

# The No2EU electoral alliance in the UK: An enemy of the working class and socialism

Michael Barnes  
22 May 2014

The No2EU (No to the European Union) alliance is standing candidates in the 2014 European Union (EU) elections in seven regions. No2EU is an electoral front of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) union bureaucracy and its supporters in the Socialist Party and Communist Party of Britain.

No2EU seeks to exploit the impact of the global economic crisis and the EU's hated austerity measures to direct growing opposition in the working class into a nationalist dead end.

The outfit emerged out of the Trade Unionists Against the EU Constitution (TUAEC), formed in 2004. TUAEC's web site linked to a number of what it termed "EU-critical" organisations. These included far right, anti-EU groups within and outside the Conservative Party, among them the UK Independence Party (UKIP). In March 2009 the RMT executive endorsed No2EU and became its moving force.

Speaking last year, No2EU's former spokesman Bob Crow, then RMT general secretary, denounced the EU's "free movement" of workers for undermining the control of "national parliaments." "Free movement within the EU impoverishes workers," he said.

Crow concluded that it was necessary to "leave the EU and rebuild Britain with socialist policies."

The reference to socialism is bogus. There is nothing anti-capitalist about the organisation's opposition to the EU and when it speaks about "socialism," what it really means is pressuring Britain's ruling elite to use the state apparatus to strengthen the national capitalist economy against its major competitors.

No2EU's effort to blame foreign labour for economic misery in Britain is a reactionary fraud that pits workers in different countries against one another. It absolves the British government and British capitalism of any responsibility for brutal austerity measures because,

according to No2EU, they are merely following EU "diktats."

Brian Denny of the RMT (also standing as a No2EU candidate for the East of England) strips No2EU's program of its pseudo-socialist rhetoric, bluntly attacking "social dumping, whereby cheap foreign labour displaces local workers."

The demand "British jobs for British workers", it should be noted, is the main slogan of the fascist British National Party's European election campaign.

No2EU rails against the globalisation of production because it has undermined the position of nationally based organisations such as the unions, threatening the privileges and social position of their officials.

Remarks delivered in 2010 by RMT president Alex Gordon (who is standing as a candidate for No2EU in London) at Karl Marx's grave in Highgate Cemetery, London bring out the thinking of the union leaders.

Gordon, a former anarcho-syndicalist now closely aligned with the Stalinist Communist Party of Britain, bemoaned not only "the global reach of capital markets", but the "speed and volume of capital flows and their repercussions [for having] undermined 'normal' democratic policy cycles." This had weakened both "the ability of organised labour to resist economic exploitation" and the ability "of nation states to regulate economic activity."

Gordon's conclusion, one that forms the central axis of No2EU, is to cling more firmly to the nation-state and to call for the latter to be strengthened.

"The present crisis of capitalism and massive attacks on the idea of the nation state and democracy, demand that we return to 'the National Question' with sober senses", he said, adding that "National independence should, once again, play a decisive role in the defeat of the parasitic class."

As the *World Socialist Web Site* commented No2EU was founded, “There is something grotesque in the assertion that British imperialism has lost its ‘right to self-determination’. Given the criminal record of the British bourgeoisie across the globe, the oppressed peoples of the Middle East, Asia and Africa will rightly treat such claims with the scorn they deserve.”

No2EU’s “Fortress Britain” policy goes hand in hand with the unions’ role in imposing job cuts and productivity drives. The essential role the trade unions play is no longer to push the employers and government for reforms and concessions, but to pressure workers to give up everything achieved in the past in the name of defending the national economy.

The global integration of production and finance and the global division of labour mean that any attempt to return to national protectionism is not only unviable economically, but would bring about a greater social catastrophe.

The problem is not, as No2EU claims, global production per se, but the profit system. Global production has vastly expanded the size and strength of the working class, creating a truly global class of billions, who share the same experiences and have the same interests. The task is to actualize this vast power, through a political perspective aimed at overcoming national divisions in the fight for socialism.

No2EU’s campaign is directed at undermining this unity. It stands in the tradition of the trade union bureaucracies who twice in the last century subordinated the interests of the working class to their “own” nation and led them into the slaughter of world war.

Once again, the world is a tinderbox, in which local incidents can quickly erupt into a wider war, as in Ukraine. No2EU’s campaign has the objective character of dousing this tinder in petrol.

It is no accident that the group barely mentions the dangers of fascism and war in Europe in its campaign. The few articles that it has on events in Ukraine issue no call for workers’ unity. While identifying the EU’s role in helping install fascists in power in Kiev (the role of the US and the UK goes almost unchallenged), this is done to justify a nationalist retreat into beggar-thy-neighbour protectionist measures that history shows will end in war.

Gestating within the RMT (identified by the pseudo-

left as the most “militant” union in Britain) and No2EU are highly dangerous policies of right-wing nationalism.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, (PSG), British and German sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, have intervened into the EU elections to provide the growing opposition to the attacks of big business and its political representatives with a clear socialist and international orientation.

Recognising that there is no national solution to the problems workers confront, we call for the abolition of the EU and all its institutions and the establishment of a United Socialist States of Europe and the formation of a workers government in every country.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**