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## 'This scandal must not be allowed to continue' No more PFI in the NHS!

By Jane Burton

The jewel in Labour's crown has long lost its glitter. Building on the Tories "marketisation" of the NHS, Labour has pursued a variety of privatisation schemes in the NHS: Best Value, Private Finance Initiatives and Foundation Hospital schemes.

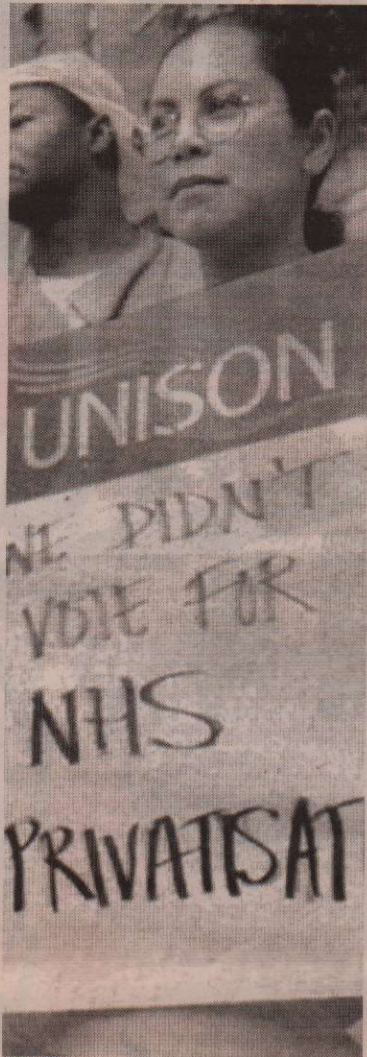
All of these schemes have failed to provide a service that can deliver free, quality healthcare at the point of need. Yet, in the face of outrage at these schemes, and in the face of an epidemic of the super-bug, MRSA as a direct result of these schemes, Labour's answer is: privatise it all a bit more!

The PFI racketeers stand to gain most from the extra investment for the NHS, not working class patients. Construction companies like Balfour Beatty, Tarmac, Jarvis and Siemens stand to make big bucks, considering the NHS has an annual budget of £74 billion.

Fresh from slaughtering innocent rail passengers on the privatised rail network, the likes of Jarvis are eagerly looking for a killing in the NHS.

As with education, Labour aims to turn the NHS into a two-tier system. "Failing hospitals" - those without the necessary funding and resources, those serving poor and generally more ill working class communities - will be starved further.

Those that can attract a better class of patient, turn their entrance halls in



replicas of US shopping malls, and guarantee their consultants spend most of their time servicing pampered private patients will get foundation status.

Waiting lists will be cut by fiddling figures. The crisis in the recruitment and retention of nurses will be offset by the employment of private agency staff.

Miracle cures will be touted by private drug companies that already cream off around 14 per cent of NHS expenditure - but hospitals won't be able to afford to buy and supply them. Working class health will continue to suffer.

This scandal must not be allowed to continue. There should be a fully funded genuinely national NHS, not a "choice" between "good" (Foundation) and "failing" (under-funded) hospitals, which condemns millions to inadequate care.

To minimise the threat of health epidemics, the nationalisation of the drug and pharmaceutical companies, with no compensation, and the expansion of state funded health research institutions must be carried through immediately.

Every privatisation measure introduced into the NHS must be reversed. All of the private contracts in the NHS should be ended, without any compensation for the companies who are sucking the very lifeblood out of the service. The entire private health care sector needs to be nationalised - now!

## Blair's Schools for the Future

By Kate Foster

Privatisation, privatisation, privatisation. That was what Blair really meant to say in his famous declaration on the importance of education to New Labour.

In their third term Labour will further increase the grubby reach of big business into our schools. Its thirst for profits, at the cost of working class children's education, will be quenched by Ruth Kelly of the Ministry for Mis-education and Joblessness.

Labour's vision for schools was set out in "Building Schools for the Future" published in February last year: "Independent specialist schools in place of the traditional comprehensive".

Much is made of the promise to rebuild all secondary schools, invest in more staff, and now - shamed into it by a celebrity chef - to spend 50p per child on school dinners. But each of promises is really just another way of squeezing public money into the private sector's pockets.

Schools will be refurbished and rebuilt. After years of Tory neglect, this is an urgent need. However, every local education authority, when bidding for money, must include in their bid plans for privatisation - either wholesale, via academies and private finance initiatives, or through the contracting out services.

LEAs have been told that any school in their area, whose exam results are below an average of 30 per cent 5 A\*-C GCSEs, must become academies. Any LEA, where the exam results across the authority are less than 40 per cent 5 A\*-C, must include a plan for a new academy in the area. Private capitalists will gain total control of schools - the site, the staff and the curriculum - for a paltry investment of £2 million.

They will be given around £23 million to rebuild the school, and will also control its annual budget. From the existing academies there is already evi-

dence, produced by *The Times Educational Supplement*, that academy sponsors, such as car dealer Reg Vardy and Alec Reed, head of Reed International, are siphoning off public funds to their companies or subsidiaries - £290,214 to Vardy's King's Academy in Middlesbrough, and £180,964 to Reed's West London Academy.

Labour politicians are fond of boasting of how much more money they have invested in education. Teachers, other education workers, pupils and parents often look around and think, "Where has it gone?" The answer is into the bank accounts of private businesses.

Supply teaching agencies, which used to be run by LEAs, have been privatised. Timeplan, Capita and Select make massive profits from providing teachers to cover absences - profits which come from school budgets. There has been an explosion of testing under New Labour - plenty of profit to be made here by the private exam boards. Ofsted employs private companies to provide inspection teams.

Much of the increase in the funding for school dinners is destined to end up in the pockets of big business too. However much Jamie Oliver might want to see the return of the skilled dinner lady, school catering is now a monopoly in the hands of Sodexho and Capita.

The chance of them employing skilled cooks and introducing nutritional food is about as high as Lee Bowyer becoming the FA's race awareness ambassador. Many of the contracts, which have already been signed, lock schools into exclusive deals with these multinational child poisoners. Schools, strapped for cash, will not be able to break their contract, and the junk caterers will continue to make money.

Blair's schools for the future: unhealthy, saddled with debt and controlled by car dealers. There must be an alternative!

## For an integrated publicly owned transport system

Rail privatisation has been a disaster. Yet Labour refuses to do anything about it. Instead it has actually extended privatisation - on the London Underground and in Air Traffic Control. The result is transport chaos for most of us and a profits bonanza for the rail and bus companies. Safety standards have plummeted - the Paddington and Hatfield rail disasters were the direct results of privatisation.

A recent report from the think-tank Catalyst demonstrated that ending the privatisation of rail would save the taxpayer at least £500 million every year, and that privatisation has already cost £6 billion in government subsidies to the private rail companies. Where is the sense in that?

A recent report from the House of Commons Transport Select Committee stated that the Public Private Partnership set up to privatise London Underground is costing the taxpayer 20 times more than the state-run system. More than £1 billion of public money will be spent on the network this year, most of it going to the two private companies, Metronet and Tube Lines, that maintain the trains, tracks and stations.

Meanwhile safety has got worse, with sharp increases in broken rails and signals passed at danger, since the PPP began in 2003. Derailments have quadrupled.

Bob Crow, Rail Maritime and Transport union general secretary, said: "The Transport Select Committee has today confirmed that the PPP is an expensive scheme which puts guaranteed, risk-free profits into contractors' pockets despite their failure to deliver improvements... The only winners from these rip-off contracts are the contractors who are pocketing £2 million a week in profits."

We clearly need to fight for the re-nationalisation of transport services. The entire rail and bus network should be brought back into public ownership, with no compensation to the rip-off merchants who bought it up and are ruining the transport system. The people who work on it and use it every day should run the rail and bus system.

And the whole system should be properly integrated so that we can provide the means of people getting to where they want easily, without having to use private cars. At the same time we should nationalise the road haulage companies transferring as much freight as possible to the rail. Both of these measures would not only ease traffic chaos, they would considerably help rebuild our environment by reducing pollution.

## Hands off our housing!

By a Lewisham Council Unison steward

The Labour Party is busily selling off every council house in the UK. In 1999 David Curry MP, a former Tory Housing Minister, said, "A revolution is taking place in British housing."

It spells nothing less than the death of the council house... once again, the triumph of Tory policies in the hands of a Labour government."

Thatcher started the ball rolling with the "Right to Buy". Labour is finishing the job by getting rid of social housing altogether. Council housing stock has fallen from 5.5 million properties in 1980 to around 2.6 million today.

On 1 April, Labour announced its plans to engineer a further million council and housing association tenants into home ownership: by extending the right to buy - and reducing the number of homes for low-income workers to rent.

But even council tenants are targeted for privatisation. Whether it is through stock transfers to RSLs (housing associations), PFIs (private companies) or ALMOs (semi-privatised companies), local councils have been instructed to flog their housing stock at knock down prices.

Labour MP Austin Mitchell recently commented, "Every dirty trick is mobilised, from starting ballots early to prevent opposition

material reaching voters, to using housing officers - council employees - to canvass support on behalf of private companies. Prescott's task force instructs councils on these tricks, introduces private sector friends who will help, and warns that if the tenants vote the wrong way they'll have to ballot again. Or rot in hell."

Putting this housing stock up for sale is an expensive business. The government and local councils spend millions on their dirty tricks campaign. Also, housing associations have higher interest charges and management overheads, so it costs them, on average, £1,300 more to repair and renovate each housing unit than it does a council.

But the government is facing a backlash from tenants - and even councils. Defend Council Housing groups have sprung up around the country successfully encouraged tenants to reject the transfers. 125 councils are refusing to launch ballots, knowing they will only lose them.

The fight to defend council housing is on.

Defend Council Housing groups should draw in local tenants' associations, community groups and trade unions to make sure an effective campaign is built. They need to block the Liberal Democrats - who will "defend council housing" until

they are elected and then sell it off as they have done in Liverpool - using the campaigns for their own political advantage.

Local government union Unison should mobilise its members to stop the privatisation drive and demand massive investment in council house building, repair and renovation. It should build for strike action to refuse to implement the transfer schemes and ballots.

But the defence of council housing will not solve the problem. Kate Barker of the Bank of England estimates that we need 206,000 new homes a year and says that, "Left to itself, the market would be unlikely to provide for all those who need housing."

With a million people in need of housing, but unable to afford private rents, and over 50,000 young people homeless, we need to force the government to build decent council housing for all in need. Disgracefully, Labour is simply offering to build just 15,000 new homes, all for sale on its "shared equity" scheme.

The struggle over housing is a vital one in the years ahead. A successful fight for the right to have a roof over your head, provided by the state at an affordable rent, can deal a body blow to New Labour's whole privatisation agenda.

Contact Defend Council Housing: PO Box 33519, London E2 9WW. Tel 0207 987 9989 or visit [www.defend-councilhousing.org.uk/dch/](http://www.defend-councilhousing.org.uk/dch/)

# No vote for Labour! Unions - build a new workers party!

The Tories have closed the gap on Labour as the election race begins. But it would take an unprecedented surge in support to bring them a majority. However Labour leaders fear that historic levels of working class abstention will cause them serious problems. And they may be right: opinion polls register a deep mistrust of Blair because he dragged Britain into war under false pretences, and because he has presided over rising social inequality.

The Tories, of course, also backed the war to the hilt so their criticisms do them no good whatsoever. Labour's racism against asylum seekers, their law-and-order measures, from Asbos to the pledge to introduce ID cards, and their plans to further privatise parts of the health service, the schools system and council housing have made it impossible for the Tories to put much "clear blue water" between themselves and Blair.

And deputy party chairman Howard Flight's claim, that the Tories' planned cuts went "way beyond" the £35 billion publicly announced, proves that despite Michael Howard's attempt to "move to the centre" the Tories are the same anti-working class party.

Nevertheless, there could very well be a substantial abstention by Labour loyalists alienated by the war and other policies. Some of these - certainly in Muslim communities - may turn to Respect but its non-class and populist character, plus the fact that it is not even a party, will make it unattractive to large numbers of disaffected traditional Labour voters.

Despite being blessed with economic good news, despite having delivered measures in the interests of some workers, such as the minimum wage and tax credits for low income families, it has failed to plug the "democratic deficit" that many people experience in British parliamentary politics. Disillusion with parliamentary democracy, as we have witnessed in by-elections as well as the North East regional assembly vote, continues to be a deep-rooted phenomenon.

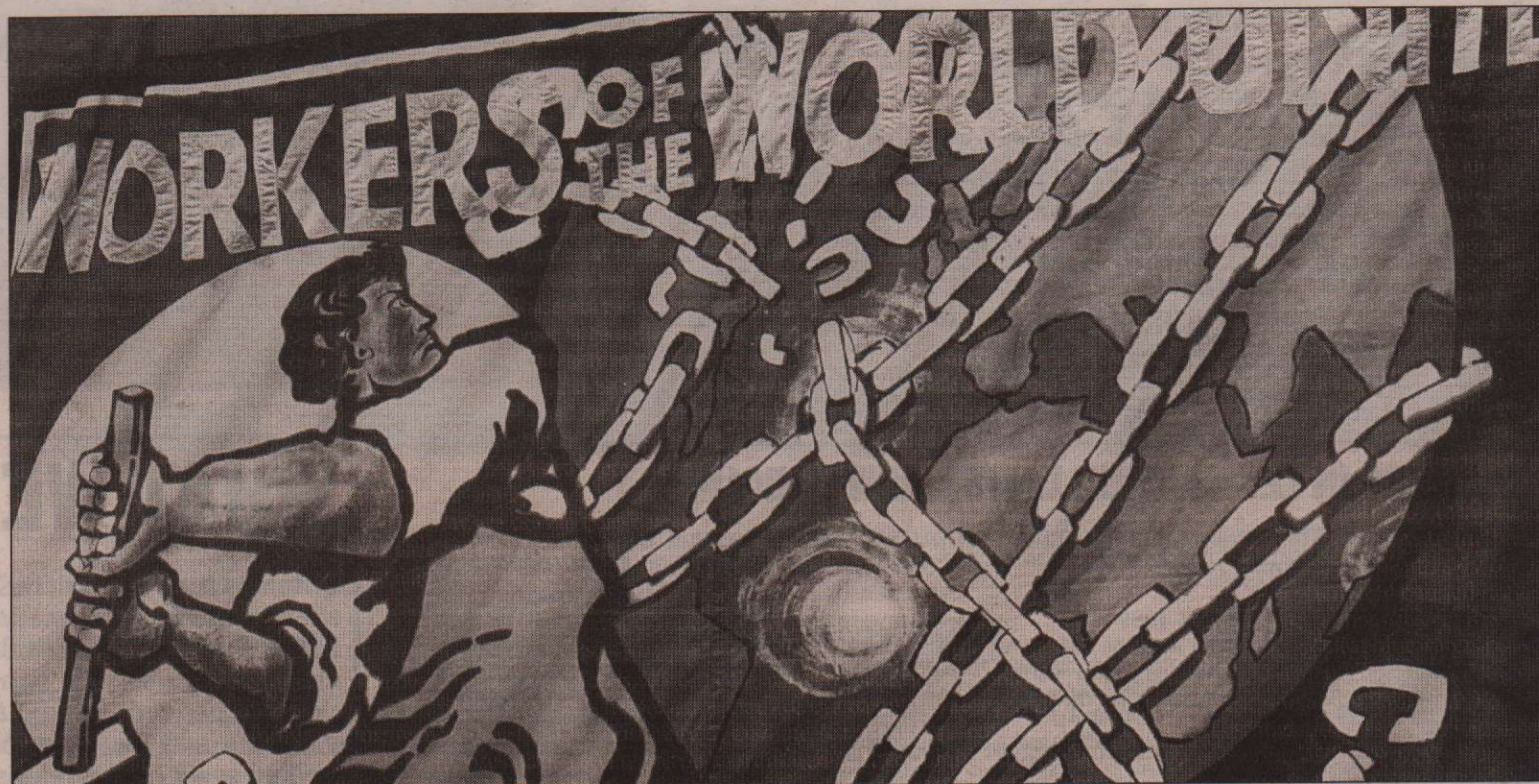
In the last election, in 2001, the turnout dropped from 71 per cent to 59 per cent. Then Gordon Brown claimed it showed people were so content that they felt they didn't have to vote. In this election, abstention could reach a new peak; only, this time, there can be no such excuse.

#### Why?

Two years ago, most people were against the impending war, yet parliament voted for it. Decent pensions for all, affordable public housing, fully resourced hospitals, well staffed schools, a renationalised rail system - all things the majority want. Yet none of the major parties offer them. These demands are ones our society could easily meet. British companies made record profits last year, and Gordon Brown claims we are enjoying the best period of growth since 1701. So why are none of the major parties in favour of taxing the rich and providing these basic services?

Because none of them are prepared to tax the huge corporations, make the super rich pay, confiscate the ill-gotten gains of the privateers. In short none of them are anticapitalist: they are pro-capitalist.

Of course, some of the much smaller parties, like the Greens or Respect, do claim to be anti-war and anti-privatisation, for social justice and public services.



But, despite taking radical positions on the war, personal drug use and, of course, the environment, the Green Party is fully committed to a capitalist solution. They oppose the nationalisation of large-scale industry and defend the market as the basis for a "fair" economy. These fundamental positions led the Greens in London's Assembly to back the privatisers against the tube-workers in last year's strikes over pay.

Respect does include the word socialism in its name, but it doesn't dare say what it is or how to achieve it. It wants to attract all classes in society apart from the biggest capitalists. But it doesn't dare say that it is the working class who must lead the struggle to bring about a society without war, exploitation and the threat of environmental catastrophe.

Most of Respect's activists are socialists, members of the Socialist Workers Party. They believe a revolution is necessary. But they have decided not to say so for fear of frightening away voters. Respect has trimmed the policies on which it seeks election to what it believes is popular.

George Galloway has come out against a woman's right to choose whether to continue with an unwanted pregnancy, and in favour of "fair" immigration controls that will still punish those workers coming from countries that Britain has devastated through war or economic plunder.

#### The unions and Labour

The Labour Party used to be seen as the party of the trade unions. But it has expelled the railworkers' union, the RMT, while the firefighters', the FBU, has left it. It expelled its most prominent anti-war MP, George Galloway. Its membership has halved. Millions of Labour supporters are deeply disillusioned with it.

Unfortunately, the major union leaders continue to support New Labour. Not because their members demand it: quite the opposite. But because the union leaders are scared stiff of opening up a debate within the working class on what kind of party we need.

Workers Power is not afraid of that debate. In fact we believe it is long overdue.

We think that a real working class party - unlike Labour, which has always ruled on behalf of the bosses - would force the rich to pay back to society the

means to eradicate poverty, insecurity and discrimination. It would tax the rich, nationalise the banks and the giant corporations and place them and all their assets under the control of the workers who create society's wealth and need its resources.

We would be fools to rely on the rich meekly yielding to the authority of parliament. Even if there were 500 George Galloways in the Commons, the Queen, the judges, the police chiefs and the army generals would jump to the defence of the system they serve, instantly revealing where real power lies.

No. A real socialist party would not water down its policies in order to win votes in elections. Its programme would rest on mobilising the full strength of the working class: the militant trade unions, the self-sacrificing youth, the oppressed and excluded in society. It would build democratic action councils to wage the struggle for power. It would train defence guards against the inevitable attempts of the police to break up our movement. In short it would mobilise the revolutionary force to overcome and break up the repressive machinery of the old order and replace it with a new order, embodying the power of the overwhelming majority.

The RMT and FBU have broken with the party of war and privatisation. Large numbers in other unions have questioned why they are still paying millions to a party that attacks union members. A substantial minority of workers is actively looking for an alternative to Labour. They realise that an alternative is needed. That is why we say the decision to break from Labour is correct.

But unions must go further than just disaffiliating. On its own this could just lead to apolitical trade unionism or the unions running their own political campaigns but ignoring the question of power in society. Nor should we support the pick-and-mix attitude of the RMT leaders, i.e. supporting different parties because they support the aims of the RMT. Nor is Respect with its non-class populist programme the answer either.

We need a new working class party to fight whatever government comes out of this election: Blair or Howard. Such a party would have to conduct a thorough debate about its programme. Should it be an electoral reformist one or should it be a revolutionary programme linked to the ongoing struggles of workers

and youth? Our view is clear, but we want to convince thousands upon thousands of this in ongoing struggle and democratic debate.

Without an organisation capable of fighting for power we will never put an end to war, to private greed coming before human need. In the fight against war, racism, corporate greed, we need to rally the rank and file militants in the unions, the young anti-war and anticapitalist activists, not only to break their ties with Labour but to take concrete steps to organise a new workers party in the months and years ahead.

#### But in this election, what can we do to further this aim?

North of the border, a vote for the Scottish Socialist Party can deepen Labour's crisis. Such a vote is principled as the SSP represents between 5 and 10 per cent of the population who have already broken from Labour. The RMT and other trade unionists support them. Despite our criticisms of the SSP's programme, an increased vote for them will pile the pressure onto other union leaders to break from Labour.

In England and Wales, we should

support genuine candidates of struggle, who are standing on a ticket of combating Labour's policies and are pledged to continue fighting the next Labour government. But these are few and far between. Most people do not have the option of voting for such candidates.

In previous elections, we have called on workers and activists to vote for Labour - not because we believed they would implement socialist measures, but to put them to the test of office and, in so doing, break people's illusions in them. They have been tested and, in the eyes of millions, found wanting.

To repeat such a call, after eight years of hard Labour, would not facilitate - but present an obstacle to - revolutionary agitation and propaganda for a new workers party.

In this situation, support for Labour could only boost Blair and Brown's standing. Like George Bush after his re-election, they would be able to say, "We have made our political capital, and now we intend to spend it" - against us. Under present circumstances, the fight for a new workers party can only be expressed by a call for abstention under the slogan of "No vote for the party - Build a new workers party".

## Anti-Capitalism

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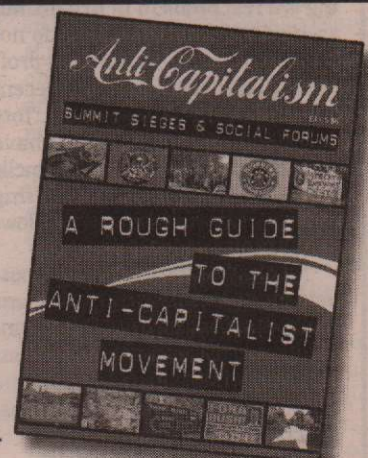
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# Labour: racist to the core

When New Labour came into office in May 1997 they pledged to repeal parts of the Tories' Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and to conduct a review of asylum policy. While many anti-racist activists were sceptical, they also believed that "things could only get better" for refugees under a Labour government, writes *Rekha Khurana*. New Labour has seriously eroded the rights of asylum seekers. It has used them as scapegoats to divert attention from the real causes of their failed policies on health, education and housing. The gutter press has portrayed them as terrorists and benefit scroungers. In some cases, this hostility has led to deaths in a country that is supposed to be a safe haven. Anyone still believe "things can only get better"?



## CHANGES IN LEGISLATION UNDER NEW LABOUR

Labour has introduced three major acts of parliament in just eight years, each one more restrictive.

### IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM ACT 1999

This act was, ironically, brought in at the same time as the McPherson report, which highlighted the institutional racism of the British state, in particular, the police.

The act:

- Introduced the degrading voucher scheme that replaced money for asylum seekers
- Brought in the forced dispersal system that led to asylum seekers being sent to areas in the country, which were already over-stretched in terms of resources, leading to refugees being blamed for taking people's jobs and houses
- Increased the use of detention
- Ended the right to appeal against removal from the UK for those who overstay their leave to remain
- Gave powers to immigration officers to enter premises without a warrant, and to search and arrest people suspected of immigration offences, with the use of "reasonable force".

### NATIONALITY, IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM ACT 2002

After just three years came the fourth piece of legislation affecting UK asylum in a decade. The most appalling element was section 55, which withdrew access to the National Asylum Support Service for those who didn't apply for asylum as soon as "reasonably practical". This

effectively made them destitute and homeless.

Section 55 had a devastating effect. People, including those with severe health problems and even pregnant women were forced to sleep rough on streets, on night buses, in A&E departments, under stairwells, begging for food. It is estimated that half of women who claim asylum are victims of rape, often by police or soldiers. Many are understandably reluctant to report this to strangers, and for this they were refused support.

Asylum seekers refused to remain silent. Many staged hunger strikes and demonstrations. Others took their cases to court and, on 21 May 2004, the Court of Appeal ruled that section 55 was inhumane and could no longer be used against those who applied for asylum after a few days.

### ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION ACT 2004

Barely a year later, another act was introduced, making it a criminal offence to enter the UK without a passport. Anyone found guilty of this offence faces a fine and/or imprisonment for up to two years. Children over the age of 10 could also be prosecuted.

The act also prevented appeals if an asylum claim is refused. As a result, parents, who were refused and did not take a free flight home within two weeks, lost all rights to benefits and would have their children taken into care.

In addition, the government announced it would stop foreign nationals accessing free NHS health care, even if they were suffering from HIV, or were pregnant.

## ARE ASYLUM SEEKERS DRAINING OUR RESOURCES?

There are many arguments to justify these tough measures on asylum seekers. After all, they are only coming here to take our benefits, houses and jobs, aren't they? The answer to these racist lies is NO!

But it's not enough to just say no. We must have answers to the real shortages in education, housing, employment and health by exposing the lies and fighting for the services we need.

### ON HOUSING

The shortage of affordable housing is a real problem in Britain, but asylum seekers or migrants do not cause it. Developers building profitable luxury flats instead of decent cheap accommodation cause it. Tory and Labour governments have restricted the ability of local councils to build new homes. New housing construction now stands at the lowest level since 1945.

More than a third of council housing has been privatised, and Labour plan to sell off a million more council and housing association homes.

If every asylum seeker left the country, there would still be a housing crisis.

### ON EMPLOYMENT

Asylum seekers are not allowed to work. This is despite the fact that the UK's working population is declin-

ing and that the education and health services are crying out for staff. The EU estimates that Europe needs 1.6 million new workers a year.

Some take casual work or jobs "off the books" - because of the ban on working. This means some are paid below the national minimum wage. If they were allowed to work legally, they would fall within the minimum wage and there would be no downward pressure on other workers' pay. Skilled workers such as doctors and nurses who are seeking asylum cannot work in the NHS, which needs staff, and instead go "off the books".

### ON HEALTHCARE

Asylum seekers and migrants do not block doctors' waiting lists. GPs are allowed to refuse any new patients if their lists are full. Migrants make a massive contribution to the NHS. Today, 23 per cent of doctors and 47 per cent of nurses were born outside the UK. Many nurses were trained in their countries of origin, paid for by the taxpayers of poor nations such as Zambia and Nigeria.

A report by the Office of Health Economics revealed that the UK spends £970 per person on health - compared to £1,400 in France and £1,700 in Germany.

### ON BENEFITS

If asylum seekers were coming here

for benefits they'd come from any poor country, not just ones where there is war and persecution. But the countries asylum seekers come from closely follows the pattern of wars, conflicts and repression around the world.

Asylum seekers get just £37.77 a week - 30 per cent below the poverty line. They are not allowed to claim other benefits.

As for asylum seekers draining our resources the Government's own figures show that migrants and refugees make a huge overall contribution to national wealth. They made a net contribution of around £2.5 billion to income tax in 1999-2000. This means they bring in £800 million a year more than the cost of running the entire asylum and immigration system.

Thanks to the governments dispersal system asylum seekers are often dumped in the poorest, most run down areas of the country. Most of the time they don't even know where they are being sent until the morning they are packed onto the coach. Asylum seekers don't choose to go to these areas, in fact if they refused to go where they are told they would lose their entitlement to the meagre support they receive.

It is clear that in many areas around the country there is a huge strain on public services. But the blame for this does not fall on asylum seekers.

## WHAT WE SAY

Britain is the fourth richest country in the world yet it spends less on public services than many other European countries. Britain also has one of the largest divisions between the rich and the poor with the richest 1 per cent owning a fifth of Britain's wealth.

Labour and the Tories before them have used asylum seekers and refugees to divert attention from their own policies. The fact remains that New Labour is more concerned with lining the pockets of big businesses than investing in decent public services for all. Thanks to New Labour, Rupert Murdoch hasn't been made to pay taxes for years. Imagine how many hospitals, schools and new houses that money would help build!

The ruling classes have always used racism to divide and weaken the working class around the world. It's been used through the centuries to create a "them" and "us". The way to fight against this is for workers from around the world to unite in struggle. As a class we have no borders. Our struggle is an international one. We need to break out of the chains of nationalism and stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who, after facing poverty, war and persecution come here for safety. We need to recognise that we have more in common with them than any British boss.

We say:

- Down with all immigration controls. Open the borders.
- Abolish all restrictions on the right of asylum seekers to work
- Give all asylum seekers and immigrants access to the NHS, decent housing, education and benefits.
- Fight for better public services funded by taxation on wealth and the corporations.
- For development of the health service and education based on plans drawn up by those who work in and use these services
- End the privatisation of housing stock. For a massive programme of house building and repair under the control of the communities that need it.

## FIGHTING RACISM IN BLAIR'S BRITAIN

Racism divides workers against each other, with the bosses happily playing on our divisions. To combat this we fight for working class unity - black and white - around working class demands. But we also fight to destroy the institutions of racism in Britain. Documentaries like the *Secret Policeman* exposed the extent of this police racism.

- Sack all racist officers in Britain's police and disarm them.
- Fight to break up and abolish the police force.

Since 9/11, the anti-terror laws have been used to target people of an Asian or Middle Eastern background. Repression, detention without trial, dawn raids and yet no specific charges of any crime: this is the reality faced by many Muslims in Britain today.

- Abolish all the anti-terror laws and release those held under them. Racist attacks against black people, asylum seekers and Asians have increased dramatically under New Labour. We support the struggles of black people against racist attacks and the organised self-defence of the black communities. In the workers' movement itself we also need to combat the racism that still exists by championing the demands of black workers, their fight against racism. We support the right of black workers to caucus inside the unions so they are better organised to conduct these fights.

# Women under fire



By Rekha Khurana

New Labour claims to have improved the lives of millions of women. Yet, up and down the country, working class women are still struggling to deal with the contending demands of work, childcare and other responsibilities at home. Many have to take several insecure jobs to make ends meet; many older women are living in poverty.

In the run up to the election, Labour has been trying to win women's votes by focusing on family friendly policies such as an increase in maternity leave by three months to nine months, and by pledging better childcare provision. Gordon Brown's recent budget boosted tax credits, child trust funds, promised better classrooms and more computers. But what do these promises actually mean?

The boost to child tax credit was actually announced in December 2002 so where's the new increase? As for the child trust fund, £250 might pay for books if your children decide to go to university at 18, but the average student leaves college owing £10,000: is a £9,750 debt that much better?

As for the talk on extra spending on schools, this is not due to happen until 2009 - if at all. Why should families have

to spend their hard earned free-time filling out endless forms to claim child credit instead of a tax cut? And why should single mothers have to go back to work if they want £2,000?

## Poverty

Labour's big claim is to have improved the lives of families with young children. The tax credit system and increased childcare have allowed more young mothers to work in an expanding economy, reducing poverty levels for some families.

But the shocking truth is that, after eight years of economic growth, a quarter of all women still live in poverty. There is still a huge gender gap. Women's average hourly pay is still 82 per cent of men's. And the situation is much worse for part-time women who earn 40 per cent less an hour than part-time men. Women survive on much smaller pensions. All added up, the average woman's income is still half that of men's.

## Attacks on quality childcare provisions

The government plans to "roll out" nationally the popular Sure Start childcare programme, but it will have less funds and less community participation. Cash strapped councils, which run the schemes, are already

cutting back on provision.

Meanwhile, new money for childcare through tax credits and employer tax incentives will find its way to the private providers. There is a huge shortage of childcare with 4.7 million under-eights in England and just over a million places with childminders. Not only are these tax incentives in fact a subsidy to miserly, low-paying employers, supply and demand market economics have seen childcare costs soar to £7,000 a year for two places.

## Threat of attacks on abortion rights

The religious right is demanding changes to the legal upper limit for abortion from 24 weeks into the pregnancy to 22 or even lower. But almost 90 per cent of abortions take place in the first 12 weeks. That figure would be higher if abortion was available on demand rather than at the discretion of two doctors, who can refuse to help women on grounds of personal conscience.

In some parts of the country there are no NHS doctors able or prepared to terminate pregnancies more than 18 weeks old, forcing women to go private and spend hundreds of pounds, or have an unwanted child.

Women must still have the right to make choices about their own bod-

ies. The alternative for most is a child born into poverty, for some violence from their family.

## We will keep fighting!

Women have been fighting back - for their rights. Thousands of young women have been active in the anticapitalist mobilisations, often starting with school debates, campaigning against the international debt and moving on to challenge the whole system.

In the workers' movement women activists have taken up leadership positions at all levels. But women still need the right to meet separately from men, to discuss ways of challenging sexist attitudes - among fellow workers as well as the bosses.

A mass working class women's movement is needed to plan actions and to win men to actively join the fight against sex discrimination. Such a movement will organise thousands upon thousands of women to combat job discrimination, domestic violence and rape, sexism and unequal pay. It will educate thousands of young women in the values of anti-sexism.

Such a movement needs to place the fight for women's liberation within the struggle for socialism. The root cause of women's oppression under capitalism is in the family. Capitalism needs the fam-

ily to isolate workers from each other and privatise the costs of reproducing workers' ability to work, day by day, generation by generation. Sexism - which undervalues this task and places it on the shoulders of unpaid women - is intrinsic to the profit system.

Socialists fight for top class public facilities to remove domestic labour and child rearing from the private family. Along this road lies true women's liberation. But if we limit our struggle to reforming the existing system, we will always be fighting to defend small gains rather than transforming our lives forever.

## We demand:

- The provision of universal free child care
- Free abortion on demand, for a woman's right to choose
- Equal pay for women. Oppose sexism at work including job and training discrimination
- Full employment rights for part-time workers from day one
- Two years maternity (split with paternity leave where desired) at full pay and the provision of workplace crèches

We are for the self-organisation of women workers into a powerful movement fighting oppression and striving for liberation.

# Lock 'em up Labour

By Karen Marshall

Since 1997, New Labour it has created over a 1,000 new crimes with 30 new crime bills. Labour has created a climate of fear about antisocial behaviour and terrorism in order to give the police and courts more powers to stop, search, detain, and arrest.

The result? More than 75,000 people are in prison. Most of them suffer real poverty. Many have mental health and drug problems. Some can barely read and write. The number of women in prison has trebled since 1993, the number of over-60s gone up 12 times since 1990.

Yet, according to the Home Office's own British Crime Survey shows that the risk of becoming a victim of crime has fallen from 40 per cent in 1995 to 25 per cent in 2004.

## Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005

Before Easter, Home Secretary Charles Clarke pushed through his bill to "control terrorists". Under the act, unelected judges have the power to impose control orders on people suspected of terrorism. The orders can put an individual under house arrest, ban them from contacting certain individuals or

limit their freedom of movement. The accused has no right to know what their offence is, or the evidence against them. The burden of proof is lower than in a criminal case.

Previous anti-terrorism laws were used against people demonstrating against the arms trade a few years ago. Others seem guilty only of being of Middle Eastern background. Of the thousands detained, very, very few have ever been tried. It is detention without trial.

## More powers for the police

The Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill proposes to set up a Serious Organised Crime Agency. This will be the first nationwide police force since Thatcher set up the National Reporting Centre during the Great Miners' Strike. Although brought in under the guise of the "war against terror", this Agency will inevitably, like its predecessor, be used primarily against the "enemy within".

The cops will have the right to arrest and detain people on suspicion of any offence - even littering or swearing. Once detained, the police will be able to take suspects' fingerprints and DNA samples, and to test for drugs in the

bloodstream, which will be a crime.

The police will be able to detain suspects, without charging them, for up to 192 hours. Community Support Officers will have the right to carry and use truncheons and CS gas, and to detain suspects for up to half an hour.

Black and Asian people will feel the brunt of these new blows. Already black people are eight times more likely than white people to be stopped and searched. If Labour gets its way, they could be detained on the most spurious of grounds.

## Targeting youth

Perhaps the most startling erosion of civil liberties under Labour has come with the widespread use of Antisocial Behaviour Orders (Asbos). Introduced to deal with the "Neighbours From Hell", they are now used by police and local councils in a huge range of circumstances.

Asbos can be made against anyone over the age of 10, banning behaviour that in itself is not criminal, such as loitering, playing football or swearing. Once issued, a prison sentence of up to five years can be imposed if a person breaches the order.

Magistrates have granted more than

4,000 since 1998, of which only 47 have been refused.

Young people have felt the brunt. Police and councils have a new weapon to use against youth. Sometimes they are used against real thugs that communities need to be protected against, but increasingly they are used as a method of social control.

Probation union Napo found that a total of 622 Asbos were given to 10-15 year-olds and 555 to 16-17 year-olds between June 2000 and March 2004. A third of these have been breached, putting the young person at risk of imprisonment.

Meanwhile, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill will give 10,000 town and parish councils the right to apply for Asbos. On-the-spot fines of £100 for littering and noisy behaviour will be introduced. Local newspapers and broadcasters will be allowed to "name and shame" under-18s.

Mass unemployment, poverty wages, the destruction of industry, the end of council house building, neglect of estates, the closure of youth clubs and projects, cuts in local authority spending - these were the hallmarks of 1980s and 1990s. Blair has done nothing to reverse this. Instead working

class youth are demonised, policed and imprisoned. On 5 March 2004, there were 11,019 under-21s in prisons in England and Wales, including 2,565 under-18s.

Labour has shown in office what Marxists mean when they talk about "class justice".

The number of employers convicted for dangerous accidents and deaths at work is tiny. The few, that are, are only fined. Yet women whose children die of cot deaths are hounded into prison.

When the big finance houses defraud millions of investors and mortgage holders, the losers have to battle for compensation. If someone defrauds one of these mighty corporations, even of a few hundred pounds, they are locked up.

It is no wonder that the prisons are overflowing with the poor and downtrodden, who rot alongside a minority of real violent offenders. If Labour has its way, more young people, impoverished mothers and mentally ill individuals will end up inside. New Labour in its third term will continue to protect the rich and their system against the poor and the oppressed.

# 'Let the rich get richer', says Blair

By Keith Harvey

In February, British companies announced their greatest profits ever: HSBC topped the banks with £9.6 billion, while Shell edged out the other oil majors at £9.3 billion.

The personal wealth of the super rich is not doing badly either. The top 1 per cent of the population in Britain now receive 13 per cent of the national income and possess 23 per cent of all privately owned wealth. The richest 10 per cent are in command of over half the nation's income and personal property between them.

No wonder Gordon Brown boasts that Britain is enjoying its longest period of sustained growth since records began in 1701 - achieved under the longest period of Labour government in British history.

But this is only half the story.

According to *The Business* newspaper, for the poorest 5.8m Britons (the bottom 10 per cent) incomes are falling. Their real income after tax, welfare and housing costs fell from £91 a week in 2001-02 to £90 in 2002-03 and £88 in 2003-04. Their annual incomes are down 3.3% to £4,576 a year.

Hardly a government "for the many, not the few" as Brown claimed in 1997. But how does this fit with Labour's claims to have reduced child poverty? Let's have a look at their record.

On the eve of the 2001 general election, Tony Blair admitted - referring to David Beckham - that he did not care if the wealth and income of the rich in Britain got bigger and bigger. Increasing

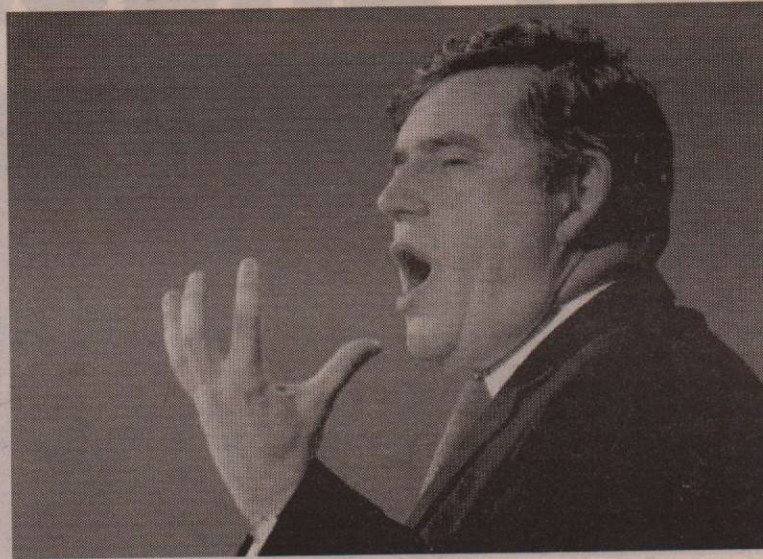
the income of the poorest, not reducing inequality, was the New Labour project.

Looking back on his first term he was certainly right about the inequality bit! Between 1997 and 2001 Britain became more unequal than any time since 1961. Average incomes were rising as strongly as during the Thatcher years (1979-90) at around 2.3 per cent a year. But the rich benefited the most. Labour's tax and welfare policies - far from re-distributing wealth back to the working class - helped the bosses.

On re-election in 2001 Labour aimed to stem rising inequality with its tax and credit programmes directed at boosting the household income of some of the poorest. Brown's Working Families Tax Credits boosted the incomes of the poorest fifth of households, ensuring that their annual increases have been more than the richest fifth. But those that benefited have been mainly those households with families and pensioners. But these are not Britain's poorest.

This shows the limited value of the minimum wage introduced by Labour. It was brought in at the ridiculously low rate of £3.60 an hour in 1999. By the end of Labour's second term, it had reached £4.85, with lower rates for under-22s.

While between one million and one and a half million workers have benefited from this law, it still leaves many millions of (mainly single, childless) workers surviving on incomes that are incapable of preventing them falling further and further behind after rising



Gordon Brown's budgets in the second term have sought to help the "deserving poor"

housing costs are taken into account.

This situation has been compounded by the Labour's aim of "halving child poverty by 2010". To do this the government aims to cut the numbers living in low income households (defined as receiving 60 per cent of median income). In 2002-03, 3.6 million children were in low-income households compared with 4.3 million in 1996-97, a fall of 700,000.

In contrast, the number of working-age adults without dependent children in low income households was higher in 2002-03 than when Labour came to power in 1997: 3.9 million compared with 3.6 million: a rise of 300,000.

This record shows the real effect

of New Labour's policy of helping the "deserving poor" - crudely, parents and pensioners - while leaving the childless poor family and the growing number of single person households getting by on poverty wages to fester on the margins of society.

And their status as an "underclass" is reinforced as they disengage from capitalist society - too poor to consume, too alienated to participate in politics. The poorest five million are the least likely to vote of any group: that's why Labour can ignore them.

On the other hand, Labour has been careful not to alienate the bosses in the process. Brown has actually cut business taxes to one of the three lowest rates among the advanced capitalist

nations (below 30 per cent). Meanwhile, the top rate of income tax remains at 40 per cent, half the rate it was in 1979.

Instead Labour's tax credits are effectively a subsidy from the government to the employers, who are not obliged to pay their workers half-decent wages.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies - among others - concludes that income inequality is roughly where it was in 1997, when Blair took office. And this makes Britain one of the most unequal societies in the developed world.

As former Labour minister, Michael Meacher, noted in a recent *Guardian* column, "the richest 10% now take home 28 per cent of total income; the poorest 10% get less than 3 per cent... the gap between top and bottom is some 179-fold - between the employee on a national minimum wage of £4.85 an hour, or £179 a week, and the chief executives of the top 100 FTSE firms on, including bonuses, an average £1.67m a year, or £32,115 a week".

So despite presiding over a long economic upturn, having seen unemployment plummet as a result, Blair and Brown have done nothing to erode the obscene levels of income and wealth between Britain's poorest and wealthiest that they inherited from 18 years of Tory governments.

And that in a period when Britain's wealth has risen to record levels. Guess who will pay if the economy falters.

We say:

- Tax the rich to pay for the regeneration of working class areas
- Nationalise the big monopolies and

# Blair's war record: thousands dead

By Dave Ellis

Over 100,000 civilians have died directly because of due to the invasion and occupation of Iraq, according to *The Lancet* medical journal. Cities like Fallujah lie in ruins. Children are dying of diarrhoea because water, electricity, food - even oil - is in short supply.

Blair claims that all of this is justified to remove of Saddam Hussein and introduce democracy.

Yet all the evidence shows that the true aim of Bush and Blair was to secure the natural wealth of Iraq - oil - and to open its economy up to the multinational corporations. The interim government, before the elections, railroaded through legislation to copperfasten the privatisation of the Iraqi economy. The lies about weapons of mass destruction were just that: lies.

Now the occupation is in place, though, is it in the interests of the Iraqi people for the US and UK to "finish the job" in stabilising Iraq and introducing democracy? Let's look at the results of previous wars.

## Bosnia

The example of Bosnia exposes the rhetoric of Blair. The 1995 Dayton Accords, which ended the war, gave dictatorial powers to the European Union's Special Representative, currently Paddy Ashdown, to dismiss members of the government and to change the constitution. He has the final say in all matters of political life in Bosnia, backed by the EU's military force, EUFOR.

The EU has used its authority to strengthen the nationalist parties, as opposed to those parties that were cross-national, representing Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims. Yet it was the nation-

alists - of all stripes - committed the war crimes.

No wonder 55 per cent of the population abstained in the last election. The reasons most cited for this were the role of the Special Representative and dissatisfaction with the nationalist parties.

## Afghanistan

After 9/11 - the bombing of New York's twin towers - Afghanistan was invaded and the Taliban regime removed. Operation "Enduring Freedom" was supposed to end Taliban tyranny and destroy Al Qaida.

The NATO occupation forces would establish democracy and, along with a massive aid package, reconstruct the country after decades of war. Women, it was proclaimed, would enjoy greater freedom after their terrible oppression at the hands of the Taliban.

What is the situation now?

To carry on their war against the Taliban and Al Qaida, the US and its allies have propped up regional warlords.

Human rights organisations report a litany of repression, abuses, and criminal activity by these warlords. They have been implicated in widespread rape of women and children, murder, illegal detention, forced displacement, human trafficking and forced marriage - not to mention the re-emergence of the heroin trade.

Remember: these are the allies of the great force for democracy, Bush and Blair!

While women are legally entitled to a range of new freedoms, including the right to vote and to go to school, the reality is different. Women who organise against or make any criticism of local warlords still face threats of violence. Many women and girls still have to wear the burqa, the all-encompassing veil.

And it is not just the warlords. Police forces have been involved in arbitrary

arrests, kidnapping, torture, and extra-judicial killings of criminal suspects.

If the suspects survive then they can expect to be detained without trial or rights. Some, at Bagram airbase, are categorised as "unlawful combatants". Like at Guantanamo Bay, these detainees are held by the US military and can expect to be tortured.

## Solidarity

Large parts of Iraq and Afghanistan remain war zones. Foreign occupation forces, often backed up by local police and army units, are trying to put down an insurgency. Many of the insurgents have terrible, anti-democratic goals, such as the re-imposition of Saddamist or Taliban dictatorship.

Nevertheless, there can be no freedom in these countries until the US, British and EU forces are driven from the land. Only then can the long-suffering Afghani and Iraqi people determine their own future.

Furthermore, a victory for the resistance and a defeat for the occupation troops and their puppet regimes will be a victory for every worker fighting the multinationals, every victim of nationalist aggression, every democrat under dictatorship.

- Solidarity with the resistance!

"Mine is the first generation able to contemplate the possibility that we may live our entire lives without going to war or sending our children to war." - Tony Blair at the NATO-Russia Summit, 27 May 1997

These are fine words from a man that has since ordered Her Majesty's armed forces to war in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq. Gone are the days of talking about an ethical foreign policy. Blair has shown that he is more than happy to use the British army as an auxiliary wing of the world's police force - the US military.

But why is Tony Blair so keen to go to war? Is it because he is a weak person who has to cling to the coat tails of the USA? Is he driven by the desire to secure his place in history?

Perhaps. But, if these were the only reasons, he would have been stopped by now. Blair isn't a dictator who can send us to war - unless the generals, law lords, spy chiefs and top civil servants agree that British capitalism needs these wars. And it does.

Globalisation represents a new phase of capitalist imperialism, where the fortunes of every country in the world are more intimately bound up with each other than before. But, rather than this leading to world peace, it has led to increased rivalry and instability. The frantic grab for markets and resources leads the world's most powerful nations to try and impose their might on the weaker ones.

If they don't, their rivals might cut a deal - and cut them out. This is our generation has seen more wars, not fewer. It is also why we can only end wars by overthrowing capitalism on a world scale.

The stakes are high: today's wars could lead to a worldwide conflict, World War III; today's international anti-war movement could develop into a global challenge to the system of wars, the overthrow of capitalism.

- No vote for bomber Blair!
- Troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Build the anti-war and anti-imperialist movements!



# The sham of parliamentary democracy



By Dave Stockton

**T**ony Blair, like his master George Bush, is fulsome in his praise of democracy and human rights. It has been used as a justification for attacking and plundering so called "failed states".

Of course, the moment US and British forces actually seize and plunder these states – human rights and the democratic right of these countries to determine their own future go out the window – as happened in Iraq. At home these "defenders of democracy" are no different. Both have undermined ordinary citizens rights on a grand scale, on the pretext of protecting people against terrorism.

Blair's sickly sweet sermons on democracy and human rights reflect the nature of the British State itself. It is democratic on the surface only. In reality it is a weapon in the hands of the ruling class to be used in a dictatorial fashion whenever it suits their needs. That is why the "mother of parliaments" at Westminster remains a talking shop while the real business of government remains in the hands of ministers, advisors and top civil servants, carried out behind closed doors.

The House of Commons, for all its pomp and pretensions, in any decisive confrontation with the executive turns out to be impotent. The prime minister effectively controls every important move. Blair can certainly be embarrassed by MPs but not effectively controlled.

It took the threat of rebellion by over 200 Labour MPs to even get a debate on the proposal to go to war. Blair nevertheless made it quite clear that he could decide to go to war, using the royal prerogative if need be. He would simply defy the rebels to bring the government down in a vote of confidence.

As for the views of the people, they didn't matter at all. Two million people were on the streets; opinion polls regularly recorded majorities against war; most Labour MPs – under enormous pressure from their constituents, were also against it. Even Blair's own supporters privately did not believe his pretext for war – Saddam's weapons of mass destruction deployable within forty five minutes.

His own Attorney General could not trump up a legal basis for war. The secret service had to be pressured into providing the "dodgy dossier" to bolster a case for war that they did not believe in either. Yet such is the power of the prime minister that he, one man, can overrule all these forces and reduce the Cabinet to a rubber stamp. When it comes to the vital issue of peace or war the sovereign assembly of the people's representatives proved totally helpless.

In fact the more democratically elected the assemblies the less real control

they have over "their" executives, "their" administrative bureaucracies and "their" enforcement agencies – the judges the police chiefs and the generals. The much praised independence of the judiciary, whilst it means that on a day to day basis it is independent of ministers directives, also means, much more importantly, that it is independent of parliament and the electorate.

The government chooses judges, again using royal prerogative powers, and once chosen they are irremovable. The judges make as many laws (rulings and case law) as parliament itself. They are dyed in the wool members of the ruling class who are there to enforce the bosses contract and property rights, and keep the working class and the poor in order.

Because adult British citizens are entitled to vote every four or five years, this is supposed to be "the rule of the people, by the people, for the people". But the people have no say over the nature of the economic system, what is produced by it, or even whether to have peace or go to war. What exists in reality is rule for the capitalists by capitalist politicians.

News, debate and information is in the hands of a tiny clique of media millionaires like Rupert Murdoch. Debates over policy and party programmes are replaced by personality contests, sound bites and photo opportunities. To insulate politicians from pressure from their party members or voters, millionaire donors pay the enormous costs of this dumbed down advertising campaign called a General Election.

This wholesale poisoning of the roots of capitalist democracy reaps its own reward: widespread apathy and cynicism – "they're all the same, you can't trust any of them". In times of serious crisis, like the rush to war, it breeds outright hatred and contempt for all politicians. Revolutionary socialists, unlike anarchists, do not use these facts to turn

our back on elections or parliament. Even left Labour MP's like Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn and George Galloway have used parliament as tribune from which to rally people to support strikers or oppose the war.

If real revolutionary class fighters were elected to parliament they would use it to expose and confront the sham of parliamentary democracy itself, something the most left of reformists shy away from doing. We would not foster the illusion that parliament can bring about a fundamental transformation from capitalism to socialism. Revolutionaries can never be silent about this – however deep are people's illusions in parliamentary democracy.

Behind the façade of parliamentary democracy stands the state and, at its core, lies its repressive forces, which protect the profits of the rich and the powerful. Frederick Engels long ago defined this core as "special bodies of armed men" – armies, police forces, the judiciary, the prison system, the top state bureaucrats. In the most democratic republic and the most brutal dictatorship alike, this machinery remains the deciding instrument of the capitalist class.

The real character of the state is revealed by whom it defends and whom it attacks. Repression on the picket lines and demonstrations, surveillance, targeted at "the enemy within", the growing prison population, all reveal that the police – and the soldiers when necessary – are the private security guards of the rich and the powerful, not the guardians of the people.

Do the police ever arrest an employer for taking away a worker's means of life, their job? Yet when an employer brings in strikebreakers, the police rush to defend their "right to work" with clubs and tear gas. If workers occupy their workplace to stop its closure and save their jobs, the police will storm it to restore it to its "rightful owners".

If all this is true over any serious defensive or sectional struggle by workers, then imagine what would happen if the working class had a party that actually set out to abolish capitalism by winning elections. If it became the biggest party in parliament and tried to form a government it would be met by savage opposition the moment it tried to implement its anti capitalist policies.

The Queen would dismiss its prime minister, using the royal prerogative, as she did in Australia with a mildly left Labour government in the 1970s. The chiefs of the armed forces, the judges, the top civil servants, the secret service chiefs, whose oaths of allegiance are to the monarch not to parliament, would rise in revolt against this government arrest it and introduce dictatorial powers.

Not to mention the wholesale economic sabotage which the bosses in the boardrooms would engineer; the hue and cry from the editorial offices, the television stations and multi-media operations that would greet even the approach of such a government.

## A workers' government

So is it all hopeless? Can we not take the power from the billionaires and put it into the hands of the working people? Certainly we cannot conquer power through parliament or by a series of step-by-step reforms. In order to transform society from one based on corporate greed to one based on the majority's needs, a revolution is required – the conscious action of millions to break up the repressive machinery of the exploiters, their control of the economy and to replace it with the rule of workers and a new economic system.

The government of such a workers' state, a real workers' government, would strip the bosses of their assets so we can begin to plan the economy on the basis of producing for need, not

profit.

But to do this we have to have build up our own power, our own means of resisting the coercion of the bosses and their state, preparing the basis of our own state. We need a revolutionary party that draws in hundreds of thousands of the most active and brave militants. One that can plan and organize with the same resolution as Blair and his coterie, those who defend capitalism.

Every serious working class struggle, and that of all exploited and the oppressed, needs self-defence. Strikers on the picket lines know that only a determined mass picket will stop the police ferrying in strike breakers and enabling the boss to carry on his business. The miners strike of 1984-5 showed that even the toughest and most courageous pickets, even in large numbers, are no match for the state forces if the pickets are disorganised and unarmed. Self-defence is no offence. We must organise self-defence in every struggle, wherever the right to assemble, to picket or to march is challenged by the state, and wherever minorities or communities are attacked by police or fascists.

A workers' government would have to draw its support not from the green leather benches of Westminster but from the workplaces and estates – our government would be based on the democratic organisations of the workers themselves, on councils of delegates elected in every workplace and every community. It would have to arm the masses and build self defence bodies and militias just to survive.

These mass organizations would form the basis of a radically new way of doing government – where decisions and laws are carried out by the delegates and their electors, not by highly paid top bureaucrats and armies of functionaries who don't care about the people they are supposed to be serving.

Delegates to these workers' councils would be regularly elected, instantly recallable by those who elected them, and paid no more than the average wage. That way no privileged bureaucracy like the one that rules as unions toady, or used to rule the Soviet Union, can rob working people of their power.

The government would be defended by the armed power of the workers themselves – a workers' militia. It would support workers in every country fighting to build a new world.

The only way, as history has proven time and again, of bringing about such a government, is through a social revolution, by the entry of the great majority onto the stage of history. Only a revolution can break up machinery of repression by winning over the rank and file soldiers and arresting the officers and generals. Only a revolution can transform the economy. And for such a revolution to win, we will need to overthrow, by force of arms, the capitalist enemy and its agents.



Workers' democracy in action: Zanon factory occupation in Argentina 2002 where leaders are recallable

# Break with Labour - for

By Dave Stockton  
and Kirstie Paton

During the last three years Tony Blair - by supporting George Bush's war and "reforming" (i.e. privatising) the public sector - has put tremendous strains on the relationship between the unions and the Labour Party. These strains led to an unprecedented event: two important unions leaving the Labour Party.

When the Rail, Maritime and Transport union decided to allow its Scottish region to back the Scottish Socialist Party, which, like the RMT, supports re-nationalisation of the railways, it was given an ultimatum. Reverse this decision or be instantly expelled from the Labour Party.

Despite re-nationalisation being party policy, Blair had not only done nothing to implement it he had forced through a semi-privatisation of the London Underground, whilst pouring billions of tax payers' money into the private rail companies. The RMT could not even get a debate on this at the Labour Party conference. Instead, it was kicked out of the party it had helped to found over a hundred years ago. The RMT AGM, following its expulsion from Labour, voted unanimously to call a conference "to discuss the crisis of working class political representation".

A similar story lies behind the Fire Brigades Union's decision to disaffiliate from Labour in 2004. Blair was determined to "reform" the fire service, to cut the number of fire stations, privatise its equipment, cut night-staffing and worsen conditions. For years, rank and file firefighters fought to democratise their political fund, so that it could be used to finance work-

ing class parties other than Labour, according to their support among the membership.

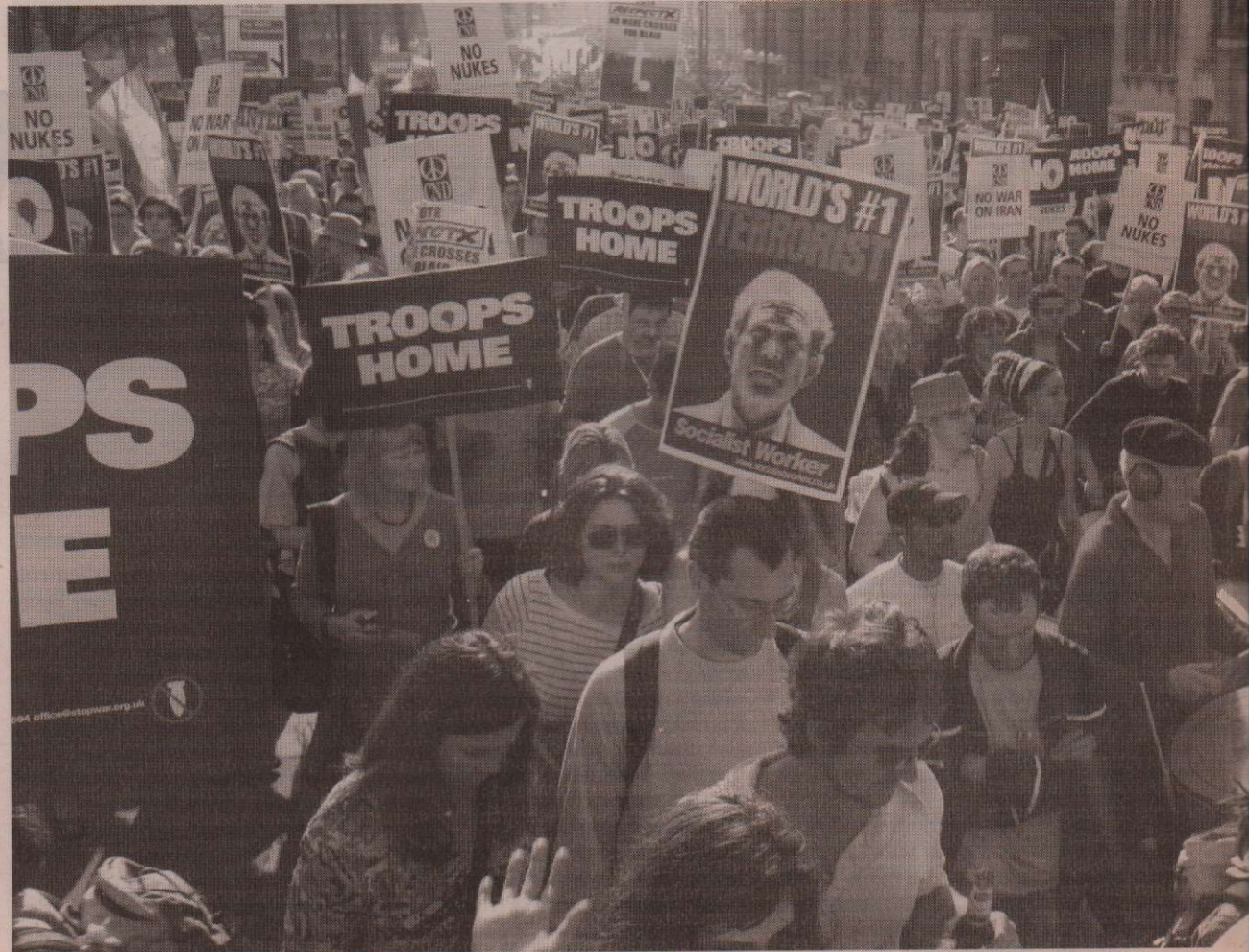
The strike campaign of 2003-04, where Labour called in the troops to scab, proved the last straw. FBU leader Andy Gilchrist betrayed this struggle because of his slavish subservience to Labour. Little wonder the FBU disaffiliated from Labour, but kept its political fund and pledged itself to host a conference of trade unions and trade unionists to discuss alternative political representation.

In 2003 and 2004 the 700,000 strong general union, the GMB, and the 300,000 strong Communication Workers Union both announced cuts to Labour. The CWU's 4,300 members in its Edinburgh No. 2 branch voted to affiliate to the Scottish Socialist Party.

As well as militant trade unionists, hundreds of thousands of Labour voters and members in the anti-war, anti-racist and anticapitalist movements were outraged by the Labour government's slavish support for George Bush's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus 2003-04 provided crucial opportunities to win significant support in the unions for a new workers party. These opportunities were frittered away. Why was this?

Since the turn of the new century sections of the left have tried to create an alternative to Labour. The Socialist Alliance was born out of Blair's refusal to countenance Ken Livingstone standing for Mayor of London. Blair alienated virtually the whole London Labour Party, imposed a candidate, expelled Livingstone and suffered a humiliating defeat.

The Socialist Alliance's problem was that the main force within it, the Socialist Workers Party, saw it primarily as



Hundreds of thousands of Labour voters are outraged by the Labour government's slavish support for George Bush's wars in A

an electoral vehicle to attract disillusioned Labour voters. The role of campaigning in the unions, against racism, against the war, against neoliberal globalisation, it allocated to other "united front" organisations which it controlled behind the scenes: Globalise Resistance, Stop the War, UNITE.

The Socialist Alliance was basically for electioneering. Under pressure it did organise a successful trade union conference in 2002. It sponsored a pamphlet by firefighter Matt Wrack which argued for unions to democratise their political funds and look for an alternative to New Labour. But after this the

SWP refused to call on the unions to break from Labour and found a new working class party. In their own eyes they were the revolutionary party and any other party would be an obstacle to their growth.

The problem was that workers were looking for a party that could fight their

# Unions - prepare for new attacks after the

By Pat Spackman  
and Jeremy Dewar

Up to one and a half million public sector workers were ready to strike on 23 March in defence of their pension rights. It was set to be the biggest strike day since the general strike of 1926. Then at the eleventh hour, the union leaders called it off because they had been offered "talks" and promises that they would not impose the "reforms" ministers had recently said were non-negotiable.

Why did they do this? Was it because they had got a good deal? You must be joking. Was it because their members were unenthusiastic for action? Quite the opposite - every militant reports real disappointment amongst his or her workmates. The union leaders quite simply didn't want to hurt the Labour Party in the run up to the general election and also didn't want to face their members at the end of demonstrations and rallies with the empty promises they had received and bereft of any plan for where to go from here.

They got away with it because union members have no alternative leadership and organisation capable of continuing with the action unofficially.

The concessions won from government - namely the withdrawal of the regulations that would have imposed the new pensions arrangements from 1st April, and an offer to open negotiations without precondi-

tion - showed that the threat of strike proved far more powerful than months of fruitless discussions.

But Labour will renew the attack on public sector pensions as soon as the election is out of the way. On 31 March Peter Hain, leader of the House of Commons, revealed that Tony Blair has a draft law to implement the cut in pensions, ready to introduce and carry through parliament in his first year, despite the unpopularity of the measure. It may even be included in the manifesto.

Thus, one of the unions' trump cards - fighting the government over pensions when it desperately needs the unions' money and workers' votes - has been wantonly thrown away. This wretched betrayal illustrates the potential power of the working class and principle obstacle to realising it: the trade union leadership.

## Defeat by the Tories...

Twenty years ago the miners were defeated. This defeat saw the beginning of wholesale retreat by the working class.

Before the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, the working class had reached a strong position in society. The post-war gains - the welfare state, near full employment and a higher standard of living - were vigorously defended. Trade union membership was at a record high of 13.5 million.

Then the bosses went on the attack. Three years into Thatcher's rule unem-

ployment topped the three million mark: "a price worth paying" as leading Tory Norman Lamont put it. Four rounds of anti-union legislation outlawed effective strike action. Part-time, casual, non-unionised posts replaced full-time, unionised, industrial jobs. As well as the miners in the Great Strike of 1984-85, car workers, dockers, steelworkers and the printers were also smashed.

By the beginning of the 1990s the trade union leaders had embraced social partnership with employers. Conflict was over; class struggle a thing of the past. Union membership sunk to under 6.5 million and there was a rapid decline in strike activity.

## ... and revival despite Labour

Despite the hopes of millions of workers in 1997, Labour kept the Tories' draconian anti-union laws: the most restrictive and undemocratic in Europe. Indeed, when the initial draft of the European Constitution gave workers the rights to strike, join a union and negotiate with their employer, Blair and Brown rushed to remove them.

In 1998, the government stood by and watched as thousands of jobs at Rover were threatened. Just like Thatcher, Blair has shown an iron determination to let manufacturing jobs go to the wall. Public sector workers too have faced job cuts, attacks on conditions and the constant threat of privatisation.

Unsurprisingly, this produced ris-

ing anger and a revival in the unions. While still nowhere near the heights of the 1970s and 1980s, an important upturn has occurred. There are a number of factors at play.

After Labour's return to office in 1997, union after union elected left-wing leaders, the "awkward squad": Mick Rix (Aslef), Bob Crow (RMT), Derek Simpson (Amicus), Tony Woodley (TGWU), Mark Serwotka (PCS), Billy Hayes (CWU), Andy Gilchrist (FBU), Paul Mackney (Natfhe) and Jeremy Dear (NUJ).

The fear of globalisation at the start of the 1990s and rise of the anti-capitalist movement at the end of the decade broadened the bonds between workers across the globe. The Liverpool dockers had made this link as far back as 1996: "We have confirmed that globalisation of capitalism necessitates the global action - international solidarity - of the working class." (The Dockers Charter).

The question of international solidarity is key to fighting the impact of globalisation. Since Blair came to office, 775,000 UK manufacturing jobs have been lost as employers seek cheap labour in the developing world.

Last year's European Social Forum saw the major unions take an active role in sponsoring the event in London, despite doing little to encourage members to attend it. But those that did met trade unionists from all over Europe and the world.

When Tony Blair and George Bush

attacked Iraq, millions joined the anti-war movement, including many thousands of trade unionists. In Motherwell, train drivers refused to carry munitions. When the war started, 360 workplaces took unofficial action.

Last but not least, union militancy is reviving. In 2002, more days were lost through strike action (1,323,000) than in any year since 1989. Although the number fell the following year, in 2004 a further 906,000 strike days were recorded.

Civil servants, nursery nurses, firefighters, college lecturers, railworkers and bus drivers have all taken action as have manufacturing workers at Landrover, and Scottish whisky workers.

## Battles ahead

The next Labour government will continue to attack the public sector and newly privatised workers through attacks on conditions - often in the form of "modernisation" deals - and job cuts.

Labour's third term could even be harsher than the first two as the economy runs out of steam and Blair and Brown demand that workers pay for the bosses' crisis. In addition, Labour's election supremo Alan Milburn wants to see more privatisations. Labour strategists believe that the party needs to press ahead with its neoliberal agenda if it is to stay ahead in Europe and catch up with the USA.

There will be more marketisation in schools and the NHS, which will reduce



# m a New Workers Party



Afghanistan and Iraq.

corner on a day to day basis, lead the struggle in all walks of life and at all times. The SA was not a serious alternative because it was not a party rooted in their communities and workplaces and did not seriously seek to become one.

The SA failed to attract substantial

numbers of Labour voters. As the mass movement against Blair's wars aroused the Muslim community to revolt against Labour another project formed in the minds of the SWP leadership: Respect.

The Respect Unity Coalition aimed to garner anti-war Muslim voters in the same way that the SA had been designed to attract disillusioned Labour voters. Its minimal programme and policies were designed to do this. The SA, which had been mothballed for two years, was unceremoniously dumped.

But Respect represents a step away from rallying workers, students and anti-capitalist activists into a new working class party. It is even less like a party, fighting on all issues, than the Socialist Alliance was.

In order to maintain an alliance with people whose politics are scarcely better than liberal, Respect refuses to fight for socialist policies that might offend such partners.

This is why they fail to explain that it is capitalism that creates oppression, inequality and war. Only a party that fights against capitalism and for socialism can begin to build a movement capable of defeating Blair's attacks on the working class at home and internationally.

Those who are only concerned with short term electoral gains, or a career in parliament, do not deserve a single worker's vote in the elections. Instead Respect supporters should put their weight behind building a mass working class party, whose members must be in the forefront of every mass struggle.

We need to learn the lessons from the failures of both the Socialist Alliance and Respect. It is not the task of a few small socialist groups to second guess what working class voters will find acceptable. This mimics the worst vice of British Labourism: trimming your politics to maximise the vote.

This leads a party to betraying its own activists and supporters. The end point is Brown's private finance, Blair's wars and the expulsion of the most mil-

itant members. This is called parliamentary cretinism, the means by which the ruling class turns anticapitalist socialists into pro-capitalist liberals.

We need to build a vigorous campaign for a new workers party in the workplaces and on the estates, in the anti-capitalist movement, in the black and Asian communities, in the universities and schools - in every town and city.

It would be a crime not to attempt this. Blair's ability to continue the occupation of Iraq and to attack pension rights is aided by the fact that we have no political party in which to organise and give political direction to our struggle.

Think how more effective the anti-war movement would be if a mass workers party could lead a campaign of demonstrations, days of action and strikes, with the RMT and CWU working alongside students and anti-war activists in the same political party.

Such a party would fight alongside the rank and file for the leadership of the unions so that they could take on the government, rather than sell out the members.

But what should the policies of such a party be? Many workers have left Labour, but haven't necessarily broken with Labourism: the view that trade union pressure and a majority of Labour MPs can improve conditions for working class people under capitalism. They are angry that Blair has robbed them of such a party but think the fundamental reformist strategy is sound.

Hundreds and thousands of workers and youth, who believe that "another world is possible", are discussing the question of power. Within the vanguard of all today's struggles, there is a variety of different political answers to these questions: from social democratic to anarchist ones.

In attempting to establish a mass working class party, we will have to debate alternative organisational structures, policies and programme in a democratic fashion.

Workers Power believes that a working class party that is anti-capitalist and internationalist will also need to be revolutionary. Two hundred years of working class struggle confirms that we can only clear the way for a new socialist society by overthrowing capitalism. Within any campaign for a new workers party, we will argue that it can only reach its goal of emancipation and working class power by declaring for revolution, and adopting a programme of struggle to make it a reality.

Many anticapitalists and trade unionists do not agree with us. Some will argue that, though they agree, the time is not ripe to say this openly, especially during election campaigns.

But if they agree that a new party of the working class is urgently needed we can unite to fight for such a party. The only condition anyone should place on such unity is that everyone is guaranteed the democratic right to argue for what they believe in.

Of course, such a party could adopt a reformist programme. But real revolutionaries - as opposed to sectarians - do not believe that vital steps towards renewing working class organisation should be avoided until all workers agree with our ideas in their entirety.

We believe that the clarity of revolutionary tactics and strategy will prove their worth in the course of struggle and demonstrate in practice that only a consistently revolutionary leadership can win.

This means we should work together to combat privatisation, to support migrant workers and refugees, to smash the fascists, to help the students fight the fees, to support those on strike.

We should enshrine internationalism into our campaign through active support and solidarity with our brothers and sisters in their struggle against imperialist war in Iraq as well as all those fighting against the debt and global injustice.

We believe that in such struggles, workers will be won to the policies of revolutionary socialism because they

represent a consistent and determined struggle against the bosses and their system.

We should take this struggle into the unions, mobilising the rank and file to force the union leaders to break with Blair and his policies. We demand of Bob Crow of the RMT, that he convenes a conference to discuss the crisis of working class representation. Campaigns to democratise the political fund in affiliated unions will open up the debate amongst trade unionists about how undemocratic the current rules are, and why a campaign for a new workers party would be in the interests of members who want to fight Blair and his supporters in the unions.

Where we have support in working class communities, we should challenge Labour at the polls with the primary aim of drawing new forces and activists into our campaign.

We should also work alongside those who think they can "reclaim Labour". The key to breaking up the Labour Party will lie in a struggle by the rank and file in the unions to force their leaders to take on the government. Those that think it possible to transform Labour will find out that Blair and Brown would rather expel 90 per cent of the members and break the link with the unions, than submit to policies that the working class demands. What we will not do is suspend the project of building a new party in the hope that some day Labour will deliver socialism. Instead we will try to convince these comrades in struggle, and welcome them when they join us.

If we can build a real campaign for a new workers party, then in local and regional conferences, alongside the trade unions won to such a policy, we can start discussing a structure and adopt policies and a programme that takes the struggle for workers power and socialism forward.

We call on every militant to join us in this campaign, put their name to our call and win their trade union, party or group, to the campaign.

## election

the standard of services for millions in the most deprived areas, and attack the jobs and conditions of teachers, nurses, doctors and other staff.

Union activists should build on the links established in the pensions dispute, and form cross-union action committees. These committees should co-ordinate resistance and demand the union leaders pledge united strike action. This time, we need to ensure the leaders are made accountable to the rank and file: no separate deals, no demobilisation without a full members' ballot.

We also need to link up with pensioners' groups, school students and parents, patients and community campaigns, and the anti-capitalist movement. They too want to resist privatisation and should be involved in campaigns and actions. Wherever possible trades councils should be revived and involve not only union branches but these social movements, as was done in Italy in 2001 around the "social forums".

If Blair goes for legal "reform" the pensions struggle will necessitate local action committees. Large union contingents for the G8 counter summit and other European Social Forum events can broaden and strengthen these alliances.

Blair's third term may be assured. But workers know that they will have to fight him from the beginning. If we learn from the struggles of the past eight years, and build on our grassroots organisational gains, we can make sure

## What is the trade union bureaucracy?

**T**rade union full-time officials constitute a conservative caste with its own interests, separate and opposed to most union members. The officials control the apparatus and, through it, the members. This is what the word bureaucracy means: rule from the office.

The bureaucrats derive privileges from their role as negotiators with the capitalists. The leader of Unison, Dave Prentis, was paid £107,369 in 2003; the average wage of a Unison official is around £30,000 plus expenses and car. They negotiate with employers and managers, sit on various boards and commissions with them. Preserving this peaceful process becomes the officials' whole life. As a result, this bureaucracy sees the capitalist system as necessary and eternal. In their view there is no alternative.

But the trade union bureaucracy also has a social base amongst skilled workers with better wages, conditions and, when it comes to wringing concessions out of the employers, stronger bargaining power than the mass of workers.

This "labour aristocracy" tends to defend their own privileges over other workers, to be sectional in their outlook, craft conscious rather than class conscious and unwilling to take up the cause of the lower paid, the badly

organised, women and young workers, those suffering from racism.

Trade union leaders are unenthusiastic about recruiting these other workers or organising the unorganised. As long as the unions are dominated by skilled, white, male, older workers the hold of the bureaucracy is assured, at least in times of stability.

The natural ideology of the bureaucracy preaches a reformist policy that leaves the levers of exploitation and control in the hands of the bosses. When workers' discontent breaks out the bureaucrats try to calm things down.

When the patience of the workers is exhausted, the union leaders may reluctantly allow action so as not to lose sup-

port. Then they speak out, sometimes with radical phrases, but limit action to one-day strikes or a series of stoppages. The effect is to exhaust and demoralise the activists, preparing the way for a negotiated settlement falling far short of the workers' demands.

In response militant workers vote for more "awkward" leaders, but this fails to challenge the bureaucracy itself. Even where they are forced to fight, these "awkward" leaders refrain from appealing over the heads of the leaders of other unions. Hence Mark Serwotka's refusal to rally Unison members to strike with the PCS on 23 March.

Replacing right-wing bureaucrats with left-wing bureaucrats - while representing a step forward - is therefore insufficient. Unless the bureaucracy is dissolved as a caste, we cannot regain control of our unions and pursue struggles to victory. The rank and file must organise to assert control, by mobilising and recruiting the poor, low-paid and downtrodden sections and by a sustained political challenge.

Unlike the bureaucrats, the rank and file of the unions have no interest in maintaining capitalist exploitation. On the contrary: to escape the treadmill of constant battles, the exploitative system of wage-labour and capital has to be abolished.

## Transform the unions

To strengthen the trade unions and to break the hold of the conservative bureaucracy, we advocate the establishment of rank and file opposition movements within and across the unions committed to:

- The election and recallability of all officials.
  - The payment of officials at the average wage of their members.
  - All strikes and pickets under the control of rank and file action committees.
  - Militant action, not collaboration with the bosses.
  - The abolition of all the anti-union laws.
- We insist that the financial

resources of the union are not used to fund capitalist politicians but to support strikers and their families, to defend victimised militants, to unionise unorganised workers.

Though we advocate a fight for official action wherever possible, we promote strikes without the bureaucrats and against the law wherever the needs of the struggle demand it.

The slogan of "political neutrality" of the unions is a fraud - there can be no neutrality in the class struggle. We struggle for the unions to support revolutionary policies and aid the struggle against the system of wage slavery.

# For a workers' Europe!

By Dave Ellis

The European Union is the butt of many a joke in Britain: cucumbers, which have to be straight, British bangers about to be banned, teenagers not allowed to do newspaper rounds....

Many of the jokes are designed to ridicule the EU and turn people against it. And, certainly, there is much about the EU that is disgraceful. Failed politicians like Neil Kinnock, Peter Mandelson and Chris Patten now earn over £100,000 a year as unaccountable Commissioners with vast budgets and the power to change millions of people's lives.

But the idea that British bureaucrats and institutions are any more democratic or progressive is an even bigger joke. And the joke is on us. Because if British workers do not see who are our allies and enemies in Europe, then we could end up fighting someone else's war.

## Blair's Europe

In March 2000, Blair persuaded the European Union "jobs summit" in Lisbon to adopt an agenda of slashing workers' wages and pensions, cutting healthcare and education budgets, and undermining workers' rights. The economic philosophy behind this agenda is called neoliberalism and is based on Margaret Thatcher's decimation of working class communities in the 1980s, and Ronald Reagan's policies in the USA. It is now being exported across Europe.

Tony Blair wants to further open up the enormous European market to British companies. There are rich pick-

ings to be made with the wholesale privatisation of large parts of the Telecommunications and transport, employment policy, health and pensions, all had to be opened up to market forces. European economy - and no one is better practised at that than the Jarvis, Balfour Beatty and co. who have made a packet out of providing miserable services in Britain.

Blair claimed this would bring growth, job creation, and win the battle to attract inward investment. The aim was to make the EU into "the most competitive region in the world" by 2010.

The current onslaught on workers' pensions is a prime example of what this means in practice. The Lisbon Agenda dictated a five-year postponement of the retirement age: to 65. Pensions must be based mainly on private savings rather than rest on progressive taxation. Employers must

be freed of their "crippling" obligations to their retired workers.

Resistance to this in France, Germany, Italy, Greece and Spain has been so vigorous that progress has been much slower than Blair and company hoped for. The pension reforms have provoked mass resistance, including one-day general strikes. If these strikes can become co-ordinated - like the attack itself! - then we can beat the bosses at their own game.

At the EU summit in March 2004 Blair, Schroeder and Chirac called for the Lisbon process to be speeded up. They called for a special EU enforcer to be appointed to chase up the economic, labour market, pensions, health and employment "reforms". In fact, they are cuts aimed at benefiting profit and lowering wages and living standards. Every working class gain made in Europe in the second half of the 20th century is now a target of these politi-

cal corporate raiders.

## EU Constitution

An essential part of this drive is to get all the EU countries to adopt a common, overarching constitution. The objective of the main European leaders is to form a new, united imperialist superpower at the expense of the continent's workers, poor farmers, youth, and national and racial minorities.

The constitution makes its commitment to capitalism perfectly clear: "Member States and the Union shall act in accordance with the principle of an open market economy with free competition."

It is dedicated to demolishing European workers' social and economic gains, and to exploiting the highly educated, but lower paid workers of Eastern Europe. The big firms can do this either by relocating their factories wholesale, making new investments there whilst downsizing or closing plants "at home", or by encouraging skilled and unskilled manual and white collar workers to come west.

By denying them social rights and job security, Blair, Gerhard Schroeder, Jacques Chirac and co. think they can use these workers to undercut the wages and undermine the conditions of workers in Britain, Germany and France.

## Another Europe is possible

There are two ways of responding to the EU constitution and the Europe wide neoliberal attacks. One is reactionary and, in the conditions of globalising capital, completely utopian. That is, to demand more and more

immigration controls, to strengthen the national state and try to make it a bulwark against "the foreigner". The other is the exact opposite: an active working class internationalism, a class struggle that recognises and respects no borders.

In the referendum on the constitution that Blair and Jack Straw have promised, we have to reject the Europe of the monopolies and say "NO" to its capitalist constitution. But we must not say, "YES" to a Great Britain or a little England either.

We must welcome workers from Eastern Europe - and from outside Europe - into our movement. They will add strength to our unions and political organisations. Therefore we must defend migrant workers against sweatshop bosses, media hate campaigns, police and state harassment and fascist thugs.

We must also aim to unite the resistance to the neoliberal plans across Europe. Just as in Britain we are faced with an onslaught on our pension rights so too are workers around Europe. We must fight for our trade unions to unite the struggle across Europe organising united strike action.

The European Social Forum has started to bring together trade unions, working class political parties, and progressive social movements. We need our own summits and commissions, to hammer out and prosecute a plan of action, just as the bosses have theirs.

The working class and anticapitalist movement needs to oppose the present Europe of the monopolies with the concrete goal of another Europe in another world - a Socialist United States of Europe.



Mass demonstration after European Social Forum, Florence 2002

# How Labour has taken away our rights

By Mike Evans

New Labour ran for election in 1997 on promises to extend democratic rights and radically reform or abolish ancient undemocratic institutions, like the House of Lords. It did indeed pass the Human Rights Act (HRA), which came into force in October 2000, and the Freedom of Information Act (FIA), passed in the same year but only coming into force in series of stages over the next four years.

But since then it has repeatedly sought exemption from the former and, at each stage the latter came into force, government departments have brazenly shredded their archives. Since these two acts, most of the Labour government's measures have been dramatic restrictions on civil liberties.

These have included the Terrorism Act 2000, that included a list of proscribed organisations, and extended powers of arrest. Up to early 2004, around 500 people had been arrested under the act, but only seven people officially charged. This act was enormously strengthened by the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001. This was rushed through parliament after the 11 September attacks in New York. It permitted the detention of non-British citizens that the Home Secretary believed to be terrorists, and

whose presence in the United Kingdom he regarded as a threat to national security.

The powers of detention established by this act amounted to indefinite detention without trial, simply on the say so of the Home Secretary. The suspect could not apply for a writ of habeas corpus, i.e. demand that they be either brought to court and charged with an offence or released. Thus a hallowed pillar of British constitutional law was undermined.

Between 2001 and 2005 these powers were used to detain seventeen Muslim men at Belmarsh prison. The ATCSA did provide a process for appealing to a judicial tribunal but these included special rules of evidence that permitted the exclusion of the detainees and their legal representatives from proceedings.

A series of legal challenges were made to the act and finally, on 16 December 2004, the Law Lords ruled that these detentions were incompatible with the UK's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. David Blunkett denounced this as "airy-fairy civil liberties" and accused "unelected judges" of "defying democracy".

This forced the government to rush another law through parliament in seventeen days, to enable the released Belmarsh prisoners to be kept under house arrest or tagged. The new

Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 allows the Home Secretary to make "control orders" on any person he suspects of involvement in terrorism. It allows for the house arrest of terrorist suspects where there is insufficient evidence to bring them to trial, and involves derogation (opting-out) from the European Convention on Human Rights.

Tony Blair, in a statement that lays the axe to the root of the very idea of human rights, declared, "We have to balance protection for the public from terrorism with safeguarding civil liberties. But there is no greater civil liberty than to live free from terrorist attack." (24 February *Daily Telegraph*)

In addition to the anti-terror legislation, there have been repeated attempts from the government to limit the right to trial by jury, to make it easier for police to get convictions. The limitation of double jeopardy - i.e. being tried twice for the same crime, making every acquittal for a serious offence only conditional - means the police will be able to keep trying until they get the result they want.

Stop and search powers have been increased, and these are always used in a racist fashion. Home Office statistics show that black people are eight times more likely than white people to be stopped.

The proposed new national identity cards - a measure that only fell because of the election - envisaged high-tech smart cards, complete with biometric information and linked to a central database. They will spell the end of personal privacy. There is already talk of linking it to a national DNA database

The Prevention of Terrorism Act seriously weakens what is regarded as one of the pillars of British constitutional law, the Habeas Corpus Act (1679). This allows for a writ of habeas corpus, whereby persons detained without trial or conviction can be ordered to be produced before a court of law and either charged or released.

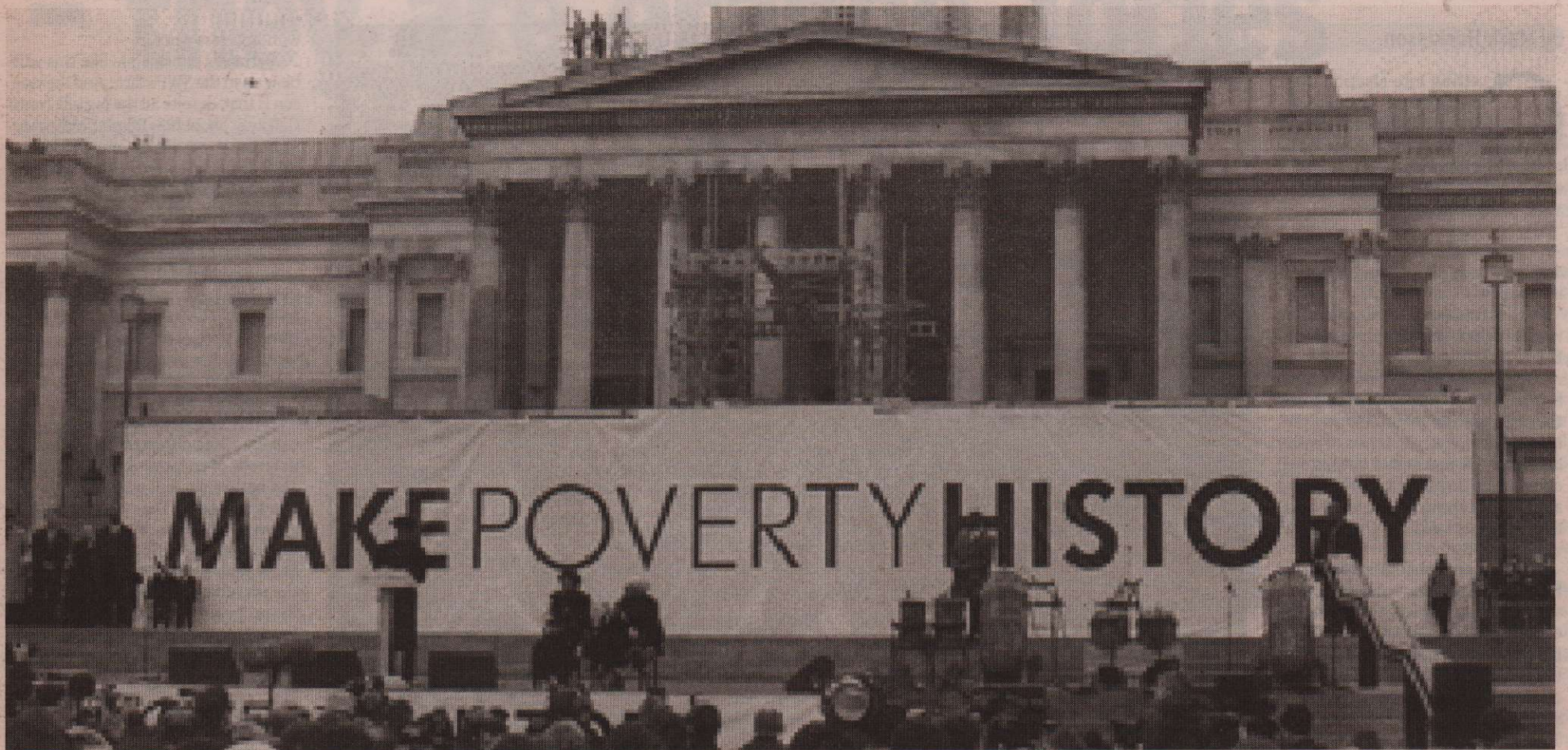
The fact that every capitalist

democracy is a dictatorship of the rich does not mean we can be indifferent to or cynical about the defence of democratic rights. After all, it was the working class that won them in the first place. They are our rights against the dictatorial powers of a capitalist government.

Every serious crisis in the history of capitalism has driven the ruling class to whittle away or abolish these democratic rights. Labour's new anti-terrorist laws could well see their first serious outing during the anti-G8 protest, this July. We need to make it as painful as possible for them to violate these rights. We must make Labour's rotten record on this issue a key point of debate during the election campaign.



# Crocodile tears for Africa



By Keith Sellick

**T**ony Blair's Africa Commission published its report on world poverty and debt last month. The report titled "Our Common Interest" was launched simultaneously in London and, Ethiopia's capital, Addis Abab. It contains 450-plus pages outlining strategies for eradicating global poverty and will be debated at the G8 conference of the world's most powerful industrialised nations this July in Scotland.

The main areas it covers are aid, debt, trade and governance. It fails to mention anything about the dangers of climate change to sub-Saharan Africa or the collapse in commodity prices that has hit African economies, especially those dependent on the mining of minerals.

**Aid**  
The report calls for an immediate increase in aid to sub-Saharan Africa taking the figure up to 16 billion a year immediately with a promised increase to \$50 billion a year by 2015. Also by that year the report calls on the richest economies to donate 0.7 per cent of their GDPs in aid.

This is an old policy in 1970 the richest countries told the UN that they would increase their aid budgets to 0.7 per cent of GDP. Currently only Luxembourg, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden do. Ireland, Belgium, Finland, France, Spain and the UK have pledged to do it by 2015. Germany has already said that it cannot increase aid because its budget deficit is too big.

The US, while accounting for a quarter of the world's aid budget, only spends about 0.15 per cent of its GDP and is silent on whether it will increase its budget. But even \$50 billion is little. One page in last year's Rich List in The Times will tell you that the combined wealth of the top 10 people in the UK is £52.55bn (about \$80 billion).

The report also calls for the immediate launch of Gordon Brown's international finance facility that aims to raise cash now through bonds and for the poor countries to pay back later. But this has also been rejected by the US and has

had no response from other G8 countries.

**Debt**  
Every year sub-Saharan Africa spends \$14.5 billion dollars repaying debts to the world's rich countries and international institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF own figures). Every year in the late 1990s sub-Saharan African countries repaid a \$1 billion more in debt repayments than they received in aid (World Bank figures).

The report calls for a 100 per cent cancellation "as soon as possible" of debts of poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa to enable them to meet poverty targets such as the Millennium Development Goals and "clear the slate for a fresh start". But the debts are only those owed to the rich countries not private banks. In some sub-Saharan countries half of the debt is owed to private banks.

Furthermore, the cancellation of debts is linked to goals established in discussion with the IMF and the World Bank and hence is dependent on countries entering into negotiations with these bodies around neo-liberal restructuring.

**Trade**  
The report calls for an end to trade subsidies that "distort global markets" whereby rich countries dump cheap goods while putting tariffs on goods from poor countries. Oxfam estimates that rich countries spend \$100 billion a year to protect their markets with tariffs, quotas and subsidies and yet the Commission wants the same countries to spend only \$25 billion on aid a year.

The report also attacks the idea of conditionality whereby poor countries have aid and trade tied to other conditions - usually the opening up of their markets to multinationals, welfare and education cuts, and privatising state industries. For example, the European Union is currently in a round of negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements tying aid to the removal of any trade barriers to European firms, the result will be increased dependence on aid as the poorer economies are dominated by European multinationals. But the report does not call for an end to conditionality but only that it should

be "strongly reduced".

## Governance

There are two strands to the report's proposals on governance: strictures on African countries to clamp down on corruption, and reforms to the IMF and World Bank.

The report makes a lot of noise about African corruption but fails to state that the worst offenders such as Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, Zimbabwe's Mugabe or the Nigerian generals were supported by rich western countries for long periods of time. Instead the report calls for African countries to clean themselves up before receiving any money. The report says that cleaning up corruption is "first and foremost the responsibility of African countries and people". It says nothing about regulating corporate power, accountability and or bribery - instead leaving it to voluntary action.

Meanwhile, The Economist (11 March) states: "For every shady multinational slipping a minister a sackful of cash for a contract there are thousands of African policemen robbing people at roadblocks or African bureaucrats inventing pointless rules so that they can demand bribes not to enforce them."

Multinationals are powerful panglobal organisations that work hand-in-hand with G8 countries to exploit and oppress the global south. They have far greater powers than a corrupt individual, with undeniably frightening powers, at a road block.

In fact Blair's government has just weakened laws against corruption and bribery. New laws exempt UK subsidiary companies from prosecution and gives multinationals a huge loophole over bribes by failing to tighten up what is quaintly termed "trade facilitation costs" - known to the rest of us as backhanders and bribes.

The report also fails to call for any action about compelling the banks to return to African countries the millions stashed away in London, Paris and Washington by dictators and their cronies.

The report does call for some minor reforms to the World Bank and IMF. It calls on the World Bank to offer more grants not loans and for the IMF to be more transparent in its dealings with poor states. It also argues both organisations should reform some of their gov-

erning bodies. More representatives should come from African countries and the top jobs should no longer be a choice between a European or an American and instead be open to competition.

But it fails to condemn how IMF structural adjustment programmes and conditionality have harmed poorer countries. There is mounting evidence of greater impoverishment under such programmes. Even the UN says that per capita income in Africa has fallen by 10 per cent since their introduction. The damage of such programmes is most felt in healthcare and education, the report implicitly hints at this by calling for the establishment of a \$10 billion budget for African to combat Aids, tuberculosis and Malaria and to provide 'free basic education'.

Yet even on these minor reforms Blair has failed his first test. George Bush's nomination Paul Wolfowitz, architect of the Iraq War, as Head of the World Bank is a signal of his intent to bring neo-conservative policies to global development. It was met with much uproar even amongst establishment figures. Former Tory MP and Hong Kong's last British governor Chris Patten said Wolfowitz was a terrible choice. Blair's reaction was "let us wait and see" while foreign secretary Jack Straw said: "that people would be pleasantly surprised."

And that's the problem. Blair will do nothing to upset George Bush. Bush can put his most ardent supporter in place and Blair will not complain. The success or otherwise of any of the proposals depends on the support of the US, which has already disagreed with much of what Blair and Brown have said and set up its own Millennium Challenge Fund - which has such a tight criteria that hardly any country has qualified.

But even if the document is supported by the G8 it will do little to eradicate poverty as it is based firmly on a neoliberal agenda. For Blair and co the market minus a few distortions will solve the problem. But the market creates wealth for those who own the land, factories, machinery; and poverty for those who work on the land or in the factories and offices. More free trade and a bit of aid will not eradicate poverty.

The NGOs in and around the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign have made various responses. The Jubilee debt

campaign says the report contains some of its own proposals and that the G8 needs to adopt the proposals quickly, act on them, and be transparent. The World Development Movement, which is one of the more critical organisations involved in MPH, argues that the proposals are a step back from those in previous reports. For instance, the early 1980s Brandt report, which called for more money in aid (1 per cent of rich countries GDP by 2000), greater reforms to international markets and finance, and taxing trade to provide more aid. But it stayed on the shelves gathering dust. The WDM has also pointed out that by putting its continuing faith in the World Bank and IMF - slightly reformed - the report undermines African initiatives such as New Partnership for African Development. But its response is only to call for greater involvement by the UN.

Yet the UN's policies are being driven by Jeffrey Sachs, the key figure behind the big bang capitalist restorations that impoverished so much of Eastern Europe, and soon he will be joined by Paul Wolfowitz at the World Bank. This shows how far the debate has gone from the mildly reformist Brandt report to having Wolfowitz, Sachs, and the free market trumpeted as the saviours of Africa.

The G8 conference will be a key event in deciding the future for the planet's poor. Some reforms might come out of it that will provide short-term respite - but that is unlikely. Instead the main proposals to come out of it will be about furthering neoliberalism throughout the world to the detriment of the sub-Saharan African countries and the entire global south.

The Make Poverty History campaign is expected to mobilise hundreds of thousands of protesters in Edinburgh prior to the G8 summit. All Socialists should build for and take part in this huge demonstration. But we need to fight not just for a one off demonstration to lobby the world leaders but the building of a militant movement that can fight for immediate cancellation of all the third world debt public and private and for the third world states to default on payment. This movement must identify capitalism as the enemy, a socialist world as the necessary solution and form a new international revolutionary party as the means of fighting for it.

# No respect for principles

By Mark Hoskisson

Getting into election campaign mode, George Galloway MP, the leading light in Respect Unity Coalition, appeared on BBC's Question Time recently. His performance proved two things about the "party" he leads:

- as its leading spokesperson, he decides what its policies are, on the spot if need be
- that it is in no sense a genuine working class, socialist alternative to Blair's New Labour.

Galloway's pronouncements on behalf of Respect made you wonder why the organisation maintains any pretence of democracy in terms of policy decisions. He just belted out his own opinions on anything and everything and the watching public went away thinking, quite rightly, that this was what Respect stood for.

That the press should leave poor old Prince Charles alone. That doctors, seeking a humane way to end the life of a terminally ill patient in the US, acting on her wishes, are murderers. That the poor old middle classes are the principal victims of Blair's onslaught on the welfare state and on living standards. That Tory right winger, Howard Flight, is now "comrade Flight".

Of course on the war in Iraq Galloway was just fine. But on most other questions it was difficult to distinguish him from the Lib Dems. Respect, it seems, is anything George Galloway wants it to be. But the one thing he doesn't want it to be is a working class socialist organisation.

He wants it to be a populist vehicle for his own re-election. He wants it to unite left wingers with Muslim activists who hold a range of views, some of which are profoundly right wing. He wants it to have an open door policy to disgruntled middle class Tory voters as well as to traditional Labour supporters. He wants its policies to be vague enough to appeal to enough people across the political and class spectrum to get enough votes to enable him to stay an MP.

Of course you would expect all this of George Galloway. He was a long standing Labour MP, closer to elements of its right wing on many issues (the former leader and right winger John Smith was one of his closest political friends) than to the left.

But how has Galloway been able to build himself an organisation that allows him to set its political agenda? How has he built a national presence in England and Wales? How is it that, instead of a workers' party project emerging from the old Socialist Alliance that stood over 90 candidates in the 2001 general election we get a cross-class populist project contesting at most around 30 seats in the 2005 election?

The answer is the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP has built Respect for Galloway. It began it all by destroying the Socialist Alliance's potential to become any sort of workers' party - using its numbers inside the alliance to crush all opposition to its populist project. Meetings were packed, members were carved out, procedures were flouted and democracy was negated. All of this resulted in the Socialist Alliance voting to dissolve itself.

In its place the SWP sought to recreate the anti-war movement at a political level. It strove to create an explicitly popular frontist alliance with the Muslim communities that had opposed the war on Iraq. While the main representatives of the Mosques declined the offer a formal popular front, many indi-



What's needed is a real working class alternative to Labour, not a populist electoral alliance

viduals, like Abdurahman Jafar of the Muslim Council of Britain, Dr Mohammed Naseem, chair of Birmingham Central Mosque, and Salma Yaqoob of Birmingham Stop the War, did agree to support the coalition hatched by Galloway and the SWP.

The SWP launched Respect at a 1,500 strong founding conference in January 2004 for one simple reason. They believed electoral success could only be achieved by wooing the Muslim community on a non-socialist basis. SWP and Stop the War leader, Lindsey German, put it succinctly when she told the second Respect conference:

"I would not have joined Respect if it had just been socialist." (*Weekly Worker* 4.11.04)

But it is not as if Respect is socialist plus something else. Alex Callinicos, leading theoretician of the SWP, makes this clear in a recent article:

"Respect (has made) astonishing inroads into some of the Muslim communities, notably in Tower Hamlets and Newham in East London, where we won our best scores in last June's elections"

Whilst admitting that, as in the Socialist Alliance, "it was clear enough from the Respect conference that most activists define themselves as socialists to the left of New Labour" Callinicos clearly has his eye on the Muslim voters, when he adds "not everyone who has strongly committed themselves to Respect would be comfortable with being called a socialist." (A Brief Reply, Alex Callinicos, *IST Discussion Bulletin*, January 2005)

This not only explains their evasive commitment to gay and lesbian rights, but their total failure to hold George Galloway to account. It also accounts for their failure to explain that it is capitalism that creates oppression, inequality and war. Only a party that fights against capitalism and for socialism can begin to build a movement capable of defeating Blair's attacks on the working class at home and internationally.

Even the limited left reformist brand of "socialism" that was the hallmark of Socialist Alliance propaganda has been diluted into populism by Respect. Worse, the SWP has seen to it that

the best elements of the Socialist Alliance - its resolute stance against all immigration controls and in support of a woman's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion - have been blunted in Respect's written proclamations and then totally undermined by Galloway, in the public domain.

Racism is an issue in this election. New Labour's racist record and the Tories' vile poster campaign demanding tighter immigration laws have already made it an issue. The scapegoating of asylum seekers, travellers and immigrants is a daily pastime in the gutter press. A consistent anti-racist response, one that does not give an inch to the ludicrous idea that "immigration" is the source of any problems in Britain, is required.

Last time round the Socialist Alliance at least took the message of no immigration controls to the electorate. This time round, while Respect itself voted down - at the SWP's insistence - the call for no immigration controls from its policy, Galloway is busily giving into the racist agenda. Here is what he said in the *Morning Star*: "we should publish an economic-social-demographic plan for population growth based on a points system and our own needs" and added "every country must have control of its own borders - no one serious is advocating the scrapping of immigration controls."

Yes they are, Mr Galloway. The SWP supposedly supports this position - though it is a measure of how low they have sunk in their quest for electoral success that they will not publicly criticise Galloway on this.

Galloway's points system and his phrase about "our own needs" - the needs of British capitalism? - put him politically in the same camp as Blunkett and now Clarke. They favour a points system and needs-based immigration policy. They support this because they are racist and now Galloway himself is backing racist policies.

It is a disgrace that a supposedly "left wing" alternative to New Labour is saying such things. It is a crime that the largest so-called revolutionary organisation in Britain, the SWP, is allowing it to be said unchecked.

And the same applies to abortion

and a woman's right to choose. On abortion Galloway has ensured that the representatives of the Mosques and of the Muslim Association of Britain have been kept on board by making clear that he is totally opposed to abortion. He said in the *Independent* on Sunday that he was "strongly against abortion. I believe life begins at conception and therefore unborn babies have rights. I believe in god. I have to believe that a collection of cells has a soul."

And what did the SWP say? Nothing, for fear of upsetting either the Catholics or Muslims that they are hoping will vote for Respect. And yet it is now clear, thanks to Michael Howard and the Catholic Church, that attacks on abortion will be an issue in this election. Millions of working class women will want to know where candidates stand. Yet from Respect - supposed champion of the oppressed - all they will get is a paltry policy statement about not restricting the legislation any further and a promise that, if elected, it will be up to the individual Respect member which way he or she votes!

That is an outrage and an offence to

working class women.

Betrayals of principle like this will blow up in the SWP's face. And the reason is that, despite all the big talk from Galloway about how Respect will sweep all before it, despite the promises from SWP leaders like John Rees that the "new" politics of Respect will bring millions to support it, Respect is flagging.

The fact that it can only mount around 30 candidates is a sign of weakness. This organisation was supposed to be, as Galloway put it, "in the big time". It isn't. It did badly in the Euro elections. It will do badly in the general election, barring one or two constituencies.

It has abandoned what Rees and co. call the "tired old methods" of the left in favour of restaurant nights, picnics and barbecues, hill walking and who knows what else. The result - meetings are smaller than the Socialist Alliance's were. Membership is flagging - in Merseyside a desperate mailing from the secretary revealed that only one Respect member had turned up for a fund raising night!

Many working class activists are suspicious of Respect, its lack of democratic transparency, its populism and its refusal to take clear positions. It has not made any breakthrough in the unions outside of a handful of FBU and RMT branches where the SWP have strong support.

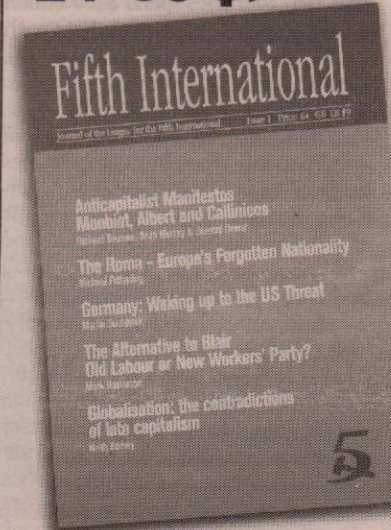
It is not moving towards attracting the mass support that the Stop the War Coalition achieved, for the simple reason that that was a single-issue campaign around which millions could unite. Respect is supposed to be a party, competing with other parties, and millions want clear answers before they will support it. They just don't get them.

So, while the next few weeks will see a frenzy of activity by the footsoldiers of Respect - the SWP membership - the day after the election, when they have failed to make a breakthrough, when the motley collection of candidates including the likes of Yvonne Ridley, have failed to become MPs, there will have to be a reckoning.

Has populism worked? No. But by trying to make it work the SWP has actively, though not necessarily permanently, blocked many from taking steps towards building a working class socialist alternative - a new workers' party. At the very least their members must make the leadership that has taken them down this terrible road pay by throwing them out, one and all.

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The Alternative to Blair: Old Labour or New Workers' Party?

Globalisation: The contradictions of late capitalism

# Don't vote for the Lib Dems - they are orange Tories

By Andy Yorke

It was May 1997. The Tories had been in power for 18 union bashing, welfare-cutting years. You wanted them out and were over the moon when New Labour was elected. Now it's eight years later, and you've had it up to here with Tory Blair. So are the Liberal Democrats a good bet?

Lib Dem leader Charles Kennedy would like you to think so. Their September 2004 Conference showcased a host of progressive policies: from withdrawing troops from Iraq to slightly higher taxes for the well off and an end to university top-up fees. What's more, Kennedy says your vote won't be wasted, because the Lib Dems are moving from a "party of protest to a party of power", capable of challenging the cycle of Tory and Labour governments.

Maybe, maybe not. But will the Lib Dems do what they say? And which Lib Dem party is the real one, the left-of-Labour face put forward by the Lib Dem electoral machine or a government-in-waiting of orange Tories?

The Lib Dems have a host of policies that look better than Labour's.

- Replace the hated council tax with a progressive local income tax.
- Raise the tax rate on earnings of more than £100,000 a year to 50 per cent.
- Cut class sizes for the youngest children.
- Abolish hidden waiting lists in the NHS.
- Meet the Kyoto targets and dramatically raise recycling rates and energy from renewable sources.
- Increased benefits for new mothers.
- £25 a week rise in the state pension.

- Abolish university top-up fees.
- Troops out of Iraq.

This sounds a lot like what people expected from Labour! There are three basic problems, however.

First off, the Lib Dems are not in power yet, and like all mainstream capitalist parties, much of this will prove to be nothing but spin and broken promises. The Lib Dems are nowhere near winning a general election and, like all parties out of power, make all sorts of claims that they won't honour if they became the government.

Second, many of their policies are anti-working class, such as putting 10,000 more police on the streets. The withdrawal of troops from Iraq is conditional on putting in the UN - the same troops but in blue helmets. The Lib Dems have promised to cut even more civil service jobs than the 100,000 Labour is threatening. And they want to privatise the Post Office. No thanks!

Finally, the yawning gap between the Lib Dems' national policy and what they would actually do when they got into power is there for everyone to see because they are already in power in nine local authorities and share power in others.

- Lib Dem-led councils will this year impose the highest rises in council tax in Britain: 25 per cent in Cardiff, 10 per cent in York. Last year they also held the record: a whopping 28 per cent rise Shepway, Kent.
- In Leeds, they promised to protect public services. Now they share power with the Tories and Greens and have shut two hostels for the homeless and axed weekend opening at four older people's day centres.
- In Birmingham, the millionaire Lib Dem deputy leader John Hemming is preparing to cut jobs. In Inverclyde,



Charles Kennedy led his party into an opportunistic opposition to the war against Iraq. The Lib Dems were opposed to the war until it started, then backed it.

Scotland, the Lib Dem leader has just pushed through school closures. In Swansea and Liverpool they have provoked strikes with their job cuts.

But the worst could be to come. An influential group of party activists has set out to reassert free trade liberalism, in modern terms neoliberalism, as the guiding economic principle of the party. Their Orange Book of proposed policies includes bringing private health insurance into the NHS to establish a two-tier system, having "standard range" services alongside "enhanced" services for those that can afford them.

Although this was rejected by conference, the authors' influence is deepening. Charles Kennedy added his seal of approval for their out-of-the-box

thinking by writing the forward to the pamphlet and has said that its policies cannot be ruled out in the future. Their latest proposal would permit the government to ban strikes that could "cause far-reaching damage to the economy and the national interest".

These orange Tories have impeccable big business credentials, and they are on the rise. David Laws was managing director at Barclays Bank and is the Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury; Shadow Chancellor Vincent Cable was Shell's chief economist, while Shadow Home Secretary Mark Oaten was managing director of Westminster Public Relations. These are the real positions of power, and dictate what a Lib Dem government would do in practice.

These are the real movers and shakers in the Lib Dems, and the bigger the party gets the more big business will vet their policies, and the more influential will this wing of the party become.

At the Lib Dem's Spring Conference Charles Kennedy claimed he wanted to centre the Liberal Democrat election campaign on opposing the government's anti-terror legislation.

This turned out to mean that the proposed control orders - curfews, tagging, house arrest and other restrictions on the freedom of "terror suspects" - should be placed in the hands of unelected judges rather than politicians. How very democratic!

After all that, imagine just for a moment the Lib Dems get in. What could you do to stop them from following their policy?

A trendy new book, *So Now Who Do We Vote For?* argues for "tactical voting" in the coming general election. It argues that in many safe Labour seats we should vote Lib Dems as a protest vote.

The Lib Dems themselves are hoping to gain mileage this way, claiming that they are poised to become the real opposition to Labour and that Britain is now becoming a three party political system. Socialists agree in the working class taking an active role in shaping politics, but the way to do that is to for the unions to organise a break from Labour and form a new workers party out of the rubble of Blair's war party, not help promote another bosses' party.

Rather than let these orange nobodies in, now is the time to argue more than ever to prevent their growth and instead build the kind of alternative to Labour that the working class needs - a new, revolutionary workers'

## Labour lefts: no base, no bottle

By Alison Hudson

As the last parliamentary session before the election stuttered to a halt yet another Labour rebellion took place. This time it was over the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Bill.

In the game of ping pong between Commons and Lords, 77 Labour MPs rebelled on eight different votes on various aspects of the bill, forcing some concessions from Blair's government - indefinite house arrest of terrorist suspects at the whim of the Home Secretary was one area where the government had to retreat, even though this only meant involving a judge to take away someone's liberty.

This brings to 47 the number of Labour rebellions to have occurred so far in the fourth session of this Parliament. This is the highest number ever for the final session of a post-war Government, beating the previous record set by Labour rebels in Callaghan's government during the 1978-1979 session.

Labour MPs have rebelled over many other issues: the most

significant ones being student top up fees, foundation hospitals and the war on Iraq. Robin Cook resigned as Speaker of the House over the war, Clare Short followed shortly after. Other MPs including Alan Simpson, John McDonnell, Tam Dalyell, set up Labour Against the War.

So is the Labour left alive and well, and should socialists support them?

Many of the consistent Labour rebels are also members of the Socialist Campaign Group, which claims the leadership of Labour's left. But in the real world, outside of the Westminster bubble, the Campaign Group has dramatically declined in significance from its 1980s glory days - it now has little or no base in the constituencies and little organised grassroots base of support.

Alan Simpson, when pushed about the failure of the Labour Left's to mount a challenge to Blair's leadership, at a Stop the War meeting in Sheffield late last year, admitted as much after he asked how many in the room were in the Labour Party and hardly anyone raised their hand. Long

time Labour supporters have left the party in droves over issues such as the war but while Simpson's answer is to ring his hands and whimper, "come back" he fails to see that it is the left MPs themselves that are at least partly to blame for this situation.

When Blair was on the ropes as his lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq unravelled before an outraged party and public, they failed to mount a leadership challenge. They even failed to push the issue of Iraq onto the agenda of the Labour Party conference, settling instead for winning a vote against Foundation Hospitals - a policy that the government pushed on with regardless.

They, along with most of the "awkward squad" trade union leaders, have put their faith in Gordon Brown inheriting the Labour leadership. This is despite the fact that on most policy issues there is hardly a hair's breadth between Brown and Blair, indeed along with Blair he was one of the architects of "New Labour". He didn't oppose the war, he certainly doesn't oppose privatisation - he

insisted on it for the London Underground. He enthusiastically embraced the Tory policy of PFI for hospitals and schools.

The Labour Left will not put up a real fight because the fear splitting the party that is their home - they know that to put up a real fight, to mobilise the party and trade union rank and file members against the leadership, would get them unceremoniously thrown out on their ear, with Brown first in the queue to put the boot in. They like the safe limits of their left reformism; they are happy to be the "left conscience" of the party and the leadership is happy for them to remain so - they are harmless after all.

The Labour lefts have always been incapable of mobilising real forces outside of parliament - they could do nothing to organise and direct the millions on the streets against the war to obstruct the war drive and oust Blair. They are parliamentary socialists through and through and parliament is powerless against a determined government, governing for the bosses.

Meanwhile the constituency

parties themselves are in a dire state - at last year's conference they voted by a majority of 70 per cent against motions to renationalise the railways and defend council housing. And there were far fewer constituency delegates than ever before at the conference, most of them being government supporters. Membership of the Labour Party is now thought to be at its lowest point since the 1930s, below 200,000 following mass disillusionment over the war and Blair's lies on over Iraq - this compares to one million recorded members in the 1950s!

Now the Labour lefts are fighting for their own survival. Labour Against the War has launched a campaign to try and save anti-war MPs with slim majorities: they are using a pledge to "do everything in [their] power to bring the occupation of Iraq to an end", the aim to try and get out some foot soldiers to campaign for them in the election. It is too little, too late. If the parliamentary Labour left emerges weakened from this election it has no one but itself to blame.

# Vote for the Scottish Socialist Party

By GR McColl

Elections in Scotland are rather different from those in England, or even Wales. In Scotland, workers can choose a party that commands significant support and has campaigned aggressively on their behalf both in the Scottish parliament and on the streets: the Scottish Socialist Party.

In the wake of the highly successful campaign of non-payment and civil disobedience against the Poll Tax, leading activist Tommy Sheridan secured 20 per cent of the vote in the

tion, the party made dramatic headway under Sheridan's leadership.

In Glasgow, the party has proved itself capable of winning between 10 and 20 per cent of the vote (rising to nearly 28 per cent in Pollok), with a respectable share of the vote in three Edinburgh constituencies. The SSP's total vote across Scotland in 2003 was just below eight per cent on the regional list system.

Of course, the media fostered the development of something of a cult of personality around the figure of "oor Tommy" and made the SSP all but synonymous with its leader, who combined

The reversal in the party's progress cannot be reduced to any single factor, but the SSP has become increasingly pre-occupied with constitutional questions and the pursuit of an independent Scotland. The focus on the Scottish national question has left the SSP competing for nationalist voters with the Scottish Nationalist Party, which remains a thoroughly capitalist party. Their search for a nationalist bloc with them has encouraged a rightward drift in their politics.

At the same time, however, 2004 witnessed a breakthrough, with the RMT's seven Scottish branches affiliating to the party - a move that eventually led to the RMT's expulsion from Labour. The large CWU branch at Royal Mail in Edinburgh sought to transfer its political fund to the SSP as well, but the union's national executive blocked it. The party has also established significant union fractions in the FBU, PCS and Unison.

The SSP has also been to the fore in actively opposing: the Afghan and Iraq wars, the Faslane nuclear base, hospital closures, deportations of asylum seekers and the Dungavel immigration removal centre, and the forthcoming G8 summit at Gleneagles.

It has used its platform in the Holyrood parliament to expose the iniquitous Council Tax and put forward a genuinely progressive alternative tax programme, while also lending its support to strikes by firefighters and nursery nurse, civil servants and most recently RMT members at CalMac ferries in the wake of privatisation. The party had pushed for the extension and improvement of free school meals long before Jamie Oliver, as well success-

**The SSP has used its platform in the Holyrood parliament to expose the iniquitous Council Tax and put forward a genuinely progressive alternative tax programme, while also lending its support to strikes by firefighters and nursery nurses, civil servants and most recently RMT members**

Glasgow Pollok constituency at the 1992 general election. Sheridan's vote - standing against the Labour Party - was remarkable because he was imprisoned at the time for resisting an attempt by sheriffs to seize the property of a household that had refused to pay the grossly unjust tax.

Sheridan had personally been expelled from the Labour Party in the late 1980s.

Until November last year Sheridan was the convenor of a six-strong group of SSP members in the Edinburgh parliament. While the SSP owed its seats to a system of proportional representa-

tion, the party made dramatic headway under Sheridan's leadership. In Glasgow, the party has proved itself capable of winning between 10 and 20 per cent of the vote (rising to nearly 28 per cent in Pollok), with a respectable share of the vote in three Edinburgh constituencies. The SSP's total vote across Scotland in 2003 was just below eight per cent on the regional list system.

Of course, the media fostered the development of something of a cult of personality around the figure of "oor Tommy" and made the SSP all but synonymous with its leader, who combined charisma with old school tub-thumping oratory and the courage of his convictions, repeatedly facing imprisonment for protests at the Faslane nuclear base.

Sheridan's fall from grace in the wake of a sex scandal, eagerly reported by a prurient press, has harmed the SSP in recent months. It remains to be seen whether the election of Colin Fox as the party's convenor will put an end to bitter infighting.

But the slump in the SSP's electoral fortunes predates this. The SSP's share of the vote in the June 2004 European election fell, and they failed to gain a seat.

## Should Scotland separate?

Scotland is clearly a nation, with its own history and customs, reflected in today's separate legal system and Holyrood parliament. As with all nations, large or small, all true democrats must support the right of Scotland to self-determination.

Scottish nationalism - the ideology, which advocates a separate development for the Scottish people by dissolving the union with England and Wales - has risen and fallen depending on the direct attacks emanating from Westminster and the City of London, and on the strength or weakness of British-wide working class resistance.

Regardless of these ebbs and flows, socialists should oppose the separation of Scotland. We favour large nations, which benefit the development of production and the integration of powerful working class movements.

But such a union must be absolutely voluntary. Should the Scottish people decide to separate - and they should be allowed to by means of a simple majority in a referendum, a right they have never been accorded - then English workers must help them overcome any attempt by the British ruling class to thwart their will by force or fraud.

That way, we can limit any damage to internationalist working class unity, and pave the way for a re-unification of the British people - in a Socialist Republic of Britain.

fully forcing an end to the impounding of impoverished debtors' goods.

Yet, the party's strategy is that of left reformism, rather than revolutionary socialism. It poses its goals in terms of 200 achievable aims within the limits of the Scottish parliament's constitution. Its direct action campaigns are merely there to bolster its parliamentary work.

What is missing is any bridge between today's struggles and the struggle for socialism, which cannot be achieved within the confines of the Scottish, British or any other parliament.

Revolutionaries within the SSP should immediately seek to form their

own tendency - or platform - within the party to agitate for a complete overhaul of the party's strategy and programme, so that electoral politics is subordinated to the mobilisation of the working class against the capitalist system, rather than an end in itself.

Nevertheless, Workers Power strongly urges voters across Scotland to support the SSP in the election. We believe that there is still a fight to be had over the character and direction of the SSP, and that the party could still play a crucial role in the founding of a new workers party that would be a lively battleground of ideas pitched between reform and revolution.

# Smash the fascist BNP!

By Bill Jenkins

In the General Election, the British National Party will stand 100 to 120 candidates in an attempt to build on the 800,000 votes and 24 councillors they won during last year's Euro and local elections.

The party claims to have renounced its fascist past, and even not to be anti-black people, just pro-white. But you don't have to dig very deep to find out the truth.

Mark Collett, the party's Yorkshire Regional Organiser and leader of the young BNP, recently explained what his party has got in store for British workers.

"National Socialism was the best solution for the German people in the 1930s", he told Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme "I honestly can't understand how a man who's seen the inner city hell of Britain today can't look back on that era [Hitler's Germany] with a certain nostalgia."

The BNP's leader, Nick Griffin, Cambridge graduate and middle class son of Welsh landowner, is a long time Nazi, with a conviction for incitement to racial hatred. As the editor of the *Rune*, a racist quarterly, he echoed Collett's words when he proclaimed:

"The electors of Millwall (where the Nazis had a councillor at the time) did not back a post-modernist Rightist Party, but what they perceived to be a strong, disciplined organisation with

the ability to back up its slogan Defend Rights for Whites with well-directed boots and fists. When the crunch comes, power is the product of force and will, not of rational debate".

This sick white-only party hates all black people and describe mixed race children as "the most tragic victims of enforced multi-racism". The BNP's leadership are full of Nazis, like Collett, and Griffin, with a long list of convictions for crimes, including everything from bomb making to physical assault and rape.

So the BNP are Nazi scum, that's not in dispute. But how best can we fight them? Many people believe that Nazis should still have the right to free speech. The fascists claim that in a democracy, like any other party, the Tories, Labour, Liberals and Socialists, they should have the right to persuade people that their opinions are right. People often think, "How can we oppose the Nazis' discrimination against others if we discriminate against the Nazis?"

**But ask yourself: what is the content of the Nazis' free speech?**

The BNP are modelled on Hitler's Nazi party. They will try to use "free speech" in order to attack anyone else having the right to free speech. The real content of the Nazis' free speech is their right to advocate the repatriation of black people from Britain. Nick Griffin explained to the BBC in 1996 if elected "all black people will be repatriated, even if they were born here" and what



does repatriation mean - throwing people out of their homes, out of their country. How will the BNP achieve this? By extreme violence.

They accuse of Jewish people of "providing us with an endless diet of promiscuous, pro-homosexual, anti-British trash". How will they address the problem of these "anti British trash"? We know how the Nazis did this last time they were in power - through the gas chambers. This is what their

free speech means and we should not let them use it to clear the path to the violent totalitarian state they want. We must deny them the right to spread their hatred, just as we deny the right of murderers to murder.

Hitler's massacre of six million Jews, alongside countless other victims - Romanis, socialists, the disabled, Slavs, lesbians and gays, the list is endless - shows the practical fruits of the fascists' policy. Of course, the BNP do not

campaign for these policies on the doorstep: but, then again, neither did the Nazis!

Like the Nazis, the BNP pose as the champions of those sections of society - the impoverished middle class and the parts of the working class and poor that have been let down and abandoned by the labour movement - who have lost all hope. They represent the politics of despair.

But rather than mobilise these people against the bosses and the capitalist state who have bankrupted small businesses, created blackspots of mass unemployment and run down inner-city and edge-of-town housing estates and public services, the fascist party employs racist, homophobic and anti-working class demagoguery to turn them against organised labour.

In short, the BNP is a party of civil war against the working class - albeit, in waiting. That's why, wherever they have scored electoral successes, they have followed through with increased racist attacks on the local Asian and black population, on socialist and trade union activists.

And why we should stop them leafletting, marching or holding public meetings during this election campaign.

Fine they're pathetic and weak now, but they are growing. The best time to destroy them is now before they become a real threat - not when it is too late to stop them.

- Smash the BNP and National Front!
- No platform for fascists!

## Campaign to support the Basra students' protest against Islamist repression

Dear comrades

On 16 March, students in Basra began a strike in protest at an attack carried out on students from Basra's University's engineering faculty by Moqtada al-Sadr's Army of the Mahdi, in which several people were injured and one killed. The strike ended on 22 March but the students' campaign against the violence of these political Islamists continues and needs international support and solidarity.

Al-Sadr's gang and the city's tribal elders had threatened to bombard the university if the students did not issue an apology for their "blasphemous" slogans against political Islam. Such was the Islamists' determination to end the strike that they even threatened to

kill bus and taxi drivers who transported students to demonstrations at the university. However, the students' determination and the support they have received from freedom-loving people in Basra have now forced the Mahdi Army's representative Asad al-Basri into giving an apology to the students! This apology has been published in the well-known Basra newspaper Al-Manara al-Basriya.

The Basra Student Working Committee, which was founded in December last year and represents students in the city's university and high schools, commented: "Recent events in our city show that Iraqi workers and students are determined to resist political Islam, and can win if they are united. The Student Working Committee will continue

to work for the creation of a progressive student movement in Iraq."

We will continue to support the Basra students' campaign:

- To bring the al-Sadr assassins to justice.
- Compensation for the victims of the attack.
- For the expulsion of Islamist militias' headquarters from all Iraqi universities.
- Separation of religion from the state and the education system.
- For the creation of a united progressive student movement in Basra and other cities.

**Workers Power replies:**

**We fully support the demands of the**

**Basra students, but with one important addition: that the occupation forces be immediately withdrawn from Iraq.**

**The truth is that the only "justice" system in Iraq is that of the US/UK military occupation. The transitional government has no legitimate authority, since all the candidates were vetted by the occupiers, and its election boycotted by whole swathes of the population.**

**Justice for this crime - and many other crimes being committed by the Islamists, Ba'athists, and above all the occupation troops - can only be brought about as a by-product of the fight to eject the forces of the biggest mass murderers of all: Bush and Blair.**

## Revive the pensions battle

Dear comrades

This year's NUT conference met the week after the union had called off a ballot for strike action against the attack on our pensions.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party supported the officers of the NUT in calling off the ballot. This was presented as a "success", a "real climbdown on behalf of the government", "round one to us".

What rubbish! We have won nothing except the promise of talks (not even negotiations). They could have waited three days for conference to hear what teachers felt about the government demobilising a strike in the run up to the election.

A strike of more than 1.5 million public sector workers would have sent a message to the government to withdraw their plans or else.

The SWP argued that to say anything less than "It was a great success" would be to demoralise the members. But unless we explain the tricks of the bureaucrats to string out and demobilise the members then we will not build a challenge to their misleadership. That's demoralising!

The Socialist Party (despite calling off the action in the PCS) agrees with Workers Power on this. We have written a model resolution with delegations from Greenwich, Bolton, Sandwell, Hackney, East London, as well as discussing our strategy with Martin Powell Davies from Lewisham. The aim of the resolution is to get as many associations to pass it.

The key points are:

- It was a mistake to call off the ballot.
- We must form action committees across public sector unions to build the campaign for strike action across the public sector. Our aim is to pressure the executive to reinstate the action as soon as it becomes clear that the talks are dragging on.
- We will convene a conference in the summer term to make such action effective, whether official or unofficial.
- We will invite other public sector unions with the aim of establishing a public sector alliance.

We want unity - but not the unity of the bureaucrats, who will "unite" to sell out the members, but real unity from below. The SWP's perspective is a recipe for all the unions tailing the most right wing leaders and will lead to disaster.

**Kirstie Paton**  
Greenwich NUT  
For full details of the model motion see [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com)

# Here to stay, here to fight

Dear Comrades

In the early spring sunshine about 500 people marched from Clerkenwell Green on Saturday 2 April to Hackney's Haggerston Park. The demonstrators took part in the London leg of one of at least seven protests around Britain in defence of refugee rights and in support of migrant workers.

The protests in London, Manchester, Nottingham and elsewhere came in response to a call issued from the European Social Forum in October 2004 for a day of co-ordinated action in opposition to mounting racism and in support of the right to move freely across borders.

In Britain the initiative had gained the support of the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, Barbed Wire Britain, the No Borders initiative and a host of local campaigns. More established organisations such as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants also backed the



protest.

Crucially, a number of refugee community organisations endorsed the demonstration, including the Halkevi Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre and the recently formed campaign of Zimbabwean refugees.

The turnout from British left groups was generally disappointing, but the most obvious absence was that of the

organised labour movement. A sole Natfhe banner appeared on the march and, while Unison's Greater London region had given its official backing, this did not put feet on the street.

No doubt the short notice and the Easter holiday period made it more difficult to build in the unions, but the poor showing also highlights the yawning gap between good paper policies and

active support for asylum seekers and immigrant workers.

Just days prior to the protest, dozens of largely immigrant cleaners from Canary Wharf stage a stunt at the Old Vic theatre in order to embarrass bosses at Morgan Stanley bank, the theatre's main patron.

While the march was quite colourful and lively, the London demonstration also illustrated that there is a long way to go in terms of building an effective campaign in the immediate defence of asylum rights, and against the development of an ever more draconian "Fortress Europe".

A follow-up meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 26 April at the Halkevi Community Centre, 100 Stoke Newington Road, London N16.

**In solidarity**  
**George Binette**  
Secretary, Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers (personal capacity)

## Revolution can make capitalism history

Dear comrades

Revolution, the Socialist Youth Organisation, held its annual conference on 2-3 April in London. The conference brought together activists from across the UK for two days of debate and discussion, under the slogan "Make capitalism history".

The slogan echoed the fact that, at the centre of this year's conference, were the planned protests against the G8 in Scotland by the Make Poverty History coalition, and the more radical protests planned by Revolution and other groups to shut down the event.

In the evening plenary session on the Saturday there was an excellent debate around these protests. With Revolution National Organiser Simon Hannon exposing the crimes of the G8 and League for the Fifth International activist Richard Brenner giving a moving

talk on the protests and street battles that took place when the G8 met in Genoa, in July 2001.

Revolution also launched a new and bold campaigning initiative called 'Dump the Debt'. The campaign calls for the full cancellation of the third world debt, an end to all austerity and neoliberal programmes imposed by the international financial institutions, the dismantling of these institutions and for third world countries to default on payment.

In the most popular of several theoretical sessions, Nathalie Smith outlined the importance of the ideas of Leon Trotsky 65 years since his death at the hands of a Stalinist agent.

The conference placed a strong emphasis on the plans Revolution has for campaigning over the next year. Alongside Dump the Debt, Revolution committed itself to supporting the Asylum Lies

campaign against the media scapegoating of Asylum Seekers, and to continued solidarity work for imprisoned Roma antifascist, Mario Bango. Several campaigning workshops looked in depth at these campaigns and how they could be implemented locally.

Revolution also elected delegates to the approaching World Revolution international conference that would see Revolution established as democratic centralist international youth organisation, strengthening our group in our day-to-day fight against capitalism and imperialism.

All in all, it was an excellent conference, with every activist keen to go back to their locality and build the group over the coming year.

**Luke Carter**  
National Organiser Revolution UK  
[www.worldrevolution.org.uk](http://www.worldrevolution.org.uk)  
[info@worldrevolution.org.uk](mailto:info@worldrevolution.org.uk)

## Support T&G merger?

Dear comrades

Mark Hoskisson's article on the TGWU and Amicus merger made interesting reading. He was right to stress how previous mergers have overwhelmingly been bad for workers' democracy. But he erred by saying that we should oppose this merger outright.

It is certainly right that past mergers have nearly always led to a decrease in lay member control. And he is right that this merger is being led by a leadership with no confidence in winning members through struggle. But there are crucial differences in the examples Mark gave to the current merger. The EETPU was a scab union, using a merger to force its way back into the TUC. The merger that created Unison included a far greater number of managerial workers. Neither of those are the case with the TGWU, Amicus or the GMB.

Also we must consider the timing of those mergers. They followed the years of Labour and Tory attacks, and notably the defeat of the miners of course. It was a time when the unions saw no way forward other than as "service providers" and an insurance policy for members.

It's also interesting to note that many within the GMB (whose executive has now agreed in principle to the merger) are actually more confident about the prospects for increased lay control given the suspension of Kevin Curran.

Mark makes the correct point that what we need are industrial unions. But he then uses this as a reason to oppose the merger, despite the fact that the unions involved are already general and not industrial unions. I work in the voluntary sector where workers (where they are members of a union) are split between 5 different unions! The merger would go to unite at least three of them within a single union. Activists must be arguing that in any new union the sectors are set up on an industrial basis, each with their own structures, newsletters, and so on.

But the main point is that our strength is not on the executives or the trades groups, but in the workplace itself. A merger - on democratic grounds, and with lay control at least as strong as it is currently - would be a step forward in creating workplace unity.

**Richard Belbin**  
Sheffield

# DUMP THE DEBT

In the last 24 hours another 35,000 people have died from curable disease. Millions more go malnourished; hundreds of millions more live on less than a dollar a day. Our world is richer than ever before: satellites can beam images across continents in seconds; man-made probes can land on the surface of mars; scientists can map our entire genetic make up.... So why can we not give everyone three meals a day, clean water and an income that makes a decent life possible? In short why can't we end poverty?

The poorest 70 countries in the world owe the richest banks and nations \$80 billion. As this debt is too great for them to service, the wealthy offer aid and rescheduling - but only on the condition that they cut back welfare, privatise their assets and let the multinationals take over the market. Like loan sharks, they use poverty to keep the poor ever more firmly tied to the interests of the rich. It's called debt bondage.

This year there is a growing campaign against poverty and debt. Tony Blair has his Africa Commission, the UN has its own report on how to eradicate poverty, and there is Make Poverty History and a host of charities and initiatives campaigning around debt and aid.

But will the solutions put forward by these organisations eradicate poverty? No. Because they are based on myths about reforming capitalism, the system that causes poverty.

Revolution, the socialist youth group has launched a new campaign, **Dump the Debt**. It explodes the myths that exist within the movement and offers a way forward, from resistance, through solidarity, to victory.

### Myth 1: Free trade is the answer

Free trade means huge North American, European and Japanese corporations can move their production effortlessly across borders in search of lower wages and costs. "Third world" countries, which want the jobs and industrialisation these companies bring, have to provide the cheapest possible labour, creating a race to the bottom that means the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting ever richer. Free trade wipes out their

### Myth 2: Aid helps poor countries

Aid, just like debt, is used as a political weapon by the biggest capitalist countries. "Third world" nations often have to open up their markets as a condition for receiving aid. Or they are forced to spend the aid on importing goods, undercutting local producers. Aid is usually in the form of loans either from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank or private banks - all of which charge excessive interest.

### Myth 3: The problem is corruption and war in poor countries

In the cold war the US and European countries supported dictators, like Saddam in Iraq and Mobuto in Zaire. This continues today. In Venezuela the US backed a military coup against the democratically elected government of Hugo Chavez because he wanted to use more profits from the oil industry to put them into free healthcare. Now George Bush slugs off the corruption of "third world" governments without saying that it was the rich governments and corporations that corrupted them - and then armed them to the teeth to defend them against their own people! *The Economist* estimates that 10 per cent of the money spent on the arms trade each year consists of bribes. But Bush refuses to regulate them.

### Myth 4: Famines are caused by too little food

Food is always available to those that

small-scale industries and services replacing them with the products and services of huge corporations like Bechtel.

can afford it. The United States has built ships that dump large amount of crops at sea in order to maintain higher prices at a time when thousands die through famine. The European Union is infamous for its butter and grain "mountains" and its milk and wine "lakes". The World Bank and the IMF encourage countries in the global south to grow cash crops for export, neglecting small farmers who grow a whole range of food for local markets.

### But is there enough money in the world to eradicate poverty?

- The assets of the 200 richest people on the planet are worth more than the total annual income of the bottom 41 per cent of the world's people.
- The oil company Exxon Mobil has this year been valued at £380 billion pounds on the stock market, equivalent in size to the entire Spanish economy.
- Three Families - the Gates' (Microsoft), the Waltons (Walmart) and the Brunei Royal Family - have a combined wealth of \$135 billion, equivalent to the incomes of 600 million people living in the world's poorest countries.

Inequality is not only grotesque; it is growing. Nor is it just in the "third world" that this great divide is brutally felt. The past 20 years in Britain has seen a massive widening of the gap between rich and poor. The wealthiest 10 per cent increased their share of total wealth from 46 per cent to 54 per cent between 1990 and 2001.

Over the past 30 years "Third World" countries have paid back their debts several times over in interest payments. Enough is enough!

### Dump the Debt says:

- Cancel all the debt! Not just some of the public debt, but that owed to the mega rich banks should also be dumped.
- Destroy IMF/World Bank! Fight to end the IMF imposed austerity and neoliberal programmes.
- Reparations to the Global South! The countries of the global south are owed compensation from the plunder of their human and natural resources over decades.
- Can't pay - don't pay! Support indebted countries that refuse to pay off these monstrous debts and take direct action against any reprisals.
- Shut down the G8! The G8 is the group of the eight most powerful countries in the world.

When the G8 meets in Scotland we must build a massive movement to shut it down. This will send a powerful message of solidarity to the workers and poor of the global south that there is a movement of resistance in the G8 countries too.

These solutions will need a mass militant international movement to take direct action against the institutions that enforce the policies of global poverty. This movement must identify the capitalist system as the enemy. Capitalism cannot afford a decent life for billions of people.

To end poverty for good we quite simply have to end capitalism for good. Only when the factories, banks and giant farms are in the hands of the workers and poor of the world will it be possible to draw up a plan that eliminates poverty for good.

## Get active, stay active, join Workers Power

Even the onset of war did not stop the global revolt against it.

Across the world the working class is coming together. Globalisation has forced workers and activists from different countries and continents to unite, work and fight together. There have been huge Social Forums of resistance in Europe at Florence and Paris, in Asia at Hyderabad and Mumbai, and in South America at Porto Alegre.

Together with the L5I, which is represented on the European Social Forum, Workers Power campaigns to bring these movements together into a New

World Party of Socialist Revolution - the Fifth International.

This is a momentous time, one of those times when the true nature of the world we live in suddenly becomes clear to millions. Capitalism is revealing itself to be a system of war, conquest and global inequality. By taking to the streets against war and capitalism, hundreds of thousands of people are showing that they have seen through the lies.

Take the next step and join Workers Power. Phone us on 020 7820 1363 or email us at [workerspower@btopenworld.com](mailto:workerspower@btopenworld.com)

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Mail: Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

Tel: 020 7820 1363

Email: [workerspower@btopenworld.com](mailto:workerspower@btopenworld.com)

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