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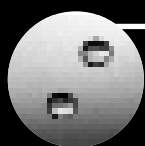


AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ BRING THEM HOME — ALIVE



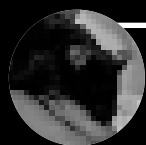
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WORKERS

“Bring them back – alive

THE CRY IS going up everywhere from Whitehall to the White House, from Herat to the House of Commons. “We didn’t expect it to be like this. We didn’t expect this kind of trouble. Why are they fighting so hard?”

Whether it’s in Afghanistan or Iraq, Basra or Beirut – why won’t Johnny Foreigner do what he’s told? We’re doing this for their benefit, not ours, bringing them democracy and all, and do they thank us for it? They jolly well do not!

Hang on though, weren’t we told that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction? Surely in that case we should have expected a bit of a ruck? Unless of course our military and that of the US knew there were no such things, and so actually expected a pushover. That would explain why they’re now surprised.

Either that or they don’t read history. How many goes have the British army had at subduing Afghanistan, how many attempts to control Iraq (see p14)? For the past two hundred and fifty years our government has done little else with its army outside of world wars than try to control places far afield they consider to be within their sphere of influence. Or rather, speaking of the past 50-odd years, more often the US sphere of influence.

The present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance, were started by the US for what

the Bush government regarded as its own imperial interests – we were then called in to try and create some semblance of legitimacy, and to provide cannon fodder.

It didn’t work then, it isn’t working now and it won’t work in the future. Where next? Iran? Darfur? No, probably not that one – it doesn’t have oil.

The reason the sun set on the British Empire was that we got kicked out of the countries we tried to govern. Britain didn’t withdraw graciously like a benevolent uncle. It was beaten. And Britain is being beaten now, even as we tail ignominiously after the US, trying to prop up their Empire. On Afghanistan, General Sir Michael Rose, commander of the British forces in Bosnia, said, “Given the level of resources NATO has at the moment, and the strategy we are pursuing, we simply cannot win.” British troops are dying for this.

It is not our job to bring democracy to anywhere else, just as it wasn’t our job to bring Christianity or civilisation or whatever other name we gave the same thing before, to anyone else. Our job is to respect the sovereignty of other countries. That way they will respect ours.

Blair and the real respect agenda? Forget it.

Bring the troops home now – alive.



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**TERROR****UNEMPLOYMENT****HEALTH****PRIVATISATION****NHS****IRAN****POWER****EUROTRASH****WHAT'S ON****NEWS ANALYSIS**

No safety in capitalist war

Highest since 2000

Victory close at Whipps X

Portrait of a borough

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Bush raises the tension

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The latest from Brussels

Coming soon

Israel lashes out

No safety in capitalist war

THE US-LED war in Iraq has not made the world any safer. As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "I cannot say the world is safer when you consider the violence around us, when you look around you and see the terrorist attacks around the world and you see what is going on in Iraq."

The number of terrorist atrocities, and of their innocent victims, continues to rise each year. The US State Department itself reported that in 2004 there had been 651 "significant" terrorist attacks in the world, killing 1,907 people. In 2003, there had been 175 attacks, killing 625, in 2002, 139 attacks, and in 2001, 123.

Speaking about his tour of Middle East nations, Kofi Annan said, "Most of the leaders I spoke to felt that the invasion of Iraq and its aftermath have been a real disaster for them... They believe it has destabilised the region." He also noted, "One used to be worried about Afghanistan being the centre of terrorist activities. My sense is that Iraq has become a major problem and in fact is worse than Afghanistan."

Security for the Iraqi people is worsening. According to the website Iraqbodycount.com, at least 43,269, and possibly as many as 48,046, Iraqi civilians have been killed, and the pace of killing is quickening – 20 a day in the first year of the occupation, 31 a day in the second year, and 36 a day in the third. The UN recorded 2,669 violent deaths in May this year, 3,149 in June and 3,438 in July. 890,000 Iraqis have fled the country.

The US military has suffered 2,689 deaths since the war began and 19,945 wounded. 232 troops from other coalition forces have also been killed. There are, according to the Pentagon, 500 attacks a week on the occupying forces, up from 250 a week last year. A recent poll funded by the US National Science Foundation shows that 84.5 per cent of Iraqis "strongly oppose the presence of coalition forces in Iraq".

This failed "war on terror" has so far cost the US state £254 billion. It has cost us in Britain £4.5 billion so far. A Populus poll carried out between 1 and 3 September found that 62 per cent of us agreed that "To reduce the risk of future terrorist attacks the Government should change its foreign policy, by distancing itself from America, being more critical of Israel and declaring a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq."

UNEMPLOYMENT**Highest since 2000**

UNEMPLOYMENT ROSE by 93,000 between May and July to 1.7 million, its highest level since 2000, according to the 13 September report by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Yet Blair told the TUC on 12 September: "Tomorrow I think we will probably see – for the first time in some months – a fall again in unemployment, which is very, very welcome indeed."

In fact, he was wrong: unemployment had risen; only the number of people claiming unemployment benefits had fallen, by just 3,900.

National Statistician Karen Durnell wrote to the Cabinet Secretary complaining about Blair leaking the figures: "The reported comments clearly contravened the National Statistics Code of Practice." This is the first time that the National Statistician has publicly stated that a minister has contravened the code.

NORTH SEA**Divers reject pay offer**

BY A VOTE of 640 to 2, North Sea Divers, members of the RMT trade union, have rejected a 15 per cent pay offer spread over three years. The divers, employed in the oil and gas exploration industries, are expected to move to strike action shortly.

Wage rates have fallen by over 20 per cent in the past 20 years despite the demand for oil and gas continuing to rise and the profits of the oil and gas companies being recorded in billions of dollars.

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us or fax on 020 8801 9543 or e-mail to rebuilding@workers.org.uk

EUOTRASH**The latest from Brussels****Bulgaria+Romania+EU=pay cuts**

BULGARIA AND Romania join the EU next year. There is debate about whether people from those countries should be allowed to work in Britain immediately.

Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary, thinks the government should allow it. He said, "You cannot stop Romanians and Bulgarians from coming to the UK." Even the CBI called for a pause before allowing more workers into Britain, because the present influx is putting "enormous pressure" on social services.

Neither acknowledges that the free movement of labour is a basic part of EU law which cuts indigenous workers' wages and conditions. Workers see the effect in their pay packets; all research on the subject backs that view too.

Don't bother to comment

THE EUROPEAN Commission is starting to send its proposals for EU laws directly to national parliaments for comment – but it says that it will not review any of its proposals even if the parliaments oppose them.

Our law in their hands

THE GOVERNMENT plans to abandon Britain's national veto over policing, courts and criminal laws. The Finnish presidency of the EU wants to discuss how police and judicial cooperation issues could be decided by majority vote. Geoff Hoon, the Europe minister, has refused to rule this out, saying that one consequence of the discussion "could be the application of qualified majority voting to some part of EU police and judicial cooperation". Hoon is ignoring his government's 2003 White Paper, which said, "We will insist that unanimity remains for ... key areas of criminal procedural law."

Terror blackmail

EU JUSTICE Commissioner Franco Frattini has used the terrorist threat to call on member states to give up their veto over home affairs, warning, "Shall we just sit around and wait for the next European terrorist bombs?" However Danish justice minister, Lene Espersen, insisted, "I would rather have that things take time, and that the citizens are secured in their rights rather than making rushed new laws."



Unity, discipline, collectivity: Whipps Cross workers on strike during July

Photo: Workers

Victory close at Whipps X

THE ONGOING Unison dispute at Whipps Cross Hospital, North East London, now enters a new stage. After eight days of hugely effective strike action, negotiators have achieved almost 99 per cent of the union's demands. More money is on the table: higher wage rates kick in on 1 October, and significant sums of backdated wages – all of which the Initial workers were entitled to under a 2003 agreement – are available, though originally denied and resisted by the hospital trust and the contractor. The employers are reeling, battered, beaten and on the ropes.

The victory now needs to be sealed, moving from being on the offensive to consolidating the position. As the pay battle moves into this new stage the political struggle to rid Whipps Cross of the contractors and their petty bullying disciplinary regime has to be a campaigning goal of this group of low-paid workers, who have without doubt demonstrated the value of every founding principle of trade unionism – unity, discipline, collectivity.

PRIVATISATION**Portrait of a borough**

NORTH LONDON borough Enfield is reeling under the effects of privatisation.

Its leisure facilities are in doubt, including a complex that has only been open for a couple of years. Enfield Leisure Services Ltd was set up in 1999 to take over services previously run by the council. Now the shareholders, which include many of the staff, are expected to vote for its voluntary liquidation. Public swimming pools were first opened in the borough in 1903 and were an immediate success, aiding public health and hygiene and teaching children how to swim.

Meanwhile, building work on the new Oasis Academy in Enfield has been suspended while a review is carried out of spiralling costs. Steve Chalke, Baptist minister and founder of the Oasis Trust which is providing just £2 million of the £21 million required and which will be running the school when it's built, admitted that costs had increased by several million

pounds. When the school opened this September most of the Year 7 pupils were studying in temporary classrooms. Chalke said project costs could be brought back into line if cheaper materials were used.

And according to local newspaper reports an Enfield secondary head has resigned over the effects of PFI (Private Finance Initiative) on her school. Monica Cross said that Highlands, opened in 2000 as the first English secondary school built under PFI, lacked basic facilities despite the government pumping millions of pounds into it. The school was built by Equion for more than £16 million, repayable by Enfield Council over 25 years. Equion is also running the building and providing equipment.

Cross added that the sports facilities were the worst in the borough, that the food technology room could not be used for the first year because the cookers were so poor and that there was a shortage of computers. And she felt Equion charged extortionate costs such as a quote for a new staff room which was twice that put in by local builders.

NHS**Logistics battle**

THE PROVOCATIVE decision by the government to privatise NHS Logistics, the hugely successful and income generating NHS in-house agency has, in the face of government refusal to reconsider, resulted in industrial action in September.

The contract has been handed over to the German DHL distribution company with significant US private medical backers. Two strike days were called: 21 and 27 September – the latter to coincide with Blair's swansong at the Labour Party conference.

The ballot – resulting in a 72 per cent Yes vote among Unison members – is seen as members willing to resist privatisation. But the TGWU vote not to support the action is ignored. Ignored is trade union

density in NHS Logistics. Ignored also is that days before the Unison ballot recruitment leaflets in Polish were being circulated to desperately recruit Polish staff.

What appears to be a straightforward fight over privatisation should be setting alarm bells ringing in the trade unions, especially Unison. The dispute almost mirrors a dispute in 1999 at University College Hospital London, which was ruled as political and hence illegal by the House of Lords. Are the government and employers luring Unison into a trap?

Unison's other strategy, to seek a judicial review over the contract allocation and failure to consult, has been quietly dumped. Other than having a strike on the day Blair speaks there is no apparent strategy.

A set piece battle is being enacted, but the initiative is coming from the employers. It must come from the unions.

Bush raises tension over Iran

BUSH IS ratcheting up the US drive to war against Iran. Responding to a question on Iran, he said on 12 September, "It's very important for the American people to see the president try to solve problems diplomatically before resorting to military force." The word "before" implies that the one follows the other. As Charles Krauthammer noted in the WASHINGTON POST, "The signal is unmistakable. An aerial attack on Iran's nuclear facilities lies just beyond the horizon of diplomacy." Bush also said, "The world's free nations will not allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon." Not the "United Nations won't allow", but the "free nations" of the world won't allow.

As part of the war preparations, Republican members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence released a report, "Recognising Iran as a Strategic Threat", on August 23. It was not voted on or discussed by the full bipartisan committee, but the office of John Negroponte, the director of national intelligence, reviewed it before release.

The report was written by Fredrick Fleitz, a CIA operative on secondment to the US ambassador to the UN, John Bolton. Fleitz and Bolton were involved in constructing the arguments for the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. Fleitz is also writing a report about North Korea for the intelligence committee.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, a UN body, has protested to the US government over the Iran report, calling it "erroneous" and "misleading". The IAEA said that the report contained serious distortions of the agency's findings on Iran's nuclear activity. It said the report was wrong to say that Iran had enriched uranium to weapons-grade level, when the IAEA had found that it had produced only small amounts of uranium, which were far below the level necessary for weapons.

The IAEA also took "strong exception to the incorrect and misleading assertion" that the IAEA removed senior safeguards inspector Chris Charlier for "allegedly raising concerns about Iranian deception" over its programme. The IAEA went on to brand as "outrageous and dishonest" a suggestion in the report that Charlier was removed for not adhering "to an unstated IAEA policy barring IAEA officials from telling the whole truth" about Iran.

The Democrat vice-chairwoman of the committee told colleagues that the report "took a number of analytical shortcuts that present the Iran threat as more dire – and the intelligence community's assessments as more certain – than they are." Sounds familiar.

Iran says its nuclear programme is solely for power generation, but the US and British governments have accused Tehran of using it to hide a nuclear weapons programme. The US state has told the IAEA that Iran is "aggressively" trying to build nuclear weapons and that the time has come to punish Tehran with UN sanctions. However, both Russia and China have resisted the US-British effort to impose sanctions; they recognise that imposing sanctions will not bring about a peaceful solution.

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****OCTOBER**

Saturday 14 October, 7pm, Dragon Hall, Stukeley Street, London WCB 5LT.

Workers' Music Association 70th Anniversary Celebration

A celebration in speech and song, with choirs and other performers. Tickets and further information from Anne Schuman, 240 Perry Rise, Forest Hill, London SE23 2QT, annefschuman@btinternet.com

NOVEMBER

Thursday 9 November, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

Who Owns Water – Us or Them?

Drought orders all around, but floods of profits. A public meeting organised by WORKERS and the CPBML. All welcome.

ENERGY**GREEN REACTION**

THE GENERALLY tranquil countryside around Selby in Yorkshire was rudely disturbed for a week at the end of August, when hundreds of self styled "climate change activists" assembled and prepared for a day of action aimed at shutting down the mighty Drax power station.

Drax is the largest coal fired station in Europe, and supplies 7 per cent of our electricity, and is the therefore a symbolic target for the protesters, who argue that it is a massive polluter. Ironically, it is the cleanest and most efficient such station, but this cuts no ice with the "eco bullies" as local residents describe them, who are opposed to all forms of large-scale power generation, and hence industry.

Police and private security firms were deployed in a show of force not seen since the days of the miners' strike. But the protesters will be back. Like the animal rights activists they so resemble, they are obsessed and will stop at nothing. Workers cannot avoid this battle of ideas unless they wish to see scientific advance and progress consigned to history.

TAXATION**EU-enabled VAT fraud**

BBC PANORAMA says that VAT criminal fraud costs Britain £5 billion a year. The Treasury says it is under £2 billion. But that is still a vast amount of money stolen from British workers, made possible only by EU rules on tax and trade.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel's attacks on Gaza and Lebanon

THE BRUTAL Israeli blockade of Gaza's 1.3 million people continues. Since 27 June, Israeli forces have been attacking and re-occupying Gaza. They have killed more than 260 Palestinians, including 64 children and 26 women. 1,200 Palestinians have been injured. One Israeli soldier has been killed and 26 injured.

Israeli air strikes destroyed Gaza's electricity power station, so 55 per cent of power has been lost.

The Israeli government is withholding the tax revenues it takes from the people of Gaza. Other governments have been assisting the Israeli strangulation by also holding back funds. The EU has withdrawn all support since the March elections won by Hamas. The US state has pressurised Arab banks into stopping the transfer of any funds to the elected government.

But this same US state gives \$3 billion a year to Israel, so that it can arm its forces and build new illegal settlements in the illegally occupied Palestinian territories.

Lebanon

The war on Lebanon killed 1,393 people, injured 5,350 and displaced more than 1,150,000.

During the war Israeli forces used illegal weapons. The head of an Israeli Defense Force rocket unit in Lebanon said, "What we did was insane and monstrous, we covered entire towns in cluster bombs." He stated that the IDF fired around 1,800 cluster bombs, containing over 1.2 million cluster bomblets. In addition, soldiers in IDF artillery units testified that the army used phosphorus shells during the war, forbidden by international law. According to their claims, the vast majority of this explosive ordnance was fired in the final ten days of the war.

The rocket unit commander stated that Multiple Launch Rocket System platforms were heavily used. These can fire huge numbers of mostly unguided rockets designed to burst into sub-munitions at a planned altitude in order to blanket enemy army and personnel on the ground with smaller explosive rounds. They have a margin of error of as much as 1,200 metres from the intended target to the area hit.

Ehud Olmert, the Israeli PM, boasted to the Knesset's foreign affairs and defence committee, "The claim that we lost is unfounded. Half Lebanon is destroyed. Is that a loss?"

But Hezbollah too committed war crimes by deliberately targeting Israeli civilians. During the month-long conflict, Hezbollah fired nearly 4,000 rockets into northern Israel, killing 43 civilians, seriously injuring 33 others and forcing hundreds of thousands of civilians to take refuge in shelters or flee. Hezbollah argued that its rocket attacks were a reprisal for Israeli attacks on civilians in Lebanon and were aimed at stopping such attacks. But international law forbids the targeting of civilians and reprisals.

Blair

Blair's inflexible opposition to calling for a ceasefire in Lebanon wrecked Britain's declining reputation in the Middle East and destroyed all hope that British diplomacy could help broker a peace in the Middle East. It also significantly weakened his position here; opposing a ceasefire was so obviously unpopular that eight junior ministers resigned. Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells has now admitted that an earlier call for a ceasefire "might have worked".

MP Frank Field has called for a debate of the T&GWU, has called for an debate from a working class and

Let's have a working c

THE GOVERNMENT forecast that there would be 15,000 immigrants from Eastern Europe in the year after their entry to the European Union on 1 January 2004. The actual number was 300,000, followed by another 300,000 in 2005. Due to the increased supply of labour, wages in several unskilled and low-skilled job sectors have fallen, hitting the indigenous working class. The extra demand for housing has forced prices and rents ever higher, and in many cities students now find it almost impossible to get part-time jobs to help them through college.

Consequently, three-quarters of the population now wants far stricter limits on immigrant numbers, according to an Ipsos MORI poll carried out on behalf of the SUNDAY TIMES between 11 and 13 August: 63 per cent say immigration laws should be "much tougher", up from 58 per cent 18 months ago, while a further 11 per cent say there should be no more immigration. 77 per cent think the government should set a strict limit on the number of immigrants allowed into Britain each year. Just 14 per cent of people strongly agree that immigration is "generally good" for Britain, with double that number taking the opposite view.

Incidentally, the same poll also revealed widespread impatience with Tony Blair, with almost half of the nearly 1,000 people questioned believing that he should resign immediately.

This popular pressure against unlimited and uncontrolled immigration may force the government to impose limits on migrants from Romania and Bulgaria when the two countries join the EU in 1 January. The government predicts that 350,000 Romanians will come to Britain next year. Alistair Darling, the Trade and Industry Secretary, told the BBC that migration would be "properly controlled". Home Secretary John Reid said, "I don't believe in the free movement of labour: I believe the situation should be managed. You hear the same from ethnic minorities. There's nothing racist about it." But the Home Office insists that no final decision has been made and the Foreign Office is lobbying hard for no limits to be introduced.

Whose decision is it?

The point is, who decides? In a democracy, the majority should decide, even if some think they are wrong. What does it say about Britain, if the government imposes its view, against the clearly expressed wishes of the majority of the British people?

Immigration is and always has been a mechanism for depressing wages and undermining working class organisation. That is why the government and the CBI have declared that immigration is a good thing. To its shame, the TUC has endorsed their sentiments despite unemployment approaching 2 million and the decline in average earnings, including bonuses (National Office of Statistics June 2006).

And removing skilled labour from other economies does nothing for the development of those nations denuded of those skills; nor does it assist in the development of an organised working class in those countries. In the past 12 months both the South African Health Minister and the Pakistani ambassador to Britain have put in pleas to Britain to stop seizing their nurses and computer programmers respectively. Their polite requests have been ignored.

debate on immigration. Jack Dromey, Deputy General Secretary
 amnesty for illegal immigrants. Here's a contribution to that
 trade union perspective...

Class debate on immigration



Photo: John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk

Hundreds of young Polish migrant workers protesting at their working conditions at Briery Farm, Leominster, Herefordshire this summer in a "Stop exploitation picket" at S & A Produce, which supplies a third of all strawberries sold in Britain.

The West Indian immigrants who came here in the fifties and sixties were invited to take the low-paid jobs that British workers could not afford to take. This helped to maintain the low wages of those jobs, although to the credit of the unions, these workers did become organised. The immigrants from the Indian subcontinent who came to fill jobs in the textile industry were by and large confined to the lower-paid jobs. Sometimes unions such as the Knitwear and Hosiery Workers Union, as it was then, would insist that highly skilled knitting jobs be ring-fenced for British workers in order to maintain wage rates while lower-paid, less skilled jobs would be reserved for immigrants who would be outside the union. This is history – workers' defence of their skills and livelihood in a bad situation.

There has always been a relationship between immigration and wage rates. Today, that relationship is no different but

much more critical. Our borders are open, immigration is on a gigantic scale and we face an influx of cheap Romanian and Bulgarian labour from January 2007.

Better life?

Of course migrants aspire to a better life, but they should fight for it in their own country – or how will it ever make progress. Poland's economy, for example, is being hamstrung by a shortage of workers. Even drafting in convicts to do essential work is not plugging the gap. And the situation in some African countries is even more dire.

Young men who abandon their country make things worse, not better. And we in Britain need to fight for progress here.

Further, British working people should not be cast as racists or against people from other nations. The question of training our own people is fundamental.

Employers moan at the lack of skills –

quite understandably – but seek the cheap way forward. The same is occurring in the public sector. For example, local government will sponsor overseas workers to gain British recognised qualifications – running courses in London for Australian, New Zealand and South African teachers to boost their qualifications to British standards while completely failing to produce courses that could raise Londoners with qualifications just short of the required level.

People who squeak that racism is the core of the opposition to an unfettered movement of labour need to look at some of the consequences. White teachers from Commonwealth countries get preference over mature Londoners (black and white) who would otherwise be fast-tracked into teaching. Some of the inner London

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boroughs have unemployment levels (mainly black people) of over 8 per cent, yet jobs are going to EU migrants (mainly white). What can be more racist in our context than denying someone indigenous work by importing overseas labour?

Here are a few ideas to throw into the debate about what should be done:

1. Restrict the free movement of labour to Britain from Romania and Bulgaria if these countries join the EU on 1 January. Better still, don't let them join.

2. Control the export of capital. Because of the deliberately engineered skills shortage – abolition of apprenticeship, etc – manufacturing employers are threatening to move production abroad to Eastern Europe or China if their workforce refuses to accept Polish, Lithuanian or other East European skilled workers whom they want to employ on the National Minimum Wage instead of the skilled rate. How might we deal with this?

Well, one way would be to put in place controls on the export of capital to prevent them carrying out their threat. We could then insist that all immigrant workers require work permits, which would only be issued if the employers agreed to take on and train local workers to replace immigrant labour when they qualified or became indentured, and on condition that the employer paid the rate for the job. Government funds could assist this training. The immigrant labour would then be required to leave the country when this process was complete.

3. Prove no one can be recruited here. In the case of unskilled immigrant labour,

“People smugglers, gangsters and gang masters, and the new employment agencies are the new slave traders...”

perhaps the work permits would only be issued after the employer could prove that it had exhausted all means of local recruitment including substantially increasing pay. The employer would be required to pay the immigrant labour the highest rate of pay on which it had failed to recruit local labour.

The immigrant labour contracts would be limited to a defined duration when the employer would be forced to try and recruit local labour again. If the employer is contracted to a public service, the contract would be terminated if the employer failed to recruit local non-immigrant labour on the second attempt. Immigrant labour would be required to leave the country at the end of any work permit unless it was proven that it was impossible to recruit local labour on established rates of pay, in which case they could stay as British citizens and British workers.

4. Secure our borders. The concept of an amnesty for illegal immigrants is foolish if we don't have control over our own borders, as it would simply be followed by another wave of immigration. The first step must be to secure and control our borders. Every sovereign country has the right to know and control who comes in and who

goes out of the country. Then maybe we should tackle the problem for what it is – 21st century slavery.

If a ship repair yard employer on Tyneside brings in a Polish workforce on the National Minimum Wage rather than the rate for the job, houses them in cabins inside the yard, and rotates them every ten weeks for a new workforce to prevent unionisation, that's slavery. People smugglers, gangsters and gang masters, and the new breed of employment agencies are the new slave traders, and illegal immigrants working in sweatshop conditions are the new slaves.

Let's outlaw new slavery in all its forms with punitive sentences appropriate to slavery. Any employer paying below the National Minimum Wage should be treated similarly. After this, we could put the illegal immigrants to the same test as skilled or unskilled immigrants referred to above. Those who choose not to work, or are involved in the black market or crime to survive, will have to leave the country.

Basic ideas to protect Britain

These are very basic ideas designed to protect British manufacturing, British workers and wage rates. To secure our borders we should bring British troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan to help create a border, security and customs force along with existing agencies and maybe a strong unit to enforce anti-slavery and immigration laws. That surely should be within the power of a sovereign state.

Unfortunately, all of this would be incompatible with EU laws and policy. In fact, the expanded EU was solely about free movement of labour and capital to help capitalism survive. This means that the British parliament has no real control over issues such as immigration and so the first step to controlling it would have to be withdrawal from the European Union.

The notion, shared by those on the ultra left through to the leadership of the TUC, that everyone in the world has a right to come here to work must be quashed: it is anti working class. If we decide to do these necessary things, we decide to take charge of the state ourselves as a class.

Bring out your badges

Do you have any old labour movement and political badges in odd containers and drawers? Put them to good use and send them to the CPBML – we'll sell them at labour movement events during the year to raise money for the Party. Please send them to:

Badges
78 Seymour Avenue
London N17 9EB

Bills up, dividends up, and the worst polluters in Britain. It's time to bring the water companies back into our control...

The great water robbery

WATER COMPANIES in Britain are robbing the people, depriving them of the use of water, polluting it, and failing to provide security of supply for the future. They are losing 3.6 billion litres every day through leaks. In 2001, Thames Water lost 181 million gallons a day; it is now losing even more – 241 million gallons a day, 30 per cent of its water. It is imposing hosepipe bans on 14 million homes, and threatening standpipes next year, having just avoided one this summer.

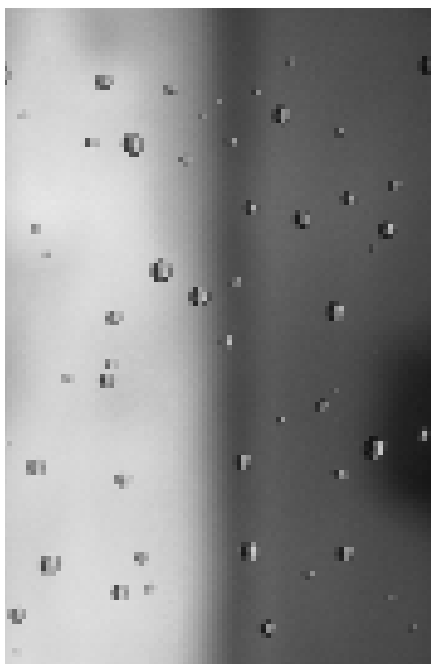
The industry regulator Ofwat decided not to fine Thames for its failure, for the fourth year in a row, to reduce leaks as agreed. This is no surprise, since the firm, Halcrow Management Science, which produced the “independent” report into its failings, works for Thames. Ofwat eased the company's leakage targets for the next two years and is also allowing all the water companies to raise their prices by 4.2 per cent on top of inflation.

Thames is responsible for more incidents of industrial pollution than any other private sector company. This includes sewage spills at Swindon, Cholsey and Stevenage. Severn Trent and Southern Water also figure in the top ten polluters.

Pollution

The water sector is responsible for more than a quarter of all serious industrial pollution incidents, making it the worst polluting sector of British business. The same three companies also face huge fines for missing agreed target times for rectifying supply interruptions and sewer flooding and for responding to complaints and billing enquiries. Severn Trent has to pay more than £110,000 to 5,000 families in North Staffordshire when taps dried up from 2 to 4 July.

Average water bills have more than doubled since privatisation. Severn Trent's profits rose by 18 per cent last year, United Utilities by 21 per cent and Anglian Water's trebled to £2 billion. Thames Water wants to raise prices by 24 per cent by 2010, on top of its 18.3 per cent rise from April 2005, and the 4.4 per cent rise in April this year, to add to its



bumper pre-tax profits (up 31 per cent to £346.5 million last year).

It paid a record £216 million in dividends to its owner, Germany's RWE, 52 per cent up on the previous year, while it spent just £181 million on fixing leaky pipes. RWE's Chief Executive Officer got £8.1 million last year. Between them, the five-man board of RWE get £24 million every year. Since 2000, it has taken £800 million in dividends. Just from 1990 to 1996, its dividends totalled £7 billion. RWE's profits rose to 4.1 billion euros for the six months to June, up from 3.5 billion a year earlier.

RWE is trying to sell Thames for £7 billion. Private equity firms, like the buyout specialists Terra Firma and 3i, are interested. They have no industry experience.

The DAILY EXPRESS said in an editorial in 2003, “The privatized water companies knew that their network was wearing out. They have had years in which to set aside money to pay for the work but it seems that, instead of doing so, they preferred to reward their shareholders and enrich their directors.”

The Institution of Civil Engineers says

that Britain must invest in new water resources, including reservoirs, to guarantee long-term security of supply. Since privatisation in 1989, there has been little investment in new reservoirs. We need to invest in new and upgraded infrastructure, in research and development for innovative alternatives e.g. improving capacity and quality for recycled water and transferring water between regions through a National Water Grid.

Privatising the rain

In the past ten years, three giant global corporations, France's Suez and Vivendi Environnement, and Thames, have seized control over the water supplied to almost 300 million people in every continent. Vivendi increased its water revenue from \$5 billion in 1990 to over \$12 billion by 2002, RWE from \$25 million in 1990 to \$2.5 billion in 2002.

What are the results? These companies claim to be “passionate, caring and reliable”, as one company states, yet they push for higher rate increases, frequently fail to meet their commitments and abandon a waterworks if they are not making enough money. As Suez's Chief Executive Officer said, “Water is an efficient product. It is a product which normally would be free, and our job is to sell it.” In France, charges for privatised water services are 13 per cent higher than for public services.

For two months in 1998, after privatisation, more than three million residents of Sydney were forced to boil their drinking water to kill parasites. Fifteen months after the city of Adelaide signed a contract turning over its waterworks to Thames Water and Vivendi, the city was engulfed in a powerful sewage smell, “the big pong”.

New Jersey, Buenos Aires, Bogota, Manila and Jakarta have all experienced problems after privatisation. In 1996 Hamilton in Canada experienced its worst

Continued on page 10



Photo: Workers

Continued from page 9

sewage spill ever, when 48 million gallons of untreated human waste, heavy metals and chemicals flooded into Lake Ontario. Atlanta, Georgia, gave control over its water to Suez five years ago, and quality and service dropped. The city returned control to the public utility.

In Cochabamba, Bolivia, the water bills doubled after Aguas del Tunari, a Bechtel subsidiary, took control of the city's waterworks in 1999. The contract allowed the company to close down people's private wells unless they paid Aguas del Tunari for the water. Union leader Oscar Olivera said, "They wanted to privatise the rain." The city's people organised a referendum. Most voted to end the contract and forced Bechtel out of the country. Similarly, in 2000 the people

of Grenoble succeeded in returning their water and sewage system to public control.

In Iraq, the US state put Bechtel in charge of rebuilding the water and sewage systems. But, as the US Agency for International Development reported, "Baghdad's three sewage treatment plants, which together comprise three-quarters of the nation's sewage treatment capacity, are inoperable, allowing the waste from 3.8 million people to flow untreated directly into the Tigris River." A UN survey in May 2004 found that 80 per cent of families living in rural areas had no safe water. Only 64 of 249 planned water projects have been completed.

South Africa

In 1999, South Africa initiated five water privatisation programmes, aiming to make people pay the full cost of having running

water in their homes. As Nelson Mandela had said, "Privatisation is the fundamental policy of our government. Call me a Thatcherite, if you will." Consequently, ten million South Africans had their water cut off for various periods, forcing people to get water from polluted rivers and lakes, leading to South Africa's worst outbreak of cholera. More than 140,000 people were infected and 265 died.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) says that 98 per cent of whites, but only 27 per cent of blacks, had access to clean water in their homes in March 2001 – a smaller proportion of the population than in 1994. In rural areas, only 2 per cent of blacks had indoor plumbing. Two million people have been evicted for not paying utility bills. Many poor families pay 30 per cent of their income for water. Despite South

Africa's rating by the United Nations Development Index as a middle-to-upper-income country, one child in 22 dies before reaching the age of one, often from diarrhoea caused by poor water. The 13 per cent of South Africans in the white minority is 18th on the Human Development Index, equal to New Zealand. The black majority is 118th, in line with Bolivia. Of all the countries in the world, only Guatemala has a wider gap between rich and poor.

In 2004, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development concluded its study of privatisations in sub-Saharan Africa, "profit-maximizing behaviour has led privatised companies to keep investments below the necessary levels, with the result that rural communities and the urban poor were further marginalised."

Water empires

The European Commission has been driving privatisation of all our utilities, and its new EU-wide water regulations should mean fat new contracts for the water giants. Since 1998, Vivendi and Suez, backed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, have secured water concessions in at least 23 major cities and districts in Eastern Europe.

The big three are also moving into the

'The European Commission's new water regulations should mean fat new contracts for the water giants'

USA, buying its largest private water utility companies. They have increased their lobbying and federal election campaign spending. In Washington, they have already secured beneficial tax law changes and are now trying to persuade Congress to pass laws that would force cash-strapped municipal governments to privatise their waterworks in exchange for federal grants and loans. It is estimated that US cities will need \$300 billion over the next two decades just to maintain their aging waterworks.

Water, like air, is a necessity of human life. It must not be treated as what Fortune magazine calls, "One of the world's great business opportunities. It promises to be to the 21st century what oil was to the 20th: a precious commodity that determines the wealth of nations." By 2002, the six most globally active water companies ran drinking water distribution networks in at least 56

countries, up from 12 in 1990. Yet private companies still run only about 5 per cent of the world's waterworks.

In 1989, Blair wrote, "The major utilities – gas, water, electricity and the oil, postal and telecommunications networks – are uniquely important to the national economy. Their operations underpin the rest of industry. We believe that the great utilities must be treated as public services and should be owned by the public – by the community as a whole."

Public utilities offer better, cheaper and fairer water services than private firms. Countries need to keep water in public hands, under democratic control.

Join the debate on water...

PUBLIC MEETING

Who Owns Water – Us or Them?

Thursday 9 November, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

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BADGE OFFER – Nationalise water. Reclaim our most vital resource!

BRITISH WATER supplies are in the hands of foreign owned monopoly companies who are enjoying a cash bonanza while our infrastructure crumbles. If the ridiculously high profits made by these companies in the last few years had been channelled into developing a national water grid and other infrastructure projects we would no longer be facing a water shortage.

As it stands, if the winter of 06/07 has the same low rainfall in the South East as it did last year, then by next summer much of SE England will be using standpipes.

Severn Water, for example, has seen an 18 per cent rise in profits as complaints against the company rose by 55 per cent and it was investigated for providing false data to OFWAT. And since it acquired Thames Water in 2000, RWE (its German parent company) has extracted around £1 billion pounds in dividends to shareholders!

FIGHT BACK with a Nationalise Water! badge, available from Bellman Books, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 8EB, price 50p each, or £4 for 10. Please make cheques payable to "WORKERS".



Exposing the use of GM crop technology for capitalist priorities class to be “more inclusive” towards the world’s agricultural wo

GM – science for development

AS PART OF the annual Brighton festival this summer the local Institute for Development Studies (IDS), based at Sussex University, staged a lecture about the need to “democratise” genetic modification (GM) technologies, so as to ensure the differing needs of farmers in different regions of the world are given priority over the extraction of profit through capitalist ownership and control of the technology.

It’s an important area for discussion, and one singularly neglected in Britain, where the weight of public discussion seems to be about how nobody at all wants GM crops. In fact, in developing countries scientists and farmers look to GM crops as holding enormous possibilities for feeding their people. Cuba, for example, is a pioneer in the genetic modification of tropical crops.

The lecturers from the Sussex institute included an African professor who criticised the control of technologies by corporations and the fact that farmers and academics from the African continent are rarely involved in running research projects to apply GM technologies in their region.

Slow progress

Indeed, in a series of briefing papers accompanying the lecture, the IDS points out that the current domination of capital in this crucial area of technology will lead to a situation where there is “...slow progress in those GM crops that enable poor countries to be self-sufficient in food; advances directed at crop quality management rather than drought tolerance or yield enhancement; emphasis on innovations that save labour costs, rather than those which create productive employment...”. Areas of the world like the African continent often have completely different priorities and needs from technology than those existing in Britain and Europe, and are not served by these trends.

The briefings also point out that “...international regulatory regimes [i.e. IMF and World Bank and the legal system of intellectual property rights] frequently

constrain countries fashioning their own responses suited to their own circumstances, needs and priorities”.

Falling short

While all these points of criticism of the current political context of GM technologies are valid and welcome, the IDS analysis falls short in its proposals of how to address this crucial area of scientific progress. For example, during the lecture, and in the briefing series, there was much talk of ideas such as “fostering a genuinely inclusionary biotechnology policy and regulation...” through the use of methods like “citizens’ juries” and the “effective enforcement of competition and anti-trust laws”. But who has the power to impose such conditions on the big capitalist corporations?

Capitalist hegemony

Such vague idealist strategies add up to an acceptance of capitalist control of the development of this area of technology and assume that “globalisation” is incontestable and impossible to challenge. Indeed, throughout the lecture all the lecturers used the term “globalisation” uncritically.

But the whole concept of globalisation is questionable and “politicised” in itself. As one commentator has pointed out there is, rather, a need to counter the “...defeatist acceptance of inexorable global capital hegemony”.

In practice, the very existence of globalisation is also highly questionable. For instance, it is estimated that 85 per cent of industrial output is produced by domestic corporations in a single geographic location.

And governments do not have to accept the imposition of corporate priorities in this, and many other important areas, because of an increasing “powerlessness” in the face of global capital. As a commentator put it simply, “Money can flee to tax havens and to offshore banking centres only if countries allow it to do so.” And there are other models for development.

The contradictory ideas of the IDS,



Corporations are not all-powerful. In areas of medical research, such as the Human Genome Project. The project, which spanned three continents, has made significant progress, scientists in Europe and the US have worked closely with humans. Embryonic stem cells capable of giving rise to all cell types were first produced at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Centre, in Cambridge, which

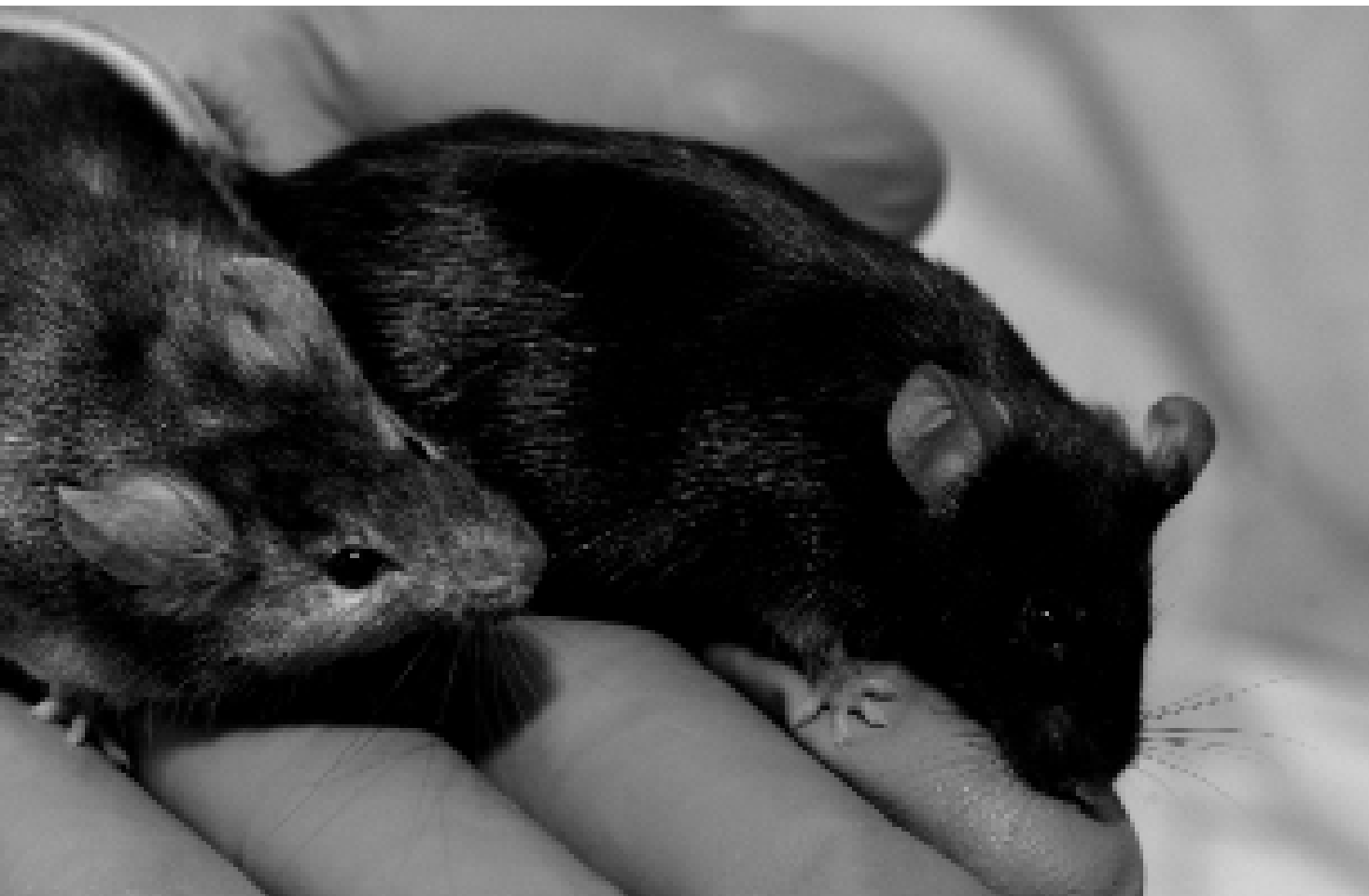
and most importantly the workers within the institute, and their acceptance of its vague and ineffectual proposals, stand in sharp comparison with New Labour.

Constantly claiming that it can do nothing to protect workers in our manufacturing industries in the face of corporate moves to “outsource” to cheaper labour in other countries, they happily go on NEWS AT 10 to insist they will do “everything they can to maintain viable production in this country”.

The alternative

There are different ways to approach scientific developments like GM technologies. Instead of studying the

of exploitation is a necessary task – but calls for the capitalist workers will not bring change...



medical research, scientists have successfully challenged the private control of genetic research, most famously through the Human Genome Project, which made the entire sequence of the human genome publicly accessible for free. Most recently, in a move which should accelerate medical research, the UK government has given its backing for the Knockout Mouse Project, in which mice can be designed to have “knocked out” (or deleted) one of the 2,000 genes they share with humans. The mice resulting from this work will be made available free to researchers around the globe. Much of the work will be done at Britain’s groundbreaking Wellcome Trust Centre for Gene Editing, where a third of the human genome was sequenced. Pictured: left, mouse with a gene for hair colour knocked out; right, normal mouse.

proposals from IDS, workers in this field could look to the practice of countries such as Venezuela and Cuba in resisting the imposition of “free trade” as the only method of developing technology and the industrial infrastructure this requires.

For instance, Cuba has developed what are widely recognised as the best health and education systems in the world, not through the imposition of the ideas of a dictatorial leader, but through the active engagement of workers and the whole population of the island in this development.

The Cubans have done this within a framework of socialism based on national independence and resistance to US-led

efforts, like the North American Free Trade Agreement and the 40-year illegal blockade. And Cuba also has the best biotechnology in Latin America.

Why then could agricultural workers, academics and governments in so-called “third world” countries not do the same as well – that is, resist the imposition of free trade as a pre-requisite for the development of GM technology which meets their requirements? There is no need to fear the large corporations patent lawyers – Argentina has shown that defiance of international capitalism, by refusing to pay off a proportion of its IMF debt, has not led to death and destruction.

Indeed, it would be possible, as the Cubans and Venezuelans are doing in areas like health, education and oil production, to offer mutual support and technology transfer between countries in regions with similar agricultural needs, without the imposition of privatisation or free trade.

There is no track record of globalisation providing for the needs of workers across the world, but there is plenty more evidence that national sovereignty, working class control, mutual respect and economic support has benefited millions of workers across the world. Let us do our bit by working for independence and control here in Britain.

With British troops once again mired in Afghanistan, WORKERS go to conflict...

Britain's imperial obsession with Afghanistan

This article was originally published in **THE WORKER** in 1988. At the time Britain and the US were again interfering in Afghanistan, supporting the Mujahedin insurgents operating from Pakistan. This was to undermine Afghanistan's reforming government, which was supported by the Soviet Union. Soviet forces left in 1989 and by 1992, Mujahedin guerrillas and other Islamic rebels moved in on Kabul and ousted President Najibullah. An Islamic republic was established, which fell apart amid violent warfare and factional squabbling.

THE VICTORIAN British ruling class regarded India as the jewel in the crown of the Empire, to be guarded at all costs. The dangerous rival was Russia and the weak frontier was Afghanistan. Subjection of the Afghans was therefore a prime objective of the British government in India. Friendship with them proved difficult, however, as they were a group of fighting tribes who had lived for centuries despoiling the traders through the Khyber Pass.

At the beginning of the 18th century the English and Russian frontiers were separated by 4,000 miles, reduced to 2,000 in the nineteenth by the British annexation of Bengal. When the Russians in their turn began to advance the frontier, the British started the First Afghan War. At the demand of the East India Company, an army led by General Elphinstone occupied Kabul in 1837. In 1841 there was an uprising so the General agreed with the Afghans to evacuate the town and go back



The same mistakes, time after time: Royal Marines of 45 Commando disembark from Chinook helicopters of 27 Squadron Royal Air Force at Bagram airbase Afghanistan in July 2002 in what was then said to be the last planned British operation in Afghanistan.

to British India under safe conduct. The Afghans proved treacherous, attacked the British force of 4,500 men and killed or captured everyone except a doctor who escaped to the fort of Jellalabad near the entrance to the Khyber Pass in January 1842. After a display of great bravery by Indian and British troops defending Jellalabad, a fresh British force under General Pollock advanced into Afghanistan, defeated the Afghans and occupied Kabul. The historian Mowatt wrote, "After thus indicating the prestige of the British Empire, the East India

Company recognised the independence of Afghanistan and evacuated the country." The nightmare of the British was always that the Russians would make friends with the Afghans because it was believed almost impossible for them to scale the great mountain wall of the Hindu Kush if the Afghans were hostile to them.

In 1878 the nightmare came true when the Amir invited a mission of Russian officers to reside in Kabul. The British Government in India demanded the same right and that the Amir should conduct his foreign relations only through the

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Government of India. War followed and the Amir was compelled to accept these terms in 1879. An officer of the Political Department was sent to Kabul and on 3 September he and his escort of 75 Indian soldiers were killed.

For the second time the Afghans had shown their contempt for the British so now a lesson had to be taught. General Roberts, later of Boer War fame, marched at the head of 7000 Indian and British troops through the Kuram valley to Kabul, but meanwhile Governor Burrows had been defeated by the Afghans at Kandahar. At all costs the legend of British invincibility had to be retained in order to hold down India, so Roberts was despatched with thousands of troops, horses, mules, camels and guns to march to Kandahar 313 miles away. They did this very quickly, met Ayub Khan and routed his Afghan army.

Repulsive

A new Amir was chosen by Britain and the original terms were imposed on him with a minimum of internal authority as all external authority belonged to the British. British power had been vindicated, Russian influence expelled and rifles and money were given to the ruler Abdurrahman to keep down the people or, as the British expressed it, "to keep law and order." One of the most repulsive aspects of these invasions was the war fever in Britain, and particularly amongst the radicals in the industrial towns. A similar phenomenon can be observed today in the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and the National Union of Mineworkers. It is marvellous to behold how belligerent men past calling-up age become.

In 2006: those trade unionists so keen to send troops to the Middle East, using the specious argument that some trade unionists from Iraq wanted them there, have gone quiet now that larger numbers of British soldiers are coming home in boxes. There is, however, little serious trade union opposition to the current US-British wars of occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq.

WHAT'S THE PARTY?

We in the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), and others who want to see a change in the social system we live under, aspire to a society run in such a way as to provide for the needs, and the desires, of working people, not the needs and desires of those who live by the work of others. These latter people we call capitalists and the system they have created we call capitalism. We don't just aspire to change it, we work to achieve that change.

We object to capitalism not because it is unfair and unkind, although it has taken those vices and made virtues out of them. We object because it does not work. It cannot feed everyone, or house them, or provide work for them. We need, and will work to create a system that can.

We object to capitalism not because it is opposed to terrorism; in fact it helped create it. We object because it cannot, or will not, get rid of it. To destroy terrorism you'd have to destroy capitalism, the supporter of the anti-progress forces which lean on terror to survive. We'd have to wait a long time for that.

We object to capitalism not because it says it opposes division in society; it creates both. We object because it has assiduously created immigration to divide workers here, and now wants to take that a dangerous step further, by institutionalising religious difference into division via 'faith' schools (actually a contradiction in terms).

Capitalism may be all the nasty things well-meaning citizens say it is. But that's not why we workers must destroy it. We must destroy it because it cannot provide for our futures, our children's futures. We must build our own future, and stop complaining about the mess created in our name.

Time will pass, and just as certainly, change will come. The only constant thing in life is change. Just as new growth replaces decay in the natural world, this foreign body in our lives, the foreign body we call capitalism, will have to be replaced by the new, by the forces of the future, building for themselves and theirs, and not for the few. We can work together to make the time for that oh-so-overdue change come all the closer, all the quicker.

Step aside, Capital. It's our turn now.

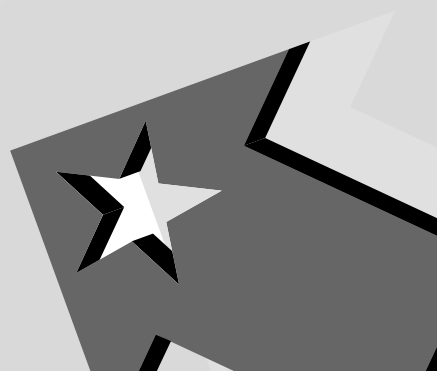
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Back to Front – Forwards or backwards?

‘The sterility of debate at the TUC, the dead hand of control, the stage-managed events, will only be surpassed by the forthcoming Labour Party Conference in Manchester’

THE 138TH TRADES Union Congress has concluded, and workers should ask themselves in which direction – backwards or forwards – 19th century or 21st century – are we moving? Fewer unions, fewer members, fewer delegates and yet supposedly the unions have the ear, the deaf ear, of government. Government displays itself as the school yard tantrums of Blair, Brown and other self-promoting, largely ex-union, officials wanting to aspire to Downing Street.

The greatest political mistake of the trade unions and labour movement was the establishment of the Labour Party, and for the TUC to continue to describe itself as the “Parliament” of the working class reinforces that stupidity. When Clare Short, soon to be an ex-MP, coincidentally called for a “hung parliament”, she unintentionally saved the day and at least raised a wry smile on many delegates’ faces.

The sterility of debate, the dead hand of control, the stage-managed events, despite the orchestrated walkout by the RMT and their silly Trotskyite hangers-on, will only be surpassed by the forthcoming Labour Party Conference in Manchester.

If the trade unions invite Blair and Brown to address them, more fool them, but once there they should be heard out in total silence – the same as the Health Secretary received at the recent Unison Health Conference. And though policies passed, as in the previous 138 years, were pious, correct and needy, it remains to be seen whether words match up to deeds – not just further Congress reports.

The most significant decision, and one which will be critical for the next general election, was the establishment of the ‘NHS Together’ campaign. For the

first time all health unions, be they TUC or non-TUC, have come together. This provides the organising core for uniting all the strands of union, community, professional, and public – bringing together our fears, concerns, aspirations and expectations for the health of every individual worker.

It will be health, pensions, work, wages, employment which destroys this government – not its bloody adventurism in far-off lands.

Brown promises more of Blairism. Blair recognises that Brown has been the economic architect of his government. All posturing of MPs or trade union sound-bites about the fourth term miss the point that the working class voice and working class aspirations are not on the agenda. Since 1979 an estimated £300 millions of trade unionists’ funds has gone to the Labour Party, and millions of workers must be scratching their heads in confusion over the returns.

As in 1868 the TUC faces the same dilemma: is it possible to reform capitalism? The answer was NO in 1868 and it is NO in 2006.

Workers should ask themselves: is the so-called marketisation of health, housing, education, pensions or public services what they want? Is the mercenary role of Britain in the world – war on nearly every continent – what they want? Do we want the further massive undermining of wages and employment by enforced EU migration? Answer ‘NO’ and the terminal decline of the unions’ relationship with the Labour Party accelerates.

We need to re-assert control of our unions and our interests as a class; in doing so we have a world to win for ourselves.

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