

Cameron speaks for the rich – not for us

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The derision emanating from the ruling class and their mouthpieces – or at least significant sections of them – which followed the Brussels farce indicates that David Cameron does not, on this issue, even speak for all of them. How the mighty have fallen!

He is a representative of one of the strongest powers, British capitalism, the world has ever seen, which at one stage ruled, through its 'empire', one quarter of humankind. Backed by a powerful industry – the 'workshop of the world' – historically, British imperialism was able to play off one European power against another, with the infamous 'balance of power' strategy of the British ruling class. Its navy 'ruled the waves'. Now, through Cameron, the 'empire' is reduced, metaphorically speaking, to one man in a rowing boat in the English Channel at odds with the rest of the European powers!

The full consequences of the historical collapse of British capitalism, which the Socialist predicted, have been brought home. It is signified by the decline of productive industry, manufacturing, etc in favour of 'services', financial services in particular. It was Thatcher (and Cameron loudly proclaimed himself as one of "Thatcher's children") who ruinously pursued this policy in the 1980s, continued by Blair and Brown through New Labour governments.

This is reflected in the fact that manufacturing industry is now no more than 12-13% of gross domestic product (GDP).

Will Hutton in the Observer claims that 75% of GDP now comes from 'services'. But the financial sector is just 9% of the economy and in terms of employment accounts for less than manufacturing.

The financial sector is facing its biggest collapse since the onset of the crisis beginning in 2007-08. It does not offer a lifeline to the generation of jobless and is unable to arrest the rise in unemployment, as manufacturing did in the past. This is why Osborne and Cameron have urged the 'march of the makers', the renaissance of manufacturing industry.

Defending the City

But Cameron has taken a stand in defence of the City, the finance sector, which threatens to further undermine Britain's failed manufacturing base. 40% of steel exports, for instance, go to Europe, which is still Britain's biggest export market. And for what? To prevent, allegedly, the imposition of a 'transaction tax' – sometimes referred to as the 'Robin Hood' tax – which, even if it is implemented, will merely trim the fingernails of the hedge funds and speculators at whom it is aimed.

We have to remember these are the very people – the speculators, the banks, the bond traders – who helped to bring the world economy and Europe to its knees in the first place. These criminals have been bailed out with our money, through the state, instead of being put on trial and jailed. They then awarded themselves obscene bonuses – some of the banks' top chief executive officers' salaries have gone up by as much as 5,000%!

Cameron with the pitiful Liberal Democrats in tow, led by that Vicar of Bray Clegg – 'all things to all men' – and 'Saint' Vince Cable, wishes to protect them against this excessively minimal measure!

Yet this is not guaranteed to protect them against the competition of other rival financial centres in Europe such as Frankfurt and Paris. Even the Sunday Times, which supports Cameron, has warned: "Never underestimate the vindictiveness of the protectionist instincts



Merkel, Sarkozy and Monti



Cameron and Miliband



of our European partners."

Ollie Rehn, European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, has also warned that further regulation will apply to Britain's financial sector inside or outside of the new structures. The fact that Britain is still in the 'single market' is not an insurance policy against Germany and France for instance, dubbed 'Merkozy', ganging up against British capitalism to ensure that the City is pushed out into the cold.

Cameron's claim that his refusal to ratify the new treaty will not lead to a refusal to invest by foreign multinationals in Britain is bogus. The isolation of British capitalism flows from this. As capitalist commentators themselves have pointed out, when they consider investment in Europe, in Beijing or the US, they will be more reluctant to invest in this country if it is not involved in the 'consultative' process within Europe itself.

Not that working people should rely on the whims of capitalist magnates, whether in this country or abroad. Capitalism worldwide is falling apart at the seams, with even its apologists warning of 'endless austerity'.

Cameron took his stand not for economic reasons but primarily because of the political pressures from within his own party. The last general election gave a fillip to the Eurosceptic and often Thatcherite right wing of the Tory party. This was reflected in the hugely significant revolt of 80 MPs against the government a few months ago.

Fear that going along with the rest of the EU would split the Tory party down

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Building the opposition to the bosses' Europe plans photo Paul Mattsson

phes of RBS and Northern Rock showed, can only really be protected by nationalisation of the banks – but with workers' control and management. We completely reject state capitalist methods of taking over the banks, keeping the same management that ruined them in the first place, accompanied by redundancies for many bank workers.

As with all issues the EU must be approached with the interests of working people central. Both in its original design and its practices today, it is a bosses' club. It arose out of the contradictions of capitalism, specifically because of the inability of the productive forces – science, technique and the organisation of labour – to be further developed within the narrow limits of private ownership and the nation state.

Capitalism can never overcome this limit. They can share out the loot when the market is expanding. This is what happened with the launch of the euro but, as the Socialist predicted, once the boom became bust, the opposite has happened. They are at each other's throats. This is what is unfolding before us, as each power jostles for supremacy. German capitalism, represented by Angela Merkel, is the dominant power, with France in tow. It is using its economic prowess to put the rest of Europe on 'rations'.

With the departure of Cameron from the negotiations, the impression was given in Brussels that the other 26 countries had come up with a solution to the eurozone crisis around sovereign debt. Nothing of the kind was achieved.

'Merkozy' has not set up a mechanism for 'fiscal union' as they hinted at and some claimed. What is proposed is a new version of the broken Stability Pact, which limited budget deficits to 3% of GDP and total national debt to 60%. This time, it will be the Stability Pact 'on steroids', with teeth, and the threat of fines of up to 0.25% of GDP if a country steps out of line!

It is, in effect, a brutal neoliberal straitjacket, which aims to prevent national governments from bending to popular will and increasing public spending. It is another reason to oppose the capitalist EU, which is unreformable and seeks to attack and crush working people at every turn.

However, this political crisis in Britain gives the opportunity for the labour movement to raise all the crucial questions

pertaining to the EU from a class point of view. If this crisis persists, because of the inaction of New Labour and the trade union leaders who are refusing to speak with a clear class voice, then the dangers of nationalism can develop. Cameron and the Tories are toying with the idea of electorally capitalising on this.

We have had experience in the past – for instance, at the time of the Falklands War – of the way that the representatives of big business in the Tory party have used issues abroad in order to stoke up nationalism, which could redound to their benefit in elections.

In 1983, the Tories – with the help, it is true, of the traitors who broke from the Labour Party at that stage, when it was a workers' party at its base, the now defunct Social Democratic Party – called an election, using the new upsurge of 'national' pride following the victory in the Falklands War to climb back to power. This was despite the previous unpopularity of the Tories and the existence of mass unemployment and deteriorating social conditions.

Poll results

The initial polls indicate that Cameron has about 62% support for his EU stance. It is possible that Cameron will attempt something similar to Thatcher in the present situation. Witness the outpourings of support of the previous anti-Cameron Eurosceptic wing of the Tory party for him on his 'triumphal' return.

'Cameron played a blinder', bellowed that towering intellectual Boris Johnson! On the evening after his return from Brussels, the Eurosceptics gathered at the Prime Minister's country retreat, Chequers, there to laud him as the reincarnation of the 'British bulldog'.

However, a snap election in the current conditions in Britain would be a risky enterprise for the Tories. Cameron would not be able to limit the campaign to the issue of the EU as the questions of austerity, poverty and social deprivation would come to the fore. In such a scenario, Cameron could face the same fate as former Tory prime minister Ted Heath, who called a snap election during the miners' strike of 1974 on the slogan 'Who rules Britain?' and was defeated.

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Protesting at the bailout of the banks, at our expense photo Paul Mattsson

particular to cut across the dangers of nationalism. The right may attempt to link Cameron's stance of standing up to 'Johnny Foreigner' to immigration, in order to prepare the ground for a possible early general election with the prospect of an outright victory of the Tories now a real possibility.

However, with the new grossly undemocratic arrangements that the ConDem coalition has put in place for five-year fixed parliamentary terms, there are some obstacles to facilitating early elections. Unlike in the past when a vote of no-confidence in the Commons would almost automatically trigger an election, that is no longer the case.

The end of a five-year parliamentary term would obviously result in a general election. There are also two other ways in which this can happen before the end of the five-year term: if a motion of no confidence is passed and no alternative government can be found; or if the motion for an early general election is agreed either by at least two thirds of the house or without a division.

These arrangements were clearly designed to keep the vicious austerity coalition in power for five years, irrespective of the mass opposition increasingly demand-

ing that they depart. This is just one example of the anti-democratic semi-totalitarian methods which the capitalists internationally are resorting to in order to enforce their attacks against working people.

'Parliamentary Bonapartist' measures have seen unelected, so-called 'technocratic' governments installed in Greece and Italy. In answer to this onslaught of increasingly undemocratic measures, labour movements internationally must adopt measures and tactics including the demand, in some cases, for referenda to stop them.

Ireland

In Ireland, the left, led by the Socialist Party and its parliamentary representatives like Joe Higgins, are demanding an immediate referendum on the EU treaty. Yet British workers are denied the right to decide on this issue. As a very minimum the trade union movement should campaign for a referendum on the issues of our choosing – the class questions which are at the heart of the neoliberal agenda which is the 'modern' EU.

We do not want a referendum on issues framed by Cameron simply in relation to the proposed treaty in March, which

in any case will not now be voted on, it seems, in Britain.

Referenda for the labour movement to oppose lock, stock and barrel the EU's Lisbon Treaty agenda – with its programme of privatisation, cuts in wages, etc – is a different proposition. This must be closely linked to preparations and mobilisation of the trade unions for another one-day public sector general strike, including workers in the private sector. No time must be lost. Set the date now for early in the new year!

Another mass mobilisation against the attacks on pensions and linked to the brutal austerity package of Osborne in the autumn statement can help to cut across the plans of the Tory party to exploit their alleged new-found 'popularity' on the EU. We need to reassert total opposition to the bosses' club of the EU. We must come together, not in a narrow nationalist fashion but with solidarity of workers and the labour movement on the international plane.

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