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# Blairism falls apart



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# Build Public Sector Alliances

New Labour's privatisation agenda means that organisations are needed to deliver joint action by trade unionists

Early this year regional officials in London from several unions with large public sector memberships set up a "Public Sector Alliance" (PSA) for the capital.

Backed by a combination of branch committees and regional councils from the FBU, CWU, Unison, the NUT and the RMT, this move came at an opportune moment. Workers across London's schools, local authorities, the tube and rail network were all gearing up for a wave of strike action over weighting allowances and pay in general.

At the same time, almost every aspect of the public sector faced the prospect of either outright privatisation or backdoor attacks in the guise of PFIs and PPPs.

The PSA announced its existence to many activists through a glossy leaflet outlining a 10-point "charter for public services" that gained wide distribution during the first London Weighting strike by Unison members on 14 May. But what was missing from the leaflet was any indication of how the alliance intended to achieve rail renationalisation, much less an action plan for defending the postal services from privateers or, indeed, winning the London Weighting dispute.

Further strikes took place in London local government and the momentum built over the early weeks of summer for the 750,000-strong nationwide walkout in sup-

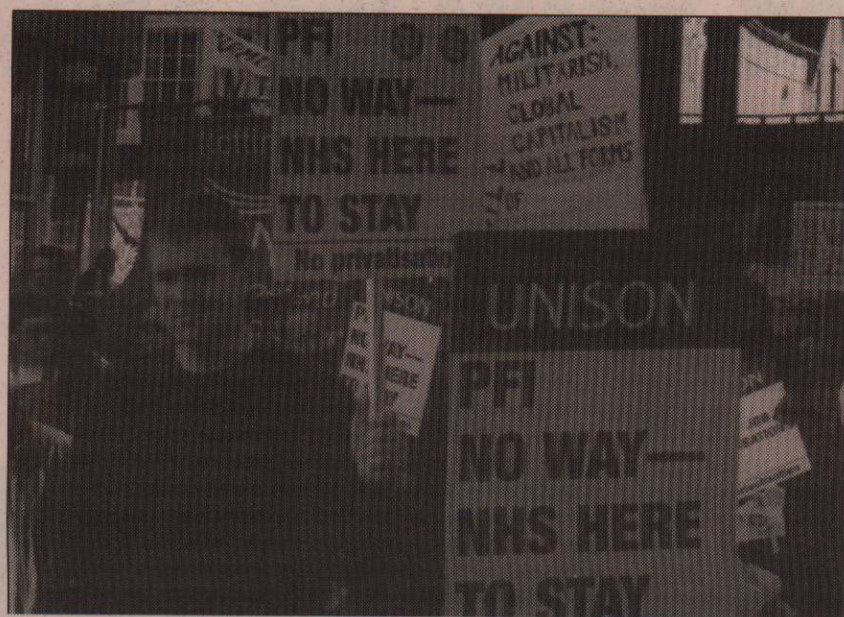
port of the joint union pay claim against councils in England and Wales. Tube-workers were on the brink of their own strikes over pay and health and safety concerns raised by the part-privatisation of the Underground.

The original London PSA seemed to have fallen silent. Then in early July a meeting of left activists revived the idea and since then a number of Unison branches have adopted motions calling for the formation of locally rooted alliances.

The concept has caught on in some other parts of the country most notably in Newcastle, where the local government branch has helped spearhead the development of what appears to be the most vibrant PSA to date. It is mounting a demonstration and rally in Newcastle on 2 November in opposition to a large-scale push to privatise or restructure many services by the New Labour council. This looks set to draw in active support from many other sections of workers not directly affected, such as CWU members, who in turn face similar threats in the near future.

Meanwhile, in London a late October rally, called in the name of the PSA was the first major show of support from other trade unionists for the FBU's struggle. A start, certainly, but only a small part of what PSAs can do and need to do over the coming week and months.

There is no reason, in principle, why full-



The Public Sector Alliance could link up struggles over privatisation, pay and conditions

time officials shouldn't play a part in building PSAs. Indeed the initial impetus in most branches and workplaces is likely to come from those who are already leading stewards or branch officers. But the emphasis has to be on breaking down bureaucratic and sectional barriers between unions, sectors and occupations so that PSAs have the

flexibility that highly bureaucratised union structures generally lack.

PSAs are not about to supplant existing unions and their internal structures, but what they can offer is either a supplement or alternative to trades councils, which have all too often ceased to exist entirely or fallen into terrible disrepair.

The FBU's upcoming battle and the education strikes in November must be the catalyst that transforms talk about creating PSAs into practical activity to attract much wider layers of activists, old and new, across the various unions. If such bodies are going to deliver the goods, they cannot be talking shops, but need to have input from and be accountable to members.

In most cases, a structure based on elected delegates from branches, workplaces and community organisations like tenants' associations and pensioner action groups, won't be achievable straight away, but this needs to be the explicit goal of PSAs from the outset.

A local PSA could dovetail with an area's firefighters' support group and also reach out to communities of service users to lay the groundwork for future campaigns that can combine industrial action with militant public protest. In the FBU dispute, a PSA could organise support for firefighters' picket lines, workplace levies and a wide range of actions focused on workplace health and safety, up to and including walkouts.

But the short to medium-term objective for an effective PSA should be far greater co-ordination between rank and file activists in the component unions in order to deliver strike action across the whole public sector over the threat of privatisation, issues of pay and the so-called "modernising" agenda of the Blairites.

## College staff must escalate action on pay

Lecturers, administrative staff and support workers in further education colleges are preparing for strikes over pay.

The current campaign began with a lecturers' strike last May. Follow up strikes by Natfhe, the lecturers' union, were originally planned for September to coincide with the Labour Party conference. This didn't happen, although the original offer of a measly 1.5 per cent was increased to 2.3 per cent following the two-day strike in May.

Who says strikes don't win us anything!

In England there is now an additional £32m for the Teachers' Pay Initiative (TPI), which is a form of performance-related pay. It is not consolidated into the pay scales and can remain the gift of individual Principals. Some lecturers may get nothing.

College lecturers teach the same subjects as teachers in schools and there is a loss of lecturers into the hard-pressed schools simply because the pay is better.

The current claim is for a flat-rate £3,000 to restore parity with school teachers. About 10 years ago, prior to the incorporation (privatisation) of the colleges, further education lecturers and school teachers were paid the same. Now we are approximately 12 per cent behind and have no national bargaining structure.

Members of Natfhe are angry that the leadership have only gone for a one-day strike in November. At conference we voted for escalating action. But the leadership have called a shorter strike than the May action.

The strike called for 5 November is a joint action with Unison, GMB and other college unions. This unity is a step forward. But we need to build for a real escalation of the

### PASS THIS RESOLUTION

Natfhe Rank and File is organising in the branches and regions. Pass this motion in your branch or region and forward it to: Natfhe, Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JP or Email: [hq@natfhe.org.uk](mailto:hq@natfhe.org.uk) for the special Sector Conference on 7 December

#### This Branch/Region

- Is angry at the decision to delay the next stage of action in pursuit of our pay claim and condemns the leadership for delaying the Special Sector Conference called to decide on the future direction of the dispute.
- Does not regard one-day strikes as escalating action in this dispute.
- Calls for indefinite strike action as the only effective method for us to realise our claim for parity with teachers.

action now if we want to win.

The leadership is planning to call further one-day strikes each month from December. The danger is, we will get locked into a war of attrition and it will become ever more difficult to sustain the action. One day strikes spread over a long time do not unify the workforce. They can actually wear it down to the stage where many members ask "what's the point?"

The management can ignore the effects of one day actions for as long as they choose, because they may be a nuisance, but they don't seriously disrupt the service.

We must make the one-day strike action, and the planned lobby of the AoC on 19 November in Birmingham, successful but we must also build for action that will win this dispute. The best way to achieve a rapid victory is to take effective all-out, indefinite strike action. This would bring our management, the AoC (Association of Colleges),

to the negotiating table with a serious offer in no time. The goal of parity with teachers could be won.

As we go to press it seems as though lecturers in Wales may be offered a deal that includes parity by April 2004. If Wales can afford this then England can also afford to pay decent wages to its lecturers too. We should use this offer to build a united fight of all lecturers and all college workers for the full claim to be met by all colleges. We must beware separate local deals that will fragment the union and set lecturers in different areas against each other.

Resolutions for all-out strike action must go to the special Natfhe conference in December. The leadership's delays have already served to prolong the struggle. We do not want to have this year's claim run on into next year. Nor do we want to accept another paltry offer with promises of jam tomorrow.

## Release Asians who defend their communities

A fascist mob have invaded your town. You are Asian. You and your friends stand up to protect your homes. You go to the aid of a white shopkeeper and a pregnant woman to protect their shop. You succeed. You are a hero. You are sent to prison for a year. You are filmed throwing one stone. You are Mudasar Khan, 21, of Bradford.

Last summer the fascist BNP provoked riots, in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, by attacking Asian communities. So far 200 Asians have been arrested. The average sentence received by the 46 people already convicted is four and a half years. The fascists charged are getting average sentences of less than half of this.

Why the double standards? Because the British state will not tolerate Asian people defending their communities. Self defence is an offence to our rulers.

In Burnley the riot broke out after a fascist gang of between 20 and 30 men attacked two Asian taxi drivers, set fire to an Asian business and restaurant and burgled two Asian houses. An all white jury found, a group of six Asian men who had defended their area against the fascists and the police, had acted in self-defence. Nonetheless four were convicted of a single charge of violent disorder.

Mohammed Nawaz, 35, who assisted an elderly white woman during the uprising, was cleared of all charges after being filmed carrying a stick.

Mohammed explained why they had acted: "It was necessary we were there. If we hadn't been there the same thing would have happened as happened in Burnley Wood and the town centre. If racists had got into Daneshouse, everything would have been destroyed. I have no regrets. I would do it again."

Just in case anyone is in doubt why the British state has targeted Asian youth with such vicious repression, listen to Judge Gillick who sentenced the Bradford defendants: "It must be made crystal clear to everyone that on such tumultuous and riotous occasions, each individual who takes an active part...is guilty of an extremely grave offence. It would be wholly unreal, therefore, for me to have regard to the specific acts which you committed."

British justice is racist justice. We demand the immediate release of all Asians and any of their black or white friends who defended our communities against fascist attack. All future charges must be dropped now.

Self defence is no offence!



Asian youth arrested in Bradford this summer

As we go to press the FBU executive has called off the first 48-hour strikes. After lambasting the union as Scargillite, and saying "no pay talks before December" the threat of a solid strike forced Prescott into an embarrassing U-turn.

But now the danger is that the dispute's momentum will be lost. The government will bring whole elements of the modernisation agenda forward: the employers would not be at the table if pay and "modernisation" were not still linked.

Right now the task is to exert rank and file control over the negotiations, to prevent pressure from government and the TUC forcing Gilchrist to accept less than the historic hike in pay the firefighters deserve. So far there has been no government assurance that extra millions will be found to settle the dispute - so a strike is still possible.

An FBU strike will determine the future of the labour movement for years to come. Victory will see a rapid escalation of confidence and struggle, especially within the public sector. The real chance to defeat the government's policies not only on pay but also on its whole privatisation agenda will exist. That is no doubt why the government is desperate to buy it off.

The FBU realises what's at stake. Andy Gilchrist publicly argued that a dispute that began over pay "is also, in my view, a dispute all about the future of public services. And I make no apology for saying that." (*Redwatch*, Ballot Day issue).

This is a strategic battle between the labour movement and the ruling class - with New Labour at the helm on behalf of the ruling class.

The FBU is in a very strong position to win this dispute. It has the overwhelming backing of its membership, it is tightly organised, it has the experience of an extremely lively and militant six months of campaigning behind it and it has real power.

It is, at the moment at least, uncompromising on its demands and its refusal to participate in the government's so-called independent inquiry (actually, a Blair appointed inquiry). The FBU is making clear that it would be on strike, putting the onus for "emergency cover" and any potential fatalities onto the government. The union is fully mobilised and ready for battle.

Moreover, though the FBU has gone for discontinuous action, by moving rapidly towards three sets of eight day strikes with very short intervals between them, means that it is, in effect, an all out strike. If it hasn't won after 36 days of strike action (the number so far called between now and December) the likelihood is that it will move to a continuous strike after Christmas.

Add to this the fact that the RMT and Aslef are pledging walk-outs on safety grounds, that other public sector unions are beginning to offer support, that the awkward squad are rallying behind the dispute and that the FBU have extensive public support and the recipe for a speedy victory is plain to see. The strike can win and deliver a huge blow to New Labour.

Of course there is a huge factor militating against the achievement of a speedy victory - the centre right bureaucracy of the TUC who remain in league with Blair, even though they may grumble about aspects of his strategy.

The fact that they and Blair are dredging up ancient codes of conduct for disputes (the 1979 agreement they are referring to, the so called Concordat, was drawn up by the Labour government and the union leaders after the winter of discontent in order to undermine effective strikes and picketing) shows how low they are prepared to go.

Their support for the FBU in words at the last congress has yet to be matched by deeds. Indeed it is reported that they informally sanctioned Sir Tony Young, a former TUC president, going onto the "independent inquiry". If, as is highly likely, the TUC majority prevaricate and attempt to undermine the strike, the need for the awkward squad to constitute an axis of solidarity independent of the TUC will be posed.

Blair was clearly lining up to smash the FBU as the new "enemy within". The resolve

# FIREFIGHTERS Fight for the full £30k

As Workers Power went to press the first four days of FBU strike action had just been called off. The union rank and file must stand ready to force the leadership to call action if £30k is not forthcoming



of the FBU membership made him lose his bottle. But in return for any substantial rise they will want "modernisation" plans that could totally sap the strength of the union in the workplace, bringing in McDonalds style work practices and PFI deals.

Any attempt to offer less than 30k or link it to significant concessions should be met with strike action. We need to keep the momentum going. If the strikes start on 6 November:

- every trade unionist should get a firefighter to speak to their branch/workplace, organise regular collections, twin with fire stations

- every workplace activist to canvass for walk outs if health and safety regulations are being breached - follow the rail workers' example

- every trade unionist should campaign now to get their unions nationally to pledge solidarity with the firefighters, to demand the TUC dump the concordat and organise a campaign of massive financial and physical solidarity with the firefighters, including bringing forward claims and organising joint strike days with the firefighters

- start building support committees in solidarity with the firefighters and draw in trade unionists, community groups, anti-capitalist activists etc. Organise local demos, occupations of fire authority and other local authority buildings, dramatic banner drops, banners over rail tunnels saying "Unsafe - do not enter", systematic harassment of Labour MPs at their surgeries, etc. etc

- build the picket lines in the event of

troops attempting to cross them - produce special leaflets aimed at the troops if it gets to that stage

- in the unions led by awkward squad members activists must agitate for their leaders to convene a national firefighters' solidarity convention in the event of the TUC doing the dirty on the strike

- left MPs must condemn Blair's attack on the FBU, put down more early day motions supporting the strike and rally support for the FBU throughout the party

- College and student union facilities and resources should be opened up to the firefighters. Youth groups like Revolution, should be asked to form mobile solidarity crews to approach the stations and offer to undertake a range of tasks from collecting money to staging publicity stunts.

This is a fight we can win. We can put an end to an era of defeats and retreats. We say:

- Solidarity with the firefighters - their fight is our fight

- If it's not safe we won't work in it - for walk outs across industry on safety grounds

- Scrap the anti-union laws - all out with the firefighters if they try to outlaw the strike

- The TUC must stand with the firefighters - no deals with Blair behind the backs of the FBU

- For rank and file control of the strike through regular mass station meetings and democratic elected local leaderships - the rank and file voted to start the strike, the rank and file will vote on any deal before the strikes is called off permanently.

Workers Power spoke to **Steve Godward**, a Birmingham firefighter and Fire Brigades Union activist. He was speaking in a personal capacity, before the postponement of the action.

■ Do you think that the determination of the membership, shown by the vote for action, is matched by the determination of the leaders?

The ballot result was absolutely amazing: 83.5 per cent turnout, 87.6 per cent for action and 12.4 per cent against. That is a clear mandate for Gilchrist and the executive to take us all the way for £30,000. Right across the service the massive majority are saying that we want £30,000.

I've seen militancy growing in individuals who I would consider on the right - our troops are prepared.

To date this dispute I think has been conducted very well. The message is getting through to Gilchrist and the executive members and they will be hearing it clearly. Of course there are areas where the leadership could start talking about a compromise: we could split the rise over three, four or five years and we could have different scales. But at the moment such deals would be difficult to sell to the members. We want an unconditional thirty grand. Then we want a new pay formula. Then they can start talking.

■ What do you think is at stake politically in this dispute

The politics behind all this constantly impact upon us on a daily basis. PFI has slowly crept into the fire service. In my area they want to close two fire stations and build one to replace them. Well, that's an absolute wrecking policy.

But the worst of it was that it was the Labour Group, in fact an ex-FBU official, who moved this proposal at the fire authority. So you start to believe that those people who used to be your friends are becoming your political enemies. At the FBU conference last year, we took the radical step of deciding for ourselves where our political funds should go to (instead of automatically handing them to Labour). We tried this year to consolidate that but got knocked back. But the whole essence of our job, because we are controlled by the politicians, means that our strike is a political strike.

■ Obviously it's the members that make the strike, not the officials. What are the mechanisms at a station level for the rank and file to exercise control over the strike?

I'll just talk about the branches that I know, which is four or five branches in the north of Birmingham. We've called a branch meeting at eight o'clock in the morning of the 29th, and we're asking everybody to attend. It's really brought the firefighters on the stations closer together. And because of the nature of our work where we do work together as a team, not just on our particular watch but across the four colours, we've got this united front.

We're going to be walking out all together. Members are going to picket but also go out into the public shaking tins to raise money to keep us out for as long as necessary. But we're also going to

be meeting members of the public. Now this will politicise them as they see the support that you get when other trade unionists come up and start talking to them.

We will be meeting regularly to look at strategy and how we are talking to other trade unions in our patches such as on health and safety issues and looking at risk assessments that their employers should be making.

We'll also want to be getting out to do some speaking so those of us who have speaking skills will be taking people along and starting to develop people like that because them's the ones who will be developing our class for the future.

■ Will you actually be electing a strike committee? And will you be having regular mass meetings?

The strike committees will all be elected by the branches and they will range from fire stations to fire control departments and the offices. And they'll all be democratically elected and get together for that particular branch and have a certain autonomy but the propaganda that they use will still be centrally produced by the union.

I believe that mass meetings have got to be the way forward. I'd ask members to make sure that there are mass meetings.

■ What can other workers do to help?

Well there's the normal pounds, shillings and pence. It's terrible when it comes down to a blunt appeal for your money, but it is still an issue. We will need money to keep the firefighters out. I would say to comrades if they raise £50 or 20p it doesn't matter, take it to the fire station, take it to the membership, that will boost them.

Also, do some education, get into discussions with firefighters and put the case for the whole public service unions working together. The other thing I'd say is go to the fire stations, don't just take it as read that there is a support group, go to the door.

I would hope the Socialist Alliance, in which of course Workers Power plays an very important part, would be, not leading it, but in that old phrase, helping to build a broad united front to support the strike. Also start inviting firefighters in, not just the gobby ones like me, and start developing them politically.

■ What about the health and safety angle and the possibility of getting other workers out?

This all started kicking off when Bob Crow and Mick Rix said that if there wasn't a fire service on the streets of London and other cities that they would have to say to the members because of the danger, don't go in. French firefighters have also been saying that they will not do the jobs of their comrades across the water, so that brought the Eurotunnel into the frame.

Our advice to workers is, "Ask about risk assessments". Your employer is duty bound to undertake a risk assessment under the management at work health and safety regulations of 1996 if there is a change within the workplace. Health and safety at work also includes fire precautions. Fire precautions are designed for when there is a fire service. So that's why there is an issue for workers to exploit within their workplaces. I'd prefer a general strike, but if workers are out this way, well, fair play. If in doubt, go to your fire station and ask for advice there.

New Labour's Third Way was a response to Thatcher's defeats of the working class. But with ministers resigning and trade union leaders openly criticising the government, now is the time for the left to finish Blair off

First Stephen Byers, then Estelle Morris. One lied too much, the other couldn't bring herself to lie enough. What they had in common was their total devotion to the ideology we know as Blairism and their total ministerial incompetence.

As Oscar Wilde might have said, to lose one may be regarded as a misfortune, to lose both seems like carelessness. But it is more than carelessness that is cracking up the Blair administration from within: it is a profound change within the Labour and trade union movement.

Both Byers and Morris lived and breathed the "Third Way". The central goal of Blairism is running a lightly controlled capitalism. Market forces are used to deliver socially desirable goals and the goals themselves have more in common with patronising liberalism than social reform.

The concrete expression of the strategy is the tendency, in public services, to go for maximum private sector involvement or at least "independence" from the state, combined with quasi-Stalinist performance targets, set with headlines in mind as much as service users themselves.

The demise of Estelle Morris provides a worked example of the limitations, and ultimate contradictions of the Third Way. Consider the issues that brought her down.

- The A-level fiasco of this summer was the direct result of a combination of rigid target setting and quasi-marketisation. Having placed regulation of the exams system at arms length from the government, in the form of the QCA, Morris then clashed with the QCA over the issue of who would take the blame for the blatant fiddling of exam figures both parties had been involved in.

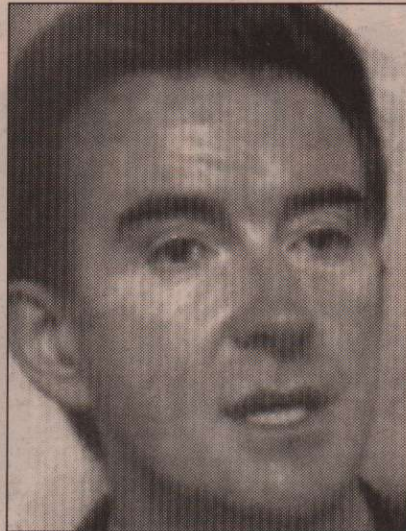
- The failure of the Criminal Records Bureau to vet enough staff to open the schools by the start of term was a direct result of handing the Bureau over to private contractors Capita, whose reputation for soul-ups does not seem to stop it winning one lucrative outsourcing deal after another.

- Her predecessor David Blunkett had offered to resign if literacy and numeracy targets were not met by this summer. They were not met. Morris wrongly told the Commons she was not covered by the pledge, then had to apologise for "misleading the house".

To be a Blairite minister is to live in a world of targets and deadlines. To meet them you throw money at private capitalists and semi-independent quangoes full of overpaid bureaucrats. When the targets slip you massage the figures. When that fails you lie, you blame public sector workers and the intransigence of the bureaucracy. You struggle because you are not technically competent to do the job. You are there, above all else, because you are one of Tony's cronies. You have been fast-tracked past unbelievers with decades of experience in parliament or public office.

Forget media intrusion and cabinet infighting: Estelle Morris was brought down because she tried to live the lie that is Blairism. The same thing happened to Stephen Byers. And all this is only the start of New Labour's problems.

The starting point for Tony Blair's "project" was the idea that the working class is finished as an independent force in British politics. It is often forgotten that the originators of this idea were none other than the Eurocommunist wing of the collapsing Communist Party of Great Britain and its fellow travellers in the Labour Party. Eric Hobsbawm's book "The Forward March of Labour Halted" outlined the basic premise: decline of industry means decline of unions; decline of unions means decline of grassroots class consciousness; socialism ghettoised in a few declining smokestack towns; Labour permanently incapable of winning elections. The solution – and the only way for the working class to play a progressive role – was a radical new alliance of the Labour movement and the English middle class. Left Tories, Greens and Liberals



Some of New Labour's most enthusiastic supporters have fallen because of the Third Way's inability to deliver

# Is the Third Way grinding to a halt?

welcome; militant socialists keep out.

Neil Kinnock was surrounded by believers in the Hobsbawm thesis – Charles Clarke, Peter Mandelson, Patricia Hewitt and third-way theorist Anthony Giddens. And after old Labour's John Smith died they all re-emerged as key players alongside Tony Blair.

There was one crucial difference though. They had conveniently forgotten the bit of the thesis that said this was a strategy for the working class, a means to a higher socialist end. And in Blair they found somebody who had never known about it in the first place.

Once you understand the essence of the Third Way to be despair about the ability of working class people to act for themselves, all the things socialists hate about New Labour can be seen as the product of logic. New Labour will throw 15 per cent profits at Amey and Balfour Beatty to build new hospitals but force hospital workers to work for slave-driving anti-union contractors. Deliver the service, sod the workers who provide the service, line the pockets of the capitalists: it's all for the greater good of the undifferentiated mass called middle England.

But now Blairism faces two enormous problems. First, the Third Way does not work. Second, the "forward march of Labour" – in the sense of the unions and working class radicalism – is not halted. It is Blairism that is halted.

If there is one area where the Third Way should demonstrate coherence it is in the running of the economic infrastructure. Railways, energy, air-traffic control, water supply, the health and education systems: in the mid-20th century all stifled by big bad

**Now Blairism faces two enormous problems. First, the Third Way does not work. Second, the "forward march of Labour" is not halted. It is Blairism that is halted.**

state-ownership and centralised command, the Third Way should be able to create new forms of ownership and control that liberate their potential.

Now look at the reality. Rail privatisation has collapsed to be replaced with a non-profit company whose job it is to shovel expensively borrowed money into the wallets of the few remaining private firms still in the game.

The main route from north to south is suffering shutdowns unprecedented in its 150 year history. The non-profit company that runs the railways is based on the model hastily invented to stop Britain's private water businesses from going bankrupt. Most of Britain's power stations struggle to make money. They are handed around between international power firms like a tray of biscuits.

The nuclear industry is bankrupt, kept alive by a £600 million temporary bailout; four out of ten of the most modern reactors are shut down for safety reasons. Air traffic control is regularly chaotic and would be technically bankrupt but for the larding in of more government money and a compulsory price rise for airlines.

To build £18 billion worth of new schools and hospitals the government has borrowed

– using Enron-style PFI mechanisms – a staggering £102 billion. Many of the PFI schools and hospitals are jerry-built. Health managers struggle with the re-introduction of market mechanisms – suitably modified and complicated by Third Way crackpot ideology – that are set to disrupt rather than enhance care provision.

What is striking about all these creations is their ad-hoc nature. The semi-private Network Rail, the bailed-out British Energy, the lame duck air traffic system, the semi-bankrupt water companies are not brilliant creations of a political ideology. They are monuments to its failure. They are a product of accident, not design. But the accidents that keep happening to Britain's public services are rooted in the same contradiction as those that happen to Blairite ministers: the Third Way is a living lie.

Market forces breed chaos because they force competition where competition is unnecessary. Profit can't be harnessed to delivering better services because part of the money spent that once before went on the service now goes to buy the Audi Quattro of the managing director.

None of this is rocket science, and the fact that millions of people are starting to work it out is the source of Tony Blair's other big problem. The working class movement and mass radicalisation is reviving.

At one level the revival in trade unionism has been the product of basic economics – with the late 1990s boom followed by an unusually mild downturn, and combined with an increase in public sector jobs, the fear of unemployment no longer provides the employers with a deadly weapon.

At a second level, Labour's meagre reform of the anti-union laws has had the

unintended consequence of creating a space for the revival of grassroots organisation.

On top of that, the survival instinct of the trade union bureaucracy has kicked in, and they have started to organise in order to build the membership.

But the new element in the situation is the political shift within the trade union bureaucracy, from general secretary down to local full timer. It's embodied in the changing stance of John Edmonds, leader of the GMB. Once Edmonds personified the forces that gave rise to Blairism: the "modernising" wing of the bureaucracy, which saw its future in providing services to members rather than leading struggles. Now he personifies the total disillusion of the centre-left bureaucracy with the Blair project.

Instead of delivering better public services Labour devastates them in the name of private sector involvement. In the process it tears off whole branches of GMB workers and hands them to private sector employers where their conditions, pensions and general self esteem are then sandblasted by market forces.

It's no better in the private sector. Labour's first term presided over an acceleration of the decline of manufacturing, the destruction of yet more unionised jobs. That should have come as no surprise given that the man in charge of "trade and industry" was Peter Mandelson whose main experience of trade and industry were the trade in ministerial favours and Labour donations, and the industry of corporate PR.

So today a union leader like John Edmonds, who once stood on platforms with Blairites, now shares platforms with Trotskyists. This shift of the centre left bureaucracy into opposition is partly self-preservation. One only has to listen to former Blairite Jack Dromey – self-appointed contender to lead the TGWU after Bill Morris retires – to understand the cleansing power of rank and file discontent.

Dromey now talks as left as he can at every opportunity. He knows it's his only chance of avoiding the fate that befell his counterparts in Amicus (AEEU), the CWU and the PCS – shock defeat at the hands of an unknown left wing candidate.

The centre-left march against Tony Blair has only limited ambitions. Its opposition to PFI and PPP is "not ideological but practical". And because it has no figurehead – Robin Cook too discredited, Peter Hain too Blairite – the centre left confines itself to pressure on the existing Labour leadership.

Former centre-left fixer David Clark, writing in the *Guardian* in late October, outlined the preferred route for the coalition that is riding the wave of Blairite catastrophes and working class revival. He points out that the new party chairman is an ex-Kinnockite, former Stalinist fixer: "As someone who has argued over many years that the left must keep evolving in response to social and political change, Reid is in a better position than any other senior minister to point out that New Labour, too, was a product of an era now past, and to identify the need for a new modernising project; to forge a post-New Labour politics capable of relating the government's programme to the party's historic purpose."

Decoded, this is the call for Kinnock-lite. The reinsertion of the working class piece of the cross-class alliance and the remembrance of why it was started in the first place – but not the abandonment of the strategy itself. Faced with all this there are many opportunities arising simultaneously for the left: to intersect with the centre-left's resistance and criticise it; to address the small number of principled workers still in the Labour Party; to build a socialist alternative to Labour, a mass workers' party on a socialist programme; above all to generalise the strikes and struggles.

But Blair is like a boxer on the ropes. What would be criminal is to go for a points victory instead of a knockdown.

# the firenze flyer

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM SPECIAL

LEAGUE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

## Defend Iraq! Defeat imperialism!

We are issuing this appeal to organisations and individuals on the global revolutionary left with an invitation to co-sign it and act together to realise its tactics and slogans in every country in the period ahead

**Fracción Trotskista**  
(Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico)  
**League for a Revolutionary Communist International** (Australia, Austria, Britain, Czech Republic, Germany, Sweden, and Ukraine)  
**Communist League** (India)

**T**HE WAR on Iraq will be a war for oil: for the plunder of the country's natural resources by a consortium of the biggest North American oil companies like Exxon and by Britain's BP. But it is at the same time another step in the drive for total world domination by the USA.

First, Afghanistan was subjected to massive bombing ending in its effective colonisation. Now Iraq is in line for the same treatment – this time with a massive land invasion by over 250,000 US and British troops. A US general would hold power in Baghdad – with or without an Iraqi puppet government. This recolonisation is projected to last for a decade or more if George Bush gets his way. He must not get his way.

The White House has asserted a new doctrine: its “right” to take pre-emptive military action against any sovereign state. Bush claims the right to impose “regime change” by military means wherever he deems the vital economic and security interests of the USA state and big business are threatened.

The massive oil reserves of Iraq will be used to undermine still further the already shaky sovereignty of the states of the Middle East. Bush and Ariel Sharon will impose a final solution against the Palestinians that will deprive them of every hope of achieving national self-determination for their people.

Meanwhile, the expansionist settler colony, boosted by billions of US dollars a year and state of the art weapons technology, is given free rein with its bloody occupation of Palestinian towns and cities. The Palestinians are stigmatised as “terrorists” and, like Iraq, told to change their leadership or suffer the consequences.

It is Israel and its transatlantic master that

are the “terrorist states”, armed to the teeth with “weapons of mass destruction” on an incredible scale. That Iraq poses a threat to them is laughable.

The major states of the European Union, plus Russia and China pose as upholders of international law and express their doubts about an attack on Iraq. Diplomatically they are playing a game of hide and seek in the United Nations Security Council to limit unilateral and pre-emptive action by the USA.

Their motives are not an altruistic search for peace but sheer self-interest. France and Russia have their own investments and concessions in Iraq to defend. Germany seeks to restrain the extension of US control because it wants to construct a rival imperial superpower with independent influence in the region.

Russia and China wish to continue with their own oppression of the Chechens, the Uighers and Tibetans without outside interference. Thus they wish to preserve the power of their Security Council veto. But as long as the price is right, they will not obstruct Bush. They have no reason to defend the independence of Iraq or any other country. The UN Security Council is truly a “thieves kitchen.”

But thieves do fall out. Despite the present US global pre-eminence, imperialism remains a system of feral rivalry between several imperialist powers. None of them dares challenge the USA militarily today, but Washington's global offensive will inevitably force them to combine to resist it. Therefore all their talk of international law and “peaceful solutions” is a lie.

All those who advocate a UN solution are preparing a trap for the working class and all those resisting this war. As soon as bullying and bribery obtain UN approval – they will subside into a sorrowful acceptance of the

decision of “the international community”. With or without UN approval we must fight against this imperialist war.

Bush and Blair claim that the “war on terrorism” is justified by the need to secure the USA's national defence and security. This lie is repeated a thousand times every day in the millionaire media. By means of these weapons of mass deception, the US and British ruling classes want to rally support from the working class for their imperialist aggression.

What “anticapitalist” fighters in many parts of the world have come to call global capitalism or neoliberalism – the plunder of the entire planet by the IMF, the World Bank and the large multinational capitalist corporations, is integrally linked to the “war against terrorism” and the attempt to recolonise Iraq. Why? Because they are the essential characteristics – utterly destructive and inhuman – of imperialism. Therefore in order to put an end to war it is necessary to root out the imperialist system as a whole.

For the working class, the “war on terrorism” means the suspension or abolition of key civil rights: today, freedom of movement and asylum is curtailed and state surveillance is massively extended. Racism and Islamophobia are given a veneer of respectability – on “security” grounds. As the war crisis mounts, freedom of expression and organisation will be in the firing line.

The “War on Terror” is a green light for all oppressor nations to step up military action against peoples who are denied the elementary right of national self-determination. The Spanish state bans the Basque party Batauna. The British police raid Sinn Fein's offices in the Northern Irish assembly and then suspend it. Moscow seizes the chance to increase its murderous campaign against the Chechen

people. The war criminal Sharon reoccupies the West Bank and destroys the Palestinian National Authority. In name of the war on terrorism, the United States finances Colombia” and supports the reactionary government of Uribe.

However it is not inevitable that Blair will succeed. And they must be allowed to succeed.

Today around the world a mass anti-war movement lives and fights. In September and October massive demonstrations of people in London and one million in New York showed what can be done. Class workers, immigrant and Muslim communities, women and revolutionary youth are fighting this war in their millions.

We seek to stop this war by mass demonstrations that will shake the system to its foundations and topple the warmongers and who support them.

This must take place in the imperialist countries themselves. When fighting out we must call clearly and unequivocally for the total defeat of the imperialist system and victory for the Iraqi resistance to the days of the Vietnam War, the victory of the former colony against Great Power aggression must be the rallying call of the international anti-capitalist and working class movement. Victory to Iraq!

We must demand that the trade unions take action against the war: boycott, strikes, demonstrations. In the UK and Britain, the task is to convert the imperialist war against countries Iraq into a political social crisis, leading to the overthrow of Bush and Blair.

The deputies of the labour, socialist and communist parties must force debates in parliament – using its tribune to expose the war. continued on

# Another world is possible but

The Florence meetings should be used to challenge the hold of ATTAC and other reformist organisations on the global anti-capitalist movement

The European Social Forum, which gathers in Florence this November, followed by the assembly of the European social movements, will be an incredible assembly of activists from right across the continent. This is proof that corporate globalisation has given birth to its opposite – a movement of many movements determined not to retreat into national or even continental isolation but to combine their efforts against the common enemy. In Florence, there will be thousands of trade unionists, NGO activists, ecologists, socialists communists and anarchists, anti-racist, human rights, feminists and anti-war campaigners – in short many of those who have built up the movement against global capitalism over the past five years. This “movement of the movements” helped overcome the single-issue fragmentation, the post-modern abandonment of the big picture, which marked the early 1990s.

From the outset this movement involved the struggles of the landless in Brazil, the indigenous peoples of Chiapas in Mexico, against water privatisation in Bolivia, against death squads and the US war against drugs in Colombia. It included the struggle against sweatshop labour in Bangladesh and Indonesia, of militant trade unionists against unemployment or privatisation from South Africa to Korea. In recent years it has included Palestinians waging the Intifada.

In each of these arenas people came to realise that they had one enemy – whether they named it globalisation, corporate capitalism or imperialism. But even more they realised that they were not alone. In the words of the Seattle demonstrators – “the whole world is watching.” Not only watching but willing and able, to take action in solidarity with them.

The dozens of militant mass demonstrations from Seattle to Genoa targeted the arrogant gatherings of the bankers and politicians who were exploiting, starving, and polluting our world. Militants in Cochabamba and Buenos Aires were gunned down for defying the IMF and its austerity programmes and privatisations. Not only in South America but also in Gothenburg and then in Genoa, where Carlo Giuliani was killed, the world’s rulers made a futile effort to crush the movement.

But this movement was not simply a matter of action or for “celebrating diversity”. Of course it is vital that every particular struggle has a wealth of experience to contribute but it is not true that a unity of purpose and direction cannot arise out of this diversity. Certain common lessons need to be learned and applied. Within the movement there are

conflicting answers to the questions how can we get rid of the system of exploitation and war and what shall we replace it with. Slogans such as “diversity” and “many worlds” are not sufficient answers.

That is why there has been a drive to hold international gatherings for discussion and debate over answers and solutions. The idea for the European Social Forum, one of several such continental forums, was initiated at Porto Alegre at the second World Social Forum.

The prime movers were the French-based ATTAC, the Brazilian PT and various Italian parties and unions.

These organisations represent the powerful political and material base for the strongly reformist character of programme of the ESF. In Italy, the Democratici di Sinistra (DS) and Rifondazione comunista (RC) as well as unions like FIOM-CGIL will be central to its organisation and funding. Also supporting it will be the CGT and SUD unions of France. Even the European TUC has come on board.

The presence of these unions will encourage and facilitate thousands of union and party members to attend and participate. It is even better if these leaders are willing to debate openly and democratically, to be put on the spot. For example we want to know what the CGT, SUD, the CGIL, the RMT, even the ETUC itself, propose to do about the war against Iraq, about the persecution and expulsion of asylum seekers and immigrants, about privatisation, factory closures (Fiat) and rising unemployment.

The rank and file members can also use Florence to forge links with their fellow workers across the continent. If unionists go away from Florence with the realisation that they must not leave it to the “lead-

ers” to take action on all these questions, if they are empowered to act for themselves, to act together, this will be a huge step forward.

But anti-capitalist activists should be under no illusions about the far greater strength of reformism at the ESF than on the streets of Seville, Prague, Gothenburg and Genoa. They will certainly attempt to marginalise the more radical and revolutionary elements. Marginalise, but not completely exclude them because the intellectuals, journalists NGO executives and the lightly disguised politicians form the parliamentary parties desperately need a new mass base. That is why they will be there.

Their aim is to conquer this new movement for a renewed reformist, gradualist, programme. Their ideas are nothing to be afraid of. We can debate them openly. But what must be resisted is the methods of organisation and the procedures that originated at the first meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre.

Who really takes the decisions in the WSF-ESF? The process is hidden behind a cloak of constant discussion and “consensus” seeking. Everyone participates all right – if you can afford to fly to Brussels, Vienna, Thessaloniki, Rome and Barcelona. Large-ish meetings there have discussed the main topics and the programme of speakers.

But it is clear at these meetings that there are a few “big hitters” – representatives of ATTAC, RC, the International Socialist Tendency (whose status has risen because of their role in the British anti-war movement as well as the European anticapitalist mobilisations).

ATTAC is the right-wing of the move-

ment. It seeks at all costs placate the leaders of the sponsoring unions and social democratic parties. It tried hard to keep Palestine well down the agenda for the really big sessions. It showed a consistent desire to avoid giving too much prominence to exposure of state racism, immigrants rights and explicit references to fascism and Islamophobia.

At the Rome organising meeting, it even wanted to exclude Iraq and Afghanistan from discussions on the war question. In Barcelona, it showed a powerful resistance to the main demonstration centring on the war threat – claiming that the French trade unions would not come if this was the case and that the war was not a big issue in France.

Though ATTAC has mobilised forces for demonstrations like Millau and Nice in June and December 2000, its main home is not on the streets. It is a think-tank seeking to revive the popularity of a neo-Keynesian programme of state regulation, old-style import substitution “development” for the “global south” and the defence of the “rights of citizens.”

Central to the work of ATTAC is the question of the taxation of capital movements, (the Tobin Tax, control of tax havens), the re-imposition of nation-state controls on financial markets, reducing the Third World debt, fighting the WTO and its free trade agenda including NAFTA or MAI, GATS, exposing unfair North-South trade. It does not develop militant tactics to achieve these goals but rather relies on lobbying supposedly sympathetic governments

ATTAC’s failure to develop any plan of mass struggle, or to say what sort of political power (that is the state) is needed to implement its goals can be seen most clear-

# Disobedience is not enough to

The European Social Forum poses a real test for the radical wing of the anti-capitalist movement, argues *Jeremy Dewar*

At a series of international meetings activists from a network of autonomous (anarchist and libertarian) groups connected with the Zapatista international, People’s Global Action, formulated their response to the growing domination of the European Social Forum’s (ESF) by those on the right wing of the anti-capitalist movement:

“We agreed to launch the idea of constituting a concrete space for those of us who traditionally work with structures which are decentralised, horizontal, assembly-based and anti-authoritarian; a space that would maintain its autonomy with respect to the ‘official’ space of the ESF, but at the same time remain connected, allowing for a specific kind of intervention. This would mean, specifically, having one leg outside and another inside the ESF (the first, in any case, with two feet).”

More beguilingly Ur@Action Hub, as the intervention as been dubbed, will not “compete” with the ESF, but will try “to make the ESF social democracy show their real face and take positions”.

This fear, that by fully participating in the ESF radical forces will end up being co-opted and yet by keeping our distance we will be isolated, is a very real one. Yet the politics of the PGA (which includes Reclaim the Streets in Britain and the Disobedienti in Italy) preclude an answer to this problem. Indeed, the very absence of an agreed framework for resolving the questions

posed has led to a political divergence among the activists concerned.

## EMPIRE

At the heart of the PGA’s politics lies the idea of Empire. Empire is used to describe the post-cold war world where globalisation has obliterated or is eclipsing the role of the nation state. Supranational bodies like the IMF/World Bank, the WTO and regional groupings like the European Union and the FTAA set out the rules for the global domination of multinational corporations. Crucially, there is no centre to this dictatorship.

The old goal of the Marxist movement – to smash the capitalist state and establish the rule of democratic workers’ councils – is seen as no longer relevant. Indeed, the way to fight the power is not to counterpose an alternative power based on mass democratic organisations but to disobey all authority though horizontal, autonomous, co-operative networks. By refusing to be drawn into a head-on confrontation, the Empire will not be able to use its war machine to crush decentralised resistance, but on the contrary will find itself hemmed in and rendered impotent by a network of networks that has no hub.

This view of the world informs the riddles and speeches of subcommandate Marcos, leader of the Zapatistas and has been systematised and theorised by Toni Negri and Michael Hardt in their book, *Empire*,

as well as forming the common ground of the PGA, codified in their hallmarks.

However, it is coming under attack from events in the real world. It is dogmatic insofar as it takes a static snapshot of the world in the mid to late 1990s as an everlasting truth about capitalism. And, far from confronting reformism, it seeks to cap the class struggle by imposing limits beyond which the working class and its allies must not pass.

## WAR AND IMPERIALISM

Since 11 September 2001 it has become clear to everyone in the world that the USA is the hegemonic global power. Along with its allies, most notably Tony Blair’s New Labour government, it has demanded and exercised its right to impose its will in every corner of the world.

When it can do this through international bodies like the WTO and the United Nations, it has used them. But when they have not co-operated it has discarded them. When it has been able to enforce its rule through economic means like sanctions and trade agreements it has used them. When not, it has resorted to military assaults.

Yet Luca Casarini, a leading spokesperson of the Movimento dei Disobedienti, claims this is not the case. Bush and Bin Laden are “different sides of the same coin, because Bin Laden is also a millionaire, has power, and kills civilians”. The same could

be said of Saddam Hussein, but does this mean we should be indifferent to the outcome of the USA’s war against Afghanistan or Iraq?

Of course not! The victory of the USA and the UK will see the imposition of the rule of the mightiest military and economic powers in the world, while their defeat will encourage billions of the most downtrodden and exploited people on the planet to rise up against their puppet regimes.

Already millions across the Muslim world and the global south see this. Our task in Europe is to unite the mass anti-war movement with those anti-imperialist millions. We cannot do this by putting an equal sign between Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein on the one hand and Bush and Blair on the other. The people of Iraq and beyond know that the Saddam is an evil butcher, but they also know that Bush and Blair are no friends of the oppressed. The minute they attack they become the biggest enemies of the Iraqi people because their goal will be the subjugation of the country not its liberation. A just peace in the Middle East – and beyond – can only be built on the broken back of the imperialist invasion, not by standing aside and saying, “Not our fight”.

The view of the world that simply poses all authority and all powers as equally immediate and equally dangerous evils cannot conceive of the tactics necessary to destabilise, thwart and throw back imper-

rialism. Similarly, the Disobedienti and the PGA raise all struggles against authority to the same level: our diversity is our strength. The problem with this is that this fails to take into account the specific role the working class plays within capitalist society, both as the source of capitalist profit and as the social class with the direct interest in abolishing private property.

The libertarians and the anarchists only see bureaucratic and reformist unions and socialist parties; we see the massed army of rank and file workers who look to these organisations and who have the power to transform them. The Disobedienti relegate tactics to win rank and file control of the unions to the backburner; we promote such tactics because they provide the spark to ignite the anti-capitalist revolution in Europe.

## REVOLUTION

But if the politics of the PGA fail the test of imperialist war, they also fail the test of revolution. Asked “does the movimneto dei disobedienti have an explicit intention of ‘making a revolution?’” Casarini reveals his fear of a head-on conflict:

“The problem is how to inhabit this conflict [between capitalist power and the movement]. For instance, power tends to turn this conflict into war. If that happens, and a civil war starts, we are all going to the grave, all of us.”

From this Casarini derives the con-

# it won't come through reform

ly with its biggest fetish, the Tobin Tax. ATTAC estimates that a tax levied on each financial transaction at a rate of about 0.1 per cent, would raise a sum of around a hundred billion dollars a year. The proceeds would go to developing the "global south". Leaving aside the small sum raised compared to the needs that exist, leaving aside ATTAC's obvious fear of threatening the property and incomes of the super rich and the mega-corporations, even with direct taxation, let alone with expropriation – how will it be executed?

No one country could impose the tax without making financial institutions relocate their dealings somewhere where the tax was not levied. To wait to apply it everywhere simultaneously is to wait till the end of the world. Who can organise this? The United Nations? Laughable! Who would enforce it? There is no international law for the simple reason that there is no world state to enforce it. Who would pay a tax unless it was enforced?

In fact, ATTAC concentrates on trying to get the European Union, the United States and Japan to adopt it, to become in effect a G7 "Tobin zone." This is asking the chief neo-liberal poachers to turn gamekeepers. ATTAC sees no other solution but to mobilise the collective hot air of "civil society" to gently blow the governments, bankers, and giant corporations towards this scheme.

This whole approach is what Marxists call a reactionary utopia. Reactionary because it seeks a return to a world economy of national capitalist states, of post-1945 style Keynesian state regulation. Utopian because it is presented as a good idea – "another world is possible" – but without tackling the question of power and classes.

Which class has the power today and which other class could take it away from them, to build this "other" world? ATTAC will not say. This means in the end that it really wants to pressurise and persuade the unenlightened, reactionary bourgeoisie (the really existing one) to hand over to an enlightened one (dreamed about by the social democratic intellectuals). But above all the rough hands of workers and peasants must not reach out for state power, even to realise ATTAC's insipid utopia.

If ATTAC is not so important on the streets – despite Millau – its influence is great behind the scenes, at the WSF meetings in Porto Alegre in 2001 and 2002 and in setting the framework of rules for the ESF.

The World Social Forum Charter of Principles is a document clearly written by the intellectuals of ATTAC for representatives of reformist parties and capitalist funded NGOs. It asserts the right "to guide the continued pursuit of that initiative" and demands "to be respected by all those who wish to take part in the process".

Buried among rhetorical denunciations of neoliberalism and global capitalism the principles slip in some truly reactionary rules – ones that are operating in Florence too and must be exposed and combated.

"The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organisations and movements of civil society". To this it adds: "neither party representations nor military organisations shall participate in the Forum". What is this supposed to mean?

Simply that organisations that are formed around a programme to change society, that struggle to do so by various

means, (political parties) are excluded or, what is nearly as bad, obliged to disguise themselves as single issue campaigns or "social" bodies.

It is totally reactionary to exclude parties and their representatives, especially those that are fighting global capitalism and war, as though they were not part of civil society or the body of citizens.

It privileges NGOs, crippled by their funding systems, hog-tied by legal status as charities, and reduces organisations that are not so bound (trades unions and parties) to impotence. In fact it condemns the Social Forums to the status of mere talking shops. What is wrong with voting after a democratic discussion? Only those in a minority can seek to prevent the majority expressing their will. Consensus is a recipe for the minority always imposing its will on the majority or blocking action altogether.

Militant anarchist and populist comrades should recognise that a ban on politics or on taking a vote, which they often collude with because of their anti-politicism, is undemocratic and plays into the hands of reformist parties, trade union bureaucrats and the managers of charities.

These bigwigs can easily hide behind the scenes as "the organisers" and in any case are specifically allowed to participate "in a personal capacity". As if Lula was present at Porto Alegre, or Fausto Bertinotti in Florence, will be present as just another individual.

What are the "military organisations" that the World Social Forum wishes to ban too? Hardly the US marines or the British paras? No, what is meant is clearly the FARC or even the Zapatistas – guerrilla movement struggling against imperialism and repression. However "government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity."

If we really have to debate with French imperialist "minister-socialists" like Chevenement, then we do not see why guerrilla fighters against imperialism should be excluded. Only people who are socialists or anti-capitalists in words but imperialists in deeds could have imposed this arch-reactionary clause. Similarly reactionary is the bar on the social forums taking any decisions. Again the principles lay down: "The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings."

Not only does this prevent broad democratic mass assemblies taking any decisions it leaves the "locus of power" as the organisers who, for example, drafted this wretched document, did not have to put it

to any democratic body and who have imposed it on the thousands of people gathered in Porto Alegre and in Florence.

The aim of these organisers is to assert hegemony over the "social movements" or the "movement for global citizenship" as Susan George likes to call it. The idea of paralleling the global business forums like the WEF (Davos) expresses the NGO's desire to become partners with the global business and political leaders. The more conservative of them undoubtedly yearn for some sort of global corporatism. As a Peoples Global Alliance discussion paper on the ESF very aptly puts it, "a Greenpeace-Shell World Government."

Assemblies on the scale of Porto Alegre or Florence do present enormous opportunities for networking, for bringing together militants from the semi-colonial countries and the imperialist heartlands, for discussions on tactics and overall strategy. But they will be of use only if they are bold enough to issue calls to fight on the key issues of the day. Then they could play a progressive role in moving the organisations of the working class, the peasants, the myriad of parties and campaigns towards the realisation that an even higher form of international organisation is needed.

But this will be ultimately fruitless unless an organised and militant revolutionary alternative is mounted to "official" forums whether in Florence or Porto Alegre. To do this means also fighting the "revolutionary" apologists for this undemocratic, talking shop system. Militant class struggle forces, trade unionists, the organisers of strikes, mass direct action, road blockades, rather than academic seminars will be what is needed if there is to be a true "rebel international".

**ATTAC sees no other solution but to mobilise the collective hot air of "civil society" to gently blow the governments, bankers, and giant corporations towards this scheme**

# stop the global bosses



The body of Carlo Giuliani killed by police in Genoa. The idea of "Disobedience" disarms the movement in the face of a prepared and armed capitalist state.

cept of disobedience: "We call it 'disobedience', conflict and consensus, an action always open to experimentation, open to transform and rethink the movement ... But we are always holding back in order not to be drawn into a civil war."

Casarini has repeatedly "rethought" the movement in the past year: after Genoa, after the shooting of right-wing economist Mario Biagi and again after the union lead-

ers derailed the 12 million strong general strike movement last summer. But each time this vacillation has failed to strengthen the movement or increase its independence. On the contrary it has handed the initiative back to Berlusconi and capitalism's lieutenants in the labour movement, the trade union and reformist party leaderships, while disorienting and demoralising the rank and file.

And it is not just Casarini who seeks to walk the line between confrontation and compliance. His more radical critics behind the Ur@Action Hub initiative in Florence also talk about a confrontation with the ESF organisers and the Italian state which is both "not too far, not too close".

This elaborate game of cat and mouse, however, is an ever decreasing circle.

To make matters worse, the "civil war", which Casarini fears so much, erupts at precisely those points in history when capitalist rule is endangered – during revolutionary crises. And these revolutionary situations happen objectively, that is outside of the will of either the capitalists or the anti-capitalists.

Look at the Argentine revolution, for example. This enormous crisis was the direct result of the IMF-imposed policies on the countries, but the IMF did not want their policies to bring the masses onto the streets in revolutionary actions. The question posed point-blank to activists in such situations is how do we use this situation to ensure that the capitalists, not their victims, pay the full price of their crisis?

While Casarini talks of "holding back" in such situations, revolutionaries have a different answer. We seek an anti-capitalist solution to the crisis, one which overthrows the capitalist rulers and replaces it with the rule of workers and poor peasants, which ends the rule of the market and replaces it with a democratic plan of production to fulfill peoples' needs.

## CHALLENGING THE REFORMISTS

We can only do this if we can win the workers away from their reformist leaders. Otherwise we will become isolated and dragged into a civil war we cannot win.

As in Italy and the rest of Europe, the Argentine union leaders are in cahoots with the bosses, the politicians and the generals. But rather than retreating in order to fight another day when the workers and the unemployed are spontaneously on our side, we seek tactics to push these leaders to take more militant actions and to build up the workers' independent strength to take action without, and against, them if and when they refuse.

This is derided as old school politics. But the PGA's alternative – to avoid cooption by denouncing the reformists from the sidelines – is even more old school. And it is doomed to failure.

If you don't believe us, look at the state of the Argentine revolution. Despite the heroic actions of a diminishing minority at the heart of the popular assemblies, among the piqueteros and in the occupied factories, the big unions have refused to mount a challenge to the IMF-loyal government and now elections have been called where only those parties that support the IMF have the backing necessary to win.

We must patiently argue with workers and activists, we must place demands on their reformist leaders – to call a general strike, to denounce the debt, to put forward a democratically accountable presidential candidate who will abide by the wishes of the popular assemblies and expropriate the

banks and the enterprises in order to feed the masses.

This means breaking with the dogmatic method of only acting after reaching consensus. Consensus with these reformist leaders means only going as far as they are prepared to go – or allowing them to go one way (with the mass organisations behind them) while we go it alone in the other. Instead, we should challenge their right to leadership and try to hold them to account through workers' democracy – a full and open debate and everyone agreeing to follow majority decisions.

And so too in Europe. There is only one way to escape the circular game of cat and mouse and continuously "hold back" for fear of a civil war that we cannot win. There is only one way "to make the ESF social democracy show their real face and take positions". And that is to go into the ESF and demand that the unions and "socialist" parties take action.

We demand co-ordinated strike action and occupations across borders against closures and job cuts, the dismantling of detention centres and the abolition of immigration controls, the disruption of parliaments and boycott actions against the war. In the process we hope to push these fakers further than they wish to go. But we make clear as well that, for European anti-capitalists to join the ranks of those in Argentina, Iraq and elsewhere in struggle against global capital, we will need a new party, a party of world revolution – not an anti-party that confines itself to increasingly ineffective "disobedience".

Continued from page 5

atives the warmongers. They must not only... against the war, but also disrupt the normal business of the talking shops and summon workers and youth to active resistance.

We support mass intifadas across the Arab and Muslim world against the USA and Britain, against all the regimes that support them, actively or passively. We call for demonstrations and direct action against the bases and symbols of imperialist power and their corporate investments around the globe.

These actions alone distinguish anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and revolutionary opposition to the war. The reformist leaders will oppose us on the grounds that support for Iraq's resistance against a US-UK attack means supporting Saddam Hussein, just as they claimed that defeatism in the Afghan war meant support for the Taliban dictatorship.

But only the Iraqi people - both Arabs and Kurds - have the right to overthrow Saddam's brutal dictatorship and at the same time ensure the independence of their country. To be colonised by the USA and Britain would be a terrible disaster for them all. Liberation can only be achieved if the workers and youth of the cities rise up and replace the Baathist and military regime with a democracy based on workers and peasants' councils.

The official leaders of the European labour movement have again betrayed the working class by offering either open or veiled support for the imperialists' war of plunder. Social democracy is continuing its nine decades of treason by taking its place at the head of

the war drive in Britain.

In Germany, France, Spain and Italy, the social democratic leaders follow the policies of their own ruling classes. They do not challenge the USA's crusade against Iraq; they simply demand that any war be sanctified first by the approval of the United Nations.

The official leaders of the trade unions are no better. Pressed into declaring opposition to US unilateralism by the strength of anti-war feeling among the workers, they nevertheless tie themselves to the social democrats and, through them, to the UN and thus, in turn, to the imperialists.

The leaders of the so-called Communist parties seem more left wing. In opposition they support anti-war demonstrations and call for peace. But for the leaders these are merely pious words, not backed up by deeds. In government they act just like their social democratic brothers. The French Communist party was part of the imperialist government that attacked Serbia in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2001. The Spanish CP did not dare vote against the banning of Bata-suna.

Even Rifondazione Comunista continued to support the Olive Tree coalition government when it sent imperialist troops to stop the Albanian uprising in 1997. Today all of them focus on respect for the United Nations. Not one of them dares, honestly and openly, to defend a nation under attack by the rogue superpower.

However as the reality of war becomes ever clearer, thousands of rank and file members and activists from these parties, and the trade unions linked to them, are beginning to resist

the pro-imperialist stance, or reliance on the UN, of their party leaderships.

We call on them to intensify their opposition, to be more consistent and determined. We call on them and to either oust the warmonger leaderships or break with them en masse. There can be no consistent opposition to war without naming and declaring war on the warmongers.

Not only should give no recognition to any UN-bestowed legitimacy, we should not support calls for the return of the UN weapons inspectors.

We do not deny Iraq the right to possess deterrents that Israel, not to speak of the USA, already has in enormous quantities. We recognise and support Iraq's right to defend itself against imperialism and its creation, Israel. We demand the immediate lifting of all UN sanctions that have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians.

With or without the UN this war is an imperialist war of plunder and national oppression. Its initiators must be stopped from launching it or defeated if they do. Our position has to be "US and UN hands off Iraq!"

The task of anti-capitalists, anti-imperialists and all partisans of the working class is to intensify the social and political crisis caused by Bush's "endless war" into a revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. This alone can bring lasting peace.

The increase over the last three years of internationally co-ordinated protest against neo-liberalism global capital, and imperialist war reveals one thing above all. The time

is ripe to establish once again the highest possible level of international organisation of the working class, of youth, of all those who wish to replace capitalism with socialism.

This means not resting content with a "movement of movements". It means a worldwide organisation which is democratic but also a centralised - an International. This international can develop a strategy based on world revolution as the means and socialism as its goal.

All those who oppose or delay the creation of such an organisation of the working class are consciously or unconsciously, aiding the efforts of the global capitalists and imperialists to keep us divided.

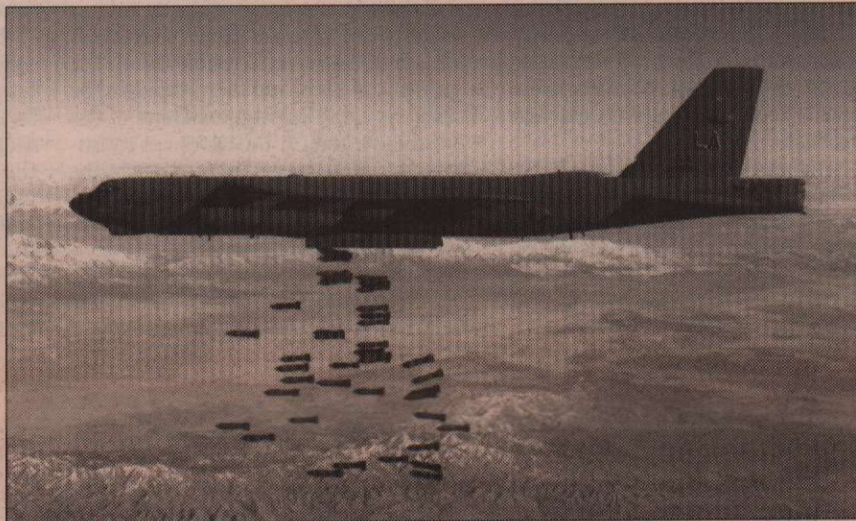
This is true whether they do so in the name of opposition to all centralisation or political organisation, or because they believe mass parties have to be first of all in each country and then united into an International.

Let the call go out from all the mobilisations against imperialist war for the formation of a New International, a revolutionary world party of the working class, the strongest weapon against imperialism and war.

The Fracción Trotskista and the League for a Revolutionary Communist International believe that this International must continue and build upon the programmatic and organisational heritage of Lenin's Communist International and the Fourth International of Leon Trotsky.

Nevertheless we do not make this into an ultimatum for those organisations and individuals who agree with stopping the war against Iraq and whose close collaboration in struggle we urgently seek.

- No Blood for Oil! No war for the US Empire!
- Hands off Iraq! Stop the war preparations!
- Repeal all "antiterrorist" laws and release all prisoners and detainees.
- All imperialist forces out of the region! US bases out of the Middle East and Gulf, the Indian Ocean and South/Central Asia!
- No UN arms inspectors in Iraq - spies, provocateurs and advance troops of imperialism!
- Lift ALL sanctions against Iraq! Break the blockade now!
- Stop Sharon's murder of the Palestinian people. Victory to the Palestinian intifada!
- Not a cent or person for the "war on terrorism". Vote against the military budgets.
- Use direct action to impede the war effort: mass demonstrations, road and rail blockades, occupations of military facilities.
- Broaden economic strikes against the capitalists' neo-liberal plans into political mass strikes against the war.
- If the invasion takes place - Defeat for the US-UK armies: Victory to Iraq!
- Turn the "war against terrorism" into a class war against the exploiters.
- Down with global capitalism and imperialism.
- For a new revolutionary workers' International.



# Stop capitalism's global terror

The socialist youth movement, **Revolution**, agreed the declaration below at a meeting in London in October. It wants the conference of social movements in Florence discuss and adopt it. Sign up to support it now!

For the second time in a year the war machine of the world's most powerful state is preparing to attack a small country.

The USA is hell-bent on invading and occupying Iraq - with or without the approval of the UN Security Council. George Bush, and his ally Tony Blair, have set their sights on plundering the oil reserves of the Middle East as part of the drive to establish unchallenged US domination of the world and the global economy.

As the corporations open up the markets of the world to their exploitation, the military bases and advisers' spread into more and more countries. It is a war for global capitalism and for imperialist domination.

Bush's war is not to defend the peoples of the world against terrorism or liberate the people of Iraq from Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. The

endless US/UK bombing of Iraq, together with the savage UN sanctions, have terrorised and killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. With their backing, Israel is terrorising the Palestinian people and occupying their land.

Bush and Blair can provide no proof that Iraq is either a centre for organising terrorist attacks, or that it threatens its neighbours with "weapons of mass destruction", including nuclear and biological ones. States that possess these weapons are active in the Middle East - namely the United States, Britain and Israel.

These are the biggest terrorists. They have no progressive role to play in getting rid of Saddam Hussein. That is a task for the Iraqi people.

The "war on terrorism" has encouraged every reactionary force on the planet. The governments of North America and Europe have attacked

civil and human rights won over centuries - asylum, the right to privacy, and the freedom of citizens from police harassment - and have introduced imprisonment without trial. Racism and the persecution of Muslims or of any one with a "Middle Eastern appearance" have been unleashed by the press leading to an upsurge of racist attacks and murders.

We, the representatives of popular organisations, trade unions, campaigns for an end to world debt, poverty, environmental destruction, condemn this war. The same neo-liberalism and global capitalism that is at the root of these evils is at the root of the threatened war. We pledge ourselves to campaign across Europe to demand - with or without UN approval - DON'T ATTACK IRAQ.

Starting with a Europe wide day of action against the war on... we will continue to campaign:

● By means of mass demonstrations, civil disobedience and obstruction of the "war effort"

● By means of boycotts of the state and corporate institutions of the perpetrators and supporters of this war;

● By campaigning for strikes in workplaces, schools and colleges.

Our aim is to prevent a war being launched. If we fail in this we will campaign by militant means to force its cessation and the withdrawal of the attackers. We hope our actions will encourage the resistance of the Iraqi, Palestinian and Arab peoples and help them to defeat the imperialist attack. To them - from Florence - we send a message of solidarity and encouragement: You are not alone! We will do everything in our power to strike the weapons of mass destruction from the hands of "our own" rulers.

We must globalise the fight against imperialist war, just as the mass - and successful - anti-Vietnam war movement did in the last century.

We call on all anti-war forces, including trade union leaders, members of national parliaments, immigrant community and NGO leaders, to use their public tribunes, their access to the media, to summon millions to action against the war and to take a lead themselves in anti-war actions.

We call on the grass roots, popular, immigrant communities, and labour movement organisations to co-ordinate their forces at local, national and international level to do all they can to mobilise millions against it.

We declare war on war and on the warmongers.

● To sign this declaration email: [info@worldrevolution.org.uk](mailto:info@worldrevolution.org.uk)



# Their Europe - and ours

The architects of the European Union thought it would end war and hunger. In reality, it's just exported them to the third world - and put up fortress walls to keep out the world's poor and oppressed. Welcome to the bosses' Europe.

The dream that Euroland would become a wonderland of social democracy, a pacifist counterweight to America and a haven of freedom in a heartless world is dead.

Europe is divided. Politically, the USA's determination to have a war with Iraq has split the European Union (EU). The UK, Spain and Italy are egging Bush on. Germany and France have adopted the role, temporarily at least, of refuseniks.

The process of enlargement was thrown into doubt by Ireland's rejection of the Nice Treaty last year. The fear that it would refuse a second time has now gone, but the original referendum vote cast a long shadow over the enlargement negotiations.

Moreover, in the context of an EU economy that is stagnating, France and Germany want to scrap agreed tight budget rules for economic management. Even the European Commissioner called the rules "stupid". Not unnaturally, those that stuck by them are displeased.

It seems a long time since midnight fireworks on January 1 this year sent the population of Europe running to the ATM machines to get their hands on a brand new currency.

The glitch-free roll out of the Euro was a time for celebration among the eurocrats who run the European Union and who want to see more and more sovereignty of each member state ceded to the institutions of a European super-state.

Control over the money supply of those in the eurozone - together with power to set interest rates - was handed over to the European Central Bank.

They looked forward to the harmonisation of taxes, a common foreign policy and even an elected President of the European Union.

A European Convention was launched in February in which 105 politicians from the 15 member states and 13 applicant countries are debating the content of a new constitution for the European Union to be ratified sometime in 2004. They hope this process and the end result will "bring Europe closer to its citizens".

In fact, at its launch Convention president Giscard d'Estaing made clear the real aspirations of many of the leaders of Europe.

"What has been created over the last 50 years will reach its limit."

He argued that the Convention needed to come up with a plan that "matches our continental dimension and the requirements of the 21st century"

And in a warning to the USA he argued that a new Europe "would be respected and listened to, not only as an economic power it already is but as a political power which will talk on equal terms to the greatest powers on or planet."

But the aggressive military build up of the US since Bush came to office plus the unremitting imperial global ambition of the administration has shown just how far the European Union is from being ready to challenge the US. It lacks unity and power.

Working people in Europe have no interest in backing plans to make Europe an equal to the US on the world stage - an equal partner in the carve up of the assets of poor nations and the enforcer of oppression around the world.

The EU is a Europe of the bosses and for the bosses. It is led by our class enemies across the continent. It is organised to suit their interests.



The bosses' Europe is a union of bureaucrats.

The EU is run by unelected bodies like the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and Committee of Permanent Representatives while its parliament has no real powers. Yet according to UNICE, the pan-European employers' federation: "In European countries, 60 per cent of new laws are introduced at a European Union level and 70 per cent of these measures (regulations, directives, decisions and recommendations) are concerned with the economic domain".

Tens of millions do not vote in European elections because they sense rightly that their representatives can make little or no difference, beyond setting up inquiries, asking questions and deliberating over the budget.

The Convention will be as closed and undemocratic as all other past examples of drawing up treaties: it will not involve the working people of Europe. If it were truly democratic, it would go through a democratically elected constituent assembly, based on one vote for all those living and working inside the European Union.

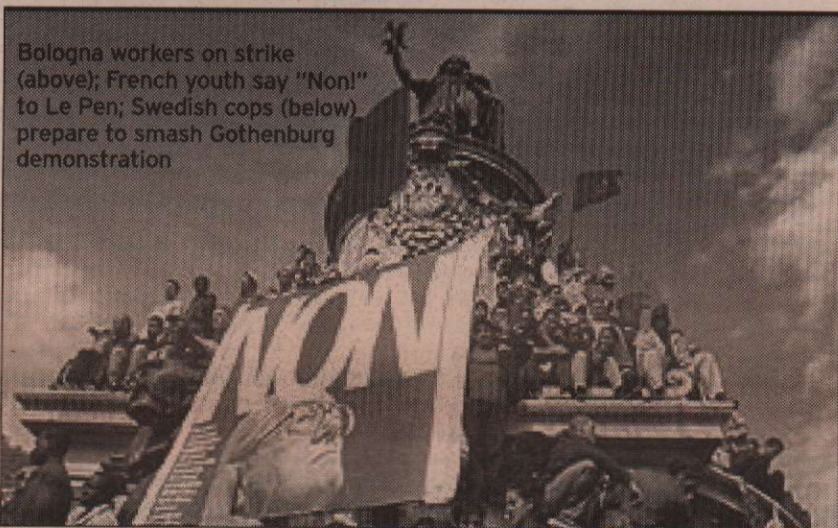
**The bosses' Europe is a union of corruption**

The lack of accountability leads to immense abuse and misuse of funds. Regular scandals over expenses for MEPs erupt or over contracts awarded to Commission members' families and friends, only to be eclipsed by bigger scandals over the misuse of EU funds for projects abroad. EU slush funds are used to line the pockets of corrupt officials in the Balkans, Middle East, Turkey so that these governments will favour EU companies when it comes to awarding contracts.

**The bosses' Europe is a union against the poor of the Third World**

At last year's World Trade Organisation ministerial in Qatar the EU trade officials were among the worst imperialist representatives present.

Pascal Lamy, the EU's trade commissioner fought tooth and nail to protect the EU's right to dump subsidised farm products in poorer countries which has a devastating effect on the poor farmers of the south who cannot compete against cheap imports.



Bologna workers on strike (above); French youth say "Non!" to Le Pen; Swedish cops (below) prepare to smash Gothenburg demonstration

Lamy threatened to walk out unless he got his way on postponing to the future "negotiations with a view to phasing out" subsidies to rich farmers. The EU representatives refused to agree to the Third World request for a study into the effects of lower tariffs on the economies of the South before proceeding to lower them.

Lamy was shoulder to shoulder with US trade representatives in bullying the delegates from the poorer countries: unless they agreed to a new round now they would have their debt relief programmes withdrawn.

Yet while the EU plays tough with the south it bends over backwards to help out the oppressive state of Israel. Last month the EU again refused to take sanctions against Israel for illegally exporting goods to the EU which are produced in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, yet at the same time they provide satellite monitors to track Palestinian activists.

**The bosses' Europe is a union of war mongering and aggressive militarism**

The EU governments, one after another, rushed to back Bush's "war against terrorism" in the wake of the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Centre. EU heads were desperate to be seen in the front rank of those signed up to attack the Taliban.

Now the UK, Spain and Italy have pledged complete support for Bush's campaign in Iraq. Schröder could only get elected again by pledging not to support the USA's war. But even Germany has agreed to take on more military duties in Kabul as the

trade-off for challenging Bush's war on Iraq. Embarrassed by their utter dependence on the US for their strategic military facilities, the member states have been striving to construct their own "rapid reaction force". They hope to use this to secure "stability" in all regions in the EU's backyard (such as North Africa, the Balkans and the Middle East) where uprisings against reactionary pro-western governments can be put down.

The EU is effectively responsible for the running of much of the Balkans. Its commissioners run Bosnia with an iron fist, in the interests of global capitalism.

**The bosses' Europe erodes civil liberties**

After the attack on the World Trade Centre the UK passed a draconian bill which opts out of the European Convention on Human Rights to allow the Home Secretary to detain foreign nationals indefinitely and without trial who are "suspected" by him of involvement in "terrorism". This fol-

low on from legislation last year which massively broadens the definition of terrorism to embrace most forms of extra-parliamentary protest movements.

It would have been possible to back the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s with these laws and ANC representatives would have been locked up. In France the Chirac government has carried on where the Socialists left off, tightening laws, fuelling racism and harassing inner city youth.

**The bosses Europe is a racist union**

The EU allows free access for capital across its borders and demands the right for its bosses and bankers to operate freely anywhere in the world. Yet millions of legal immigrants working and paying taxes in Europe are denied the right to vote; many are denied employment in the public sector.

Migrant labour, for Europe's leaders, is nothing but a commodity to be imported according to the needs of capital. On the one hand it welcomes with open arms workers who are very well qualified.

Refugees fleeing from political persecution or from economic devastation caused by IMF-devised and EU-backed policies in the Third World are denied entry or herded into camps, like Sangatte near Calais, surrounded by barbed wire, often for months or years on end.

In the UK New Labour has come up with ever more repressive ways of scapegoating and harassing refugees - restricting benefits, segregating their children into separate schools, and prolonged detention or fast track deportation.

**There is an alternative**

The European Union is an anti-democratic and pro-business union that is seeking a more global police for itself to enforce anti-Third World policies and build up a military machine that can back up its economic and diplomatic might.

The workers of the European Union must reject attempts to withdraw "their" nation states from this entity. That would be an utter diversion. Rather we need to urgently combine our forces. We need international class solidarity, class organisation and class struggle.

Our goal, as a European working class, is to overthrow the ruling class in each state and in Europe as a whole. We want to build a Socialist United States of Europe with real democratic rights for all and free from exploitation by the big corporations and militarism.



Ten months after its "revolutionary days" Argentina is still in a grave economic crisis. The political establishment remains discredited and divided. Nevertheless, the opposition to President Eduardo Duhalde on the streets has lost its mass character. Why?

- There is a certain bottoming out of the economic crisis, including an imminent deal with the IMF. This may restore a degree of unity within the ruling class.

- Duhalde's decision to bring forward presidential elections to March next year, has turned the thoughts of the urban middle class and the trade union bureaucracy towards an electoral way out of the crisis.

- The split between the militant vanguard and the mass of the employed working class remains the most important subjective weakness in the opposition movement.

These factors have slowed the tempo of the mass movement. But they have not resolved the political and economic crisis in Argentina. Sudden turns in events can quickly recreate the conditions for mass

– the unemployed piqueteros and the more middle class cacerolazos – came up against limits of their spontaneous development and a certain bureaucratisation of them has taken place.

The left-wing of the piqueteros movement, led by the far left and populist forces, has suffered repression from the state.

### THE BOURGEOIS OPPOSITION

Elisa Carrio's Alternativa por una Republica de Iguales (ARI) is the only "regime" oppositional party with any credibility (it has 17 deputies).

Formed on an anti-corruption platform, support in the polls for the ARI has increased markedly since June. Carrio was a key sponsor (together with the CTA union federation chairperson De Gennaro) of the Citizens' Forum from July to September. It seeks to exercise leadership over the "get rid of them all" movement and dilute that sentiment into electoralism.

Instead of focusing that sentiment on the slogan for a Constituent Assembly (and hence an end to Congress, Supreme Court and Presidency) Carrio has now

job sharing without loss of pay or even systematically linking up with the factory occupations (the exception being Zanon).

### POPULAR ASSEMBLIES

The popular assemblies came into existence as a result of the mobilisations of the unemployed, the middle class-dominated cacerolazos and of the workers from enterprises faced with closure. But they were and remain not delegate councils in which workers predominate but local meetings and in the best cases, city-wide meetings of their representatives.

While more than 300 popular assemblies remain active, the numbers attending have dwindled and most are concentrated in Gran Buenos Aires. More importantly they lost the capacity to call the massive "cacerolazos" that were common earlier this year. Only in Neuquen has there been close collaboration with the factory occupations for which the Trotskyist PTS must take much of the credit.

More dangerous still, the regime has tried to co-opt them in Buenos Aires by seeking to put them under

The leaders of the National Movement of Reclaimed Companies and the CTA are trying hard to get workers to negotiate and cave in the face of the state. This would entail them being turned into tame workers' co-operatives. The revolutionary response to this has to be to use the occupied factories to act as a vanguard force in the fight to move beyond workers' control in the factory to workers' control in society.

The occupied factories are proving a "school for socialism". But to achieve this goal they must become a revolutionary weapon to smash the apparatus of the state. They cannot remain tiny isolated islands of socialism in a sea of capitalist ownership and competition. Without control over the mainstays of the capitalist economy – the banks, the major multinationals – the occupied factories will be smothered or at best survive on the basis of self-exploitation and profit sharing.

### THE UNIONS

Back in December, the trade union bureaucracies derailed the full potential of the December revolu-

# Fight for working class leadership

The working class movement in Argentina must break from Peronism

struggle. The crisis is reduced to the crisis of working class leadership. The objective prerequisites are still in existence for a rapid revolutionary development of the crisis.

### THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Businesses have folded, unemployment has rocketed to more than 25 per cent. Real wages have fallen by 25 per cent. A staggering 50 per cent of the population has fallen below the poverty line. Crime has doubled compared to years ago, kidnapping is rife as people are plunged into poverty and seek to get their hands on the \$20 billion in cash (about the same as all bank deposits!) said to be stored in homes.

The IMF aims to restore the banking system, preserve its assets and create a climate for profitable foreign investment again in Argentina. It needs a different president from Duhalde to impose structural reform.

But it recognises that Duhalde is a lesser evil compared to the overthrow of the regime from below. So the IMF has shored up the regime with minimal subsidies, while keeping it politically weak.

The IMF has a minimum and maximum programme: first, "a relatively short-term" agreement. But the maximum programme is a government capable of imposing price rises and restarting foreign debt payments.

### THE GOVERNMENT

The crisis of the Argentine ruling class is reflected in the structural crisis of the Peronist party (PJ). The PJ is divided into factions. There are those who accept the transformed role of the Argentine bourgeoisie as totally subservient to imperialism (particularly the USA). The main representative of this wing is Fernando de la Sota who is also supported by the most conservative and corrupt sector of the Argentine trade union federations, the CGT Daer.

There is another wing representing the weaker sectors of the bourgeoisie who need state support and protection against the pressure of the IMF and multinational corporations. They play with old-style Peronist populism and promise not to follow IMF dictates. This wing is represented by the one-week-president of last December, Rodriguez Saa. He has successfully built an alliance with the previously more combative union, the CGT Moyano (as well as with a semi-fascist former paratrooper and coup maker, Ricco!) and has made overtures to sections of the piqueteros movement.

Duhalde's survival is also thanks to support from the CGT trade union bureaucracies that have refused to organise a general strike against his government.

From spring onwards the radical mass movements

agreed to put herself forward as a presidential candidate in the March elections. Carrio is an important political force for reconciling the urban middle class to the regime and the existing constitution.

### THE PIQUETEROS

The piqueteros, the vanguard of the unemployed movement, have been responsible for some of the most militant actions during the last ten months and for this very reason have been subject to the harshest repression.

More recently, the movement has been derailed politically by the municipalities' use of workfare schemes, which tie the piqueteros materially to state governors and others in local administration. The United Left tries to bureaucratise the movement. The combined sectarianism and opportunism of the Partido Obrero (via the Polo Obrero) means that it remains a difficult struggle to unite the movement with the employed workers around necessary campaigns for

control of the municipality. Politically, they are derailed by the election preparation and by the fact that they have no strategy for realising their demand for nationalisation of the banks in order to release their frozen savings accounts.

### OCCUPIED FACTORIES

The factory occupations – such as Zanon in Neuquen or Brukman in Buenos Aires – represent a real challenge to Argentina's bosses. They do not just demand more jobs or more food or the return of savings, but challenge capitalist private property itself. They show practically that workers do not need bosses to run production.

For this reason the occupations are under attack. Regular attempts are made to have them declared illegal and increasing attempts are made to oust them physically. In addition they are under attack politically by reformist currents that seek to derail their revolutionary potential.



Zanon workers

tionary days by withdrawing the great mass of the employed working class from the struggle. They then threw their weight behind Duhalde.

Today, the trade union bureaucracy of the two CGT federations provide the main basis of social and political support for Duhalde. They have refused to organise national strikes against his government despite the rise in unemployment and collapse of real wages. Worse, they have colluded in or orchestrated attempts to end the occupation of Zanon factory and actively seek to undermine certain popular assemblies. They now collude with the PJ in seeking to ensure a Peronist successor to Duhalde; Daer and Barrionuevo back De la Sota while Moyano has endorsed Rodriguez Saa

The question is how to remove the obstacle that these corrupt and pro-bourgeois bureaucracies represent to any revolutionary development. There is only one answer – the tactic of the united front. This must combine outright exposure and denunciation of their treacherous actions with fomenting demands from their rank and file to break with Peronism (in the case of the two CGTs) and with bourgeois populism (Elisa Carrio) on the part of the CTA/CCC.

Wherever possible workers must seek to replace local officials with newly elected representatives of the rank and file who want to fight. They must demand regional and national leaders organise national general strikes to get rid of Duhalde. As the culmination of these demands we call for them all to break with the bosses' parties and form a workers' party that could rally the workers to an independent strategy, a revolutionary strategy for the destruction of capitalism and its replacement by a revolutionary workers' state based on the democratic organisations – councils and a militia – of the working class itself.

## Repression against the subway workers of Metrovías

Subway workers are demanding a general transport strike from the UTA (transport union) after the repression suffered by striking subway workers in Buenos Aires.

On Thursday 24 October at noon there was a violent repression against a demonstration of subway workers of Metrovías.

They were holding a demonstration in front of the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires, demanding that their work underground be recognised as unhealthy and that the law reducing the work day to six hours be implemented.

The workers were expecting to be able to enter the hall of the Legislature as the Constitution allows, but upon arriving they found a strong police presence.

The police responded with violent repression when the workers – together with the Judge who had given them authority to invoke the working hours law – attempted to enter the hall. Two workers were seriously injured as a result of the police attack.

A strike was announced for the following day on all subway lines.

Some popular assemblies are beginning to mobilise in support of the subway workers.

This information came from the Argentine Solidarity Committee. For further information on this strike and other aspects of the struggle in Argentina contact the Argentine Solidarity Campaign at [Argentina\\_solidarity@yahoo.com](mailto:Argentina_solidarity@yahoo.com)



Metro workers demonstration that was later attacked by police

### Brazil: a correction

WP 268 correctly argued that it was impermissible to vote for bourgeois candidates in alliance with the PT in the Brazilian elections. It was possible in the congressional and state elections, where the electronic voting system involved open lists, to vote PT without voting for bourgeois Liberal candidates, and in these circumstances we called for a vote for PT candidates.

Our call to cross off Alencar, the leading industrial capitalist who was Lula's Vice-Presidential candidate, was however not possible within the electronic voting system and therefore in the first and second rounds we will argue for an active abstention in the election for the Presidential ticket, voting "none of the above". The heading of the article on voting in the elections therefore should have read 'Vote PT' rather than 'Vote Lula'.

# Women against war

Women have been at the centre of many anti-war movements in the past 100 years. But to succeed, the struggle against war must be linked to the fight against their oppression, writes *Kirstie Paton*

A striking feature of the 400,000 strong demonstration in September against the planned attack on Iraq was the number of young women on the demonstration. A new generation of young women waving flags, chanting slogans and demanding justice and an end to war.

They were angry, loud and confident as they marched, many for the first time. It is a strength of this anti-war movement that it has inspired so many women to get involved, especially within the Asian community.

Women have a long tradition of leading and building anti war movements. From the outset of the First World War, women like Sylvia Pankhurst played a prominent role in making their opposition to the imperialist war heard.

More recently, the US war against Vietnam in the 1960s provoked the biggest international anti-war movement since the First world War. It played a key role in the victory of the Vietnamese people against the most powerful nation in the world.

Women were heavily involved in the anti-war movement from the outset. Dagmar Wilson launched Women Strike for Peace (WSP) in 1961. It was dominated by middle-class women who were influenced by some feminist arguments that women instinctively opposed war because of their roles as mothers and carers. They drew attention to the fate of children in the Vietnam War and in 1966 tried to block napalm shipments from the Dow Chemical company from San Jose, California. Dubbed "housewife terrorists" and "Napalm ladies" by the newspapers they were arrested and convicted.

Their publicity stunts involved actions like sending a coffin inscribed with the words "Not Our sons, Not Your Sons, Not Their Sons" to the office of General Hershhey. The fact that President Johnson received over 100,000 cards with the appeal: "For the sake of our sons...for the sake of our children...give us peace in Vietnam" in 1965 indicates the level of support the WSP had.

This also indicated the direction that Bella Abzug, a member of the Democratic Party, wanted the WSP



Women on anti-war demonstration, London, October 2002

to take – a pressure group that could support a congressional campaign to stop the war. Increasingly the WSP put its efforts into supporting Democratic candidates in congress elections.

Alongside the WSP, the formation of Another Mother for Peace (AMP) in 1967, was explicit in its appeal to the "nurturant motherhood" idea that women were by nature, more peaceful than men because they were responsible for the "seeds of life".

But a growing number of young women, radicalised by their participation in Students for a Democratic

1968!), typing and the provision of sex!

This new generation of women went on to build a radical and vibrant women's movement. It was this new wave of young women, alongside the general wave

**Today Bush and Blair's war aims are shaped by the ruthless drive to dominate the world, not because they are men, but because their economic system, capitalist imperialism, demands it**

Society (SDS), rejected the "essentialism of motherhood" as the basis for their opposition. As Betty Friedan said "I don't think the fact that milk once flowed within my breast is the reason I am against the war".

At the same time they were tired of male domination within the anti-war movement. Women activists complained widely that the men in the movement excluded them from decision making and allocated them menial tasks like food preparation (in Berkeley women did all the cooking until a rebellion in

of radical protest across Europe, that turned sections of the peace movement into anti-imperialist militants fighting for active solidarity with the Vietnamese in their fight against US imperialism.

These young women, like the women of today, could see the connections between the brutality of militarism abroad and the lack of power they experienced at work and at home. Some radical feminists went down the blind ally of suggesting that the root of both war and

oppression lay in male power. They argued that war was a product of male violence and the need to inate women.

The large numbers of women who joined the anti-war movement rejected this argument. They saw war as a product of the pursuit of economic and political influence by the ruling class. Today and Blair's war aims are shaped by the ruthless drive to dominate the world, not because they are men but because their economic system, capitalist imperialism, demands it.

Are women naturally more peaceful than men that explain why a new generation of young women taking to the streets? It is true that the social situation of women as domestic carers makes them more susceptible to the call for peace. War means an increased burden in the home, the absence of loved ones and mourning of lost husbands, boyfriends and sons.

However this doesn't mean that our desire for peace automatically translates into pacifism. During the Vietnam war, Vietnamese women took up arms alongside their brothers to fight for freedom and it is estimated that in some regions they composed up to a third of the fighting force of the Vietnamese liberation armies.

Today in the war torn streets of the occupied territories in Palestine, women and men are resisting the violence of the Israeli state. And here in Britain a new generation of young women on the streets are not only mobilising because they reject the policies of Bush and Blair, but, judging from their actions for a free Palestine, they want to see the victory of the Intifada as well.

Our movement today has a great advantage over previous anti-war movements – we can learn from their lessons. Our allies in the fight against Bush and Blair are the millions of oppressed across the globe who suffer at the hands of imperialism.

We will not defeat it with flowers and slogans – we will need a movement that is prepared to resist and fight back. In the process – like our sisters in the US – we will combine this struggle with the struggle to end our oppression too.

## Repression continues in Palestine

While attention has been focused on the war on Iraq, the Palestinians are still suffering, writes *Marcus Chamo*

With the world's attention focused on the imminent US attack on Iraq, Palestinians have good reason to feel a deep sense of foreboding. The Israeli army's regular incursions into Palestinian-administered territory continue unabated, while every unilateral ceasefire from the Palestinian militant organisations breaks down after a few weeks due to repeated Israeli provocations leading to Palestinian civilian deaths.

The most recent Palestinian ceasefire ended on 18 September with a bus-bomb in Tel Aviv. While this was described in the Israeli and American press as the end of a six-week period of "calm" in which no Israeli civilians were killed inside Israeli territory, it was anything but calm for Palestinians under occupation. They continue to suffer daily deaths, curfews, economic siege and all the violence of the occupation.

Sharon's government responded to this attack with 10-day a siege of Yasser Arafat's presidential compound in Ramallah, destroying most of the buildings in the compound except that containing Arafat himself. This came at precisely the wrong time for US plans against Iraq.

After pressure from President Bush, the siege was lifted. But it is widely regarded

as having been a "dry run" – a rehearsal for a future operation in which Arafat will be arrested and deported to Lebanon or Libya, thus signalling an end to the Palestinian Authority as a "negotiating partner".

The initiative for the recent attempts to establish a ceasefire appears to have come from the grass roots and the militant Palestinian organisations themselves. In part, this reflects a growing recognition that the strategy of striking at Israeli civilians has failed – that the IDF has proved capable of exacting an unacceptable price in terms of Palestinian deaths. In part, it reflects an attempt to relate to the much-vaunted "reform" of the Palestinian Authority, in which the militant organisations can translate their resistance into popular support in the elections scheduled for January next year.

It also ties in with the adoption of new, mass-based methods of struggle against the occupation – such as the mass breaking of the curfew in Nablus by schoolchildren and teachers. This growing movement of civilian resistance has been greatly encouraged by the practical solidarity shown by international activists and some sections of the Israeli peace movement.

Nevertheless, the prospect of a US-Iraq war would present Israel with oppor-

tunities to intensify the repression. Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery went so far as to publicly accuse Sharon of supporting US military action in order to revive his long-held plan for "transfer" – the mass deportation of Palestinians from the West Bank into Jordan.

Almost as if to prove the point, an influential right-wing think-tank called Gamla has published "The Logistics of Transfer", arguing for Israeli politicians to soften up international opinion and the Israeli public to such a "final solution". "Transfer" has become a popular topic for discussion in academic, military and political circles.

Indications that this is not mere talk include the recent deportations of the families of suicide bombers to Gaza from the West Bank, and the removal of Israeli citizenship from members of Israel's Palestinian minority accused of involvement in "terrorism". "Transfer" could indeed become a realistic threat in the event of a regional war, without any restraint on Israel from its US backers, or any serious response from the Arab states.

America's Arab allies are well aware of this threat and of the explosion that it would cause in their own societies. Jordan, in particular, is especially nervous about the effects – on its pro-Iraqi Palestinian major-

ity – of a simultaneous war on Iraq and ethnic cleansing by Israel. Bush's administration has therefore gone to some lengths to be seen to be "doing something" to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, prior to or concurrent with enforcing "regime change" in Baghdad.

The latest "peace plan", backed by the United Nations, Russia and the European Union, is effectively a rehash of the ideas outlined in Bush's speech in June. This called for an end to Palestinian violence in return for an Israeli withdrawal from the areas occupied since the outbreak of the intifada in September 2000, and the establishment of a "provisional" Palestinian state with undefined borders and subject to international supervision over aspects of its "sovereignty".

This plan is a trap. If implemented it would represent a historic defeat for the struggle for Palestinian national self-determination. It would formalise an apartheid system, in which the Palestinians were confined to their ghettos while the lands currently controlled by settlers and the military would be annexed to Israel.

It would mean an entity incapable of absorbing the 4 to 5 million Palestinian refugees. It would mean a powerless Bantustan, whose real job would be to police

the Palestinians on behalf of Israel and US imperialism.

The future of the Middle East as an anti-imperialist struggle now hangs in the balance. Bush's administration have to show that they are willing to disrupt this balance to reshape the region according to their interests, while barely restraining their own disruptive ambitions.

The workers and peasants of the region, through their own struggle and self-organisation, must take the initiative by mounting a new struggle against imperialism, and all its agents in the region – Jewish and Arab. In an age of globalisation, this will depend more than ever upon movements of solidarity with the Palestinian and Iraqi people.

The anti-war movement here has a role to play in aiding this development. Indeed after September's huge demonstration it is already being said in Arab countries that the first battle in the Middle East's war on Iraq will take place on the streets of London.

We should do our part to make sure that US imperialism is defeated in its war, and that the fight for a socialist republic of Palestine, as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East, takes a huge leap forward.

# workers power

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## Don't take our eyes off Bush and Blair

# Stop the war

After the brilliant success of 400,000 antiwar protesters on the streets of London on 28 September, after the local protests on 31 October, there must be no let up in our campaign to stop the war. Plans by the Stop the War Coalition, for a further mass protest in London in December must be firmed up.

Both the FBU strike and the protracted negotiations for a resolution in the Security Council has taken the war off the front pages. But despite the jaw-jaw at the United Nations it is still war-war at the White House. Plans to actually launch the attack on Iraq are well under way. The military build-up in the Gulf is proceeding apace. A recent report on the development of JDAMs (joint direct attack munitions) by the US revealed that the blanket bombing of Iraq will be considerably more fierce than during the Gulf War of 1991:

"Instead of F-117s buzzing Baghdad with a measly pair of one-ton laser guided bombs, as in the 1991 war, the next conflict might start with B-2s over Iraq, each dropping 16 of the one-ton JDAMs. They would probably be followed by B-1s each capable of dropping 24 JDAMs on a single pass." (*Time Magazine*, 21 October)

In other words hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi people are going to be pelted with horrendous weapons of mass destruction - all in the name of eradicating weapons of mass destruction, which nobody believes Saddam possesses.

No one should foster the illusion that the United Nations can save the day and bring peace. George Bush may be playing word games over his plan for "regime change" in Iraq, but the US/UK resolution to the UN Security Council leaves no room for doubt about their intention to attack Iraq no matter what.

It combines a demand for the return of weapons inspectors with access to everywhere and the threat of unspecified action if Saddam Hussein fails to comply with an



almost impossibly tight timetable. It is a declaration of war in all but name.

France and Russia are trying to water the resolution down. But their objections

have nothing to do with a concern for world peace. They have a tactical difference because of their own political and financial interests in the Gulf region. Bullying and

bribery could easily bring them on board, or at least lead to them abstaining.

Meanwhile most of the UN members sit back, utterly powerless to do anything to influence the horse-trading by the great powers. The United Nations is, and remains, a tool of US policy.

And even if France and Russia hold out and do push for a weaker resolution it won't stop George Bush. US diplomats made this clear during negotiations when they declared:

"This is now a game of chicken. The US is daring France and Russia to stand in its way and risk a top level rupture in international relations. They are daring the US and Britain to go it alone, without security council approval."

And both Bush and Blair have made clear that they will go it alone if necessary. Can France and Russia stop them? No. The rulers of these countries will prove powerless in the face of Bush's drive for global domination.

But there is a force that can stop them. The massed ranks of the anti-war movement. We need to deepen and broaden the movement, but also up its levels of militancy.

As well as the direct action that stopped the streets on 31 October, we need a protracted campaign of such action - backed up by trade unions striking against the war, Labour MPs disrupting parliament given that Blair will not allow a free debate and vote on any war, schools and colleges striking and occupying, blockades at military bases and boycotts of the corporations backing the war.

We need mass protests targeting not just Downing Street but the US embassy at Grosvenor Square London.

We need to ram the message home - not just in Britain but in a co-ordinated campaign across Europe, which could be kicked off at Florence - Hands Off Iraq, Stop the War, Defeat US and UK imperialism.

### Teamsters against the war

Below is the text of a resolution adopted by Teamsters Local 705 in Chicago. It is the second largest Teamsters' branch in the US.

#### Resolution Against the War

Whereas, we value the lives of our sons and daughters, of our brothers and sisters more than Bush's control of Middle East oil profits

Whereas, we have no quarrel with the ordinary working-class men, women, and children of Iraq who will suffer the most in any war

Whereas, the billions of dollars being spent to stage and execute this invasion, means billions taken away from our schools, hospitals, housing, and social security

Whereas, Bush's drive for war serves as a cover and a distraction for the sinking economy, corporate corruption, lay-offs, Taft-Hartley (used against the locked out ILWU longshoremen)

Whereas, Teamsters Local 705 is known far and wide as fighters for justice

Be it Resolved that Teamsters Local 705 stands firmly against Bush's drive for war

Further Resolved that the Teamsters Local 705 Executive Board publicise this statement, and seek out other unions, labor and community activists interested in promoting anti-war activity in the labor movement and community."

We ask all those who support and are encouraged by this statement to contact Teamsters Local 705 to offer support:

Teamsters Local 705  
312 738-2800 or  
[www.teamsterslocal705.org](http://www.teamsterslocal705.org)

## www.workerspower.com

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