THE EU REFERENDUM. STAY.

The working class is objectively a single international class formed by the global division of labour whose historical class interest can only be realised within the trans-national economy that is bequeathed to it by capitalism. Today, while the capitalists organise internationally, they retain the nation in order to imprison and divide workers. Capital flows from country to country, cascading from higher waged regions to lower waged regions while all the time eroding the differences between them. Each capitalist is a member of a class who shares in the legalised theft of the unpaid labour of the workers of the world in proportion to their investment. It matters nought whether they are American, European, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, male or female, paternalistic or despotic, or whether they pay workers in Dollars, Euros, Yen or Sterling.

If the working class is to free humanity and take society forward, it can do so only on the basis of its own internationalism undisturbed by the drag of nationalism. Only international solidarity can prevail against the might of the global corporations who treat the various nationally based trade union bureaucracies with deserved and complete contempt.

Working class internationalism is seldom tested during periods of prosperity but always during periods of economic austerity. Capitalist crises set in motion disintegrative centrifugal forces as the capitalist class is transformed from brothers and sisters sharing in the exploitation of workers, into hostile cousins seeking to pass on their losses through cunning, swindling and force. This disintegration tests the resolve of the working class. National solutions to the crisis proposed by the more vulnerable sections of the capitalist class are taken up by workers in the weaker countries as a solution to their own problems. These include immigration controls, prioritising jobs for the nation, raising the threshold for outsiders claiming benefits and rationing housing for locals. These measures are not only fool’s gold, they are the razor wire which keeps workers apart.

The test for any position adopted by the working class at any time is whether or not the cause of internationalism is advanced or set back by any position held. This applies to Brexit which encapsulates the centrifugal forces unleashed by the financial crisis in 2008, the stagnation in Europe, together with the division within the British capitalist class as to where its future lies. It has the potential of dividing British workers from European workers and English workers from Scottish workers.

What Brexit is not, is a working-class initiated and driven referendum. The only choice workers are being given is to line up behind one of the two wings of the capitalist class, to either stay in the EU or to leave. Appending working class manifestoes to the referendum - that is making a decision on whether to stay or leave conditional on our demands being met now or in the future - is best left to the scribblers of programmes.

The British capitalist class is torn between the smaller, more national-centred capitals and the bigger more international capitals. On the one side the smaller capitalists seek an escape from ‘red tape’ - really a euphemism for workers’ rights, consumer rights, environmental rights and health and safety rules enforced by Brussels. They aim to profit by the removal of these rights and rules when Westminster regains the sovereignty it allegedly lost. The other side, particularly the City of London, knows that, should it leave the EU, Britain will lose financial influence and markets.

What drives each camp is naked economic interest, but one which has cleverly been disguised. Instead the referendum is dressed up in a colourful brocade of democracy, border controls, culture, history when all else fails, fear mongering. The all-important, and in the end decisive, fear factor favours the Remain side as it is able to project economic pain from exiting Europe, whereas all the Leave side can conjure up is some paltry savings and vague economic advantages sometime in the distant future.
AUSTERITY EUROPE.

The left argues that the EU is based on austerity, exemplified by the punishment meted out to the Greeks. What is conveniently forgotten is that Britain has suffered the second deepest cuts in Europe after Greece and it has done so without the help of Brussels. And just as Greece was sacrificed to keep solvent the European banking system, in particular Deutsche Bank and Societe General, so the British population was sacrificed to save the British banking system and with it The Royal Bank of Scotland, then the world’s biggest bank. Austerity is not a political policy but an economic reflex in a capitalist world where losses have to be socialised to protect private profit. The response to the 2008 crisis was not prepared in parliaments but in central banks around the world and only then rubber stamped by the legislatures. It is a complete fiction - and a gross misunderstanding of the way in which capitalism works - to assume that London will behave in any way differently to Brussels in the face of another economic catastrophe - even though London has the flexibility of its own currency and unrestricted budget deficits.

DEMOCRATIC BRITAIN.

If the capitalist class were so keen on democracy, they would have appended a second question to the referendum: ‘Should we keep the “first past the post voting system” or should we adopt “proportional representation” in the UK?’ Britain is almost alone in Europe in retaining this most backward and undemocratic voting system, one which has allowed the Tories to carry out their scorched earth policies towards local government, education, the NHS, democratic and trade union rights, despite having received only one in four votes. The British capitalist class is intent on retaining first past the post as it is easier and cheaper to control and corrupt two parties rather than many, and because it is easier to distance two parties from the electorate. Britain, courtesy of the scale of defeats inflicted on labour by Thatcher and later by her prodigal son, Blair, is one of the most oppressive and exploitative countries within the EU, one driving much of the anti-working class, pro-big business agenda within the EU itself. Leaving the EU will not reverse this agenda but intensify it.

The anti-democratic credentials on both sides of the debate is brought into relief by TTIP. The Leave campaign claims it opposes TTIP because it is Brussels driven. But the core of this treaty, i.e. deregulation, is precisely the set of policies the Leave campaign are urging. Should they win the referendum and gain political control in Westminster, it is clear from their statements, that Britain will more resemble the United States than it will Europe. Cutting ‘red tape’ is exactly what TTIP is all about.

IMMIGRATION CONTROLS.

The right-wing Tories and UKIP-led Leave campaign claims that regaining control of our borders will reduce immigration. Obviously they stop short of claiming that this is intended to reduce the supply of labour which would engineer a labour shortage, thereby improving the bargaining position of British workers. Why should they? They are employers. These same politicians support the anti-union laws which effectively outlawed the closed shop in 1983. Their support for immigration controls definitely stops short of proposing a national closed shop for British workers, still less one controlled by workers. Instead we are treated to the humbug that British immigration controls will keep out scroungers, the unskilled, criminals and of course the terrorists that British foreign policy produced in the first place. In other words all their policies amount to, is to avoid paying towards the upkeep of the reserve army of labour outside Britain especially in Eastern Europe.
SAVING MONEY.

Britain has never been a donor country; it has always been a recipient country. Payments to Brussels and foreign aid are highlighted while the much larger profits, rent and interest British corporations and individuals suck in from the rest of the world, is conveniently ignored. If Britain is now experiencing a balance of payment crisis, this is not due to the money sent to Brussels, it is the result of the loss of income from the rest of the world and tax dodging. This lost income dwarves the net annual payments to Brussels and annual net aid payments (that part which is not skimmed off by British companies and organisations). This deficit currently stands at 7.3% of G.D.P. and rising compared to the adjusted 1% Britain spends on the EU and aid.

THE LEVERS OF POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY.

The rise of globalisation has led to workers in their hundreds of millions feeling increasingly disempowered and embittered. It is in this context that the demand to make Westminster sovereign acts as a siren call. It sounds empowering. Nothing could be further from the truth. The global corporations and banks will continue to rule. Being in the EU did not cause, nor did it prevent, Britain reducing its corporate tax rate to one of the lowest in the world. A reduction producing a loss of income equal to the net payment to Brussels. This race to the bottom is not the product of EU membership but economic dependency on these corporations. If Cameron doffs the cap to the new Chinese emperor offering all kinds of inducements, this is not because Britain is part of the EU, but because it needs Chinese capital and expertise. If anything, leaving the EU will make Britain more, not less, dependent on the giant corporations. Britain may be the seventh largest economy in the world, though this is a vastly inflated claim, but that is only equivalent to a couple dozen of the largest corporations.

The government may stuff propaganda through the door of every household in England, the Leave campaign may capture much air time, but ultimately it will be the markets that decide the issue. If the financial markets sense that the Leave campaign is gaining an edge, the run on the Pound will sink this already fragile and lopsided economy, and it will be this intimidation that will swing the vote.

In the end we must vote to stay in the EU as an act of solidarity. Leaving the EU will make it harder to join with European workers in building resistance to, and taking on, the giant international corporations. It will make it easier to pick on English workers especially when they have lost their Scottish brothers and sisters and potentially their Welsh ones as well. Britain, already a right wing country, with some of the most authoritarian legislation in Europe will become a prison house for its workers. It will be an island marooned in the fog of nationalism behind which lurks the most avaricious capitalists seeking to complete Thatcher’s mission, to free the market by imprisoning society.