Workers of all lands, unite!

A labour movement policy on migration, labour and refugees
WORKERS OF ALL LANDS
UNITE

KARL MARX

THE PHILOSOPHERS HAVE ONLY
INTERPRETED THE WORLD IN
VARIOUS WAYS; THE POINT
COME ER IS TO CHANGE IT.
Workers of all lands, unite!

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Introduction

Many millions of working people and their families today are descended from migrant workers who left their native region or country to settle in one part of Britain or another. Going back centuries, migrants have brought music, art, literature progressive ideas and culinary traditions to what is a now a multi-ethnic society, bringing together many positive and vibrant aspects of national cultures. Over a couple of generations, individuals, families and whole communities have integrated into society and played a full part as citizens. This is a natural process and has gone on for millennia. It has never required special tests of loyalty. Nor does it require people who have settled in Britain to abandon the original national, ethnic or other aspects of their cultural identity. Indeed these characteristics are precisely what have given us such a vibrant multicultural.

Yet issues of immigration, asylum and migrant labour have deliberately been kept at the centre of the political debate by reactionary elements in the media, the main political parties and the state. This has been particularly the case in the run-up to, and since, the referendum decision of the British people to exit the European Union (EU). This continual barrage has fostered perceptions – often widespread – that Britain is being ‘swamped’ by migrant ethnic groups and nationalities, that immigrants and asylum-seekers are ‘bogus’ and receive privileged access to public and welfare services. It has also helped the growth of fascist and right-wing xenophobic organisations, although these remain small and largely ignored by working class people.

At the same time and as a reaction to these right-wing and racist tendencies, those on the idealist and liberal ‘left’ have chosen to define the decision to leave the EU as in itself as being racist and have demanded a ‘no borders’ policy.

Both the xenophobic attitudes, and the calls for ‘no borders’, help conceal the role played by the capitalist state and by capital itself, which is the direct cause of most of the economic and social problems afflicting the working class across the world – problems that lie at the heart of mass migration.

It is the responsibility of the Marxist party of the labour movement, the Communist Party, to present an analysis of these issues that serves the interests of the working class rather than those of monopoly capital. This pamphlet draws on a previous Communist Party publication of the same name issued in 2008.

The Communist Party welcomes discussion on its content and further matters arising from it.

Tony Conway
Convener, Communist Party Anti-Racism Anti-Fascism Commission
March 2018
Immigration and asylum – the facts

Firstly, we should disentangle facts from fiction. It is vital to put the scale and character of immigration into perspective if the labour movement is to develop and unite around policies that are anti-racist, genuinely internationalist and can win wide support in the working class.

Who is a migrant?

Given the extent of inaccurate and misleading propaganda in the mass and social media, there needs to be more clarity on this question. Different definitions are used by a range of domestic and international bodies. Migrants can be defined as people in one or more of the following categories:

• People whose country of residence is different from their nationality, citizenship or country of birth.
• People residing in one country for at least a year whose usual residence is in another country.

Of course, there are problems with these definitions. For example, children born abroad to British citizens can usually qualify for British citizenship and would not normally count as ‘migrants’ when in Britain. Neither would British citizens who have lived abroad for one year but who return to Britain. People may choose to retain a ‘non-British’ nationality whether born here or abroad, or whether or not they have official British citizenship.

However they define themselves in terms of their national, cultural or ethnic identity, people who have shown their commitment and lived in Britain long enough to acquire citizenship should not be seen as ‘migrants’, but as full and permanent citizens who qualify for the same rights and entitlements as the rest of us.

The difference between migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

The three categories of people are often conflated. But their reasons for coming to Britain and remaining here can be fundamentally different.

A migrant may have come here to live and work or study for varying lengths of time, if not permanently. Usually, this is a choice they make relatively freely, although there may be compelling reasons why they are seeking work or looking to join family members already here.

Asylum seekers, however, are defined under the 1951 Geneva Convention as people who fear persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group in their own country, are unable or unwilling to seek protection from the authorities there and so seek refuge or ‘asylum’ in another country.

As a signatory to the convention, Britain must consider an application for asylum from anyone already here. All applicants have the right to remain in Britain while their application is being considered by the Home Office and its UK Border Agency.

People may also apply for asylum if deporting them would breach the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (which is not related to the EU).

Sometimes, mention is made of ‘bogus’ or ‘illegal’ asylum seekers. There are none.
Everyone who applies for asylum is legally entitled to remain here while their application is considered, whether they arrived in Britain illegally or not. An asylum seeker whose application is successful then becomes a ‘refugee’ in law and entitled to the full protection of the British state. The term ‘refugee’ is also used to refer generally to people fleeing persecution, conflict or extreme hardship, which is reasonable but should be distinguished from its definition in law.

Britain has a long and distinguished history of granting protection to people fearing or escaping persecution, from the French Huguenots in the late 17th century and Karl Marx in the mid 19th century, to German and Austrian Jews in the 1930s and the Ugandan Asians in the 1970s. Anti-immigration campaigners who claim to be ‘patriotic’, while decrying or disparaging asylum seekers and refugees, should be reminded of this proud aspect of British history.

**Britain and asylum seekers today**

In modern times, Britain’s record has been a shameful one. Participation in imperialist wars and capitalist super-exploitation of the developing countries has helped drive many millions of people from their home countries. The position at the end of 2016, according to the UNHCR Statistical Yearbook (2018), is as follows:

**Syria:** 5.5m people have fled the country since Western-backed militias launched a war to topple the authoritarian Assad government in 2011. Most are being sustained in exile by neighbouring Middle East countries, Turkey and the United Nations.

**Afghanistan:** 2.5m Afghans have left their country and not returned since the US and British invasion of 2001 helped plunge the country back into war.

**Iraq:** The Iraq War ignited by the US-British invasion in 2003 drove more than 4m people into exile; more than 308,000 Iraqis have fled in recent years and 3.6m citizens are remain displaced inside the country.

**Ukraine:** Since the US, British and EU-backed right-wing coup of 2014 and plunged the country into civil war, 1.8m people have been internally displaced and 239,000 have gone into exile.

**Libya:** Since British and French military intervention assisted the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime which threw the country into further chaos and destruction, 625,000 people have left their homes, many of them seeking to reach Europe.

**Africa:** more than 6m people have fled war or famine in Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Rwanda, Congo, Eritrea, Burundi and the Central African Republic in recent years, leaving behind 11.3m driven from their homes. Many of them are victims of Western-armed regimes and militias, or of policies promoted by the major imperialist powers – notably the USA, Britain and France – and their monopoly corporations and free markets, such as: cash cropping for export, debt repayment, austerity, privatisation, unequal terms of trade and the removal of barriers to Western imports and capital.
Palestine: 5m UN-recognised refugees live outside Palestine, as the USA and Britain continue to prevent any decisive action to end Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories.

The countries that have given shelter to the most refugees are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Thousands (2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Turkey</td>
<td>2,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pakistan</td>
<td>1,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lebanon</td>
<td>1,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Iran</td>
<td>979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Uganda</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ethiopia</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Jordan</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Germany</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Congo</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kenya</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. USA</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Britain</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR Statistical Yearbook (2018)

British governments have made it almost impossible for asylum seekers to come to Britain to apply for refuge, with ever larger penalties for anybody bringing people here without official approval. Would-be asylum seekers have to apply from outside, which is often a difficult or dangerous operation, as well as a very lengthy one. Around 27,000 applications were made in 2017. Of the 21,000 or so cases decided that same year, fewer than one-third (about 29%) were approved with refugee status granted.

Under the 1951 convention, applicants should have the right to live in reasonable conditions during the period when their asylum claim is being examined or their appeal heard.

In Britain, successive governments have prohibited them from working or accessing mainstream benefits. Instead, they are placed in detention centres, or in secure accommodation where they are provided with food tokens and only the most basic facilities. Often, asylum seekers will be dispersed away from communities and support networks of people from the same background. Whole families are placed in camps, making Britain one of the few countries willing to detain children. Several of the nine detention centres are run by private security firms, employing people on minimum wages and poor terms of employment, with little or no specialised training and no trade union representation. Not surprisingly, riots by inmates sometimes occur.

In Britain, too, deportation decisions are often taken without proper legal representation for the asylum seekers and in a language they cannot understand. In recent years, it has become harder and more expensive to appealing successfully
against deportation. The payment-by-results regime has multiplied the number of perverse and callous deportation orders, as documented by such bodies as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. Over many years, the British state has deported people to countries where they have no roots, may not ever have lived and where they are often at risk.

In February 2017, the Tory government abandoned the so-called 'Dubs Amendment' to the 2016 Immigration Act, having granted entry to only 350 of 3,000 lone refugee children.

In the long term, only a world no longer dominated by imperialism will create the conditions in which many millions of people are not driven to leave their homes, families, communities and countries to flee persecution, war, super-exploitation, hunger and famine.

In the meantime, British governments should accept our obligations as one of the world’s wealthiest countries to offer shelter to many more refugees, fully embrace people’s right to claim asylum and treat asylum seekers with dignity. Such an approach would also undermine the opportunities for the people smugglers and traffickers to ply their squalid trade, profiting from human misery.

**Immigration in proportion**

For centuries, British capitalism and the state have used the so-called ‘free movement of labour’ in order to export surplus labour to the colonies and, at different times, to meet specific labour shortages. The latter was the case, for example, in the 19th century with the mass importation of Irish labour to feed the new factory system, and with the mass recruitment of Caribbean workers after the Second World War to staff public transport and the National Health Service. A little later, Asian immigration was utilised to expand the workforce in manufacturing, transport and the health service. In Britain’s worldwide shipping industry, it has long been the practice to super-exploit foreign labour, which could only be done effectively by allowing Asian, Arab and North African seafarers to reside in and around the major English and Welsh ports.

By today, Britain’s migrant population is spread across the nations and regions, though very unevenly. Concentrations exist in London and the cities and large towns of the Midlands, northern England (less so in the north-east) and south Wales. Many agricultural and tourist areas have high concentrations of seasonal migrant labour.

Long-term immigration into Britain by non-British citizens has stayed fairly constant over the past ten years, at around half a million annually, and has fallen a little from its post-crash peak in 2014 (source: ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Reports). Of these, between 39% and 45% are from the EU, while the proportion from southern Asia has fallen by half to around 11% as the immigration and citizenship barriers to the non-EU world have risen.

The balance of long-term net immigration of around 300,000 has also been falling since 2014, with the EU accounting for around 27% of that – down from its peak of almost half just a few years ago. That net inflow adds less than 0.5% to Britain’s population every year, less than half the proportion added by live births and more than cancelled out by the number of deaths.


**Comparative statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK population</td>
<td>66,181,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths</td>
<td>597,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigration</td>
<td>209,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live births</td>
<td>774,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>505,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net inflow</td>
<td>295,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum applications</td>
<td>26,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given refugee status</td>
<td>21,290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY:**

- **a** 2017
- **b** 2016
- **c** non-British, 12 months to September 2017

Source: *Office for National Statistics*

**Why people come to Britain**

Britain’s colonialist history and its role in making English an international language, as well as relatively high living standards, have made it a popular location for immigration.

In 2017, as in other recent years, almost half of all immigrants came for job-related reasons (down by almost half since 2015) and almost one-third to study.

**Workers:** almost two-thirds of those immigrants from the EU came to Britain for employment-related reasons, three-quarters of them on the basis of a job offer. Since counter-revolution and the restoration of capitalism in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, more than one million of their citizens have come to Britain to live and — in most cases — work. In Poland, the Czech Republic and other countries, their economies have been privatised, asset-stripped, deindustrialised and taken over by multinational corporations from Germany, France, Italy, Britain and other western European countries, assisted by the ‘free market’ rules of the EU and its Single Market.

EU nationals in Britain are predominantly employed in the retail, hotel & restaurant, food and beverage, education, health, construction, agriculture and small business sectors. They are often in low paid, casual and precarious work, used by unscrupulous employers to undermine collectively bargained wages and conditions and trade unionism itself. Nevertheless, they continue to make a significant contribution to major sectors of Britain’s economy, including to our public services. Migrant workers have also contributed to wider society in Britain, putting down roots and raising their families here, helping to reinvigorate many local communities.

How to ensure that Britain’s society and economy can have a mutually beneficial policy towards migrant workers is dealt with in Chapter Four.

**Students:** many of Britain’s universities are global centres of learning and research in many fields is now international, requiring extensive cooperation between countries. They recruit staff as well as postgraduate and undergraduate students from around the world. Britain attracts more international students than any other country except the
USA and the benefits of this exchange are felt culturally as well as in terms of academic and scientific progress. Of the 438,000 overseas students (one-fifth of the total) in Britain’s HE sector, 71% of these come from outside the EU and the 91,000 students from China comprise the largest national cohort.

Tory government announcements about clamping down on the number of foreign – especially non-EU – students have no economic or academic logic. They are designed to give the appearance that the Tories are ‘tough’ on immigration.

At the same time, government underfunding and the private-sector approach of many of Britain’s universities has meant that overseas students are increasingly treated as a cash-cow. According to HESA (Higher Education Student Data), they provided £4.7bn (27%) of universities’ £17.7bn income from tuition fees in 2016/17. The further commercialisation of higher education will encourage institutions to attract students based on their ability to pay rather than for academic reasons, or to provide wider access to working class and minority ethnic students.

Removing foreign students from immigration figures does not address the problem. While attempts to reduce or cap their number should be opposed, we also need major reforms of our university system: there should be no need to chase richer students as a particular source of funding; stronger partnerships with developing countries would ensure that Britain helps provide the education and training they need, while improving the prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation in the future; and more spending on research, linked to national and international development goals, would attract students to Britain and produce benefits for all involved.

**Families:** many people apply to reside in Britain in order to join a partner – who may or may not be a British citizen – or other family members. These account for around 16% of long-term non-British immigration cases. Different types of permanent, temporary and conditional visas can be granted according to circumstances. The procedures are intrusive and sometimes the interrogation can be humiliating.

Since 2012, in the case of a foreign partner wishing to join a British citizen or settled resident here, the couple must be able to prove that they have a combined income of at least £18,600 per year before tax. Bringing a child into Britain costs extra. The threshold rises by £3,800 for the first child and £2,400 for each one after that. This ‘minimum income requirement’ does not apply if the partner is coming from within the European Economic Area (EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), thereby discriminating against people who are far less likely to be white.

The £18,600 threshold was calculated as the level at which a single-earner household with no children, paying £100 per week in rent, would cease to be eligible for tax credits or housing benefit while still working. Anybody on less might be entitled to claim them and so – horror of horrors – a small portion of public money could go towards supporting their partner.

This minimum income rule takes no account of a person’s overall net contribution to public finances, whether or not they receive benefits.

According to Migration Observatory research for Oxford University, almost 40% of all workers in Britain today earn less than the income threshold and therefore do not have the same right to live here with their foreign partner as someone with a higher income. That proportion rises to 51% for those sponsoring a spouse and one child and
to 57% for sponsoring a spouse and two children.

More than half of all young and women workers in Britain do not earn enough to entitle them to live here with a non-European partner. Moreover, workers in some regions and nations of Britain are also less likely than in others to earn more than the threshold.

This means that the minimum income rule adds indirect age, gender and geographical discrimination to its direct discrimination against working class people.

‘Illegal’ immigrants and overstayers

There are categories of people who enjoy an automatic right to live and work in Britain: British citizens; nationals from the EEA or Switzerland and their extended family members (now subject to post-Brexit arrangements); nationals from the Common Travel Area (Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Isles); and various categories of Commonwealth citizens who qualify on grounds of either age plus ancestry, or marriage.

Other people may also apply for work visas of various kinds, notably domestic servants, sportspersons, skilled workers, creative and charity workers and, in the top tier, ‘investors’ and ‘entrepreneurs’.

But, as in almost all countries, there are migrants who have entered Britain illegally, having failed to seek or secure prior permission to work or reside here. Other immigrants may have breached the terms of their visas by taking paid employment while here as tourists or visitors, or by overstaying.

Under the 2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, employers are expected to conduct document checks on employees to ensure they are eligible to take on or continue to do the work for which they are being employed. Employers who knowingly or negligently employ what the law terms an ‘illegal worker’ can be fined up to £10,000 for each one.

Estimates of the number of illegal immigrants in Britain, including overstayers, vary between 310,000 (the Home Office minimum) to 863,000 (London School of Economics, 2009, maximum). Around half of them may be working at any particular time.

The LSE research indicates that the public services and benefit costs of ‘regularising’ half of the illegal migrants in Britain would be balanced by extra tax and national insurance revenue. The Institute for Public Policy Research suggests that it would cost £5bn to set up the systems necessary to track down and deport even a small percentage of the illegal immigrants here. A general amnesty, on the other hand, would not only save any such outlay – it would also secure around £1bn in ‘regularisation’ revenue.
Capital and the free movement of labour

It is a pervading myth of capitalist society that wealth is created by entrepreneurs. Wealth is created by workers. It is their labour power, not the manipulation of capital – however adroit – that sustains society and enables capital to accumulate through the generation of surplus value.

Capitalism requires there to be a body of labour whose livelihoods depend on them selling their labour power, who are subject to economic and political pressure to be ‘flexible’ and ‘mobile’, who are ‘free to move’ to where the employers and their system need them.

People who move from their community, friends and family to work elsewhere rarely do so out of choice or a spirit of adventure. Although there are exceptions, they are generally forced to do so for economic reasons. To refer, therefore, to the ‘free movement’ of labour is misleading. When it occurs on a mass scale, it is almost always a product of indirect or direct coercion.

The coerced movement of labour has always been a feature of capitalism. Mention has been made earlier of Britain’s historical record. More recently, patterns of migration have undergone a major shift as a result of collapse and counter-revolution in the former socialist states of eastern Europe and their accession to the EU.

Trade unionism and ‘super-exploitation’

Capitalists – the owners of most industry and commerce – will seek to maximise profit by a variety of means, including reductions in the real wage and other costs and an increase labour productivity. It follows, then, that when workers become organised and achieve better terms and conditions of employment, the owners of capital may seek to shift investment elsewhere or to import cheaper, unorganised workers with the aim of reversing their falling rate of profit.

While all workers are paid for their labour power at less than its real value, and are therefore exploited, migrant workers tend to be ‘super-exploited’. They are often paid significantly less than the norm, work longer and more intensively in inferior conditions and go without entitlements to paid holidays, leave, sick pay and other benefits. Such super-exploitation can then undermine the norm, worsening pay and conditions for other workers. Recent investigations in Britain (as in other countries such as Germany and Denmark) have uncovered numerous abuses:

- An Al Jazeera TV documentary in 2016 reported a carwash in Canterbury where eastern European workers serviced Volvo and Kia dealerships at £2.88 an hour for a 12-hour shift.

- In March 2017, the BBC exposed the plight of Rumanian and Moldovan truck drivers delivering Ikea goods in Britain and elsewhere in western Europe who slept in their cabs for months at a time and earned between £33 and £105 a week.

- In August 2015, Britain’s Anti-Slavery Commissioner Kevin Hyland told the Financial Times that the instances of exploitation he had witnessed in the agriculture,
fisheries, hospitality and construction sectors were ‘extremely shocking’. He said labour abuses across Britain amounted to ‘serious and organised crime’.

Although the law has an important part to play in combating super-exploitation, it is usually inadequate, weakly enforced and under-resourced. For example, large companies must now publicly report what they are doing to stamp out ‘modern slavery’ (ie, super-exploitation) in their supply chains. Al Jazeera found that almost half of Britain’s biggest (FTSE 100) companies fail to report at all. Between 2007 and 2017, only 13 companies were prosecuted for breaching the National Minimum Wage Act although, up to February 2017, 849 companies had been ‘named and shamed’ for non-compliance with the law. The Gangmasters Licensing Authority had its staff numbers cut by more than one-quarter between 2010 and 2015. Furthermore, many migrant workers are unaware of their rights, while the introduction of high fees has slashed the number of tribunal claims against employers by more than 60% since 2013.

Trade unionism has long shown itself to be the most effective way for workers to defend and advance their interests at work. This also means that trade unions are often in the front line of the struggle against super-exploitation, where they need to be. When unions succeed in limiting exploitation through collective bargaining and binding collective agreements, this benefits all workers by improving terms and conditions and establishing a proper ‘rate for the job’. This goes a long way to preventing super-exploitation and the consequent undercutting of wages.

Not surprisingly, therefore, it is in the interests of capital to undermine trade union strength and, where necessary and possible, either to import non-unionised labour or to relocate to areas where labour can be exploited more profitably. Of course, countervailing factors may also have to be taken into account.

Thus freedom of movement for both capital and labour can prove essential if capitalists and their transnational corporations (TNCs) are to maximise their profits. Hence the ongoing drive by the TNCs of Britain, the USA, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada to remove restrictions not only on their own direct access to markets across the world, including the market for labour, but also on the access of labour – preferably cheap and non-unionised but also skilled workers – to their home countries. Where regulation of capital or labour is an obstacle, they and the states that represent their interests will seek to modify or remove it.

Economic and social impacts of migration
The overall impact of labour migration – and in particular who benefits from it – depends to a considerable extent upon how labour markets are regulated and on the relative bargaining positions of workers and their trades unions in the host country. In general, the big capitalists and the state in the countries receiving migrant labour will benefit most because the majority of immigrants are young and of working age. They often bring with them skills in which the importing country has not invested sufficiently and a willingness to work hard and adapt.

But the extent of the benefits to the state and the host society depends on a number of factors, not least the capacity of the trade union movement and labour legislation to ensure that migrant workers are not super-exploited and are paid the rate for the job without displacing existing workers. When the latter is achieved, all the evidence indicates that immigration generates additional wealth, increases purchasing power,
creates more jobs, reinvigorates local communities and produces extra tax revenue that can be used to fund improvements in public services.

However, if migrant workers displace existing workers, then this will have an adverse impact, particularly if local rates of pay are pulled downwards by undercutting. The resulting reduced purchasing power will mean employers have less incentive to invest locally, including in training and skills, and will instead seek to employ ever-cheaper labour. It also means that the economy will have to bear the additional social and welfare costs of the displaced workers.

Unregulated migration can also put pressure on public services, particularly when they are stretched to the limit due to austerity programmes encouraged by both the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Currently, the same big business and monopoly media that back the so-called ‘free market’ have sought to use the negative impacts of economically coerced migration to whip up hostility to migrants and asylum seekers, fertilising the ground for right-wing, xenophobic and racist politicians and movements.

For countries supplying migrant labour, the impact in general terms is negative and can in extreme cases be devastating. The people remaining behind have paid taxes to educate and train a generation of young workers, yet will derive little or no benefit from this investment as those workers emigrate.

The ‘poaching’ of such labour by the more advanced capitalist economies is a form of imperialism, further limiting the development of the migrants’ countries of origin. The effect is cumulative, as many of underdeveloped countries have suffered a brain drain for years. Their development may then depend increasingly upon foreign TNCs, aid and loans, which themselves usually bring all kinds of economic and political constraints and conditions.

The fact that some anti-immigration politicians and commentators cloak their racism or xenophobia in a bogus concern for those countries of origin should not mean that this reality can be ignored.

For instance, recent decades have seen the biggest internal migrations in Europe since the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Between 1990 and 2012, more than 18m mostly skilled and young people – equivalent to the combined populations of Hungary and the Czech Republic – left eastern Europe and the Baltic States to seek work in western Europe. Enterprises and industries were closed down or privatised on a massive scale, unemployment soared and public services and welfare provisions were cut to the bone.

According to the IMF, on the other hand, the ‘opening up’ of eastern Europe brought it ‘tremendous benefits’, especially an inflow of capital and innovation and higher efficiency (in other words the restoration of capitalism and domination of Western monopoly capital). Yet the same IMF study in 2016 also admits that the mass emigration had a negative impact on economic development and living standards in the east. Overall, it held back GDP growth by 7%, led to skill shortages and held back productivity, while remittances from the west lowered the incentive to work, boosted start-up wages and undermined the rate of return on capitalist investment.

The study concluded: ‘The westward migration seems to have contributed to stronger growth in Western European countries and been an economic boon for the European Union as a whole. As such, economic migration is an indicator of success of the
European Union project, which sees freedom of movement as necessary for greater economic integration ...’

The IMF researchers proposed more spending from EU funds in eastern Europe and the Baltic States to compensate for the negative impact of mass emigration, although the flow of migrant workers abated substantially in the wake of the 2008 financial crash and economic recession.

Whether abroad or at home, combating the reactionary ideas and policies that can divide working class people will not be done by denying negative impacts and denouncing sincerely held fears – however misplaced or exaggerated – about jobs, wages or public services. Instead, facts must be separated from fiction and faced up to honestly. That is the best basis for setting out an alternative approach that identifies the real roots of people’s problems and proposes solutions that can strengthen the unity and advance the interests of the working class and its labour movement.
The EU, right-wing populism and social democracy

A little over 30 years ago, the EU was radically transformed by the introduction of the Single Market under the terms of the 1986 Single European Act. It is from this Act that the EU’s current neoliberal drive largely derives, based on the four big business freedoms (for the free movement of capital, goods, services and labour) contained in the founding Treaty of Rome (1957).

The EU Single Market was designed by Prime Minister Thatcher’s Tory ministers in Britain and those of Helmut Kohl’s right-wing Christian Democrat government in Germany.

The chief British objective was to open the European financial markets to the US and Japanese banks established in the City of London after the deregulation of banking in both London and New York. The main German objective was to secure a pan-European market for German manufacturing, together with cheaper sources of labour both in Germany itself and by establishing supply chains elsewhere.

The 1986 Act aimed to implement the ‘four freedoms’ in full across the EU. It required the opening of all government and local services to competition – including publicly-owned industries. It laid down the objective of a single European currency and, as a condition for its introduction, required governments to impose increasingly stringent limits on public sector borrowing and debt. This provision brought to an end the Keynesian policies that had sustained high economic growth and low unemployment in Britain and other western European countries over the previous 40 years.

The new regulator was to be – as in the 1930s – unemployment and the movement of labour. As set out in the Cecchini Report of 1988, the ‘free movement’ of labour within the EU from areas of high unemployment to those of lower unemployment would remove inflationary hot spots by cutting wages. The resulting increase in profitability would stimulate renewed investment. This was the new neoliberal model.

At the same time, the EU Commission sought to create a ‘level playing field’ in terms of labour conditions, so that employers in less developed countries did not undercut those in more advanced countries. The resulting Social Charter was at the same time used to win the support of organised labour across the EU for the new policies. For the first time in some countries, the Social Charter gave formal legal rights to health and safety and environmental protection, equalities, the definition of maximum working time and contracts of employment in the public sector.

But the Social Charter only generalised the labour standards that had already been achieved and surpassed in the core states of the EU over the previous generation, where trade union movements and social democratic parties had exercised significant political influence since 1945. Here, sectoral collective bargaining had been the norm and large state sectors led the way in guaranteeing basic standards. The incorporation of these standards into EU law gave assurance that the EU’s emerging free market would not see employers in one country being grossly undercut by wage costs in another. Differentials continued, but a safety net was in place.

Now, 30 years later that safety net has been very largely removed and labour...
market insecurity has returned on a massive scale. The populist right-wing would claim that this is the result of migration. But is it the real reason? Migrants are themselves the biggest victims of the EU Single Market completed in 1992 under the 1986 Act.

The real, underlying causes of deep and widespread labour market insecurity can be listed as follows – starting with those of relatively limited impact and ascending to the fundamental and structural:

First, the response of the EU to the financial crisis of 2008, forcing debtor countries to repay the debts of their banks. This resulted in unemployment levels in those particular countries not seen since the 1930s.

Second, the EU’s decision in 2012 to further reduce permitted public sector deficit levels for EU countries from a maximum of 3% of GDP to just 0.5%. This produced a long and continuing period of economic stagnation, high unemployment and low investment across the EU.

Third, the growth of privatisation and financialisation. The EU’s post-1986 commitment to creating a Single Market and eliminating all obstacles to free competition has resulted in the wholesale destruction of local government-based direct labour provision and the increasing privatisation of state-owned utilities from energy and transport to postal services and communications. The 2006 Services Directive opened education, health and health insurance to the private sector. Before this, in 2003, the Pensions Directive opened public sector pension provision to private providers – leading to a major growth in the size of pension and savings assets controlled by the private financial sector.

Fourth, and most critical of all, a policy of detailed intervention in labour market regulation, starting with the Lisbon programme of 2000 (now known as EU2020) and designed to promote what is called ‘flexicurity’. This has involved weakening contractual employment rights; reducing entitlements to unemployment pay, limiting pension rights and attacking collective bargaining as an impediment to labour flexibility. This deregulation was further deepened by the EU Court of Justice legal judgements of 2007-8 which make it illegal for trade unions or governments to require migrant ‘posted’ workers to be paid locally negotiated rates.

This is why labour market insecurity has returned. Migration is a consequence, not a cause. The real cause is EU policy: the deregulation of labour markets in conditions of high and mass unemployment; the erosion of benefits and pensions and the run-down of social provision, health care and housing; the growth in casualised and part-time labour; and an overall decline in labour’s share of income. Table 1 shows the sharp fall in wages as a proportion of GDP that took place in just six years between 2009 and 2016. Table 2 shows the scale of unemployment in debtor countries in 2012 arising from the enforcement of EU austerity programmes. It was this that drove the second wave of migration after the counter-revolution in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EU Economic and Financial Affairs Commission
http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/ameco/user/serie/ResultSerie.cfm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unemployment %</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The collapse of social democracy

For western Europe’s social-democratic parties, identification with these policies has been politically disastrous. Compelled as governing parties to force through direct attacks on workers’ rights, they have seen their electoral support collapse in Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Greece, sometimes dramatically. In their place have come the corrosive politics of right-wing populism.

The Italian Socialist Party has disintegrated, the Democratic Party was thrown out of office in February 2018 with just 19% of the vote, while the far right and fascist parties polled 36%. In Germany, the once powerful Social Democrats received 25% in the September 2017 parliamentary elections – their lowest share in modern history, as the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany entered the Bundestag with 12%. In France, the Socialist Party’s presidential candidate failed to secure more than 6% of the vote in 2017, while the far-right Marine Le Pen gained 33%. In the Netherlands general election in 2017, the traditionally dominant Labour Party saw its vote fall from 35% to 6% while the extreme right-wing People’s Party secured 13%. PASOK in Greece, dominant politically since the 1940s, has been eliminated while its ideological successor Syriza betrays its voters by implementing brutal, EU-imposed austerity,
privatisation and labour flexibility policies.

Meanwhile, the mainstream parties of the right, as in Britain, are responding to this challenge by aligning themselves more directly with populist positions.

Of all Europe’s social democratic parties, only the Labour Party in Britain has gained ground in the past few years. Except for the Communist and left-wing socialist parties, it is also the one mass, left-of-centre party that has rejected the neoliberal, austerity, privatisation and labour flexibility policies promoted by the EU and its Single Market rules.
A labour movement response

This pamphlet has considered some of the major issues and controversies surrounding asylum seekers, immigration and migrant labour. It argues that:

- Economically coerced migration must be distinguished from asylum seeking. Imperialist interventions, both military and economic, often result in the large-scale displacement of peoples. We must reject the prejudicial use of terms such as ‘illegal’ and ‘bogus’. Aggressive government interventions – whether to lock up people in detention centres (often in breach of international conventions) or demand the destruction of camps in Calais – have invariably been inappropriate, discriminatory and counterproductive.

- The movement of labour on a mass scale is rarely if ever ‘free’. It is economically coerced and has been used by capital – notably through the EU and its Single Market – to drive down wage costs and drive up profits. Conversely, the aim of the trade union movement has always been to control the movement of capital and regulate the labour market.

- Although neoliberal orthodoxy claims that large-scale migration can be beneficial to host countries by enabling employers to reduce prices while simultaneously increasing profits, there will only be a real and generalised benefit if such migration adds to existing employment and does not displace labour or undercut wages and conditions.

- The combination of economically coerced migration, EU regulations, government policies and racist and xenophobic propaganda is damaging working class cohesion and must meet with a realistic, credible labour movement response.

A programme for the labour movement

There needs to be a political education drive across the labour movement to equip workers with the understanding, the arguments and the resources to challenge neoliberal orthodoxy and racism, making the case for workers and citizens’ rights in a society which celebrates its cultural variety and richness.

At the same time, valuing the diversity brought by immigration does not require the labour movement to accept those reactionary political, social and cultural elements which are present in every culture and nationality, including within the nations of Britain. Full and equal rights for women, and for all people regardless of their sexual orientation and identity, are universal and non-negotiable. So, too, are the rights to criticise and espouse both religious and atheistic ideas.

A democratic, secular society which outlaws discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, religion, disability, age and sexual orientation provides the best protection for the rights of all its citizens. Such rights must run alongside the right of people to protest and to join and play an active role in their trades unions.

It is in the spirit of working people’s unity and internationalism that the Communist Party puts forward a programme of policies for consideration by the labour and progressive movements.

A labour movement policy on migration, labour and refugees | 17
A humane, progressive immigration and asylum policy

Britain’s existing immigration, asylum and nationality laws must be replaced by legislation that is fully in accordance with international conventions and the Human Rights Act. This would seek to end all aspects of discrimination on grounds of income, wealth, gender and race – all of which reflect the class bias of Britain’s legal and political systems, based as these are on an economic system in which one class exploits the labour power of another.

The callous and inhumane barriers erected against asylum seekers should be removed and all legitimate claims fully and properly considered. As the world’s sixth biggest economy which prides itself on having enlightened social attitudes, Britain can afford to have a much more generous, compassionate policy towards people fleeing persecution on grounds of race, religion or sexuality.

The discrimination against non-EU migrants carried forward in the 2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act must also be removed, including the imposition of ancestry and financial tests on spouses and relatives. All EU migrants and their dependants in Britain must be given the right to remain and should not be used as bargaining chips in the exit negotiations between the British government and the EU.

There should be an amnesty for all migrants and overstayers here in breach of immigration law, with exceptions for those involved in serious criminal activity. This would make it possible to assist those who are victims of slavery or super-exploitation of any sort. The full force of much more punitive laws, backed by sufficient resources, must be brought to bear against agencies, gangmasters, people traffickers, employers and landlords who prey upon immigrants of any category.

There should be a reinvigorated campaign for the humane treatment of asylum seekers, demanding the closure of detention centres. Asylum seekers should be housed in safe, supportive areas. Appeal systems should allow access to legal support rather than being fees-driven.

Moreover, British governments should adhere to the ‘Dubs Amendment’ which guarantees asylum here for unaccompanied children. Visa applications for the dependants of asylum seekers should be dealt with in accordance with the right to family life as enshrined in the Human Rights Act and various international conventions.

Whether in cases of immigration or asylum, full support should be extended to campaigns against unjust and inhumane deportations.

In summary, rather than setting what are largely arbitrary migration targets, Britain’s immigration policy should help meet domestic and international development goals. These, in turn, should derive from an independent foreign policy based on equal partnership, shared progress and solidarity against exploitation and oppression.

Enhanced social rights and provisions

Many migrant workers and students arrive in Britain to a privatised jungle in such vital spheres as employment, education and housing. Unscrupulous agencies, institutions, employers and landlords use these conditions to benefit themselves and drive down standards at the expense of both migrants and host communities.

The situation has been made worse since the 2008 crash with the implementation
of sweeping cuts in public, social and welfare provisions, especially at local level. The adverse impact of austerity on the lives and opportunities of millions of citizens has been exploited by its supporters, who peddle the lie that immigrants and asylum seekers are chiefly responsible for the extra pressures being put on public and social services.

Therefore, redoubling the campaign against austerity must be a priority for the labour movement, its organisations and supporters. The battles against cuts and redundancies, for decent and affordable housing for all, for more not fewer community facilities, for fairer and higher social benefits funded from progressive taxation and economic growth, need to be taken by trades unions, trades union councils, the People’s Assembly, Defend Council Housing and other bodies into local communities and workplaces across Britain. There also needs to be special recognition of the reality that sudden, large-scale and unplanned immigration can place strains on local communities as well as bringing benefits. In 2016, the Tory government allocated just £25m to local authorities across Britain to improve services in areas of high migration. The TUC has rightly pointed out that an effective, well-financed Migration Impact Fund must be controlled by local communities, who could use it to meet local priorities by:

- assisting schools, hospitals and other public services facing a sudden increase in demand;
- fighting workplace exploitation;
- tackling rogue landlords and improving the provision of decent, affordable housing; and
- funding English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses in colleges, community centres and workplaces.

More investment in local planning, education and training would benefit the host community as well as incomers, identifying and overcoming skills shortages. Local colleges could develop ‘skill centres’ working with a properly resourced public employment service. Furthermore, all employment agencies should be registered and adhere to minimum standards, including a statutory requirement to inform all temporary, agency and migrant workers of their rights. Temporary workers should be legally entitled to receive written terms and conditions within a week of starting their jobs. Likewise, a revamped public employment service – not linked to benefit regulation – would ensure that minimum standards and rights are more easily enforceable.

**Justice for all workers**

Trades unions and elected governments must be free to secure the rights which serve the common interests of all workers, including migrants.

In Britain, this means restoring the rights and freedoms removed or restricted by all the anti-trade union legislation enacted since 1979. Once again, unions must be free to recruit, represent and take action in the interests of their members, their industry or service and society as a whole, including solidarity action with workers at home and abroad. As in the past, such freedom is only possible if unions and their members have immunity from Britain’s common law, which favours the interests of capitalist property owners and their profits over those of working people.
and their families.

These and other necessary measures have been set out by the Institute of Employment Rights in A Manifesto for Labour Law (2016), now broadly endorsed by the Labour Party. The manifesto also emphasises the need for unions to recruit migrant workers and workers in insecure employment into their ranks. This means that unions should review their rules and subscription system, employ outreach workers and conduct appropriate recruitment campaigns.

Trades unions must also be free from the anti-trade union and anti-worker case law of the EU Court of Justice. This includes ECJ rulings in the Viking (2007) and Laval (2007) cases which, in effect, outlawed industrial action to apply negotiated agreements to workers ‘posted’ by a company from one country to another, overruling national courts and imposing punitive damages on the unions involved.

Further rulings in the Ruffert (2008) and Luxembourg (2008) cases restricted the freedom of devolved and national governments to prevent the employment of ‘posted’ migrant workers on inferior terms and conditions.

Post-Brexit alignment with EU Single Market rules through membership of the European Economic Area would mean unions would have to be subject to rulings of the EFTA Court, which complies with ECJ case law. In the Holship (2016) case, the EFTA Court upheld EU competition and corporate ‘right of establishment’ laws against trade union collective agreements.

Only when national, devolved and local government is no longer subject to the Posted Workers, Services (‘Bolkstein’), Business Transfers and other EU directives will it be possible to establish a comprehensive framework of rights and freedoms for all workers and their unions.

At all levels, elected government should recover the right to insist that private sector contractors comply with terms and conditions for their workers covering such areas as trade union recognition, holiday and sick pay, learning opportunities and equal treatment. Governments should also give higher priority to providing the resources needed to enforce minimum pay and other employment rights to the benefit of workers, whether migrants or not. At present, only 422 HMRC staff posts are dedicated to enforcing statutory minimum wage compliance (and 700 to tackling tax dodging by the very wealthy), whereas 3,765 DWP staff pursue benefit fraud and error.

**Restore collective bargaining!**

Strategically, the two key recommendations in A Manifesto for Labour Law are for the promotion of economic democracy and the full restoration of sectoral collective bargaining. The latter ensures that all workers – whether union members or not – enjoy the benefits of union-negotiated terms and conditions. Collective bargaining hugely restricts the ability of employers to reap super-profits from the super-exploitation of casualised workforces and vulnerable workers.

At its height in the 1970s, well over 80% of workers in Britain were covered by collective bargaining in the various sectors of the economy. Nowadays, fewer than a quarter of all workers are covered and most of those are in the public sector. Its redevelopment will require tripartite structures involving the trade unions, employers and government. This is even more necessary in those sectors where
casual, low-paid and temporary work is widespread and where migrant workers are super-exploited to the detriment of all. The Agricultural Wages Board in Scotland and the Agricultural Wages Panel in Wales have set a benchmark for England and other sectors to emulate.

Such sectoral collective bargaining arrangements would, insofar as they cover migrant workers employed by overseas-based firms, contravene EU law and ECJ rulings. They have also been specifically targeted within the EU2020 programme as a barrier to ‘flexicurity’.

However, such structures would go a long way to address the grievous consequences of casualised employment practices to which so many workers – particularly the young – are now exposed. They would also provide a framework, based on collectively negotiated skill requirements, within which to regulate migration and the importation of labour on a fair, non-discriminatory and non-racist basis.

Campaigning for such structures will directly counter the drive by the populist right – whether in or out of government – to focus hostility on migrant workers rather than on the system that displaces them and the employers who super-exploit them.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey put forward this argument when endorsing the call for comprehensive collective bargaining at the 2016 conference of the Centre for Labour and Social Studies (CLASS):

We are also, I would argue, past the point where working people can be convinced that the free movement of labour has worked for them, their families, their industries and their communities. It is fine to argue values and perspectives for the middle distance, but if it comes up against the reality of people’s daily experience, these arguments will fail. Let’s have no doubt – the free movement of labour is a class question.

Karl Marx identified that fact a long time ago. ‘A study of the struggle waged by the British working class', he wrote in 1867, ‘reveals that in order to oppose their workers, the employers either bring in workers from abroad or else transfer manufacture to countries where there is a cheap labour force’. So it is today. Anyone who has had to negotiate for workers, in manufacturing in particular, knows the huge difficulties that have been caused by the ability of capital to move production around the world – often to China and the Far East or Eastern Europe – in search of far lower labour costs and higher profits.

Likewise, the elite’s use of immigration to this country is not motivated by a love of diversity or a devotion to multi-culturalism. It is instead all part of the flexible labour market model, ensuring a plentiful supply of cheap labour here for those jobs that can't be exported elsewhere.

Of course, all socialists must ultimately look forward to a day when people can move freely across the world and live or work where they will. But that is a utopia removed from the world of today, and would require international economic planning and public ownership to make a reality. The argument that
wage rates are not affected does not stand up to scrutiny either. Put simply, if all you have to sell is your capacity to work, then its value is going to be affected by an influx of people willing to work for less money and put up with a lower standard of living because it nevertheless improves their own lives. Supply and demand affects the sale of labour too, pitting worker against worker.

This perspective of establishing collective bargaining structures, with full trade union involvement, to stop the ‘pitting of worker against worker’ must be a key demand in the development of a progressive response to right-wing populism and the implicit racism of existing asylum and immigration policies.

Such structures will also be essential for tackling the issues of investment in productive industry, technology, training and skills which underly Britain’s poor record of economic growth and productivity. This approach therefore complements the other key aspect of A Manifesto for Labour Law: the need for access to company information and economic democracy.

Critically, however, more information and consultation must be part of a wider and deeper perspective for working class and labour movement power. Partly, at least, this will develop with the restoration of collective bargaining itself – shifting the balance of wealth and power back in favour of workers and their families, as Tony Benn and the Labour Party pledged in 1974.

International cooperation and development

Refugees fleeing across the Mediterranean from Africa and the Near Middle East take extreme risks. Many lose their lifetime savings to people-smugglers. Thousands have perished. Refugees only take these risks because conditions in their home countries have become intolerable either through war, famine or total economic breakdown. Many of these circumstances result directly from the actions of NATO and EU members either militarily (as in Libya, Syria and Iraq) or economically through exploitative trade treaties.

Both Oxfam (EU Free Trade Agreements, 2008) and War on Want (Up Front: Rough Trade, 2008) have detailed the exploitative character of EU trade treaties with Africa – following on the equally exploitative terms imposed by the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF in the 1990s. These treaties have opened fragile economies to exploitation by external TNCs, removing protection for local industries, requiring the privatisation of state utilities and services and opening up land and water resources to external acquisition. This has come on top of decades of depredation by the great oil and mining companies degraded the land and ecology of the host countries and often corrupting the local political elites.

Future treaties between Britain and developing countries must not reproduce the worst features of the 2017 EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Union Agreement (CETA) or the aborted EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). These were designed to entrench the power of big business and diminish that of elected governments.

The priority they give to the ‘right to trade’ over all other rights lowers safety standards and threatens public services by opening them up to foreign competition. The principle of ‘equal access’ to markets for foreign and domestic suppliers
prevents legislation to favour local or sustainable produce by the application of subsidies or tariffs. Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions in such treaties allow TNCs to sue governments if they believe their profits will be hurt by legislation, creating the dangerous precedent whereby any law, however much it might protect workers, consumers or the environment, can be challenged if it limits the ‘right’ of companies to maximise their profits.

The risk is not hypothetical. Such provisions have already been used across the world — from Australia, where big tobacco took the government to court over plain packaging, to Ecuador which was sued by oil giant Chevron for trying to protect its rainforest from oil spills, to Germany where the Hamburg authorities dropped legislation to tackle pollution in the river Elbe when energy firm Vattenfall took legal action to stop its coal-fired power stations being subjected to new regulations.

Britain’s future trade arrangements should be based on the principles of mutual benefit, solidarity, social justice and environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, the same principles should inform future aid and assistance. Foreign aid paid in loans has a negative impact on the receiving country as it then needs to develop cash-rich exports, such as tobacco and palm oil, in order to repay the loan. This stops necessary development in infrastructure and leads to further negative environmental impacts, such as deforestation.

If the economies of these countries are to be rescued on terms that benefit those who live there, a quite different kind of aid is required — not tied to exploitative trade agreements or sweetheart deals with Western companies. What is needed is direct investment in what is required for real economic development: roads, railways, water and power grids, IT networks, schools and hospitals — together with funding to employ locally trained teachers, doctors and nurses. And these contracts should employ local people.

Any international policy on migration must be set in the context of other policies designed to overcome the underdeveloped state of countries which suffer from coerced migration.

If poor countries are not to continually lose out to mass emigration, therefore, there needs to be more international cooperation. There must be concerted action to retain such workers in their home economy. In 2005, the Global Commission on International Migration proposed that a new international agency be formed under the auspices of the UN, similar to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. Unfortunately, little progress has been made.

Finally, much stronger efforts are needed on two other vital fronts: firstly, to minimise global climate change, which is already having a devastating impact on many undeveloped and developing countries that — with the notable exceptions of socialist Cuba and China — lack both the infrastructure and the political direction to withstand it; and secondly, to end imperialist wars, which have resulted in vast displacements of people since the ‘New World Order’ was proclaimed in the early 1990s after the counter-revolutions in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Much good work is done in international bodies to highlight these issues and propose remedies for fundamental problems. But this rarely cascades down below the higher, official levels.

In Britain, trade unions in industry and education have built and utilised
international links to contribute vigorously to policy debates and campaigns on questions of international cooperation and development. They have a particularly valuable role to play in monitoring and exposing breaches of International Labour Organisation and other conventions by TNCs and within their supply chains – although these must be followed up with punitive and corrective government action at the national and international levels.

Having said that, much closer liaison needs to be established between trade union movements and left political parties in Britain and in countries where migrants originate. This would assist trade union recruitment and the development of joint strategies that would benefit the workers and peoples of all countries involved.

As Karl Marx and Frederick Engels expressed it in The Manifesto of the Communist Party in 1848:

‘The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains’.
‘They have a world to win’.
‘Workers of all lands, unite!’

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