The EU doesn’t protect workers’ rights

NO TO TORY AND EU AUSTERITY

Roger Bannister
Union national executive member (personal capacity)

On 6 June ten trade union leaders had a letter published in the Guardian urging their members to vote Remain in the European Union referendum in order to defend rights at work.

At a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) meeting in Liverpool two days earlier one supporter remarked: “When I hear trade union leaders tell us that we have to stay in the EU to protect our rights I feel like saying, ‘so what do we pay you for?’”

The EU is an economic and political bloc acting in the interests of big business in Europe. While it is true that, particularly during the Thatcher era, the EU sometimes seemed to represent a softer form of capitalism, and some legal protections for workers were made through it, this era of so-called ‘social Europe’ is well and truly over. The EU is at the forefront of globally applied austerity measures, and attacks on workers’ rights.

The general secretaries naively call for the EU to change - to “move away from a path of austerity” as the Guardian summarised it. But as millions of impoverished Greek workers could tell them, it is a bit too late for that.

Even as the referendum debate is taking place EU representatives are locked in secret discussions with US representatives over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

This aims to eliminate “barriers to trade” between these massive blocs. Such ‘barriers’ include health and safety legislation and preservation of what remains of the public sector. The King’s Fund has recently stated that the NHS could not be exempted from EU procurement or competition rules, meaning it must be privatised.

The trade union leaders’ support for the EU on the spurious grounds of defending workers’ rights ironically comes soon after the TUC and most of the trade union leaders failed to lift a finger to stop the Tory government ripping up the right to strike of millions of British workers with the Trade Union Act. That weakness and indecision is the real threat to British workers, not Britain withdrawing from the bosses’ trading club.
Exploitation Britain

Unionise and fight for a living wage

Danny Williams

Conditions in a ware-
tance have been de-
unarised. Workers have been described as “dehumanised” Workers are exposed to living oppressive secu-
ity, unequal salaries, and a “two-tier” system which can de-
mand they work extra hours without notice or force the use of their hol-
iday allocation when hours are not available.

Low wage, zero-hours contracts and shift patterns have left workers in constant insecurity.

A similar regime of surveillance and discrimination has also been exposed in Sports Direct’s Blue-
ndon warehouse, with thousands of temporary agency workers receiv-
ing below minimum wage. Low wage, zero-hour contracts and shift patterns have left millions of workers and their families in a con-
nstant state of personal and financial insecurity. Unequal pay, threats of 
poverty and desperation and actual 
lysis of the potentiality of the 
merchandise heft, so found by these companies.

The nature of these workplaces revolve around the “just in time” approach. Sports Direct manage shareholding, Mike Ashley, agreed to appear for questioning before MN, regarding these workplaces only after noting that conditions there had been beyond the line.

He defended his company’s practices below the parliamentary scrutiny committee by saying, “I’m not a father Christmas” then scowled at an apparent question. The population humiliation was most probably not enough to reveal his distasteful semi-
worker mentality. It can do a better 
job for Sports Direct’s spin doctors.

We disagree. The fight must con-
continue against the instruments of 
workplaces, and protect workers from discriminatory exploitation by ending zero-hours contracts and bringing in a minimum living wage.

Nothing quite expresses the inhumanity and misery inflicted by the reality of the capitalist system like the amount of wealth generated by the pharmaceutical industry. It was reported in the Times that a small group of “complementers” have ex-
ploited a loophole on non-branded 
medicines theft, so feared by 
merchandise, to fuel the cost at which they are sold.

While the cost to produce pharmaceuticals may appear to be reasonable, these companies.

This is a not a new phenomenon - 

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translated and receive marketing approval. As per the 

company’s product literature, patients using this drug for 

to use and sold without prescription.

Britain’s housing crisis affects many 

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Shelter, 50% of over-50s give up 

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Housing: Let’s reclaim our right to dream again!

Low-income and middle-income households have a capital-based system like the amount of wealth generated by the pharmaceutical industry. It was reported in the Times that a small group of “complementers” have exploited a loophole on non-branded medicines theft, so feared by merchants, to fuel the cost at which they are sold.

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Britain’s housing crisis affects many but in particular the generations af-
mouring the “baby bubble” of the sixties and seventies.

According to housing charity Shelter, 50% of over-50s give up rent increase is inevitable. Not measures like those would stop the private rented sector.

Our theory is that the housing crisis is closely linked to the rise in pharmaceuticals, and the specific industry’s practices before the parliamentary v Conclusion delivered to your door every week.

Vladimir Milovanov

Benjamin Sandader

Socialist Party

Tamil Solidarity Day: Fighting Oppression and for Workers’ Rights Internationally

Dharshi Subramaniam

An intense and energetic lightbox rally was organised by Tamil Solidarity at the Link Ap headquarters in London, on 4 June.

The rally was held to show solidarity with the Tamil people, who have been facing oppression for decades.

The rally was attended by hundreds of people, who held banners and chanted slogans in support of the Tamil people.

The rally was a successful one, with many people coming from different parts of the Tamil diaspora to show their solidarity with the Tamil people.

However, the Tamil diaspora must continue to fight against oppression and fight for their rights internationally.

Benefits incentive

Workers in the construction industry have been facing structural unemployment and low wages for years. The government has implemented a number of policies to address this issue.

One such policy is the building employment scheme, which has been designed to create jobs for young people.

The scheme provides a tax incentive for employers to employ young people, and it has been successful in creating thousands of jobs.

However, other policies have not been as effective. For example, the minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation, and there is still a significant gap between the living wages of different groups.

In conclusion, the government must implement more effective policies to address structural unemployment and low wages.

Hunt payout

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt is keen to get his “cost neutral” pay and conditions offer accepted by junior doctors. However, the offer is far from generous.

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Hunt and cuts

The government has implemented a series of austerity measures, which have negatively impacted working-class communities.

These measures have included cuts to healthcare, education, and social services. As a result, working-class communities have been hit hard.

However, the government is not transparent about the impact of these measures.

The government must be transparent about the impact of these measures and make efforts to improve the lives of working-class communities.
Junior doctors’ dispute: New offer falls short

Seniority is key in this dispute, and the junior doctors’ union claims that the offer from the government is not acceptable. The BMA has warned that it will strike if the government does not meet its demands.

The government has offered a 1% pay rise, but the junior doctors’ union is demanding a 7% increase. The government has also proposed a scheme for junior doctors to work flexibly, but the union is concerned that this will undermine their rights.

The dispute has been ongoing for several years, and the government has accused the junior doctors’ union of being unreasonable. The union has accused the government of being unwilling to engage in meaningful negotiations.

The implications of this dispute are serious, as junior doctors are a vital part of the healthcare system. Without their participation, the quality of care provided to patients could be severely affected.
YOUTH MUST FIGHT FOR THEIR FUTURE -
STARTING WITH A LEAVE VOTE TO SMASH THE CORIES

For young people experiencing the bleak austerity Britain, it’s not surprising that a debate dominated by right-wing politicians is not enthusing. Most EU legislation acts to undermine workers’ and trade union rights. In any case, better rights and living standards are never ‘gifted’ to working class people, a fact that Redmond Kelly has recently stressed. The EU has consistently refused to deal meaningfully with the crisis in the Eurozone and austerity’s devastation across the continent. That’s why the Socialist Party is urging a Leave vote on socialist, anti-austerity grounds.

In recent years, a spectacular display of this instinct among young people came in the form of the Indignados and Occupy movements, which spread like wildfire across Europe and the US. This was a movement that spread, in large part, by opposition to the worst EU austerity being imposed across southern Europe, which was seen as an imposition to which national borders presented no barrier. Many of the methods adopted during this struggle - including mass occupations of squares and streets, have been invoked in the huge movement currently Occupy London, with ‘Nuit Debout’ protests going alongside a mighty trade union struggle. This fight to defend protections for workers - including collective bargaining and a big week: is rightly seen as a fight for the future of work and youth in the Eurozone. But there is no recourse to the EU for protection for young workers and young people (which you might imagine would be if you believed the rhetoric of many of the EU-led unions in Britain). However, the IMF and other International organisations have determined that the ‘current system of mass workers’ struggles’ - are too found on the poster lines and on the streets, not among the bureaucrats of Brussels.

In fact the European Commission for the Euro and Social Dialogue, Valis Dombrovskis, has given France’s government ‘green light’ for a new round of austerity agreements. The ‘Bologna process’ has been a key part of imposing this model for higher education across the continent.

For a foreigner to travel to right-wing, austerity-ravaged France - as some have argued is inevitable - a Leave vote would break the Tories in complete abeyance. And it was a movement to which national borders presented no barrier. But whatever the outcome of the vote in June, it will remain necessary to build a mass movement to end austerity and fight for socialist change. A Leave vote could offer us a renewed opportunity for this by blocking a deal sealed by Cameron and the Tories. It is not an end in itself. Young people need to get organised - both on the campaign trail and in the streets - to demand a decent future - one with secure, well paid work, genuinely affordable housing, workers’ rights, free education and so on. That’s why the Socialist Party is urging a Leave vote on socialist, anti-austerity grounds.

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50 years ago the ‘Cultural Revolution’ began in China. Here we carry an edited version of article written by Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe for Militant (predecessor of the Socialist) in February 1967.

The Cultural Revolution

50 years ago, the ‘Cultural Revolution’ began in China. A new political campaign was initiated by the Chinese Communist Party to combat what it believed was an emerging bourgeois revisionist threat.

The Cultural Revolution was the result of a long process of contradictions and class struggle within China. The Cultural Revolution was a response to the growing influence of the Chinese Stalinists, who had been using Stalin’s concept of ‘Socialism in one country’ to undermine the Chinese working class and the Communist Party.

The Cultural Revolution was a mass movement of the Chinese people, organized by the Communist Party, to defend the Chinese revolution and the Chinese working class. It was a struggle against the Chinese Stalinists, who were using Stalin’s concept of ‘Socialism in one country’ to undermine the Chinese working class and the Communist Party.

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A page from a document with text that discusses various topics, including housing, politics, and music.
Muhammad Ali 1942-2016: A FIGHTER WHO INSPIRED MILLIONS

World champion boxer Muhammad Ali died on 3 June as well as his apocalyptic commitment to the anti-war movement.

In 1966 Ali refused to be conscripted into the armed forces, claiming he was a conscientious objector on religious grounds. His ringing declaration that he had been drafted "for a public purpose for which there is no moral justification" was returned by the draft board. A military court convicted Ali of draft evasion and he was given a five-year prison sentence. Ali's refusal of the draft was not without critics, but he was at the leading edge of an activist generation in the 1960s with a history of anti-war activism. By the time the US government introduced conscription in 1940, it was already a well-established social norm that the draft was a means to exclude black youth from the military. The draft avoided being drafted by military service had been institutionalised in the lives of millions of black men.

In 1965 Ali won the World Heavyweight Championship by knockout against Sonny Liston in a match that had been considerable as a demonstration of the power and prestige of the US government.
Momentum Youth and Students: Witch hunts won’t take movement forward

Momentum held the launch of its youth and student organisation on Sunday 5 June. Momentum was initially set up to organise the thousands of people inside and outside the Labour Party who were enthused by Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour leadership campaign.

When there is a massive onslaught on young people, including attacks on pay and attempts to raise tuition fees, is Momentum capable of being at the head of a movement of young people fighting back? If Momentum Youth and Students continues on the trajectory set at this meeting, the answer is no.

No opportunity

The approximately 150 attendees at the conference were given next to no opportunity to debate and discuss the political situation in Britain and the strategy needed to defeat austerity and the Tories.

Only 45 minutes was given in the original agenda to discuss ‘campaigning priorities’ - the closest thing to a discussion on how we can beat austerity politicians. This was cut from the agenda due to the event running behind time.

Bowing to pressure from the right wing in the Labour Party and the capitalist media, the leadership of Momentum has made a number of retreats and climb-downs. They have rejected the Socialist Party’s call for a federal, democratic organisation and instead have moved to exclude various socialists and anti-austerity campaigners, including the Socialist Party.

Socialist Party members present made the point from the floor that if Momentum Youth and Students is an autonomous part of Momentum then it can and must reject these restrictions on membership.

Many young people are searching for an anti-austerity alternative, some of these may have voted for the Green Party and then Jeremy Corbyn and see no contradiction in this.

To engage and build a campaign to fight the Tory attacks and fight for an improvement in young people’s lives, an organisation must be open and willing to take the fight to the right wing.

The Labour Party has the shadow Compliance Unit that deals with expulsions and suspensions. Momentum has its own Compliance Unit in the form of its founder Jon Lansman. We challenged him on this.

After speaking and making clear that we were members of the Socialist Party, the Labour Party and Momentum, the room was whipped up by multiple speakers calling for our expulsion.

In attendance were two self-proclaimed Trotskyist groups - Socialist Appeal and the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL). Both groups have recently been targeted by the Labour Party and have received suspensions and expulsions. However neither of them spoke out against the same witch hunt against the Socialist Party in Momentum.

In fact, one member of the AWL proclaimed that he “was not and has never been a member of the Socialist Party” and that there was no place for the Socialist Party in Momentum.

These groups, by their silence, have sided with the right-wing compromisers in Momentum and are complicit in the witch hunt. They offered no strategy or programme for fighting the civil war in the Labour Party, as the Blairites will continue to fight to keep it a party which acts in the interests of the 1%.

The complete lack of democracy in Momentum was shown when Jon Lansman personally voided my Momentum membership via a text to Momentum’s office.

He said I was guilty of belonging to a party hostile to the Labour Party. The Socialist Party isn’t hostile to Jeremy Corbyn and those that have joined Labour to fight for his policies. We are, however, hostile to Blairite MPs calling for the bombing of Syria, and local councillors implementing Tory cuts.

Another Socialist Party member refused to give his name so Lansman took his photo! Are we to see ‘wanted posters’ of known Socialist Party members at local Momentum meetings?

The political outlook of the Momentum leadership was summed up by a contribution that said: “The main way to support Jeremy Corbyn is to vote Labour.” Momentum, by uncritically canvassing for Blairites, has given no warning to the role those such as London Mayor Sadiq Khan will play in attacks on Corbyn’s leadership.

Open and fighting

As the Socialist Party wrote in our leaflet, in order to succeed “Momentum needs to be an open, fighting campaigning organisation, fighting for an end to zero-hour contracts, for scrapping tuition fees, and for an immediate £10 an hour minimum wage.

Shutting out socialists and uncritically campaigning for Blairite mayors and cuts councillors will turn off those young people searching for something different to the politics of old.

“We need to kick out the Blairites at all levels of the Labour Party and campaign for mandatory re-selection. We call for Momentum to be a democratic organisation, open to all socialist and anti-austerity forces.” Without a fighting programme such as this Momentum is unlikely to be a pole of attraction to those young layers drawn into struggle.
Northern Ireland

BIGGEST TRADE UNION VOTES TO SUPPORT EXIT FROM EU

Ten trade union leaders penned a letter in the Guardian committing them to a Remain vote in the 23 June European Union (EU) referendum. They claim the EU champions workers’ rights. However, this position is being challenged by many trade unionists. As Kevin Henry, Socialist Party (CWI, Ireland) reports, Northern Ireland’s largest trade union voted at its recent conference to advocate voting to leave the EU ‘bosses club’.

The Socialist Party welcomes this decision of Northern Ireland Public Services Union (Nipsa) to oppose continued membership of the EU. Unfortunately, most leaders of the trade union movement have decided to support David Cameron’s campaign to stay in the EU.

In Britain, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) leaders have been very vocal in defending the EU. In a ‘Bet- ter Together in Europe’ leaflet, current TUC General Secretary Frances O’Grady is quoted alongside right-wing figures such as Virgin’s Richard Branson and Bank of England Governor Mark Carney.

Her predecessor, Brendan Barber, went one further and co-authored an article with David Cameron. Closer to home, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is also advocating a vote to remain.

Austerity Europe

They claim that there is a ‘social Europe’ but, in reality, it’s ‘austerity Europe’. Staying in the EU will not defend jobs in the domestic economy. The EU prides itself on the free movement of capital which means bosses searching out cheap labour in Europe (and beyond the EU).

EU competition directives ban governments from saving jobs by nationalising industry. This could have implications for saving the UK steel industry and thousands of steelworkers’ jobs.

Other EU employment regulations – such as the Posted Workers’ Directive, which allows migrant workers to be paid less than the legal minimum in their host country - are designed specifically to circumvent national workplace agreements.

In 2009, this directive was used in an attempt to undermine conditions and deny employment for construction workers at Lindsay Oil Refinery, Lincolnshire, provoking a series of strikes. However, arank and file strike committee, involving a Socialist Party member, successfully fought and won extra jobs and prevented division among workers.

Similarly, in December 2007, the European Court of Justice delivered a blow to trade unions when, in the Viking and Laval decisions, it decided that the right of businesses to ‘freedom of establishment’ must take priority over the right of trade unions to take industrial action to safeguard the interests of their members.

Our rights were not granted from on high by benevolent EU leaders but won from below by workers’ struggle. It’s misleading for trade union leaders to claim otherwise. A jewel in the crown of EU employment law is the Equal Pay Directive, which formally guarantees equal pay for women. This was won first by the mass strikes in France after World War Two.

It was only much later that this law was enforced across Europe, again following the heroic strikes of women munitions workers in Belgium, Ford workers in Britain and countless others in the decades that followed.

The Socialist Party believe it’s a mistake for trade union and labour leaders to support the bosses’ EU and echo the fearmongering of the political establishment. Instead, they should follow the example of unions like the Nipsa and others, that are prepared to tell the truth about the EU.

Work and income

Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.

All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.

An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

Reject ‘workfare’. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.

Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker’s wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.

- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.

- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.

- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.

- Defend abortion rights. For a woman’s right to choose when and whether to have children.

- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

NEW MASS WORKERS’ PARTY

- For a new mass workers’ party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties. Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.

- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.

- No to the bosses’ neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!
Workers strike back!

Sam Morecroft
Sheffield UCU anti-casualisation officer
(personal capacity)

“This isn’t any strike - this is an M&S Strike!” That’s what the banners read on the picket lines at Pennine Foods strike, where pickets have been hundreds strong again at their second 48-hour strike on 5 and 6 June (see page 4). Not a single lorry was able to enter the factory to collect the ready meals produced for Marks and Spencer, and strikers were in a jubilant mood, joined by activists from the National Shop Stewards Network and members of the public.

But it’s not just at Pennine Foods that workers are showing their power – in Sheffield we’ve seen a real strike wave in recent weeks. Both universities in the city have been on strike as part of higher education union UCU’s national industrial action for better pay in May, and at the Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) office they’ve now taken six days of strike action in response to plans to move the ‘Northern Powerhouse’ department to London.

It’s no coincidence that here and elsewhere these waves of determined local and national strikes are developing - workers everywhere are refusing to accept austerity any longer and what’s more we understand that we cannot afford to wait until 2020 to get rid of the Tories.

But how do we bring together all of these workers’ struggles and co-ordinate action to build the strike wave we need to drive this weak, divided Tory government out of office? On Saturday 2 July trade unionists from across the country will meet at the tenth annual National Shop Stewards Network conference to discuss exactly this. Come along, join the discussion and let’s unite to drive out the Tories!

See shopstewards.net for more on the NSSN conference

Link the strikes - come to the NSSN conference