a source of energy. Russia already supplies over 40 per cent of Britain's steam coal needs.

There is a bigger problem than dependency on imported coal. About 40 per cent of Britain's electricity is generated by coal-fired power stations. Because of EU regulations a third of them will be forced to close by 2016 with the remainder closing by 2018. The shortfall in energy generation that would result from the elimination of coal-fired generation capacity is a potential crisis for Britain.

## Carbon capture

The industry's main trade unions and the TUC have been advocating carbon capture and storage (CCS) as a solution. Britain is further down the road of developing this technology than any other nation, with the possible exception of China. The trade unions recognised this emerging crisis early on. Unite, which represents workers in coal fired power stations and open cast mines, and the National Union of Mineworkers, representing miners in the deep pits, have worked jointly to support the development of CCS. They have set up the Coal Combine, representing union stewards across the industry, to campaign for it.

What exactly is CCS? It is a technology-driven process that enables emissions from industrial plants such as power stations to be captured and stored permanently underground. That's instead of being released into the atmosphere as happens now at conventional fossil fuel-fired power stations.

However, CCS is still in the process of development. The EU has set aside up to two billion euros to develop this technology. One of the trials, known as the White Rose Project is being planned for the Drax power station site near Selby in Yorkshire. The companies involved, Alstom, Drax and BOC, along with Unite are in negotiations



Thoresby photos: Pete Jenkins/www.petejenkins.co.uk

**Above and overleaf: Thoresby Colliery, Nottinghamshire**

with the government seeking its support for the scheme. To access EU funding, the national government must support the project and show a commitment to its further development.

Following lobbying from the unions through the Coal Combine, the government is at last waking up to the threat to energy security. In mid-April news came that the government has told the EU it will support the Drax project. This means that the EU is expected to agree funding of 300 million euros in July.

The new plant will be a state-of-the-art, coal-fired power plant equipped with full carbon capture and storage technology. This project is intended to prove CCS technology on a commercial scale and demonstrate it as a form of low-carbon



and a handful of opencast mines. While the government organised labour to put energy security on the agenda...

# Why can't it be British?\*



West Yorkshire, one of the last three deep coal mines in Britain – and now slated for closure.

power generation. It will capture around 2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year. That will be pumped along a pipeline out into the North Sea and stored deep under the seabed.

Another aspect of this project is that the transportation for the emissions can be shared with manufacturing industries using the same technology. If the trials are successful it is expected that other power plants would be built on the sites of existing plants in the region, Britain's most energy-intensive area. New plants would be able to share a grid of pipelines taking the CO2 to be stored under the seabed.

## Clean coal

CCS, also known as Clean Coal, is the only technology that could maintain coal-fired

power generation in Britain beyond 2018. But that would require supplies of coal. Instead of closing pits, some of the other British pits that have been mothballed would have to reopen. The alternative would be dependence on imported coal, as much a sacrifice of Britain's energy security as inadequate generating capacity. Britain would have no control over the price of coal and we would be at the mercy of foreign coal producers.

In 2012, British coal production fell to

\* The headline repeats the slogan that's part of the NUM's campaign to keep Kellingley Colliery – the 'Big K' of the great strike of 1984/85 – open.

an all-time low of 17 million tonnes. Yet due to the high price of gas the amount of coal used for electricity generation increased to its highest level since 2006. An extra 12 million tonnes of coal were imported to fill the gap.

Russia has long been Britain's main source of imported steam coal used to generate electricity. By 2012 44 per cent of all steam coal burnt in British power plants came from Russia. In more recent years, steam coal has also been imported from Colombia and the USA. Coking coal is imported too, 47 per cent from Australia and 38 per cent from the USA.

Gas is no answer in the long term. Britain's North Sea reserves are dwindling; Norwegian gas production has fallen as well. As a consequence gas imports are increasing. At present 15 per cent of the supply is liquefied natural gas imported from Qatar. Around 45 per cent of our natural gas was imported in 2009; this is expected to rise to 70 per cent by 2019. This year Russian natural gas will start to arrive in Britain.

Neither Russian gas nor gas from the Middle East is a guarantee of energy security. The leaders of the coup in Ukraine are telling European countries receiving Russian gas through their territory that the supply may not continue. They threaten to stop imports of Russian gas to western Europe and to turn supplies off until a price can be agreed with Russia. Ukraine claims to have three months-worth of gas stored, but other European countries will suffer shortages.

Unions in the Coal Combine have taken control of the situation, recognising the threat to Britain from this looming energy security crisis. They have launched their campaign to support the use of Clean Coal despite the threat of pit and power station closures, and in the case of the NUM the prospect of extermination.

The Coal Combine's objectives are to:

- Jointly campaign politically for the mining of British coal, both from deep pits and surface mined, for use in power generation, British industrial use and export.
- Secure Britain's energy future.

*Continued on page 12*



*Continued from page 11*

- Engage with other unions involved in deep mining of coal.
- Jointly work with the TUC, employers' organisations and government departments.
- Promote the development and use of carbon capture and storage, not just for energy production but also for British manufacturing.

The political clarity and vision shown by the leadership of these workers is in complete contrast to the actions of politicians from all parliamentary parties. By recognising the possibilities that CCS offers and deciding to fight for it, workers in the industry have made a contribution on behalf of the whole working class.

Reopening pits, maintaining generating capacity, creating energy security in a nation built on coal, supporting manufacturing and leading the world in this tech-

nology are not idle wishes. All of this is possible even at a time when the United Nations is calling on member states to reduce their carbon emissions. Whilst the government drags its feet and the opposition remains silent, it has taken organised labour to put these possibilities on the agenda.

### **Control**

Perhaps thirty years on from the miners' strike the government doesn't trust workers with control over our own British energy resources. Perhaps they prefer the illusory security of multi-billionaire Qatari despots and Russian oligarchs. That's why the fight for energy security is a class issue. British capitalism likes to pretend that it doesn't need British workers, whether it turns to outsourcing manufacture to foreign countries, mass immigration or automation. But as so often in the past, it turns out workers know best.

**'The government doesn't trust workers with control over our own British energy resources.'**

The Green brigade despise coal, oil, fracking and nuclear power and want a land full of EU-subsidised windmills. They have little vision beyond that and don't see a future for Britain as a manufacturing nation. With dwindling North Sea oil supplies, a combination of clean coal, fracking and nuclear power could potentially see Britain on its way to becoming self sufficient in its energy supplies, free of EU interference too.

One question needs to be asked: how has capitalism created this situation? Energy prices have gone through the roof, many workers cannot afford heating and lighting, and at the same time we are facing the prospect of the lights going out in a couple of years. That does not make any sense. We can be confident of one thing: the workers in the industry know what to fight for. With this first victory on CCS, they will fight the closure of the two pits and seek to reopen others. ■

## **CPBML/Workers**

### **Public Meeting, London**

**Tuesday 4 June, 7.30 pm**

**"Britain one nation: say no to division"**

Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Nearest tube Holborn.

With the Scottish referendum only months away, come and discuss why Britain must stay united. Everybody welcome.

For further information, including updates on Kellingley and Thoresby, see the NUM website, [www.num.org.uk](http://www.num.org.uk)



**We were sold “quantitative easing” – QE – as a way of stimulating growth. Not so. And it will end in tears...**

# Nothing easy about QE



THE REASON given for the quantitative easing – also known as QE – between 2008 and 2012 was that it was a mechanism to try to revive consumer spending and stimulate economic growth. Not so. The real reason was that domestic lenders were not prepared to service government debt because of the conditions at the time.

So in stepped QE, creating £375 billion of electronic money courtesy of the Bank of England, topped up by foreign creditors lending £300 billion (according to the latest available figures).

## Debt

Britain's Gross National Product is still below 2008 levels, but total government debt now stands at around £1.1 trillion, a leap of £789 billion since 2007. That £789 billion, partly representing the cost of the banking bail-out, has largely been funded through printing money and borrowing abroad.

The eventual plan for the £375 billion of QE is to direct it to a captive domestic audience – us. It is to be paid off by our savings held in insurance companies and final salary occupational pension funds. At the moment it is stored in transit by the Bank of England, to be dumped onto our backs under the guise of “regulatory prudence” at a future date.

As for the £300 billion of foreign loans, Lenin knew exactly what that meant when

he wrote *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* in 1916: “the most usual thing is to stipulate that part of the loan that is granted shall be spent on purchases in the creditor country.” What this means is that we buy foreign exports using their credit.

This long-standing practice has acquired a recent variation where foreign creditors demand Britain's assets be sold at knockdown prices. That explains the discounted sale price of Royal Mail, where the Singapore government (a creditor nation) has ended up as a major shareholder.

We are supposed to believe the measures taken since 2007 will avert any further economic and financial crisis. For example, the Treasury recently committed loan guarantees of £130 billion to support the mortgage Help to Buy initiative at the drop of a hat. Depending on where you stand, the initiative is now stoking up the feel-good or feel-bad factor of rising house prices.

It's nothing but a fool's paradise. All the

**‘All the British ruling class has done since 2007 is to try to buy political time.’**

British ruling class has done since 2007 is to try to buy political time – at the cost of moving into a blind alley from which it cannot escape without tremendous upheaval, similar to 1914. That makes the situation dangerous.

Central Banks usually cut interest rates to raise lending and spending levels. But rates are at a historic low, with the Bank of England base rate 0.5 per cent. From here the only way is up. And when interest rates rise, bond prices tend to fall heavily. It is at this point that our pensions and savings, much of them already invested in bonds, have been earmarked to carry the loss.

What the government has actually achieved with its £375 billion of QE since 2008 has been to push up the price of bonds and temporarily diminish their yields. Talk of free markets is nonsense – the whole thing is contrived.

## Pensions

A by-product of QE has been artificially inflated pension costings, because the government's cheap electronic money has lowered interest rates. This has led some workers to believe we have to work until we are 68 before we deserve a pension.

Recovery? Large-scale business does not want to borrow even at low rates – let alone invest its own capital – because there is no real demand in the economy.

Since September 2013 the US has been trying to “unwind” QE by slowing down the rate at which the government injects money into the banking system. This has begun to restrict the availability of cheap money that until recently had induced some countries (prime examples are Ukraine and Turkey) to borrow in dollars to prop up their own current account deficits.

But with the US now putting QE into reverse the “hot money” has now exited these countries. Here the investor logic has been, “I am not interested in a return on my money but I am interested in the return of my money.”

What workers in other countries make of all this is for them to decide. But in Britain the relationship between creditor and debtor with the creditor in charge has to be challenged as part of our need to rebuild Britain. Let the creditor beware! ■

**The Soviet Union bore the brunt of the Second World War ended with the defeat of fascism. The balance of class force shifted from capitalism for a few post-war decades...**

# Victory in Europe: 8 May

AFTER THE battle of Stalingrad in the winter of 1942-43, the tide turned in favour of the Soviets. The German army was forced to retreat. For the next two years, the Red Army hurled back the Nazi invaders.

From 1943, the Soviet Union developed highly mobile, armoured formations. Their task was to punch through breaches in enemy lines, destroying German reserves and lines of communication. In autumn 1943 the German Wehrmacht deployed 236 divisions on the Eastern Front, more than 60 per cent of its total strength and more than 50 per cent of all its armour. When US and British forces opened a second front from D-Day in June 1944, they engaged just a third of the Axis forces and most of the best Wehrmacht formations were fighting on the eastern front.

By June 1944 the Red Army was advancing across a 2,000-mile front. Marshal Stalin supervised operations as overall commander-in-chief. He closely led a number of very able commanders including Zhukov, Konev, Rokossovsky and Chernyakhovsky, built up strategic reserves, oversaw weapon development and organised arms production.

First the Nazis were evicted from occupied Russia. Then the Red Army forced them out of Romania in August 1944, soon followed by Bulgaria and the Baltic states. By February 1945 the Nazis were out of Poland and Hungary; Vienna fell on 14 April. Immense Soviet forces were deployed along the Vistula river on the East Prussian border for the final assault on Germany which began on 16 April. These

**'During the war people's thoughts in Britain were already turning to the organisation of peacetime.'**

comprised an army of 6,500 tanks, 4,772 aircraft, 32,143 guns and heavy mortars and 163 rifle divisions. That represented a 5 to 1 advantage in manpower and armour; 7 to 1 in artillery and 17 to 1 in aircraft.

"Fortress Berlin" was Hitler's last wartime illusion. Berlin's defences were very poor compared to those of Moscow in 1941 (see *Workers* October 2011). Consideration was given to defending Berlin only in March 1945. Three makeshift obstacle rings were flung up: one 30 miles outside the German capital, another around its railway system and the last circling the central government buildings.

These defences were flimsy, without enough troops to man them and reliant on poorly armed Volkssturm and Hitler Youth members; they were easily overrun. No wonder quick-acting cyanide-based pills were much in demand among compromised Berliners. Eight Soviet armies encircled Berlin, and Red Army tanks advanced systematically, taking it block by block. By 25 April Soviet and Allied troops met at the River Elbe west of Berlin for a brief show of comradeship in arms.

## Reprisals

In Berlin water and public transport finally broke down; food supplies were low and residents started looting. Flying SS court martial squads roamed the city shooting and hanging deserters. Outside of Berlin diehard Nazis often took savage reprisals against civilian officials attempting to surrender their towns to British and American forces. Hitler shot himself on 30 April; Nazi Germany offered unconditional surrender on 7 and 8 May.

Hitler's fantasy of a "thousand-year Reich" completely ruined Germany. Most of its cities were rubble by the end of the war. A trail of devastation also littered the rest of continental Europe. Hitler's ebbing empire was finally reduced to a concrete bunker 55 feet below ground.

In April 1945 Allied forces had overrun the concentration camps in Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen and Dachau. Newsreel evidence was immediately screened in British cinemas, where audiences received it in stunned silence.



Photo-based illustration of the Soviet flag being raised over a city in ruins, likely Berlin, during the final days of World War II.

V-2 rockets accompanied the death throes of the Nazi regime. Silent and giving no warning, 1,052 V-2s were spotted from September 1944 onwards. Of those 518 hit London; 2,754 people were killed and 6,523 severely injured. The last V-2 fell on 27 March 1945.

During the war people's thoughts in Britain were already turning to the organisation of peacetime. There was mass pressure for change. By 1942 this brought forth policy documents that culminated in the Beveridge Report. This called for comprehensive social reform of society – and sold 600,000 copies. Other reports followed with planning ideas for education, hospitals and full employment. Total war had depended on the state and the people.

## Public debate

That mood continued post-war when regulation of aspects of capitalism was popular. There was wholesale public debate of national plans in civilian life and the armed services.

From the first week in April 1945 people were buying bunting and Union Jack and "Welcome Home" flags in readiness for VE Day – Victory in Europe. Shops sold Victory scarves, ribbons, rosettes and even hair-slides. On 7 May VE Day was

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in Europe, which  
ces shifted away

/ 1945



raised on top of the ruined Reichstag, Berlin.

announced for the following day and a 2-day holiday declared. Crowds began appearing in central London that evening. At midnight big ships riding in ports from the Clyde to Southampton opened up their sirens whilst searchlights flashed out Vs across the skies. Lights blazed everywhere as blackout regulations were ignored.

VE Day was a long piece of national rejoicing. Large crowds thronged the streets of central London most of the day and night. There were set speeches by prime minister Winston Churchill and George VI to vast gatherings, plus innumerable impromptu light-hearted happenings with much dancing, singing, hugging and kissing.

Though London featured most in the media, much the same occurred in the other notable towns and cities of Britain. Floodlighting and glare replaced wartime darkness. There were bonfires with effigies of Hitler and his henchmen and fireworks everywhere, throughout the land. Inhibitions were temporarily forgotten.

In the general election of July 1945, Churchill's Tory Party lost convincingly to the Labour Party. Hopes and aspiration for a better future were truly widespread, but these were dissipated and banished over the next few decades. ■

# 6 SIX CALLS TO ACTION

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

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

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

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

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

Devolution, and now the threat of separation, are both products of only one thing: de-industrialisation. Any referendum on the break-up of Britain must be held throughout Britain.

### 3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation

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

### 4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

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

### 5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

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

### 6: Build the Party

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

#### Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
- Get a list of our publications by sending an A5 sae to the address below, or by email.
- Subscribe to Workers, our monthly magazine, by going to [www.workers.org.uk](http://www.workers.org.uk) or by sending £15 for a year's issues (cheques payable to Workers) to the address below.

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# We're a nation, not regions

**'Instead of regionalisation and fragmentation what is needed is a national industrial plan rebuilding and redevelop Britain's industrial heartlands.'**

LIFE IS CHANGEABLE, but you can trust the Labour Party to run true to form. It has an enduring ability to come up with what it thinks is a bright and progressive idea, and everyone else thinks is a pretty dim and reactionary one. Like its new wheeze, part of its 2015 election proposals, of "regionalism".

Labour is proposing going back to regional ministers – ministers with particular responsibility for major cities – and a strategy designed allegedly to alleviate regional inequalities. It's a return to the Labour position before the 2010 general election, which you don't have to be a historian to know that it failed to win. It is wrapped up in devolution to the so-called English regions and to major cities.

The idea is unusual among Labour proposals in that it runs counter to Conservative policy. The Conservatives and their Coalition buddies opted for the abolition of regional development agencies and planning bodies, which they scrapped after 2010. But that doesn't make Labour's plan any better. Much is made of addressing regional strategies and resolving regional inequalities. All achieved through building an unnecessary and additional layer of government on top of existing local structures.

We have been here before. In the mid-2000s the strategy to create regional assemblies such as in the North East was overwhelming rejected by mainly Labour voters. The North East still has a long list of self-proclaimed wannabe "Prime Ministers of the North East".

Apart from London, most Labour strongholds dumped the Blair imposition of city mayors at the first opportunity. London has three borough equivalents of Boris Johnson. Two are independent Labour supporters, both "Sirs"; the other is fighting

allegations of links to Islamist and sectarian politics.

The election of regional ministers and mayors is part of a European Union strategy and is aimed at the further disintegration of England and the wider British constituents of Wales and Scotland.

Regionalism is embedded in the European "project", with a large and expensive Committee of the Regions housed in a suitably grandiose building in Brussels. It scrutinises all EU proposals for regional correctness, and tut-tuts about any promotion of nations.

Under the guise of addressing regional unemployment, poverty, poor housing, poor investment and destruction of traditional industries, the strategy is about breaking up a broken industrial nation even further.

Instead of regionalisation and fragmentation what is needed is a national industrial plan for rebuilding and redeveloping Britain's industrial heartlands. It would be a strategy of unity rather than fragmentation; integration rather than separation; collectivity rather than competition.

What is not needed is a further layer of state bureaucracy, phoney partnerships, privatisation and cherry picking by the crooks in the private sector. Instead we need a national strategy of renewal for local democracy and local government.

Attempts by successive governments to disintegrate over 1,000 years of local government and local tradition, and real control by local people, have produced more alienation, disenfranchisement, and disengagement from local government politics. A proper rejuvenation of local government would not apply another layer of bureaucrats but return to adequate funding and the proper application of the values of public service answerable to the people. ■

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## Publications

CHANGE BRITAIN, EMBRACE YOUR PARTY

This pamphlet brings together the statement from the Party's 2009 Congress with those from two former Congresses in 2003 and 2006. Also included is a statement on the European Union: "The fascist dream of a united Europe resurrected." (£2.75 including P&P).

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