

# Embrace Brexit

and shape the future



# TRADE UNIONISTS AGAINST THE EU

## Embrace Brexit and shape the future

The Labour Party has embraced Brexit.

Jeremy Corbyn put an end to any speculation that Labour may support staying in the single market and the customs union. He made it clear in his Coventry speech that Labour's plans for the economy are incompatible with membership of these institutions.

It is now time for trade unions to embrace Brexit too and re-shape Britain.

## Fast changing political terrain

Mass anti-establishment, anti-austerity and anti-free market movements, often denigrated as populist, are sweeping the continent of Europe. These have sadly been used to create a surge in support for the far right, except here in the UK, where it has led to its demise.

The support for the far right has been caused partly by the left's failure to articulate people's fears and demands and its obsession with individual identity and the pie-in-the-sky dream of a socialist EU, instead of class identity and national sovereignty.

Here, in Britain, the combination of Brexit and the revival of the Labour party under Corbyn provides the biggest opportunity for creating a society that trade unions have fought for centuries.

## Rebuild and Transform Britain

Labour offers the most radical programme to rebuild Britain since 1945.

But unlike the post-war Attlee government which was free to pursue an independent economic programme, a Corbyn government would be unable to put these policies into practice in the EU.

The policies of state aid, borrowing to invest, freedom to negotiate trade deals in our national interest and ending competitive tendering as well as taking back major utilities into public ownership, are all incompatible with membership of the single market and the customs union.

## Rebalancing the economy

Our current membership of the single market does not permit the rebalancing of our economy towards manufacturing and production.

The imbalance is not just between the south and the north, but, and more fundamentally, between the manufacturing and the servicing sectors. Both the south and the north have suffered a dramatic decline in manufacturing. The only difference is that in the south, the service sector and financial services in particular, took up much of the economic slack while in the north, the once thriving industrial and manufacturing centres, were replaced with retail parks.

If we are to redress this imbalance, we need to stop the flow of capital out of the UK and reverse the shift from manufacturing to servicing. After all, it is manufacturing that creates the surplus value that drives the economy; banking and financial services may make profit, but they rely on the wealth-creating sector for their survival; they do not create surplus value, they consume it and gamble with it.

## Trade deal with the EU

As we rebalance our economy, so we must rebalance our relationship with the EU and the rest of the world. We don't want the very same relationship with the EU after we leave, It has been a relationship responsible for the deindustrialisation of Britain, privatisation of our services and utilities and shift to a trade deficit.

Our current membership of the EU



customs union links us into trading agreements that put up tariffs on imported food strangling African food production in the process.

We need a trade deal that positively discriminates in favour of our own products, imports only those products that we don't have, or which we are short of and demands that, if corporations wish to sell their products here, they should make them here.

This is a green, job-creating approach and there are very few commodities that cannot be manufactured here as we again upskill our population and create meaningful, well paid jobs for all.

## Green, high tech production

Outside the EU we can end the grotesque situation in which components that could easily be resourced locally, in fact criss-cross the Channel before they are finally assembled into complete products. This is a process that is hugely wasteful of resources and detrimental to the environment.

Such a new industrial strategy may be challenging in the short term, but it will serve the country well in the long term and return us to the eradication of full employment.

Those who doubt our ability to strike a good deal with the EU should remember that the 27 EU countries in total export more to us than we export to them. Britain is actually in a very strong position in the negotiations.

The EU needs us more that we need them as far as trade is concerned.

## The Irish border

A divided Ireland is being used by the EU to try and deny the British people the clean Brexit they voted for.

Northern Ireland is an anachronism, a product of the long history of British colonisation of that island, an anachronism with which we are currently living and the Good Friday agreement provides the framework for that.

Keeping an open border is necessary to honour the Good Friday agreement and both main parties are committed to that. There are advanced technologies that would allow that to happen which the EU continue to refuse to contemplate in spite of the fact that their own study of the issue comes to the same conclusion as those of the British government. Even the Head of HMRC Jon Thompson explained this to the Brexit Select Committee of the House of Commons.

## For peace and internationalism

Not only is the EU lurching to the right politically, but it is involved in a new arms war and increased militarisation.

In November it agreed a set of new policies to massively increase its arms expenditure and equip its own military forces. This is known as the PESCO agreement. We are certainly best off out of that.

The EU has orchestrated the break-up of collective bargaining throughout the continent and in standing aside encouraged many

government such as the French and Italian currently, to rip up all progressive workers' and trade union legislation.

Instead of turning our back on our nearest trade union neighbours in difficulty for fear we might expose the real anti worker nature of the EU, as many at the 'top' of our Movement have done, we should develop new international solidarity.

The confusion amongst some that mistakes globalisation for internationalism must end. We must return to our internationalist spirit as a trade union Movement.



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Trade Unionists Against the EU



## A Challenging and bright future

Leaving the EU will be challenging. Changing our relationship with the our biggest trading partner will not be easy and there is no doubt there will be some hardship in the same way as any rebalancing of our trade arrangements and of our economy involves.

All great advances in history have includes of some kind of cost, and so it is with the task of undoing the neoliberal market philosophy that underpins the economy of the EU and its member states.

The prize we would gain is that our future will be decided by ourselves for our own national interest and not the interest of a foreign, undemocratic bureaucracy we neither elect nor can change.

As Corbyn put it in a speech in Coventry, 'Brexit is what we make of it together'.

Trade unionists should be at the forefront of rebuilding and transforming Britain.



# SHAPING THE FUTURE OF BRITAIN



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