



Brexit: let's get on with it!

Six principles to put leaving back on track



Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist

Let's get on with it!

The political establishment has never accepted the referendum result. They will have to be forced to.

It's time to be blunt about the government's approach to leaving the European Union. It set out its policy in July after the infamous Chequers cabinet meeting, publishing what it called a White Paper. But it's more like a white flag.

It talks about "no direct" jurisdiction of the European Court, but it means almost total indirect jurisdiction (and, it turns out, probably some direct, too.) It talks about ending free movement of labour, but introduces the weasel wording of a "mobility framework". It talks about leaving the EU but it means staying under the EU's thumb. Call that Brexit? It's not.

As if the EU needed any encouragement to play tough! Now they think they can get Britain to abandon the idea of Brexit altogether.

But Brussels cannot be appeased. Its short-lived empire is crumbling, with open enmity between its members and its weapon of the free movement of labour under attack even in its heartland of Germany.

The EU's desire to punish Britain is born out of weakness, not strength. It dare not make concessions to Britain, for fear it will have to do the same for border nations like Switzerland and even for its own members. It dare not make it easy for other members to leave.

While the government is taking a "collaborative" approach to negotiations, the EU is just lapping up

concession after concession. We run the risk of settling for an even more slavish relationship than before June 2016.

The "negotiations" – a big word for such supine surrender – have been matched by lack of preparations for independence, such as building the necessary infrastructure to enforce control over our economy, borders and laws. In practice this amounts to sabotage.

And all the while parliament, with its massive majority of MPs who voted Remain, is promoting the sabotage, supported by the Lords. Both houses talk about constitution and sovereignty, but what they mean is that they are sovereign over the people.

Only the fact of the 17.4 million Leave voters – and no sign of regrets – holds them to any appearance of carrying out our decision. But appearance is all it is. We must act, and act now.

With real involvement we will find ways to compel the government into leaving properly.

Let's return to the simplicity of our decision. Reinstate the red lines for Brexit. Control over our economy, our borders, our agriculture and fisheries, our food, our laws, our workplaces.

That would terrify the EU would-be masters. Only then can real negotiations begin – from the true position of British strength. •

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Contents

1 Be prepared to walk away	3
2 Stop the wreckers	4
3 Build a new democracy	5
4 Plan for independence	6
5 Acknowledge our own strength	7
6 Make a clean break	8

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Dominic Raab meets Michel Barnier. Photo: Alexandros Michailidis/Shutterstock.com

1 Be prepared to walk away

The clarity of the 2016 referendum has become obscured in a desperate – and futile – search to come up with a plan that the EU will like. That’s not what we voted for. We voted to leave.

The only plan the EU wants is one that keeps Britain in its coercive club. The tangle of detail and objections is designed to trap us in the EU net. It’s clear that the EU wants a bad settlement that will deter any other country from leaving. So we must insist the government be prepared to walk away from the table. We voted to leave, not to stay entangled with the EU.

Just look at the EU’s tactics. The European Commission has banned the European Aviation Safety Agency from talking with the UK Civil Aviation Authority about fallback arrangements in the event of no deal on Brexit, jeopardising travel across Europe.

Why such an extraordinary, punitive act? Clearly, the move is designed to step up pressure on the government to remove the no-deal option from the table.

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See also: “Take control for an independent Britain”, *Workers*, July/August 2018.

Aviation is an easy target because it is not covered by World Trade Organization rules, unlike trade, and so lacks an automatic fallback.

If successful, Theresa May and her Brussels counterparts will have the necessary excuse to add another year to the schedule in the event of “no-deal”. Perhaps the EU thinks that Britain will simply forget to leave. It has another think coming.

The first rule of negotiation is that you have to convince the other side that you are serious. The EU appears to have managed that, with the government bending to every blackmail. Those who govern in our name have failed to show they mean business – because they don’t.

Preparations for no deal should have begun the day after the referendum result. Instead we have had virtually nothing. This is no accident, but deliberate policy from a government happy to stoke fears of a “cliff edge”. No wonder the EU has been able to act with such arrogance, rejecting this and threatening that, even though its own position is weak.

Why is the government so frightened of leaving without a negotiated agreement anyway? World Trade Organization rules

exist as a fallback for trade in goods.

All this betrays a lack of belief in Britain. It’s the same lack of confidence that led to the initial vote to stay in the Common Market in 1975, and that led many to vote to stay in 2016. It’s the same lack of confidence that capitalism has been actively trying to instil in British workers for decades.

Yet for all that, the fundamentals of Britain are sound. We have a skilled and literate workforce, an exceptional research base and abundant energy resources. What can we not achieve?

The clock is ticking. The battle for Brexit is not over. The forces opposing us have many months to turn delay into the denial of democracy that they seek.

Expect more and more “reports” from corporate interests seeking to maintain the status quo.

Expect more delaying tactics from our unrepresentative parliament.

Expect more and more moans from some politicians and civil servants that everything is really too complicated and they need more time.

The people must speak out. Campaigns left dormant after the referendum must be stepped up. •



2 Stop the wreckers

If the people of Britain are to force Brexit through an unwilling and obstructive political establishment, we need to know who we can rely on. And the simple answer is that we can only rely on ourselves.

Any allegiances to the established political parties must be jettisoned. Party memberships are meaningless now. All that matters is whether people and their MPs are prepared to stand by the democracy of the referendum decision.

The opponents of Brexit know this. They have already ditched party politics. And from the moment they overcame their shock at the referendum result, they made their plans.

The political establishment has had one aim in mind: to stop the referendum decision being executed. In love with the EU and contemptuous of the British people, they will stop at nothing to undermine the fight for British sovereignty.

First David Cameron resigned, thus conveniently avoiding the need to fulfil

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See also: "Corbyn's speech: cynical, disingenuous, reckless", published on cpbml.org.uk on 6 March 2018.

his pledge to invoke Article 50 immediately – and introducing a delay until Theresa May became the Conservative leader.

May then waited until the end of March 2017 to invoke Article 50. Despite her famous utterance of "Brexit means Brexit" in July 2016, her transition agreement and then the Chequers White Paper of July 2018 have marked her out as an obstacle to Brexit.

Cynicism is her trademark. So she appointed Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary, then took relations with the EU away from the Foreign Office. Next she created the Department for Exiting the European Union, installing David Davis, but in September 2017 actually turned negotiation over to a Civil Service mandarin who wants us to stay in the EU.

May waited until 2018 to declare her hand. The "red lines" of her January 2017 Lancaster House speech are being reworded out of existence.

In all this the antics of arch-Remainer MPs have served as a convenient foil. If you want to see the real wreckers, look inside the cabinet.

And then there's Labour. Jeremy Corbyn went into the 2016 general

election pledging an end to the single market and to the customs union.

Then in a speech in Coventry in February 2018 he called disingenuously for "a" customs union with the EU, then added that it would have to be one where Britain "has a say in future trade deals". Short of actually staying in the EU, there is no way that this would be possible. And he knew it.

It was a reckless attempt to hold his party together and enlist the aid of Remainer Conservatives to bring down the government – whatever the consequences for Brexit and for Britain. What happened to Corbyn's election pledge to act "in the national interest"?

Others have played their shameful parts. Opportunistic separatists looking to turn any difficulty into petty advantage for their own causes. Equally opportunistic trade union leaderships more loyal to the perceived interests of the Labour Party than they are to the interests of their own members. And a host of special interest groups with their own noses deep in the EU trough.

In the fight to implement the referendum, there will have to be a reckoning. The wreckers must go. •



3 Build a new democracy

Delivering Brexit constitutionally depends on forcing the desired outcome onto a divided government and recalcitrant Westminster MPs, so many of whom supported Remain.

The problem, bluntly, is the machinery of what is called parliamentary democracy, but which increasingly is revealing itself as inherently anti-democratic.

The whole course of events since June 2016 has shown that the people of Britain cannot rely on parliamentary democracy to carry out the referendum instruction.

Brexit is not politics as usual. It is the most important political issue since the Civil War in the 17th century. At its heart is the question of whether Britain will exist as an independent nation. So the failure of parliamentary democracy to deliver on the referendum is not failure as usual. It shows that the entire system needs to change.

The political establishment was shocked to the core by the vote in 2016. It had assumed it could carry on ruling in the name of the people without

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See also: "Time for a new democracy", *Workers*, July/August 2018.

worrying about what the people think.

The battle to enforce the result of the referendum must be fought out in every arena – local and national, workplace, trade union. It will start as a form of resistance movement, but it must become more. We say it again: Take Control.

Britain needs a real democracy, a people's democracy where our representatives do our bidding or lose their jobs. A democracy where sovereignty resides in the people. The mechanisms are not yet to hand, but they must be created. And they can only be created in the battle with those who are seeking to betray Brexit.

Referendums are the best expressions we have now of real democracy, government by the people. In 2016 every individual registered to vote was asked: the EU, yes or no? People responded in a massive turnout. They knew leaving might involve hardship, but voted on principle – to be free of rule from abroad. The decision must be carried out.

The opponents of Brexit say the margin of victory was insignificant. No. It was clear. 17.4 million voted to leave – numerically the largest vote ever for anything or anyone in Britain.

They say people didn't understand what they were voting for or were led astray by Leaver lies. Actually, research by Rob Ford, professor of political science at Manchester University, shows that people made up their own minds. And they didn't trust what politicians from either side said.

What people did trust – according to the research – was that whatever decision they made in the referendum would be carried out. If there was that trust, we can now all see how badly misplaced it was.

Opponents say the referendum wasn't valid because it bypassed parliament. MPs in particular are fond of defining democracy as the supremacy of parliament. Yet for years MPs nodded through EU diktats without debate, in the form of parliamentary secondary legislation. So now they pit parliament against the people.

People have assumed that all they need to do is elect their representatives, and then they can sit back while those representatives do the business. But if we do that, we will never have sovereignty, never have true independence, never take control. To take control, we all have to be involved. •



4 Plan for independence

Everything we do before and after departure has to prepare and develop our country – its industry, infrastructure and assets – for this demanding new situation. That requires control over what we make and how we trade. And without planning there is no control.

In the fog of negotiations a negative line of thought has emerged – the call for “free trade agreements” after Brexit. We do not want global corporations to ride roughshod over our economy, as has been proposed, for example, with TTIP. That would be the opposite of taking control.

Trading freely and independently with other countries across the world on a mutually beneficial basis is nothing to do with these rapacious new agreements. Britain should make its own decisions about trade in the light of how we should be developing our own country.

Some free marketeers say just import as cheaply as possible from elsewhere – be it people, goods, energy, food, transport. That’s the path to dependence on others, not independence.

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See also: “Keep Britain out of the Free Trade trap”, *Workers*, March/April 2018.

Indeed, the lie that nations and their peoples can’t provide for their own future is at the heart of the EU project. Open borders, EU control over trade and uncontrolled immigration make it impossible to plan a future – both here and in the countries enduring widespread emigration of their peoples.

With Brexit the state must implement a vision for Britain and target investment where we need to transform industry, infrastructure and skills.

Instead of scrapping bursaries and charging fees for student nurses while importing nursing and medical staff from all over the world – especially poorer parts of the EU – we should plan for a skilled NHS workforce.

Instead of allowing foreign fleets to plunder our fishing grounds, we should plan how to protect and increase the fishing industry – and provide material and financial support now.

Instead of EU-required transport of live animals, bring in our own humane regulations. Enforce import controls to stop the spread of plant diseases.

Instead of EU blackmail over border trade issues, initiate studies into how to expand the electronic recording of the

movement of goods in and out of the country. This will deal with the Irish border issue. Manufacture the devices needed, if necessary in government-supported firms.

Instead of reliance on EU-controlled systems like Galileo, keep our military forces independent and protect our domestic procurement industries.

Instead of EU-inspired rail and bus privatisation, take national control to enhance our transport and communications network to sustain an increase in our economy.

Instead of relying on open-door EU migration while dumping millions of young people into unemployment or minimum wage drudgery, raise their skills in a planned and concerted way. Enlist the young for the future so that Britain will have the skills to succeed – a key foundation for the country to thrive as an independent nation.

Some have already started planning. The fishermen, for example, and the unions representing merchant shipping. Others are slower off the mark – or refusing to recognise what they must do.

We cannot stand still, we have to advance to independence. •



Newcastle and the Tyne bridges. Photo Michael Conrad/shutterstock.com

5 See our own strength

Those who want to stop Brexit show contempt for democracy, and contempt for the people. They also show the deep lack of self-confidence in Britain's establishment circles. They assume we are weak and the EU is strong, while the reverse is true.

Across Europe, people are rebelling against EU rule. In March Italy delivered a stunning rebuke to Brussels in a general election which saw eurosceptic parties garnering more than half the vote.

Countries like Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and Denmark are refusing to cooperate with the EU's imposed refugee policy, leaving Brussels either impotent or hectoring (or both).

The German government led by Angela Merkel was brought to the brink by a revolt against the EU's free movement. The Schengen area, supposedly one where all cross-border movement is frictionless, is now riddled with border checks.

Meanwhile, the EU has become a byword for debt. Over the last four years the European Central Bank has had a

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See also: "EU space blackmail", *Workers* July/August 2018.

programme of quantitative easing (QE), effectively taking and recycling the bad debt from the balance sheets of commercial banks on behalf of euro member states.

The scale is staggering. In all the bank has committed €2.4 trillion to the purchase of government bonds; equivalent to 43 per cent of EU GDP. Much of the debt is in Italy, where it accounts for 130 per cent of the country's GDP (second only to Greece).

To put things into perspective, Britain is the fifth largest economy in the world. The City of London, for all its problems and its scant regard for industry, is a global financial centre in a way that Paris and Frankfurt can only envy. Britain's universities and scientific research are a byword for excellence.

So why is the government acting as though we will crumble and dissolve if we stand up as an independent nation? Why the self-denigration of a nation?

We need the kind of backbone shown fleetingly by the government when the European Commission said Britain will no longer have access to the development of the most important parts of the Galileo satellite positioning system (developed in

large part with British expertise and money). The EU also barred British companies from bidding for Galileo contracts – on the basis that they are a security risk!

The government's initial response was robust, saying that Britain will develop its own system. Without British skills the whole project could take three years longer, cost billions more and almost certainly work less well.

It should start right now: the actions of the EU have shown that Britain cannot conceivably rely on the European Union for any part of its national security. Yes, there will be a cost, but it is a cost worth paying.

The EU is faced with losing the UK – its second-largest economy, accounting for 15 per cent of its economic muscle, and the destination of much of its manufactured goods. They need us. We don't need them.

Britain is also the EU's second largest net contributor, so Brexit will potentially deprive the EU of between €11 billion and €14 billion a year – a hole member nations either cannot or will not fill.

No wonder the EU is worried. It is they, not us, who have everything to fear. ●



6 Insist on a clean break

Of all the misleading words used by the government during the Brexit process, one of the worst must be “transition”. It gives the impression of a period during which things change, during which we move out of the EU. But look at the detail, and everything about the transition indicates that it’s a journey to nowhere: a holding pattern designed to keep us locked into the EU forever.

There’s no transition, simply a delay. Britain will stay inside the EU until December 2020, paying out billions, subject to its laws, but without any say in its decisions.

It’s as close as makes no difference to the “vassal state” that some in government had been saying was unacceptable. No matter, they say now, keep your “eyes on the prize”.

But that prize is getting further away, not closer. On 27 March 2018 May hinted that timetables for leaving the EU’s customs union “might need to be revised” – in other words, extended.

In July 2018, the Chequers proposal

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See also: “The Chequers plan is a repackaged Moroccan model”, Robert Bates, published on brexitcentral.com on 11 July 2018.

on Britain’s future relationship with the EU confirmed the fears: there is no real transition planned, just submission to the EU (without the fig leaf of a vote in the European Council). An EU colony, permanently.

When we voted in June 2016 to leave it was in the expectation that Article 50 would be invoked the next day. Yet for all the deliberately deceptive wording in the government’s Chequers proposal, we are still far away from leaving EU control over our borders, our laws, our economy.

Under the transition agreement, employers can continue to freely import cheap labour until December 2020 – a further 21 months – so that they can put off having to invest in technology and training British workers.

Yet under the proposal, this state of affairs might continue indefinitely, all masked by a liberal sprinkling of the word “sovereignty” which, when used by this government, means nothing.

It talks about Britain reclaiming its representation at the World Trade Organization able “to make credible and balanced offers to third country trading partners” – yet committing to a common EU rulebook on trade in goods that

means we would be unable to negotiate trade treaties that include goods.

It talks about taking “sovereign” decisions about free movement of labour, but explicitly leaves the door open to using that sovereignty to allow virtually unlimited EU migration into Britain. The government needs to be told: there’s nothing “sovereign” about surrendering sovereignty.

The fishermen are still left in limbo. “The UK will control access to fish in its waters,” the White Paper says...before going on to say, “Any decisions about giving access to UK waters for vessels from the EU, or any other coastal states will be a matter for negotiation.” What’s to negotiate? If we are sovereign over our waters, we decide.

And all the while, as the fishermen point out, the transition agreement means that the EU can squeeze British fishing out of existence, and the government won’t be able to lift a finger. By 2020 there may be almost no fleet left to protect.

Enough. Britain voted to leave, for a clean break. Now the people will have to force the political establishment to carry out its will. Only independence will do. •