

# Lexit. Supporting a Socialist Future Socialist Labour Party

**Vote to leave the EU strengthens our fight for a better world**



*Arthur Scargill, Leader, SLP, main speaker, Neil Barrington, chair, SLP Executive and John Tyrrell, SLP President at a meeting at Birmingham Council House 16th June 2016 on a Socialist Case for leaving the European Union. Photo Bhagwant Singh. See video on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVqjRTwj25A>*

Socialists have good cause to celebrate the British people's decision to come out of the European Union and get back into the world. The Socialist Labour Party's policy and reasons for leaving the European Union – very different from those of Tories or of UKIP – have been vindicated by the outcome of the Referendum.

The SLP has always recognised the EU as an engine of free-market globalised capitalism. Membership of the EU has inflicted horrendous economic, social and political damage to all working people trapped within it. As for Britain, 90% of our manufacturing and key industries have been wiped out with our health, education and welfare provision steadily destroyed. We see the damage everywhere around us in the need for food banks and campaigns to protect homeless families and hundreds of individuals sleeping rough, whilst high-cost sky-scrapers shoot up to house billionaires and blight our cities.

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The decision by the British people to 'come out' of the unelected and unaccountable bastion of the European Union allows us to renew the fight to restore all the industries and services privatised by Tory and Labour Governments to public ownership – but this time we must campaign for true common and social ownership and control: in our badly damaged National Health Service; our social services including care for our elderly and children; in our education system; and we must demand the restoration of council housing, owned and controlled by local authorities.

The vote to leave the European Union is a challenge to Britain's trade union leaders to reflect the views of their members on issues such the abolition of Trident and opposition to nuclear power and fracking, alongside job protection, wages, zero-hours contracts, agency working and privatisation. The Socialist Labour Party has consistently pointed out that EU membership has eroded – not protected – workers' rights.

European Union directives and European Court of Justice decisions have robbed us of hard-won free collective bargaining, the right to strike, and attacked our pension rights. We must now all join a fight to overturn these injustices – and Britain's trade unions must give a lead in recovering the rights our forebears fought to hard to achieve.

### Free movement of labour and capital

The Socialist Labour Party has consistently made clear the fundamental difference between immigration and people seeking asylum, on the one hand, and the massive inflow of 'migrant labour' from EU countries under the 'free movement of labour'. Both before and after the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 the number of immigrants/asylum-seekers entering Britain averaged 250,000 a year whilst the number of people emigrating from Britain averaged 350,000 a year.

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On the other hand, in 2014/2015 whilst official figures recorded the numbers of 'migrant workers' entering Britain from EU countries as 480,000, during that same period the Government issued 1,222,000 National Insurance numbers – to migrant workers. This clearly shows that over 1.2 million EU 'migrant workers' entered Britain in 2014/2015.

The massive increase in the numbers entering Britain are a direct result of the European Union's central policy of free movement of labour and capital – in other words, a free-market philosophy. The free movement of capital has seen the destruction of key industries such as our automotive industry and heavy and light engineering, whilst all our key utilities such as electricity, gas and water are owned privately by foreign companies (not to mention the sell-off of our railways!). Our coal and steel industries have been or are being eliminated – yet Britain is importing – at an enormous cost - both steel and coal, produced elsewhere through subsidies and/or by slave (including child) labour.

### Back into the world

The Socialist Labour Party has always argued that Britain's economy will thrive when it leaves the European Union and gets 'back into the world'. EU membership has left us with a trade deficit of between £60-and-£100 billion each year, whilst trade with countries outside the EU has led to a trade surplus of between £30-and-£50 billion per year.

We should extend our trading arrangements not only with the 53 Commonwealth countries but with the 100-plus other countries outside the European Union while maintaining trade on a fair basis - not a free-market basis - with the 27 countries inside the EU.

### What next for Britain?

In the Referendum campaign we have witnessed the majority of Tory MPs desperate to remain within the European Union monolith, which is incidentally on the brink of settling an iniquitous free trade agreement – TTIP – with the

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United States. The Referendum campaign has exposed the collaborationist philosophy of the Labour Party with a majority of its Members of Parliament and its Leader shown to be completely out of touch with the problems facing their constituents.

Statements by Jeremy Corbyn (long admired as a Socialist campaigner/ politician) that he is now in favour of a 'mixed economy' show an abandonment of principle and a betrayal of those Socialists who gave birth to the Labour Party in 1918. It is beyond dispute that the present-day Labour Party and its Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, are pursuing the same collaborationist policies as other social democratic parties in Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Greece.

The result of the Referendum and the Socialist Labour Party's campaigning should persuade people to join our Party and its fight for a Socialist future, for our children and our grand-children.

Arthur Scargill  
Leader, Socialist Labour Party  
24 June 2016

Socialist Labour Party: [slpgeneralsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:slpgeneralsecretary@gmail.com)

### EUROPEAN SUPPORT FOR BREXIT

Brexit has been achieved, but its future is totally uncertain. Those on the right who advanced it had no plan, and those who inherited it are left floundering. Worse, the term has been hijacked globally with Donald Trump endorsing it along with a reinvigorated Nigel Farage, the serial resigner who refuses to go away. Will UKIP be revived, along with Marie Le Pen in France, Gert Wilders in the Netherlands and the far right across Europe - and globally.

Brexit was voted for by more than those on the right. The left had, and has a pressing agenda. It includes many appeasers who claim the EU championed workers' rights and conditions. They join with others fighting a rearguard action to rerun the referendum of June 23rd or in some way preventing article 50 ever being signed.

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What have we left? It is not taken into account that those in other countries across Europe also want to leave the EU, but once again only the right racist and nationalist arguments come to the fore in a media dominated by Capitalist dominated global interests. We have left workers in Europe to fight a European Union which continues to dictate terms and conditions against the interests of workers and everyone else who isn't one of the elite members of the financial, banking fraternity determining global dominance at our expense. Trump claims to be different and to represent workers in Michigan and other former industrial states. Remember that Bernie Sanders also took the very same states from Clinton in the battle for the Democratic nomination. Many believe he could have fought a more effective campaign in the election itself.

As in the United States and elsewhere, the left has to make its voice heard, including in the response to Brexit.



On 28th May around 1300 delegates met at a rally in advance of the British referendum on 23rd June, 2016. They issued a statement stating “*We support the British Workers who will vote to leave the European Union in 23 June referendum.*” The idea that Britain’s exit from the European Union should have support in other countries across Europe has not been generally recognised, yet a group of Socialists came together in Paris in May, 2016 to

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encourage all in the Labour Movement in the UK to support Brexit with the implication this should be followed across Europe.

The following attempts to make clear the imperatives of international Socialists from those on the right from neo-liberals to Fascists (National Socialists). The former see the problem to come from the interests of multi-national corporations and exploitation of international labour, the other the people who are the victims of that exploitation and the vicious war and conflict resulting from their need to acquire scarce resources by whatever means.

Delegates to the “Internationalist” meeting in Paris represented 23 European countries, both in and out of the E.U. Heinz-Werner Schuster, a trade unionist and member of the Dusseldorf SPD Labour Commission in Germany, was an initiator of the appeal and he made the following statement. This was printed, along with other articles, in a report of the rally:

*“This rally gathers workers and youth from all over Europe, either by their presence in this hall or by the messages they have sent. It is being held on the basis of the appeal to trade unions, Labour Party branches and CLPs and those British labour activists who, despite the instructions issued by the Labour Party leadership and the leading circles of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), have decided to call for a vote to “leave” the European Union on 23 June!*

*With this meeting we show our determination to break with the European Union, its diktats and its institutions. And that is why we address from this podium our greetings and solidarity to British workers and their organisations who are fighting for their country to leave the EU.*

*This rally is not being held out of time and space. It is being held in France, in Paris. That is why it is also a demonstration of our support to the struggle of the French working class against the Hollande-Valls government and its counter reform of the Labour code (El Khomri Bill), implementing the EU directive and the “National Programme of Reforms in France”, within the framework of the “European semester”. That is why it is correct and important that the internationalist rally takes place here, today.*

*On February 17th, 31 trade unionists and members of the Labour Party published a statement in favour of the Brexit in the “Guardian”. We then opened up discussion on this call. For they expressed there, what we see*

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*every day in our battles: the EU is irrevocably committed to privatisation, to the destruction of social gains, to low wages and to the erosion of trade union rights. That is why the capitalists in the EU are unconditionally in favour of the EU.*

*But we made another observation: top leaderships of our organisations are also unconditionally in favour of the EU. They are constantly telling us that the EU offers a haven of peace, forgetting to mention that the EU is indissolubly linked to NATO, under the leadership of US Imperialism and without mentioning the wars waged in Yugoslavia, the Near and Middle East and on the African continent.*

*And it is in the name of “Social Europe” that these leaders defend the EU and its institutions, a totally anti democratic construction with the sole objective of defending the “single market” against the will of the majority of workers and peoples.*

*We all know it: if the weakest link in the chain of worker rights and guarantees is broken, it will then be the turn of all the others, who are confronted with this struggle in every country.*

*After the “deal” between Cameron, Tusk and the European Council on migrant workers in the EU, to deprive them of the rights the British labour movement has conquered, some are talking of the end of “free circulation” of workers in Europe. And of course the German Social Democrat Minister of Labour takes up this “deal” against immigrants in the framework of his offensive against collective bargaining agreements.*

*But for capital, it is not a question of the “end of free circulation”, but simply of a legal adjustment of “fundamental freedoms within the “single market”, which we all know, knows neither free circulation of workers in Europe, nor unlimited right to strike.*

*The door that the British labour movement can break open, frightens people for “one does not know what might happen“. It frightens too all those who claim formally to reject the EU.*

*On the “left”, we are told that our struggle for breaking with the EU would amount to covering the City of London and part of the British bourgeoisie and turning the working class away from its fight with Cameron.*

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*This left wing verbiage hardly hides a total revision of the position on breaking with the EU, a left wing cover for the leaderships, with the argument of right wing votes. But it is indeed the policies of the EU and the different governments, covered by the leaders of organisations, claiming to speak for the Labour Movement, that opens the door to right wing demagoguery. So comrades, let us help the British labour movement so that it is victorious in the 23 June referendum. This would no doubt open up a new prospect for liberating Europe from the Golden Rule diktats, from the anti social policy ruining pensions, schools, the health system, encouraging reduction of "labour costs" by lowering wages, destroying collective bargaining agreements and labour codes.*

*The new perspective would be that of the interests of workers and peoples across the whole continent, within the framework of a Europe of free peoples, cooperating freely with full respect for their national sovereignty."*

Steve Hadley, RMT Senior Assistant General Secretary commented "we really didn't know that so many people across France and Europe support Britain leaving the European Union". He paid tribute to the French workers "who are conducting a magnificent strike movement at the moment. It's an inspiration to absolutely everyone across Europe."

### **INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ACTION FOLLOWING BREXIT**

#### 1. Views that accept or deny exploitation of workers internationally.

The speaker above is from Germany, seen as the economic and political power house in Europe, able to lead, in partnerships with others, a dictatorship backed by banks and a small unrepresentative elite. On the other hand the less economically powerful nations are forced to accept the demands of the EU, the "Golden Rule diktats" which includes the privatisation of services, austerity, and "anti social policy ruining pensions, schools, the health system, encouraging reduction of 'labour costs' by lowering wages, destroying collective bargaining agreements and labour codes." He sees an alternative which would be that of "the interests of workers and peoples across the whole continent, within the framework of a Europe of free peoples, cooperating freely with full respect for their national sovereignty."

The internationalism is demonstrated in practice not only by those who attended the Paris meeting but by the actuality of work forces across Europe



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being people from diverse backgrounds because of the imperialist nature of European states. This is in sharp distinction to those who would deny this

historical reality separating people according to race, religion, ethnicity or gender, seeking a programme of repatriation and an end to progress made towards equality.

A close examination of a history of those involved in struggle for rights in the working class movement will often reveal who was involved. Annual celebrations of the anniversary of the Battle of Salfley Gate in Birmingham on 11th February 1972 has slowly revealed the extent of the involvement of different groups, women and men, with their own leaders encouraging support for the working peoples' struggle for justice. 30,000 Birmingham workers stopped work in support of the miners that day, 15,000 of whom marched as a result of enthusiastic support from all quarters in this culturally diverse city.

### 2. Distortions of reality

Messages were received by some who were unable to attend. A doctor working in the refugee camps in Slovenia:

*"Having been prevented from participating in your rally for reasons beyond my control, I salute you from the insides of the refugee camps, where the tens of thousands of those that the NATO wars and the IMF plans have chased out of Syria, of Afghanistan, of Iraq and of Africa have been stock-piled.*

*The European Union, as the heir to a long colonial tradition, is today one of the major pillars of imperialism, the very imperialism that is the cause of the political, social and cultural breaking up of many of the Balkan countries, of the countries of eastern Europe, of Africa and of Asia.*

*My patients, who are among the millions of the refugees, are but the consequence of that policy.*

*The policy of the European Union is also devastating the countries who are members of the European Union, such as Slovenia, where the public health system has been devastated, with a budget amputated by 20%.*

*In the Balkans, where our countries have recently been forced to join the European Union, the American military bases are proliferating: in Kosovo, in*

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*Bulgaria, in Rumania, while the puppet governments are integrating their armies under the control of NATO.*

*That is why we have signed the appeal saluting the British workers who will vote to leave the European Union. We, labour activists of Slovenia, of Serbia, of Croatia, of Bosnia-Herzegovina, of Bulgaria and of Greece, have signed.*

*That is why we have enthusiastically welcomed the initiative of the Indian workers who have convened a World Conference against War and Exploitation in Mumbai, in November 2016, a conference that expresses our common need for a fight for peace and social progress."*

Dimitar Anakiev, doctor in Slovenia in the refugee camps, himself a former refugee during the wars that destroyed Yugoslavia. The article also illustrates that Slovenia, like other countries across the European Union, have seen health budgets slashed in the name of "austerity".

### REMEMBER THIS PHOTOGRAPH?



UKIP made it into a poster placing the caption "Breaking Point" using it to stoke up fear and hatred. The photographer speaks of his intention to make an entirely different point. This is one of understanding the situation of the

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people in it (also described by the Slovenian doctor in the article above). The following was printed in the Guardian:

*"I spent most of last summer covering the migrant trail at the point where it comes into Slovenia. Trains would arrive from Croatia, about 1,500 people would get off, and they'd walk 8km across the border to Brežice holding camp. Then they'd wait until the next train was ready to take them to the Austrian border. It was like a conveyer belt.*

*They would have to sit in no man's land for hours before the walk, burning space blankets – the ones runners wear when they finish a marathon – to keep warm. They'd burn regular blankets, too, anything they could find. There wasn't much food, either. It was like a scene out of the second world war. The Slovenians clearly didn't realise people would come in these numbers. It was thousands. It was endless.*

*The police would march them. First, they'd snake through cornfields, and eventually they'd come to an old railway line, where this was taken. The traumatic look on their faces comes from being kettled. But there weren't a lot of police controlling them: they were really well-behaved, patient people.*

*You had every walk of life: guys straight from Syria who'd thought anything was better than life there; guys who'd been waiting in Turkey, doing jobs and getting exploited until they could make the money to get to the next stage. One man had been a doctor in Syria, but had been working slave labour in a Turkish kitchen. Another clearly had money: he came up to me and said he was prepared to pay hundreds of euros to get a taxi to where he wanted to go.*

*They all had just one objective: to get to a new life – in Germany, Austria, Sweden, wherever. Everyone would say: "Germany, Germany!" That's where they most wanted to go. No one wanted to end up in Serbia or Croatia. That was a big fear – that they would get stuck in a country they were stopped in. There was real frustration, a feeling that if they didn't go now, the borders would shut. And as we know, that eventually happened.*

*There were a lot of Afghans, but it was mainly Syrians – and men. They'd be going first, trying to get set up in a new country. They were younger and fitter, more able to battle to get on transport. When a train turned up, they'd been stuck in a station so long, they'd climb in through the windows. It was*

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*desperate. But what they're coming from is desperate too. There is no life, nothing left, in cities like Aleppo and Homs. They're just gone.*

*It was a very flat walk, so I scoped out a bridge to shoot from. I knew exactly what lens I was going to use, to compress the group, to show how many people were there. I could have walked with them the whole length, photographing how people were struggling, but you can sum it all up in one picture.*

*Photographers are there to record stories, as they happen and when they happen, in the best way we can. But what happens after that, how our images are used, can be out of our control, especially in the digital age – which is unfortunate, particularly in this case. [Ukip used the shot in its Brexit campaign.]*

*The people in the photo have been betrayed by Ukip, rather than me personally. But it has backfired on Ukip. People are very intelligent – they could see this was clearly not a group of people coming to the UK. They aren't sucked in that easily. Which makes it almost comical for Ukip, because it's had completely the opposite effect they thought it would have.*

*I was busy on another job when I heard they'd used it, and carried on with my work as normal. My job – telling the story of the migrants – had been done. It's just unfortunate how it's been picked up. It's difficult for any agency – Getty, Reuters, AP – that circulates photographers' images. They're out there. And it's not just Ukip. Newspapers also use shots in the wrong context. It depends on the political slant of any organisation.*

*You have to remain impartial. I'm there to record what happens. I know it sounds simplistic, but you shoot what's in front of you. Some of the migrant crisis made for beautiful pictures; it was in the summer, with morning light coming down the train tracks.*

*I wouldn't mind going back to see what's happening now. Migrants are trying to take different routes, to Lampedusa, just off Sicily, and places like that. The story's not over. It's still there. It's still happening."*

(Getty Images photographer Jeff J Mitchell. Guardian 22/6/2016)

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### **ACTION BY FRENCH WORKERS AGAINST EU DIKTAT**

*“Comrades,*

*I am a trade unionist in the Seine-et Marne, in the Paris region (Ile de France). In the Seine et Marne there is something special, we have the only refinery in the Paris region at Grandpuits.*

*Comrades, refinery workers have been out for eleven days now, on a united strike – CGT and FO - since the 17 May. Yesterday they decided to prolong the strike for a week, until Friday 3 June. They started by stopping any products or vehicles going out or coming in, except those linked to security measures or maintenance work (by road, as well as by rail or pipe line whose valves were shut off).*

*And from the 23 May they ceased all production. In my capacity as an elected trade union officer, I visited the Grandpuits site. At their staff assembly several things struck me:*

*-First of all the demands were very clear. The FO-CGT joint leaflet dated 17 May was headlined “neither amendable nor negotiable”. At the staff assembly, there was one demand: “Withdrawal of the Bill”!*

*-The government resorting to the 49-3 Article of the Constitution was seen as pure provocation. What's more in their leaflet the CGT and FO write – and quite rightly so: “Article 49-3 cannot replace the opinion of a French population of 66 million”.*

### **FIGHTING THE EU IN ITALY**

*My name is Dario Granaglia, I am a shop steward of the FIOM-CGIL, the Italian metal workers' union. I work in an industrial plant of the FCA – formerly a FIAT company.*

*I am a candidate on a list for the Turin municipal election, the list entitled “Abrogazione! Yesterday, we held a rally of our list supporters attended by 150 workers, activists and youth.*

*Since the beginning of the crisis and during the last six years, lay-offs have ceaselessly increased, which has driven down my wages along with those of the other workers, down to really low levels, compelling us to huge sacrifices.*

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*When I am out of work, it is the State that pays substitute wages that we call “cassa integrazione”. Which means that all the Italian citizens, through their taxes, pay the crisis of the FCA company, while the FCA management has off-shored its headquarters abroad to pay less taxes. That is what the EU and free circulation of capital means.*

*When the crisis began, FIAT decided to leave Cofindustria, the association of Italian employers, to be rid of national labour terms and conditions and to design a specific contract, tailored to suit FIAT needs. To achieve this, Marchionni, the administrator appointed by FIAT, made a deal with the CISL and the UIL, the other major Italian federations. CISL and UIL then organised a referendum of workers that amounted to genuine blackmail: if you do not accept, FIAT will close down. But even in those conditions, and even when the mayor of Turin pressured to have workers vote for the deal, 46% of the FIAT employees voted against, expressing huge resistance and a powerful determination to fight.*

*My union, the FIOM, had stood for the NO vote leading along the whole federation, the CGIL. This was positive, but at the same time, the same FIOM did not take a clear stand for the “withdrawal” nor for the repeal of the plan afterwards, just accepting the result of the referendum as it was.*

*So, from January 1 2012 on, FIAT implemented a specific labour contract, outside the framework of the national terms and conditions.*

*What was the objective?*

*At the time, the FIAT administrator affirmed that a better-suited instrument was needed to respond to worldwide competitiveness, to meet the requirements of the factory governance for international competition. But, in another interview, he was more candid: “What I want is all-out flexibility”*

*It was a declaration of war on workers, the announcement of a fight-to-the-end to destroy what remained after years and years of destructive attacks dictated by the European Union.*

*Then the whole population understood what was at stake: if the plan was implemented at FIAT, sooner or later, the same terrible working conditions, the end to national terms and conditions and harsh exploitation would be enforced throughout the country. And that was why the people mobilised standing by FIOM, standing by FIAT workers. In October 2010, a huge march*

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*was staged in Rome against the Marchionne plan. 500,000 flooded the streets from every sector. But in the face of this force, the leadership of the FIOM refused to call for the slogan “withdraw”, refused to demand the “repeal”, and preferred to make counter-proposals to the FIAT management.*

*This is the way the plan was passed, and this flung the door open to all the attacks in every sector.*

*Especially, the Marchionne plan paved the way for the Job's Act, which is what the reform of the labour code is called in Italy. This reform scrapped all the protective measures enjoyed by workers, destroyed the workers' terms and conditions as they had been won in 1971 and introduced total precariousness.*

*But this also facilitated the destruction of the national terms and conditions in the public sector, the reform which provides for the privatisation of education, and budget cuts.*

*That is so, and with the Job's Act, capitalists secured huge exemptions which further run down the State's budget. The State, in compliance with Maastricht, with EU treaties has to cut from healthcare, services, privatise and slash retirement pensions.*

*And today, we are in a situation in which a huge number of families cannot get medical assistance for themselves or for their children, in which getting an urgent visit to the surgery may take a year's waiting, which has driven the death rate up.*

*But, comrades, the Marchionne plan was warmly greeted by the European Union and then the Job's Act, directly dictated by the EU in a letter to the government, just as the reform of education and the reform of retirement pensions....*

*But their destructive work is not quite over yet: today the EU will say that reforms have been quite well carried out but that they should be continued. And for that, the government has approved a reform of the Constitution, “fast track” style.*

*So this is the balance sheet I am drawing: my situation is similar to that of tens of thousand workers. I have lived on “cassa integrazione” for seven years.*

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### A MESSAGE FROM GREECE

*Panagiotis Tassopoulos, Student, LAE (Popular Unity) member, Greece*

*Dear friends and Comrades,*

*First of all I should like to thank you for the honour you have done me, being here today among you. I should introduce myself. My name is Panagiotis Tassopoulos. I come from Greece. I am one of the thousands of young people who fight in Greece. I fight austerity. I fight against the poverty that the people suffer. I fight for my children, for your children and for the generations to come. Why do we take part in the initiative of British workers to leave the European Union in the referendum that is to take place in June?*

*We have come to Paris to say “No” to referendums, “No” to memorandums, “No” to austerity, “No to the EU”. In Greece, we said “NO” to our referendum 10 months ago. A referendum which, with 61.5%, gave a clear reply to Junker, to the EU, to the IMF to all those who supported our submission to the memorandums and austerity. This No from the youth and the people, Tsipras and his government have transformed into a Yes. i.e. in contradiction with the mandate given by the people, they have said:*

*Yes to market domination, yes to overtaxing the people, yes to privatisations, yes to lowering wages and pensions, yes to the suppression of all social gains, yes to unemployment, yes to the emigration of young people of my age to other European countries and the United States.*

*At present the Greek government is taking other austerity measures worth 5.4 billion euros, and is selling off everything that belongs to the State. i.e. it is continuing the catastrophic policy of preceding governments. That is why we continue to fight any government that implements these policies.*

*The fight goes on. The fight continues today in France. And in Britain.*

*We believe, we hope that your struggler will strike a blow at this instrument of imperialism, the EU. It will then will help all the peoples of a united Europe of workers and peoples.*

*To conclude I would like to give you some figures that are the results of the last three memorandums from 2009 till today.*



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- . Investments of 49.6 billion euros have fallen to 10 billion Euros,
- . Unemployment has gone up spectacularly from 9% to 26.6%
- . More than 80.000 companies have closed down,
- . Taxes have increased today by 180% for each household
- . Since then, there have been 10 000 suicides in the country

*Is that the Europe that some have dreamt of?*

*We do not want that Europe! That is why we say: Break with the European Union! “*

### CONTINUING RESULTS OF EU EDICTS

The following is a reality check on the position of railways across Europe. Many would like to see Britain's railway network return to state ownership, often citing the state-owned examples in Germany, France and the Netherlands. They, however, are behaving like private companies themselves and are in fact now running, or have a stake in, British franchises. They are in profit and this is returning to the countries they represent! Railway workers in Germany and elsewhere are opposed to this. What support are they getting? Workers implored labour organisations to give them support through voting for Brexit. What policies are needed to give that support?

### Britain's Privatised Rail Network Makes Millions For Foreign State Owned Train Companies

18/08/2015 16:11 | Updated 19 August 2015

**George Bowden**

Acting Young Voices Editor, The Huffington Post UK

*"Labour leadership contender Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to make Britain's railways entirely state-owned and run by a citizens' corporation - dubbed the "People's Railway". Yet many of Britain's rail franchises are already owned and operated by state-owned companies – from Germany, the Netherlands and France. Through a complex web of international subsidiaries, both state-owned and majority state-owned railway companies are operating millions of rail journeys across Britain. And the profits are flowing back to their countries, funding public transport and spending across Europe.*

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Here are the top-performing foreign state-owned franchises on Britain's rail network...

### **9 Abellio Greater Anglia - £3.64m profit**

*In 2012, Abellio - the Dutch state rail operator's international arm - made £3.64m on the Greater Anglia line. This flows back to the Netherlands.*

### **8 London Overground - £7.54m profit**

*London's Overground network is run as a joint venture between the German state rail operator Deutsche Bahn and private company MTR. In 2012, it made £7.54m profit, which is shared between the two.*

### **7 Merseyrail - £10.77m profit**

*This is a joint Serco-Abellio partnership. While Serco is a private company, Abellio is the Netherlands state rail operator's international arm. The Dutch state takes a share of profits - which totaled £10.77m in 2012.*

### **6 Arriva CrossCountry - £12.9m profit**

*Arriva is the German state rail company's international subsidiary. It wholly owns the CrossCountry franchise and made £12.9m profit in 2012.*

### **5 Southern - £13.4m profit**

*Southern rail is a Kelios joint venture. Kelios is the French state's international rail subsidiary and it owns 35% of the franchise. This is equivalent to a £5.68m share of the £13.4m 2012 profit.*

### **4 Arriva Trains Wales - £13.6m profit**

*This line is run by Arriva - the international arm of Deutsche Bahn, the German train operator wholly owned by the German Federal government. Arriva Trains Wales made £13.6m profit in 2012.*

### **3 Southeastern - £16m profit**

*The Southeastern line is 35% owned by Kelios, the French state rail operator's international subsidiary. In 2012, the line's £16m profit saw Kelios' share at £5.6m - flowing straight to France.*

### **2 Northern Rail - £33m profit**

*Northern is one of several Serco-Abellio joint ventures. While Serco is*

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*a private business, Abellio is wholly owned by Nederlandse Spoorwegen - the Dutch state's railway operator. With a £33,033m*

*profit in 2012, money flows from Northern coffers to fund Dutch public transport.*

### **1 First TransPennine Express - £50m profit**

*While First Group is listed on the London Stock Exchange, it's TransPennine partner Kelios is majority owned by the French state railway operator. Kelios takes around 45% of the profits, or £22.55m in 2012.*

*All figures for financial year 2012. Source: [Aslef \(PDF\)](#). But rail operators say that they're profits help keep Brits moving on the railway. A spokesman for the Rail Delivery Group, which represents Network Rail and train operators, said: "Commercial train operators are delivering for passengers and taxpayers here in Britain. Compared to the late nineties, almost twice as many people are choosing to travel by train helping to increase fivefold the money paid back by operators to government for building a better railway.*

*"When rail franchising was introduced, Britain's railway was running at a £2bn a year loss but faster passenger growth than any other railway in Europe means it now covers its day-to-day costs, so government can spend more on building the better network passengers and the economy need."*

Huffington Post

## **ACTIONING BREXIT THROUGH INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM**

The Socialist Labour Party was never in doubt where it stands in the relation to the free market where free movement of capital and labour was created to benefit large powerful monopolies intent on maximising profit at the expense of working people - the vast majority of those currently living and working in Europe - an extremely diverse group who contribute labour and skills to the European economy. While a number of trades unions, such as the RMT, represented at the Paris Rally, took this line, the TUC in Britain, the Labour Party leadership and the European TUC didn't. Just as the EU leadership

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consisting of bankers, and others who have recently created crisis after crisis, imposing austerity and other instruments of “shock and awe” across the continent, they argued that Britain and others had benefitted from improved rights and conditions. This was as if the struggles of the Labour Movement in Britain had never won significant victories over the last 2 - 3 centuries!

The evidence of EU diktat is apparent in France, Belgium and Greece where workers are on strike because their leaders, including supposedly socialist administrations, have sought to impose the EU conditions which seriously undermine their conditions, pay and pensions. But this is not the only matter they are opposing: the imposition of privatisation on services and continuation of austerity which affects the majority of citizens, with a disproportionate load on the most vulnerable, has to be an issue which all in the labour movement should be supporting as vigorously as possible.

Reasons for Brexit are not portrayed in this light. Rather it is universally portrayed as the property of those conducting racist and xenophobic campaigns against immigration. This serves the purpose of putting blame on the dispossessed and powerless rather than the profit hungry international corporations busy cobbling together so-called “trade agreements”. Governments of various political complexions are happy to accept the consequences which massively strengthen corporate power which prevents them or any individual preventing their progress in propagating harmful insecticides, genetically modified crops, unnecessary and dangerous medication or the development and sale of weapons of mass destruction. The Canadian European Trade Agreement (CETA) will allow US corporations operating in Canada to act against anyone deemed to be a threat to the maximisation of profits to be fined through secret courts only available to the corporations themselves. Canadians who are already experiencing an up and running trade deal with their US neighbour, the North American Free Trade, an agreement between The United States, Canada and Mexico are warning about the harmful outcomes of the agreement. Corporations such as Caterpillar moved labour away from Canada destroying communities, first moving to a southern state in the U.S., then moving again to Mexico in order to take advantage of lower labour costs.

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Nevertheless CETA is still on the table in the EU having survived an attempt from the Walloon regional government in Belgium stalling the process at one point. US Corporations have successfully sued governments for millions of pounds on the basis that protests against their actions are claimed to have affected their profits under NAFTA. The same will be true under CETA when European governments will be exposed to the same actions.

### Who voted for Brexit?

The total vote for leaving the European Union across the United Kingdom was 17,410,742 while the vote for UKIP was just 3,881,099 at the General Election in 2015, yet it is claimed that it was a victory for the right and comment on immigration into the UK. The Socialist arguments put forward above for withdrawing from the EU are scarcely mentioned in media coverage.

Among Trades Unions that supported Brexit were the RMT, ASLEF, (railway unions) and the BFAWU (Bakers' & Food industry). Alex Gordon a former president of the RMT and delegate to the Paris Internationalist Rally made the following points:

*“Firstly, a vote to Leave the EU is an act of internationalism and solidarity with oppressed peoples and workers not only in Europe, but across the world. The EU is an imperialist entity – an essential part of the NATO/IMF/EU axis. A blow against the EU weakens imperialism. That is why imperialists in all their forms are united in calling for a vote to REMAIN*

*Secondly, a vote for Britain to LEAVE the EU is the quickest method to destroy the pro-austerity government of David Cameron. Britain’s governing Conservative party is deeply and irrevocably split reflecting the tactical conflict between its factions over whether to serve as a junior partner of Germany inside the EU, or to continue as an alternative pole of global finance capitalism outside the EU.*

*A vote to LEAVE the EU will certainly lead the Conservative Prime Minister to resign and will bring forward a general election where voters will have an opportunity to elect a government committed to opposing austerity.”*

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### Appeal endorsed by labour activists from 23 countries

*“We are workers, youth and trade union and political activists from every tendency of the labour movement, and from every country of Europe (members or not of the European Union). A referendum has been called on 23 June in Britain, with one question on the agenda: “stay” in the European Union or “leave” it.*

*We salute and support those trade unions, Labour Party branches and CLPs and those British labour activists who, despite the instructions issued by the Labour Party leadership and the leading circles of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), have decided to call for a vote to “leave” the European Union on 23 June!*

*From Greece to Portugal, from Poland to Germany and elsewhere, for years we have experienced the true meaning of the European treaties based on “free and undistorted competition”, the directives and programmes dictated by the European Union or by the Troika (and implemented by every one of the governments, whatever their political colour).*

*Our peoples and the workers of the whole of Europe have suffered the same policy, whether their countries are members of the European Union or in Association Partnerships: deregulation, the dismantling of the Labour Code and labour rights (pensions, social security, collective bargaining agreements), the privatisation-destruction of public services and budget cuts in the name of the national debt, and the putting into question of every form of national and popular sovereignty.*

*We note that the European Union (interlinked with NATO through treaties) supports the foreign military interventions that are driving millions of refugees onto the road to exile.*

*We note that at the European Summit of 18 and 19 February, the British Prime Minister and the European Commission concluded an agreement which will aggravate even further the process of making workers compete with each other. Under that agreement, any worker originating in an EU country and emigrating to Britain will be deprived for four years of all the social rights won by the British working class through struggle. This can only lead to competition between workers, and to a new offensive to drive down the “cost of labour” of the British workers and to encourage a climate of reactionary xenophobia.*

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*Against this “European Union”, which tries by every possible means to set workers against each other for the great benefit of the capitalists and bankers, we counterpose the union of the workers and peoples of the whole of Europe for defending and winning back their rights, sovereignty and democracy.*

*Together with the 578 delegates who met at the annual Conference of the Trondheim Trades Council of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), we support the British workers who will vote in favour of “leaving the EU” and “struggling hand-in-hand with the workers of Europe and the whole world”.*

*A victory for the British workers on 23 June will be a leverage-point for all workers who in every country are opposing through their own class struggle the destructive plans of the European Union and the governments that are carrying out its policy.”*

This European appeal was endorsed by labour activists from Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Moldavia, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, The Spanish State, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine.

*Editor: John Tyrrell, President, Socialist Labour Party, November 2016*

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