



## **Socialist Labour welcomes Britain's vote to leave the EU. It will strengthen the struggle for a better world**

### **Arthur Scargill**

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 wiped out. 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.

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 as 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 hard to achieve.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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