

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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After Iraq...

Blair declares WAR on public services



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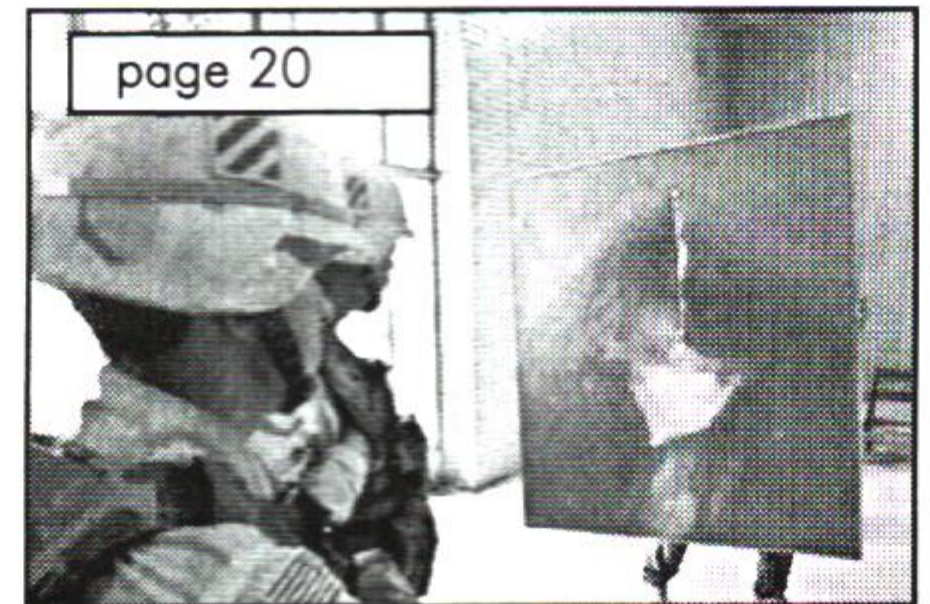
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The deadline for articles for issue 113 is May 15th

Nightmare on Downing Street

Time to reclaim the Labour Party

The Blair government faced its worst nightmare in the immediate run up to the war with Iraq. According to the Guardian revelations, Blair, Straw, Blunkett, and others in the Cabinet were on the verge of resigning if the Commons vote went against them.

In an interview Blunkett recalled: "Everyone believed, in the run-up to that vote, that Tony had put his premiership on the line and those who are very close to him would go down with him." Straw said: "The projected voting figures were very serious ... I knew there would be a point at which Tony would resign and I would resign as well."

The defence secretary, Geoff Hoon warned his US counterpart, Donald Rumsfeld, about the possible consequences of the vote. He told the Guardian: "I had a long conversation with him, warning him that if the vote went wrong we might not be able to be there... The US came to understand it was about us gambling just about everything in getting this right." He added: "If we had lost that vote, that would have been it."

The revelations show just how perilous the government's position was. At one point, Labour whips told Blair that up to 200 Labour MPs would vote against the government, and frantic last-minute efforts were made to persuade rebels back on side. With two million marching in the streets, many backbenchers finally found the courage to oppose Blair.

However, in the end, the Blairites were able to hold on by the skin of their teeth. Yet it would be a grave mistake to believe that now the war is over it will be business as usual. Nothing will ever be the same again. Blair will face opposition at each new turn.

"After a month of war, the domestic agenda is about to return with a vengeance", states the Financial Times.

The immediate issues that have given rise to so much opposition are Tory-inspired policies of foundation hospitals and university tuition fees. These elitist and regressive policies can provoke a backbench rebellion as big as, if not bigger, than that against the Iraq war.

"If these two plans are defeated by the rebels", continues the FT, "the prime minister will no longer look in control of his domestic agenda and Labour will have reverted, at least in part, to what it was before he took control."

In other words everything is set to unravel for Blairism. That is why the leadership has unleashed a witch-hunt against George Galloway. They are determined to crush all opposition and silence their critics. They have stonewalled the fire-fighters, threatening them with legislation if they do not back down. However, the harder the Blairite careerists attempt to smash criticism, the greater will be the backlash against them. Disciplinary measures and witch hunts are a sign of weakness not of strength.

Blair and Co. are determined to continue with their Tory agenda. They have bowed down before big business and



The shift to the left in the trade unions has already begun to undermine the grip of Blairism within the labour movement.

the bankers. For all their talk of the dangers of letting the Tories back in, they were the ones who were prepared to risk the fate of the Labour government to do the capitalist's bidding.

The shift to the left in the trade unions, however, has already begun to undermine the grip of Blairism within the labour movement. Many of the new left general secretaries now talk openly about the need to reclaim the Labour Party from the middle class carpetbaggers. Tony Woodley, the left candidate for general secretary of the powerful TGWU, has stated that if he wins he will convene a summit of trade union leaders to take back the party.

Given the fragile base of the Blairites, now is the time to draw up concrete plans to put this idea into effect. All it would require would be for the unions to get say 300 trade unionists to volunteer in every constituency to go in and take over the party. The trade unionists already exist in the constituencies. The unions even have the resources to pay the membership fees of every new recruit. This would be a better protest than simply cutting the unions donations to the Labour Party, putting the money to better use to sign up thousands of trade unionists to reclaim the party. The task of the new recruits would be simple enough. They would vote only for those people in the Labour Party who supported union policies. Come the time for selection of Labour candidates, on the basis of one member one vote, union-backed candidates would be democratically selected. Nothing could be easier.

Of course, this is nothing new. In the past, rightwing unions, such as the EETPU or the AEEU, ensured the selection of Blairite candidates by

sending in members to vote. That was a case of sending in careerists to hijack the party. Why not send in workers to take it back? As the saying goes, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. The party must be flooded with ordinary trade unionists seeking to change the party in the interest of working people.

Not long ago, many believed Blair and co to be unassailable, their grip on the Labour Party permanent. In frustration some left and even flirted with the idea of building an alternative outside Labour. Now it becomes clear that their grasp is slipping. They are forced to dig in with their nails to cling on. At the same time, the idea that the Blairites can be defeated by standing candidates against the Labour Party is nonsense. It is barking up the wrong tree. The Socialist Alliance, for instance, is regarded by most people as a joke, and can only muster a handful of votes. They will never succeed in a million years! Those who call for unions to disaffiliate are also wrong, and simply play into Blair's hands. After all, don't the Blairites want to break the trade union links? Just to pose the question is enough to see how false it is.

There are millions of working people who are disillusioned with the Blair government. That is why voter turnout has fallen to record lows. Many are angry after waiting 18 years for the return of a Labour government and ending up with a government little different from the Tories. But the point is not just to get angry, but to get even. With the Blairites on the back foot, trade unionists must go on the offensive in the fight for socialist policies. Reclaiming the Labour Party is the only realistic way forward. ■



by our industrial correspondent

Almost a year after firefighters tabled their claim for a pay rise to £30,000 a year, new strikes are being prepared because of the intransigence of the employers and a Labour government hellbent on attacking public services. A meeting in Brighton of 250 delegates from all 58 brigades on April 15 voted overwhelmingly to turn down a package which the union's executive had originally recommended back in March. So much by the way for the media claim that the firefighters were being led by the nose by the union's leaders. In reality the leadership is being pushed in a more militant direction by the mood of ordinary firefighters.

The deal on the table amounted to nothing new, just the same old offer of 16% over three years paid for by the cost-cutting, service-wrecking Bain proposals. These shameful proposals have now been rejected time

and again by firefighters.

The union had taken a decision to halt strike action while the war in Iraq continued. Fearing further inevitable attacks in the media, the delay in taking more action has dangers too. In any case that war is now over, and the continued deployment of large numbers of British troops in occupying Iraq must not be used as an excuse to delay action any further.

Prescott's threat to impose a settlement is still on the table. That threat, tantamount to an attempt to ban strikes in the fire service by the backdoor, must be dealt with. The firefighters continue to enjoy massive public support, but there is clearly a danger of confusion being sown in the ranks not just of workers generally but even of the firefighters themselves by long delays, and now by talk of compromise on the basis of Burchill's proposals. Under a proposal tabled last month by Frank Burchill, independent

Firefighters must strike again

chairman of the fire service's negotiating machinery, and since adopted by the FBU executive, wages would still go up 16% in three phases (against the FBU claim for a one-off 40% rise), but unlike Bain's proposals, this deal would require agreement before shifts or crewing levels were changed. The threat to make such cuts remains however. After a lengthy delay, and with no clear way forward on offer, many firefighters see this as a potential starting point for reaching an all-round acceptable compromise.

The two-to-one vote in favour of this proposal from the Executive, representing 31,859 firefighters in favour and 15,829 against, underlined the danger of confusion after seven months of conflict. Greater Manchester delegate Alan Anderson said before the special conference: "My general feeling is one of despondency. I just feel that we are coming to the end of the road and I do not think it is a very satisfactory conclusion."

At the same time the mood of a large number of firefighters is now for calling all out action. A clearly worked out timetable for strike action and appeals to other workers in transport, power etc, for solidarity action would soon bring the employers to the negotiating table. It could also place the just claim for £30K back on the agenda.

The FBU leaders need to

rally the membership with a plan to take their struggle forward. That can include proposals for negotiations, but must be based on renewed strike action.

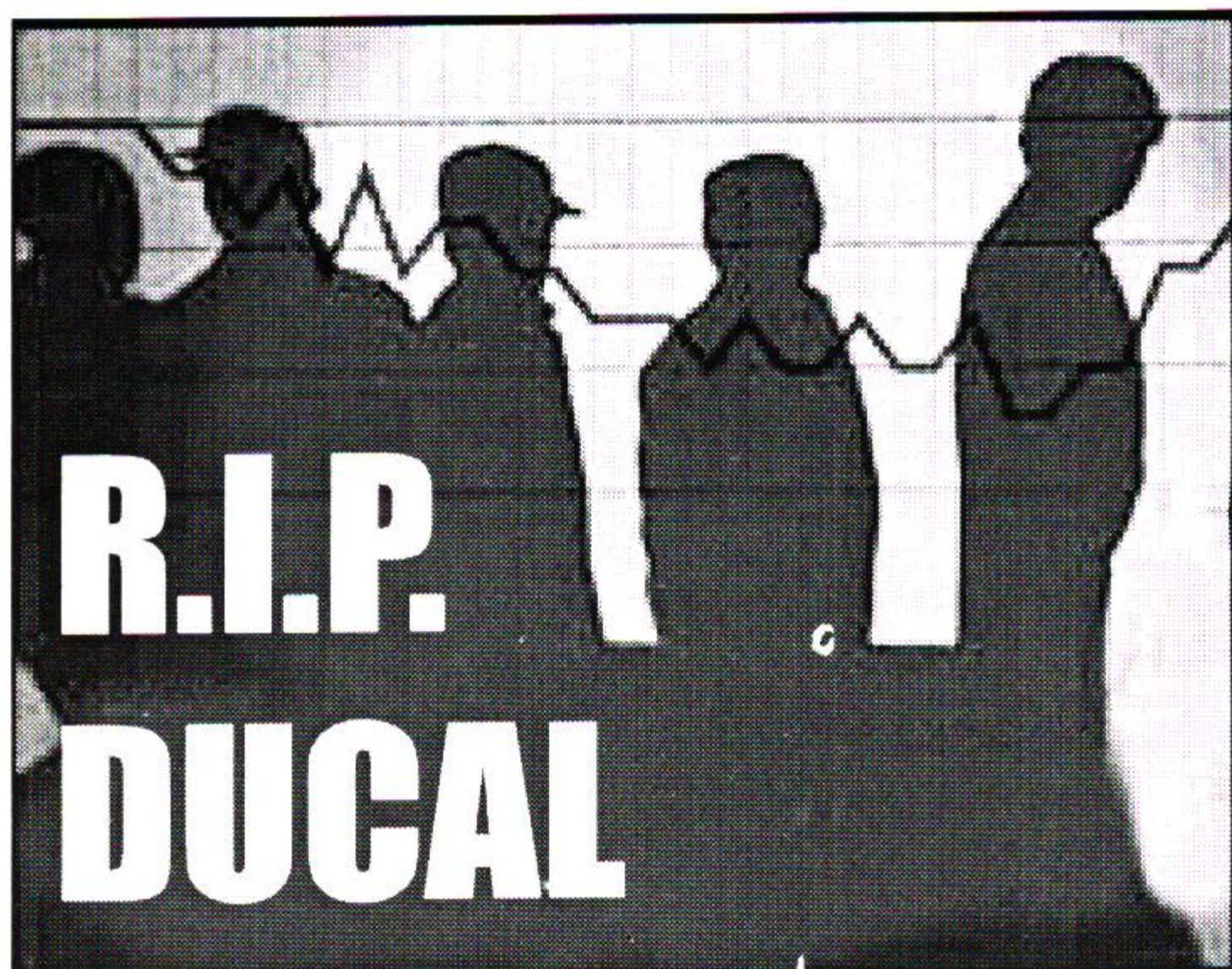
Despite the earlier unequivocal support declared by the TUC general council for the firefighters they have done almost nothing in practice. Once again they see their role as referees in the dispute trying to convince both sides to reach a compromise.

According to *The Guardian*, "Mr Gilchrist is expected to seek a further meeting with Mr Prescott and the employers, with the TUC general secretary-elect, Brendan Barber, again helping seek middle ground."

"We will be pursuing the Burchill proposals in the hope of discussing them and turning them into a revised offer," a union source said.

Marxists are not opposed to negotiations, and maybe the Burchill proposals could be "turned into a revised offer" (although 16% over three years falls unacceptably short of the original claim of £30,000 a year). However negotiations should be conducted from a position of strength. The only thing that can force the employers and above all the Blair government to negotiate seriously - i.e. to make the compromises they are always demanding of the firefighters - will be militant action. □

- For the full £30k!
- No to cost cutting, no job losses, no attacks on hours and conditions!
- For all out action!



by Stuart Knox

Founded in East London fifty-odd years ago, Ducal moved to Andover back in 1983. By 1999 - a mere four years ago - Ducal had become one of the town's major employers with 900 workers spread over 10 different factory sites producing quality pine furniture with the most modern equipment.

It was considered a market leader in Europe. The company was taken over in 2000 by Silentnight, who undertook their own "modernisation", which included shift changes.

A success story, then - a thriving, expanding, exporting, manufacturing company located in the heart of the prosperous South. But this is capitalism, so there's no fairy-tale ending. February 2002 saw 90 redundancies as the company blamed cheap imports for a poor trading year in 2001. Further job cuts followed through the year and only last month another 59 went. Boom and recession you might think. However, the laws of motion of capitalism are not "evolutionary" - a gently rhythmic breathing in and out - they are "revolutionary" and Ducal's story is boom and bust. April 4th the entire workforce, 492 in Andover and 28 in Brigend, were given 90 days notice at a meeting called by management.

"We were just dazed, nobody expected it. It was like a bombshell", commented one worker, "I was sitting with people who turned white".

According to the company statement sales plummeted from £48 million in 1998 to £26 million last year. The Ducal brand, but not the current product range, will pass to Cornwell Parker Cabinets who are also part of Silentnight. Asset-stripping? - not a bit of it! Mary Czulowski, Cornwell's managing director, explained that "remedial action had to be taken to eliminate losses and to restore profitability". The workforce have been told they have to work the entire 90 days or they will lose their redundancy payments. Capitalism has its own laws when it's a question of "remedial action" too - the staff will only get the minimum statutory redundancy package. Another law of capitalism relates to the "reserve army of labour". But if Marx's Capital is not immediately to hand, the chief executive of Andover's Chamber of Commerce, Josephine Malcolm, expressed it thus: "The Andover travel-to-work area is renowned for consistently low unemployment - usually around 0.8 percent. This rate of unemployment is unsustainably low and is bound to have a constraining effect on expansion plans for companies in Andover". □

Blairite Aliens and the continued shift left in the unions

by our industrial correspondent

Not so long ago, some on the left in the trade union movement spent hours discussing which out of two right wing candidates was the "lesser of two evils", which was the least right wing, in order to decide who to endorse, one or the other. How times have changed. Nowadays it's hard to find a bona fide right wing candidate - at least one that will admit to it. Certainly few will admit to supporting Blair. In the upcoming T&G election even (blatantly obvious) right winger Jack Dromey claims to be in opposition to the Blairites.

In the election for a new General Secretary of the 700,000 strong GMB the press are now trying to take solace in the claim that the victor Kevin Curran is 'slightly less left wing' than his opponent Paul Kenny. In reality there was no right wing candidate, with both candidates attacking the Blair leadership of the Labour Party. Curran specifically made a point of calling for the repeal of all anti-trade union legislation in his election campaign. Former regional secretary for the north-east, Curran won around 67% of the vote in a low turnout.

Evidently spurred on by this further step to the left at the top of Britain's major unions, a blast from the past right wing dinosaur days came in the form of comments from employment minister Alan Johnson. Former postal workers' (mis)leader Johnson launched a none too coherent

attack on some trade union leaders, claiming that they take "the occasional day trip to the planet Zog."

In a carefully-timed attack in the *Financial Times*, Johnson said some leaders were indulging in the kind of militancy which has largely disappeared from British labour relations over the last two decades. In other words precisely the kind of militancy which led him to scurry from his own leading position in the unions to the more comfortable post of a government ministry.

Mr Johnson said: "The TUC left planet Zog 20-odd years ago ... but a few union leaders go back for the occasional day trip."

He cited as an example the "day of finger-jabbing we had at the TUC conference last year on employment rights".

One point made by Johnson was telling, however, when he pointed to what he saw as an "endemic problem in this country where the candidates for high office in trade unions think that they constantly have to outdo each other for rhetoric". In other words they have to move to the left if they want the support of the rank and file who have finished with right wing aliens like Johnson, Jackson and Reamsbottom. The new left leaning leaders of the GMB now have to link up with other left union leaders to take the fight into the Labour Party, to send the Blairites back to whatever planet it is they come from. □

Left victory needed in Amicus

by Espe Espigares,
Amicus-AEEU West London branch

Since the election of Derek Simpson last year as the General Secretary of the AEEU section of Amicus, a victory for the left in the Executive elections for the whole of the merged union of MSF and AEEU has become paramount to implement the democratisation of the union and to alter the previous collaborationist partnership approach with the bosses. With the defeat of Sir Ken Jackson last July the right wing pro-business faction known as AEEU United has been shattered and split apart. In a desperate bid to retain their positions, as they face electoral extinction, the right wing MSF for Labour group, based around the MSF General Secretary Roger Lyons, has now threatened the future of the merger by demanding a reserved portion of MSF seats on 50% of all union bodies, in the

same way as the minority EETPU had in the last merger with the AEEU. Faced with this ultimatum there could well be a membership ballot on the future of the merger.

The draft rulebook that is currently under discussion is certainly a step backwards for democracy in the MSF section. The MSF currently enjoys lay control of their union at branch and regional level in both finances and election of officers. The draft rulebook replaces elected lay Regional Secretaries with un-elected full time officers. It also restricts the amount of money branches and regional councils can spend and stops them from making donations to individuals or political campaigns and prevents branches from supporting industrial disputes. The union conference is reduced from an annual to a bi-

ennial conference and is no longer the sovereign body of the union, losing control over the financial affairs and management of the union to the Executive. The rules conference is altered from every four to every six years.

For the AEEU the draft rulebook is a step forward in that it restores election of lay branch officers and some level of financial independence for branches as well as creating a regional council structure that matches the previous Divisional Councils under the old AEU rules. It falls far short, however, of the accountability and control by the members called for by the left in the General Secretary election campaign, prominent amongst which was the restoration of election of full time officials.

Despite these shortcomings in the rulebook the main issue at stake is the election of a left majority on the Executive in order to restore the union to a fighting organisation that is rep-

resenting the interests of the members and not the employers. The issue of a democratic rulebook can be taken up by a left Executive as soon as it assumes office and can be altered by a ballot of the membership at any time. To this end, with the threat to the union merger posed by the right wing, who rightly fear losing control of the union, and with no opportunity to present amendments, it would be a mistake to oppose the rule book at the rules conference on the 24th June providing it means that the election of a new, properly representative joint Executive can take place this year.

Clearly, for the membership, the overwhelming priority is to replace the discredited right wing self-servers with a leadership that will take on the issues of job losses, attacks on wages and conditions, increased workload and stress, management bullying and health & safety in the workplace. □

Don't let bosses get away with murder!

by Phil Willis,
Amicus-AEEU Construction section

April 28th is Workers Memorial day, the international day when union members around the world, remember those workers who have lost their lives by simply going to work, the huge number killed in work related incidents and through occupational illnesses.

It's a pity that Tony Blair and his government don't remember the promise they made, when in June 2000 they launched 'Revitalising Health & Safety' to co-incide with revamping the Health and Safety Bill, but as usual nothing has been done.

As a steel erector and shop steward within the construction industry my colleagues and I have at one time or another

witnessed a fatality, or life threatening accident during our working lives. Those who have known that the scene replays in your mind time and time again like a recurring nightmare. The horror that you have witnessed never goes away, it stays with you for the rest of your life. It leaves you with the very bitter taste that in many cases the fatality or accident could have been avoided.

Unions have played a particularly active role in bringing about major improvements to Health and Safety on sites and in workplaces around the country. Shop stewards and safety reps have worked tirelessly to assist in those improvements. Many workers today put their

lives at risk on a daily basis simply by going to work. There is patently more emphasis placed on business progression and profit than the value of a man's life. The only way in which we can make all employers sit up and take notice is by the enforcement of the proposed legislation in the Corporate Manslaughter Bill.

The current system of fining an employer is totally ineffective. Statistics show that the paltry sum of £18,200 is the average settlement achieved, a pittance in exchange for a human life, small change to most companies, the cost of two Saville Row suits to most company directors. The current system holds no fear for negligent companies and is absolutely no deterrent against future offences.

Workers in conjunction with their shop stewards and safety reps should be organising and supporting campaigns to bring about legislative change to make Corporate Manslaughter

a crime. My union, Amicus, have been running a campaign for several weeks on this subject and at a recent seminar in London the level of empathy and support for the campaign was very prominent. Fed up with the lack of progress on the part of the government, delegates sported slogans such as 'the wait is killing us'.

The mood is changing, workers are no longer willing to accept whatever fate happens along at their workplace. Bad employers should be punished severely with much heavier fines and imprisonment, only then will the killing stop. Tony Blair and his government should realise that we have been waiting for a long time now and that this issue is just not going to go away.

So, not just this year but every year on Workers Memorial Day we should remember the dead, but continue to fight for the living. □

Not safe in private hands

By Mike Gaskell

Amicus-AEEU Shop Steward Scottish Power/Power Systems

The privatisation of the electricity supply industry has proven to be the disaster for both the workers in the industry and the country as a whole widely predicted at the time by the trade unions. The industry is regulated by OFGEM. The regulator exists solely in order to introduce competition into as much of the industry as possible and the system means all former nationalised companies have what is called a regulatory review every five years. Regulation has not stopped massive profits being made by all of the former nationalised companies. It has led to many jobs being created for city spivs who buy and sell electricity and their friends who advise other spivs on the buying, asset stripping and subsequent resale of whole companies. The combination of regulation and this city free-for-all has seen the previously unthinkable happen with electricity companies starting to go bust. TXU Europe went under recently and sent shockwaves through the

energy

industry. At the same time nuclear generation experienced commercial difficulties and only survives with the granting of government loans. In other words regulation has achieved its aim of introducing the anarchy and greed of the market system into the electricity supply industry.

On the other hand regulation has seen the slashing of the in-house workforce and the increasing introduction of contractors. That is the removal of secure steady employment with decent basic terms and conditions, a final salary pension scheme, pay when you are sick or injured, reasonable holiday provision and so on. They have been replaced with casual labour hired for the duration of the contract on worse terms and conditions. Privatisation has led to the number of apprentices falling dramatically and will mean an acute shortage of skilled labour in the future if nothing is done quickly to reme-

dy the problem. Of course the workers in the industry have also had to endure every fad and gimmick that is designed to increase productivity or cut costs, flexible working, annualised hours and the like. In other words the price of privatisation is paid for by the workers.

Last October much of the southern half of Britain was hit by a storm and the privatisation chickens came home to roost with many thousands of homes without electricity, some for many days. A more widespread or severe storm could have had much more serious consequences and led to generalised power cuts.

In short Privatisation, Regulation and the market do not work. The nations electricity generation, distribution and supply network and infrastructure is not safe in the hands of profiteers.

What can we do about it? Amicus-AEEU should campaign for minimum standards (not less than the best already achieved)

in the industry to apply to all in-house, contract and agency labour for a common rate of pay.

Continuation of the final salary pension scheme for all workers in the industry and extended to contract labour. Decent holiday provision. Oppose all redundancies. Defend job security by opposing TUPE transfers. We should insist that massive investment is made in the training of the workforce of the future, apprenticeships, clerical/admin trainees, engineering trainees etc.

This should be coupled with an energy plan to manage the nation's energy needs into the future. Planning can end the short termism of privatisation most graphically displayed in the dash for gas generation that has led to the problems now being faced. It goes without saying that you can't plan what you don't own. The campaign to re-nationalise the entire industry should begin now. □

No more job losses

By Peter Currall,

Amicus-AEEU convenor Corby steel works.

On April 29, the AGM of British-Dutch steel group Corus will see the replacement of its chief executive Tony Pedder, by Philippe Varin, a senior executive of the French company Pechiney. Also the Chairman Brian Moffat will step down and will be succeeded by the deputy chairman Jim Leng. The "strategy" for getting Corus out of its multimillion pound debts is, yet again, to slash steel production with the consequent loss of jobs. There is talk of one to three thousand additional jobs being destroyed. This figure

steel

comes on top of more than six thousand jobs that have been destroyed in the last two and a half years.

On the announcement of the changes in management (and the job cuts) shares in Corus went up to 12p from a low of 4p a month ago. This level is still well down from a record peak of 190p.

As always "sacrifices" are only demanded on the part of the workforce, thus despite the fact that the workers have seen a wage freeze for the last 12

months, the company's financial director received a 39% wage increase. The salary of the new chief executive will be in the range of £1.7 million.

Faced with this reality, the unions' campaign has been very mild. Two weeks ago they organized a "red card day of action," which involved no industrial action, just the workers symbolically showing the red card to management. Unfortunately the unions campaign was based on demanding the replacement of Tony Pedder. But in reality the company's troubles cannot be reduced to management personnel and cannot be solved with a management change. In fact the announced plans of the new Chief Executive are also based on job cuts and sacrifices on the part of the workforce.

The union leadership has

wrongly taken the view that job losses are acceptable as long as there are no compulsory redundancies. The problem with this approach is that if a good offer is made then many workers might accept voluntary redundancies and the jobs will be gone forever. The union movement should take the view that workers are just occupying a particular job, which in fact belongs to the labour movement as a whole and as such must be defended as part of the future of our communities.

Steel making is a vital sector of industry that has been dying a slow death for some time. The government should intervene with re-nationalisation, particularly since the private sector has proven completely unable to run the industry at all. □

"For socialism and peace"?

The British Labour Party and war in historical perspective

by Barbara Humphries

The Blair government's policy of supporting the US led invasion of Iraq has received unprecedented opposition, both from activists in the anti-war movement and from within the ranks of the Labour Party. Even with the current regime in the Party where democracy is stifled, branches fail to meet and where activists are often disenfranchised, the Parliamentary Labour Party has been split down the middle. This reflects the mood within the constituencies and within the trade union movement.

The campaign for peace and opposition to militarism has deep roots within the Labour Party. When Labour launched its 1935 manifesto on foreign policy it was entitled "For Socialism and Peace". This manifesto, however, united party activists who had very different concepts about how this was to be achieved. Some Labour Party members were pacifists - this included the one time leader George Lansbury. There was a very large peace wing including Christian Socialists and the Co-operative Movement. Britain was then the world's foremost imperialist power and jingoistic flag waving was rampant on the part of the establishment. The Women's Co-operative Guild had a banner "No to militarism in our schools".

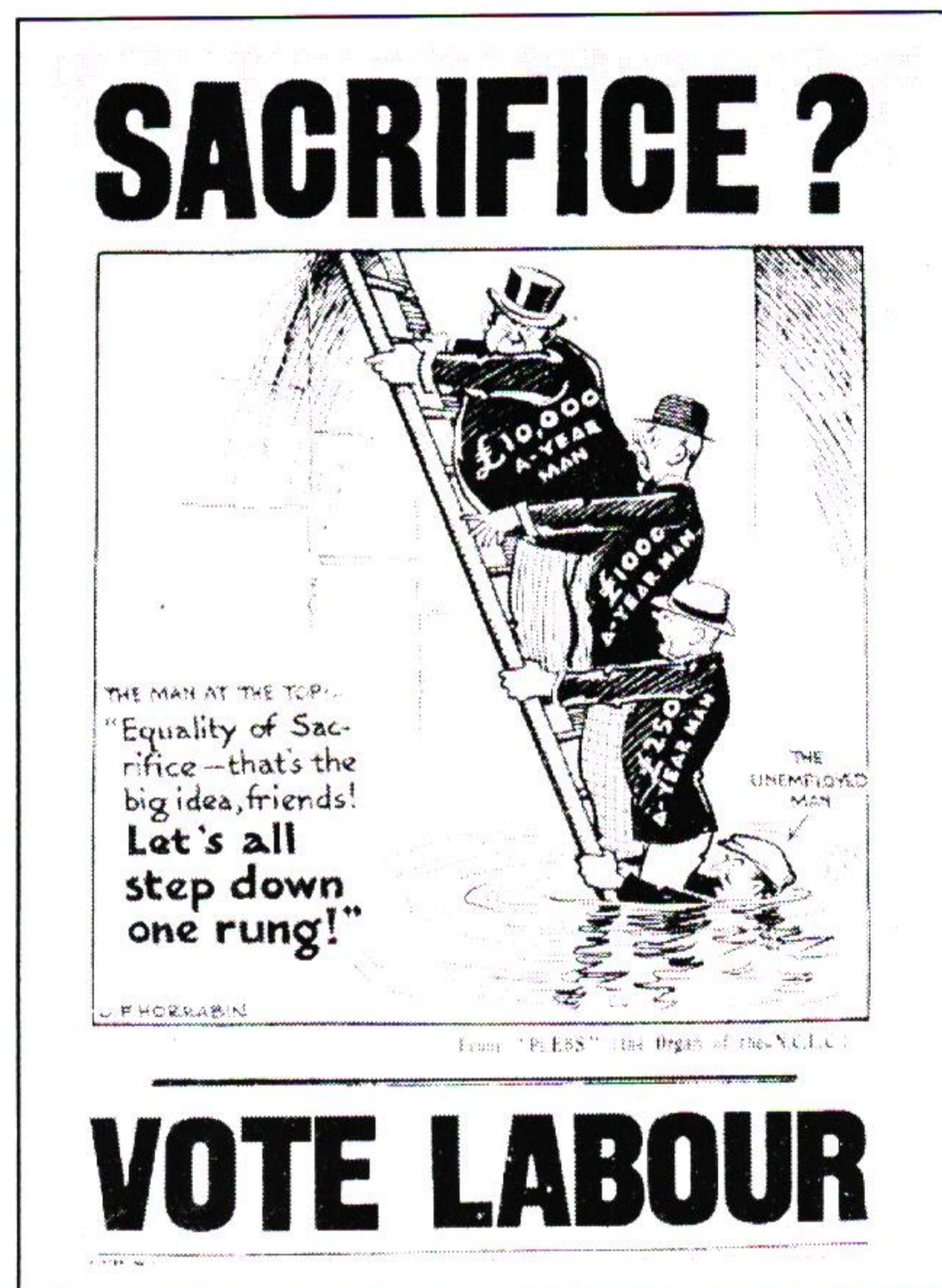
A wing of the party represented in the 1930s by the left-wing Socialist League called for a general strike world wide to stop any war from breaking out. This had been the policy of the Socialist International, abandoned in 1914 when the German Social Democratic Party had voted for war credits in the German Reichstag. The result of this vote was that the leadership of all the main European socialist parties ended up supporting their governments in the 1914-1918 war, which was imperialist on all sides and in which mil-

lions were slaughtered. The anti-war opposition in all countries was confined to a minority of socialists as even trade union leaders supported their government's war efforts. Only after four years of war was action against the war supported on a large scale. This developed into revolutionary movements of the working class across Europe, including the Russian revolution of 1917. In Britain dockworkers refused to load arms on to a boat called the 'Jolly George' which was to be used against the newly formed socialist government in Russia. They had the full support of the British labour move-

ment. A conference was called endorsing a general strike if the British government did not end its support for the overthrow of the soviet government. This was critical in changing British foreign policy at the time.

However the majority view in the Labour Party was that peace could be achieved through collective security, by the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations. This reflected a desire to never go to war again. Unfortunately the League of Nations was unable to prevent the rise of fascism in Italy, Spain and Germany - events which were to lead to the Second World War. Some of the Tories (the so-called appeasers) were to regard Hitler and Mussolini as allies in the fight against Bolshevism! Hence the League of Nations failed to stop the Second World War.

In 1945 Labour was elected to power with an overall majority for the first time. Its domestic programme included nationalization and the introduction of the National Health Service. This was widely popular, including with the ranks of the armed forces. Labour supporters expected that foreign policy would include collective security with all the major players in the war against Nazism on board - including the Soviet Union, which had played a large role in the defeat of fascism - under the auspices of the United Nations.



Foreign policy under the Labour Government however was to take a different turn. Ernest Bevin, a right-wing former leader of the Transport and General Workers Union was unexpectedly appointed by Prime Minister Attlee as Foreign Secretary. It soon became clear that he was supporting the new concerns of the US government in 'containing communism.'

The first casualty was Greece. In Greece a communist led popular resistance movement had effectively fought the Nazi occupation of their country. But when the Nazis had been defeated British troops were ordered to carry out a policy of imposing an unpopular king and pro-capitalist government upon the Greek people. This was the first war of the Cold War era. It had been Winston Churchill's policy and Labour left-wingers were dismayed to find a Labour Government continuing with the same policy. British troops, who had formerly fought alongside the Greek resistance movement now behaved in Greece like an army of occupation. Labour opponents of this policy pointed out that the government of Greece supported by "Bevin - the kingmaker" had executed over 490 resistance fighters and another 1,300 faced trial. Furthermore the continuing war against the Greek people was costing millions of pounds, which the British Government could not afford if it was to fulfil its domestic manifesto promises. Finally when British troops were pulled out of Greece their place was taken by US troops to ensure the success of the counter-revolution. Greek workers were faced with poverty and dictatorship for decades.

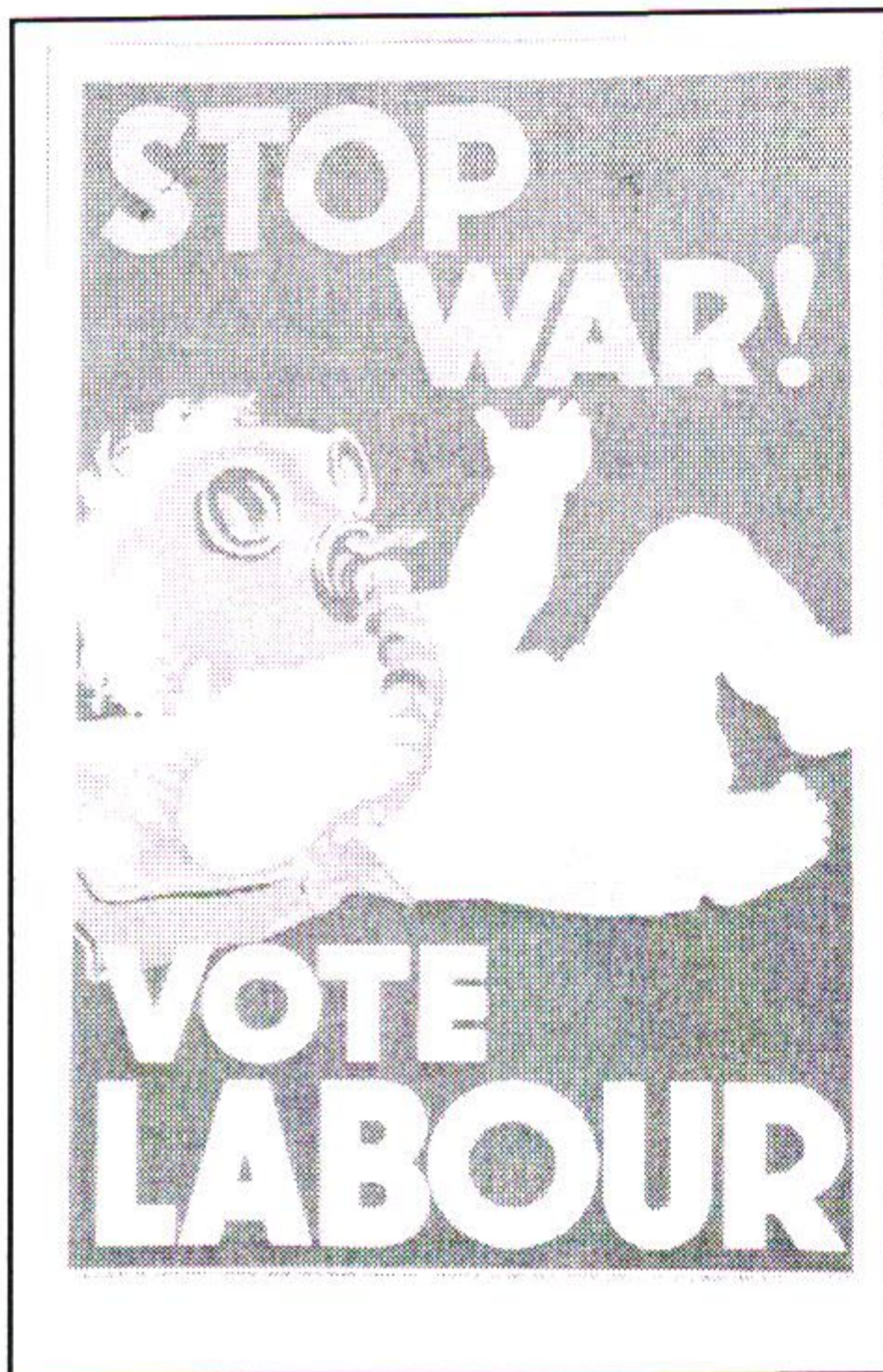
The 1945-51 Labour Government met with opposition to its foreign policy. Conscription, introduced by the government in peacetime was opposed by 85 MPs. A hard core "Keep Left Group" including Michael Foot campaigned for British independence from US foreign policy

which was increasingly leading to war-mongering against the Soviet Union by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. The complete economic bankruptcy of Britain after the Second World War had left it dependent upon US loans, which were conditional on supporting US foreign policy! 20 Labour MPs had voted against the terms of these loans, and a further 40 abstained. They did not have the support of the Labour Party conference however, as the trades union block vote was stitched up by Labour right-wingers in the 1940s.

Imperialist power

The US had become the world's foremost imperialist power but sought an ally in Europe. As the so-called "iron-curtain" descended, hysterical anti-communism became rife in the US affecting all sections of society. Fears were expressed about the potential success of the Communist parties, not only in Eastern Europe, but also through the ballot box in Italy and France. Open support for a left wing coalition of socialists and communists in Italy by Labour MPs sent in the form of a telegram to the Italian socialist Nenni was to lead to expulsion from the Party for a number of Labour MPs. The Marshall Plan, which made aid dependent on political support further sealed the borders of Europe between east and west. In 1948 NATO was formally established. Finally the Labour Government sent British troops into Korea in support of US foreign policy.

Labour lost to the Tories in 1951 and remained out of office until 1964. During the 1950s the Cold War continued. Opposition to the use of



nuclear weapons continued with the formation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1958. Opposition to militarism and nuclear weapons continued in the Labour Party. In 1964 Labour was elected again, led by Harold Wilson with a small majority. The effects of Labour's opposition to US foreign policy soon made itself felt when the Prime Minister told the American president Lyndon Johnson that he could not send British troops to support the US war in Vietnam.

Opposition

This was due to opposition from the Labour Party and the British public. Not one battalion could be sent! Washington was annoyed - it believed that the presence of British troops added international credibility as well as efficiency and effectiveness. In his book "America and the British Labour Party- the special relationship at work" Peter Jones wrote: "Faced with the problem of managing potentially irate back bench supporters, particularly in the context of leading a government with a wafer thin majority, Harold Wilson found himself in something of a dilemma. He became torn between a desire

to support America in return for its financial support for sterling and a desire to bring about a settlement to the conflict through negotiation and mediation". As the war in Vietnam continued opposition to the conduct of the war grew both on the streets of Britain and within the Labour Party. The American ambassador to London had to report that the pressure on Wilson came not just from the Left but from Labour moderates and from the public as well.

Nevertheless Wilson appeased the American government in return for support for sterling by buying the Polaris submarine and agreeing a "world role for the US".

As the Labour Party moved to the left in the 1970s and 1980s, (particularly as a result of the electoral defeat in 1979) it also adopted a foreign policy which was hostile to the deployment of US nuclear weapons on British soil. In 1983 there were accusations that the Party's election manifesto commitments would have undermined NATO. Some of the Labour leadership refused to support the manifesto. Others had already left the Party and formed the Social Democratic Party. They were the real splitters of the movement. The Labour Party was defeated again in the 1983 general election.

But the end of the Cold War after 1990 did not bring the war mongering on the part of the US to an end. The first Gulf War of 1991 ended the brief post-Cold War peace. This war supported by the Labour leadership was opposed by a large number of activists, many of whom resigned from the Party. Since 1997 the Labour Government has been involved in four wars - Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and now Iraq. But the policies of the government have been deeply unpopular and the campaign against the war-mongering of the prime minister will continue both on the streets and within the labour movement, including the Labour Party. ■

"Zillicacus: a life for peace and socialism"

by Archie Potts,
published by Merlin Press

by Mick Brooks

Konni Zillicacus, a life for peace and socialism', tells the story of a pretty decent geezer. Konni was a left wing Labour MP who died in 1967. His political education began in the trenches of the First World War where he was part of an army medical unit. Every ghastly mutilated body that came his way told him that there must be a better way to solve international disputes. And socialists do believe that peace is better than war.

After the war Zilly, as he was known to friends, spent twenty years as a civil servant to the League of Nations. He was assisted in this by knowing nine languages. The League of Nations was the predecessor to the United Nations. The League was set up as an alternative way to war to solving international disputes. 'Never again' was the refrain of folk at that time. The League deliberated and mediated instead. Every year without war was a success for the League.

The League of Nations was torn apart by the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). Poison gas was used against soldiers with spears. The League was helpless to intervene. A few years later the Second World War Konni and his generation feared broke out, leaving fifty million dead.

The League's abortive alternative to big countries throwing their weight around was called collective security. These days it's called multilateralism. Countries appeal to the authority of the United Nations, or at least that's the theory.

And, many would argue, it worked for a long time. Actually we haven't had a day of peace since 1945. But at least there hasn't been another world war,

which would probably leave the planet in the custodianship of radioactive cockroaches, if we were lucky. So isn't multilateralism good for something?



If we want to fight imperialism, there is a counterweight, potentially even more powerful than the US imperialism. It is the world working class.

As we know, multilateralism has broken down again, as it did before World War Two. The United Nations has a kind of international constitution for settling disputes. It says one country can only attack another if it is itself invaded or if war is agreed by the Security Council of the UN. The diplomatic formula for 'war is OK' is 'by all means necessary'. That formulation was not used in UN resolution 1441, which advocated action against Iraq. The resolution did not use that form of words because the majority on the Security Council would not vote for war.

The USA could not get multilateral support for invasion. So Bush invaded anyway - unilaterally. Just like the Italian invasion

of Ethiopia or Hitler's annexations before the Second World War, international disputes are being resolved by big countries throwing their weight around.

This comes across to most Labour Party supporters as seriously bad news. If it begins with Iraq, where will it end? Labour's rank and file are committed to an international policy based on the rule of law, not the rule of force. Clause 4(3) of the Party's Constitution calls for support for the United Nations. The tradition personified by Konni Zillicacus is deeply embedded in our traditions. It explains why so many Party members were outraged by Blair going along with a unilateral illegal invasion after being knocked back on a second resolution clearly supporting war in the United Nations. To Marxists this seems a secondary issue to the fact of an imperialist grab.

What caused the League of Nations to crash and the institutions of the international rule of law to crumble in the 1930s was a change in the balance of forces internationally.

After 1918, Germany was prostrate and crushed with reparations, the USA withdrew from international involvement and revolutionary Russia was a pariah country. Britain and France were the victorious imperialist powers who ruled the roost. Now Germany was actually a more dynamic imperialist power than Britain or France. When it recovered from defeat, it was bound to go hunting for what it had lost twenty years before. This explains the clashes culminating in the Second World War.

Likewise the lack of a world war or a major conflict on the continent of Europe for fifty years after 1945 is not to be explained by an ingrained respect for international law backed up by a

desperate desire not to go to war again. It was a product of the international balance of forces. The world was dominated by two super-powers - the USA and Stalinist Russia. They cynically divided the world up into spheres of influence. Any small nation that stepped out of line was slapped down.

This happened to the 'reform Communist' Dubcek in Czechoslovakia. The invasion by Russian tanks and installation of a hard line pro-Russian regime was accepted without protest in the USA. Similarly the CIA helped engineer the overthrow of Allende's Socialist in Chile government and his murder by the brutal dictator Pinochet without Russian response. It was not their back yard.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has changed the rules of the game. There is now only one super-power - the USA. There is no nation to act as counterweight, no balance of forces to stop the American government doing anything it wants to. We'd better start getting used to it!

If we want to fight imperialism, there is a counterweight, potentially even more powerful than US imperialism. It is the world working class. Konni Zillicacus' vision was a decent, honourable one. But it was flawed. It should be obvious to everyone that the United Nations can be cheerfully ignored by imperialist pirates, just as the Italians did in Ethiopia in the 1930s. Bush does not even rely on NATO, a wholly-owned subsidiary of US imperialism, to do his bidding. The dream of multilateralism, of the rule of international law has been torn up. We are on our own. But there are billions of us. Only the world's working class can guarantee peace. ■

Oppose the Witch Hunt Against George Galloway

by Rob Sewell

The outspoken left-wing Labour MP George Galloway is facing a witch hunt orchestrated by the *Tory Telegraph* and *Sun*, and seized upon by Blair and his entourage. The Tory papers say they have discovered papers ("stumbled on by chance") alleging that Galloway was in the pay of Saddam Hussein. Like all the dubious evidence emerging from the American and British occupation of Iraq, this is more convenient 'proof' for the pro-war forces in the Labour Party who are intent on purging the party of all opposition.

Galloway, Labour MP for Glasgow Kelvin, had campaigned consistently against the sanctions that condemned 500,000 Iraqi children to death. He established an anti-sanctions campaign named after the Iraqi leukaemia sufferer, Mariam Hamza. Galloway denies benefiting personally in any way from this charity.

But the Blairite machine is now in full swing, determined to bring charges against Galloway at the NEC of the party. Labour chairman Ian McCartney said the allegations were "extremely serious". They hope to use the campaign in the Tory press to lay the grounds for expelling Galloway.

Ben Bradshaw, then junior Foreign Office minister, last year described Galloway as "not just an apologist but a mouthpiece for the Iraqi regime." In fact, it was Bradshaw who was acting as the mouthpiece - for US imperialism.

"The allegations add more meat to an investigation into the MP's conduct by Labour officials already underway, prompted by complaints from party members", states the *Financial Times*. They are already busy hunting for witches, armed with 'complaints' from so-called party members, compliant tools of the right-wing

witch hunt.

These apparatchiks are more than ready to do the leader's bidding. However, when it comes to pursuing those right-wing MPs and ministers who have taken money from the CIA and its fronts to promote their right-wing publications and causes, they are stony silent. One such group is the Trade Union Committee for European and Transatlantic Understanding (TUCETU), which is the successor to the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding. This was set up in 1976 by the late Joe Godson, Labour Attaché at the US embassy in London in the 1950s. TUCETU chair Alan Lee Williams was a Labour defence minister in the Callaghan government, before defecting to the SDP. In the mid-1980s Williams and George Robinson were members of the European policy group of the Washington Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Silent of the press

The Atlantic Council/TUCETU network provided the recruits for New Labour's Ministry of Defence team. Defence Secretary George Robertson, before becoming general secretary of NATO, was a member of the Council of the Atlantic Committee from 1979-90; Lord Gilbert, Minister of State for Defence Procurement, is listed as TUCETU vice-chair; Dr John Reid, former Minister of State for the Armed Forces and chairman of the Labour Party, spoke at a TUCETU conference; and MoD press office biographical notes on junior Defence Minister John Speller state that he "has been a long standing member of the Trade Union Committee for European and Transatlantic Understanding". Speller had his own office and secretary in AEEU headquarters, and was deeply

involved in Sir Ken Jackson's failed attempt to hang on to the leadership of the union. How was this operation funded?

The people round Tony Blair, central to the New Labour 'project', are all linked to the United States, or the British foreign policy establishment, whose chief aim has been to preserve the Anglo-American 'special relationship' and to foster western (i.e. capitalist) interests. Blair's 'special relationship' extended from Clinton to George W. Bush, so much so that he is known as the Member of Parliament for Texas North.

The press remain silent on the insidious links of the right wing and the Blairites. Against Galloway however they have let loose a Niagara of attacks, in relation to his finances, his holiday home in Portugal etc. How many MPs receive corporate sponsorship, financial backing from lobbyists etc? *Socialist Appeal's* position is clear. All Labour MPs should receive a wage no higher than that of a skilled worker, their expenses should be audited by the labour movement, and they should be accountable to the movement. How many of the careerists in the Parliamentary Labour Party would then be so keen on a life in politics? How many Labour MPs living the same lifestyle as ordinary working people would support Blair's privatisation plans and the attacks on public services?

In reality the witch hunt against Galloway has nothing to do with the convenient allegations of the Tory press, and everything to do with the Blairites fear of swelling opposition inside the Labour movement to the government's policies at home and abroad.

At the same time, any hint of breaking with Labour, or that Galloway should stand independently, must be quashed immediately. This witch hunt must be fought inside the movement as part of a struggle to reclaim the Labour Party from the Blairite hijackers. To walk away would be to hand victory to Blair on a platter. From their point of view such an outcome would be even more favourable than their current plan to expel Galloway.

This attack is a sign of the weakness of Blair and co. They have virtually no base of support inside the movement, not even at the tops of the unions now. If this witch hunt is allowed to proceed it will not be the last. Such manoeuvres and disciplinary attacks are the only method Blair and co. have to retain their grip on the Labour Party.

The campaign to defeat this witch hunt must continue on to defeat the Blairites and place genuine worker representatives in their place. The unions must take this opportunity to take back the Labour Party once and for all! ■

- No Witch hunts!
- Don't Contract Out, Contract In! Trade Unions reclaim Labour!
- Defeat Blairism, fight for socialist policies!
- Pass resolutions of protest through your Labour Party, trade union branch or organisation.

Fax a protest to Tony Blair on 0207 925 0918

Email your support to George Galloway on gallowayg@parliament.uk

Return to Stormont No Solution for Irish Workers

by Phil Mitchinson

The devolved assembly at Stormont was suspended for the fourth time in its short and unstable existence in October 2002.

Now Blair, Ahern, Adams and Trimble are attempting to raise it from its coffin once more. Established as part of the so-called peace process, the assembly represents not an attempt to solve the problems facing ordinary working people of all backgrounds, but a scheme to share power between representatives of the main sectarian parties. For this reason it can never seriously address the problems of working class people, not the vital problems of health, housing and education, nor the wider questions of the border and the national question.

As we have consistently explained the Good Friday Agreement, and the institutions of devolution associated with it, could never begin to solve the problems facing ordinary working people no matter what their background. It was a cruel

deception, which promised peace to the communities of Catholic and Protestant workers, but was unable to deliver. It was a lie. There has been no peace. Sectarian beatings and killings have continued. Communities have become increasingly divided.

Indeed the divide between Catholics and Protestants has never been wider. This gulf was created and nurtured by British imperialism in order to divide and rule, to protect their system in Ireland from the threat of united working class action. In carving up the living body of Ireland through partition British imperialism unleashed a carnival of reaction just as the great socialist James Connolly had predicted.

Those who created this mess are utterly incapable of solving it. Instead of peace what they have built are lots of "peace-lines" - brick walls, iron fences and barbed wire to divide communities still further. The British and Irish governments and the sectarian parties all represent the past, they have nothing progressive to say about the future.

Temporary agreements between sectarian politicians to share ministerial responsibilities at Stormont cannot

begin to solve the underlying cause of this crisis. That has now been proven. Remaining within the straitjacket of the capitalist system, sectarian politicians and government officials from Ireland and Britain have been trying to create a better environment for big business to make money in, a better environment in which to exploit Catholic and Protestant workers alike. What none of them could do, even in a boom, because of the limits imposed by the profit system, is build houses, hospitals and schools, create jobs or eradicate poverty pay. These social conditions, which are an inevitable fact of life in capitalist society, serve to fuel sectarian division, fear and hate. In the next period, a descent into economic recession will only serve to magnify these problems.

Sectarian divide

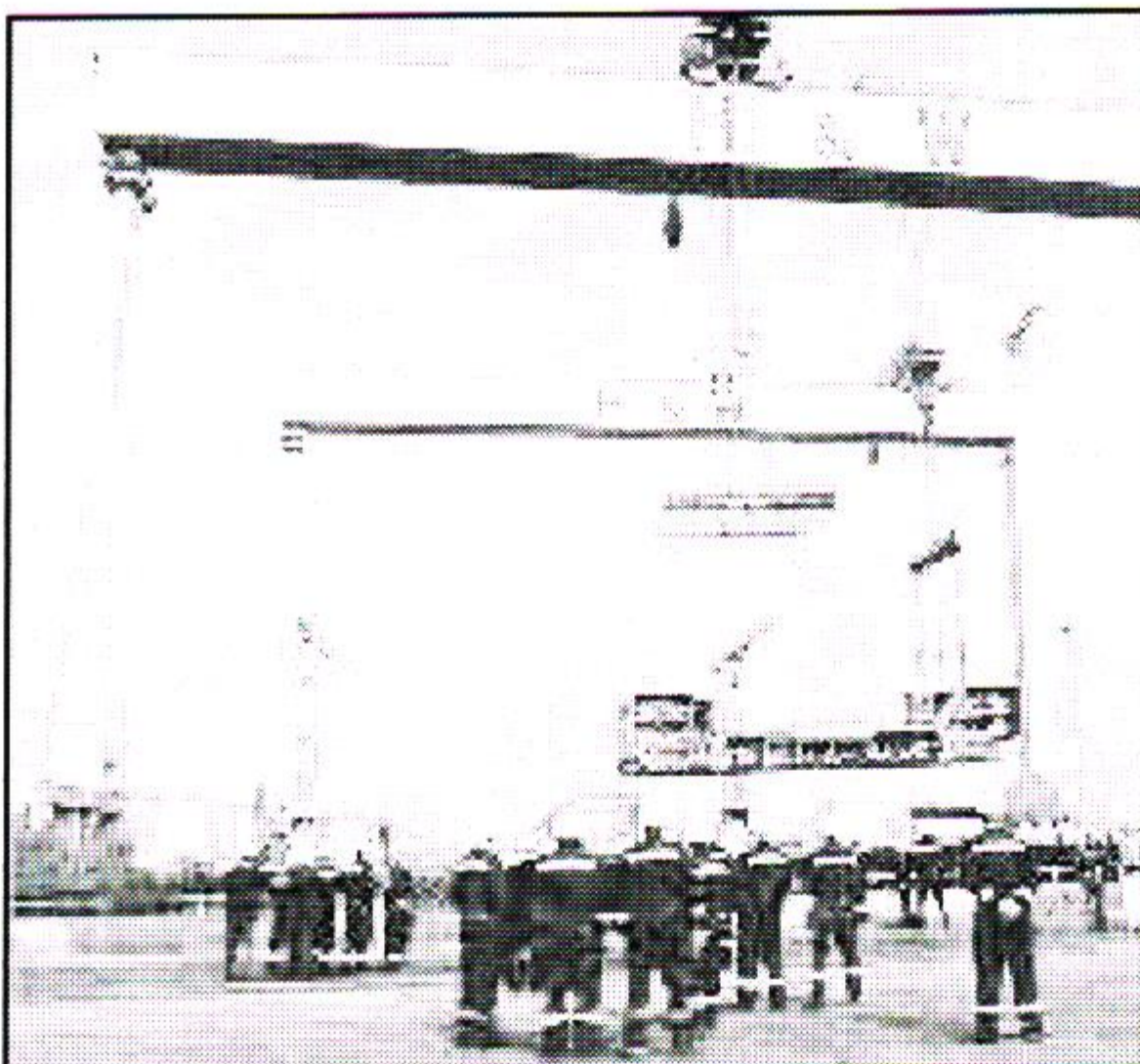
It is not ruled out that some kind of unstable deal could be done to resurrect the Stormont assembly in coming weeks, with new elections taking place even by the end of May - though that seems unlikely. The only certainty is that no such agreement can ever meet the aspirations of the nationalist community for a united Ireland, nor assuage the fears of Protestants, stirred up by the sectarian parties. Such agreements assume the continuation of a sectarian divide. In fact they rest upon that division. One would search in vain for any mention in these agreements for any talk of saving jobs, or investing in public services. They consist of this or that compromise by each sectarian party, to allow them to sit in the same room with each

other without causing uproar in their own ranks. Once sat in that room however, they will all proceed to support privatisation, and other anti-working class measures.

In reality the national and social questions are inextricably bound together. Capitalism can no more offer decent housing or healthcare to the people of Ireland than it can in Britain or anywhere else. None of these problems can be resolved on the basis of capitalism. Whatever differences the sectarian parties have, they are all equally wedded to the market economy. It is this system, capitalism, which lies at the heart of all the problems facing all Irish working people.

Whilst placing the blame for the division of Ireland squarely where it belongs, at the door of British imperialism, and roundly condemning the reactionary bigots in the loyalist paramilitary forces, we have never been willing to play the role of cheerleaders for the Provisional IRA, a role that many on the left in Britain relished in the past. The Provos have played a criminal role. Their actions over thirty years have served to widen the divide between Catholic and Protestant workers. After thirty years of so-called armed struggle, in reality what Marxists define as acts of individual terror, shootings and bombings carried out by small secret groups, they were forced to admit defeat. The tactic did not work. Such actions would not defeat the British state in 300 years, all they could achieve and did succeed in doing is driving a wedge between workers from different backgrounds and communities.

The poisonous weed of



sectarianism planted by British imperialism has been watered and fed by the actions of sectarians and bigots ever since. The Provisional IRA has not achieved a single one of its objectives. They vowed to carry on the "armed struggle" until they secured the withdrawal of British imperialism. Now they fight for the reform of the RUC. A new deal could even see Sinn Fein representatives sitting on a newly revamped police board.

In reality the establishment of the devolved body itself represented a capitulation by the Provisional IRA. It wasn't even a gesture towards Irish unity. It amounted to an acceptance of British rule and an acceptance of partition. If the devolved assembly is reconvened it can solve nothing and will lead to a new impasse. If they fail to resurrect it that too will create an impasse.

The leadership of the Provisionals has clearly abandoned all hope of a united Ireland for the foreseeable future. Their goal now is a new instalment of the failed power-sharing scheme at Stormont.

Whether or not it can be resurrected at all remains to be seen. Blair now demands a public declaration of surrender from the Provos in the form of answers to his three questions - Will all paramilitary activity cease permanently? Will they get rid of all of their weapons? Is the conflict over for good?

With no hint of irony, Unionist leader Trimble demands the Provos "bite the bullet". Now there is talk of introducing a new Protestant Veto into Stormont. Insisting on measures to attack Sinn Fein in the event of any future activity by the Provisional IRA, some in the Ulster Unionists have raised the idea of replacing the need for cross-community support to expel a party with a 40% rule, meaning union-

ists could veto Sinn Fein. The hardliners, who have been gaining the upper hand within Unionism for some time, want a return to the idea of a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people. They are no doubt bolstered by recent opinion poll findings. One such poll in the Belfast Telegraph found that support for Stormont has fallen significantly, especially among Protestants, since suspension last year. But the key question in the recent poll was this one: Do you want the agreement to work?

Overwhelmingly, the answer was yes: 92% among Catholics, 60% among Protestants, 75% overall. That is the lowest it has been in four years. A new election if it were to take place would see a further strengthening of the hard-line elements within Unionism. Meanwhile the nationalists have cruelly raised illusions, demonstrated in these statistics, which will inevitably be dashed against the rocks of Stormont's failure - either its failure to meet, or if it does meet its failure to solve a single one of their problems.

Peace

A majority of the population voted for the creation of the assembly. That is not a surprise; it was sold as peace to a population weary of sectarian killing. After the horrors of the last three decades, the majority of people in the North want peace. Of course! Who does not want peace? But the question is: how do we get it? How is a genuine and lasting peace to be achieved? The only way to get peace is by dealing with the real problems facing the people in their everyday lives. This is the only way to tackle the social roots of sectarianism. That means fighting against privatisation, fighting for better pay, better housing and against job cuts.

There was nothing in the Good Friday Agreement that

could achieve any of these aims, in fact there was nothing progressive in it at all, and we did not support it, although it got a majority in the referendum. We were in a minority, but we told the truth. Today too, we must honestly say to the people of the six counties: this deal did not solve your problems, nor will any new version.

For the last six months since the suspension of the assembly the media has continually speculated over Stormont's future. For most ordinary workers however the burning questions have been the continuation of sectarian violence, the state of housing, the war in Iraq, and the continued destruction of jobs.

The latest cataclysm to threaten the livelihoods of workers in the north is the announcement by Shorts that they intend to axe over a thousand jobs.

Bombardier, Shorts' Canadian owner, announced in Montreal it would lay off 3,000 of its 75,000-strong global workforce, 1180 of them in Belfast, to meet "challenging market conditions", i.e. the developing international recession. They have already axed 1,300 jobs since the September 11 attacks prompted a slump in the aviation industry. Shorts, which now employs 6,200 in east Belfast, has seen 550 permanent employees, and the same number of temporary and contract workers leave since September.

Bombardier has invested more than £1bn in Belfast in the past 13 years. Of course the purpose of that investment was not to protect jobs, but to make money. They are not making a loss, simply worried that in the international economic climate they will not be able to maintain their profits, therefore they demand that the workers do it for them, with fewer employed, working longer, and harder, for less wages.

The industry of the north, which played a key role -



along with major political consideration - in British imperialism's decision to carve up the living body of Ireland in the past, has been decimated. Harland and Wolff, the Belfast Company synonymous with shipbuilding (the Titanic was built there) has officially become a small business. The world-famous firm is now known as an SME or 'small to medium enterprise'. The former shipbuilder now employs just 135 people, a shadow of its former glory days when up to 30,000 men worked in the yard. At present it occupies just 80 acres of the 360-acre site dominated by the giant yellow cranes, known as Samson and Goliath, which today cast the shadow of gravestones over the industry of the north.

Neither the British government, nor the Irish government and certainly not any of the sectarian politicians have any solution to this crisis. All they can offer is occasional false dawns followed by impasse and new crises.

Ahern, the Southern prime minister, made clear that there was no place in any Southern coalition for Sinn Fein, bringing mocking



There is only one force capable of taking on and defeating the source of all these problems and that is the united action of the working class.

cries of derision from Unionist leaders "we are supposed to share power with these people, yet the government in the South want nothing to do with them." This follows the earlier dropping of the South's constitutional claim on a united Ireland. The Irish bourgeois have no interest in uniting with the North, which they see as poverty stricken and politically explosive.

Unionism

The Unionists meanwhile will never accept any real step towards uniting with the South on the basis of the current system, as their opposition to the current agreement demonstrates. The irony is that Britain would now like to withdraw. They would like to get rid of the £4 billion a year subsidy, that their continued presence in the north requires. Their problem is that the result would be a bloodbath, the Catholics of West Belfast and Derry would face a massacre and the violence would not be confined to Ireland. Sectarianism, fostered by British imperialism as part of its divide and rule tactic, has become an uncontrollable monster.

The failure of Stormont is proof once again that they cannot solve the crisis they have created. They will now try to put this ramshackle agreement back together again. Even if they do cobble together new temporary agreements between sectarian parties, this will offer no solution to the problems of the working class. Such unstable agreements will inevitably break down. The sectarian politicians will not negotiate themselves out of existence. The devolved assembly does not have the power to intervene to prevent the haemorrhaging of jobs in

the north by nationalising the industries concerned, even if it was still functioning, and even if the parties represented there wanted to. In reality however Sinn Fein, the SDLP, the UUP and the rest may disagree about the future of Ireland, but they do not disagree over the continuation of capitalism, their economic programmes have little between them. All for example support privatisation in the guise of the Private Finance Initiative.

Elections to Stormont may indeed go ahead at the end of May, more likely they will be postponed still further if not permanently. If they were to go ahead they would demonstrate a further polarisation, and a strengthening not only of Sinn Fein but also of the hard-line anti-agreement elements of unionism. In the absence of a party of Labour this election will effectively be a sectarian head count. There will be a battle between Sinn Fein and the SDLP on the one hand, and between the UUP and the DUP on the other, to determine which is the largest party on either side of the divide. Sinn Fein may well emerge as the largest nationalist party. Even if the UUP stay ahead of the DUP, the new UUP Assembly grouping will be much more anti-Agreement than the old. Within unionism the overall balance will swing strongly against the Agreement.

The key however, is that there is no mass party that represents the independent interests of working class and young people in Northern Ireland. The main Assembly parties may squabble and argue on sectarian issues but they have a lot in common when it comes to social and economic issues. None of them are prepared to challenge the profit system, they are all firmly wed-

ded to the continuation of capitalism. Trade unionists in threatened workplaces, in the fire service, teachers, nurses, public and private sector workers in general, are not represented at Stormont. An independent party of ordinary working people, based on the trade unions, with a socialist programme to transform society is what is required. The existence of such a party would bring the elections to Stormont, if they are ever to take place, to life. Such a party will not spring fully formed from the earth before the expected date of that poll, however. Trade unionists from all backgrounds should push their own unions to participate in a conference of Labour, with links to both British Labour and the Irish Labour Party, on a non-sectarian basis to begin the process of setting up a real Labour Party in the north, to represent the interests of ordinary workers. Such a party could gain an enormous echo and begin to cut the ground from under the feet of the sectarian parties.

Irish working class

There is only one force capable of securing a lasting peace, only one force capable of defeating sectarianism and protecting all communities from attack. There is only one force capable of taking on and defeating the source of all these problems - the capitalist system - and that is the united action of the working class. The working class and its organisations, beginning with the trade unions must intervene to take matters into their own hands.

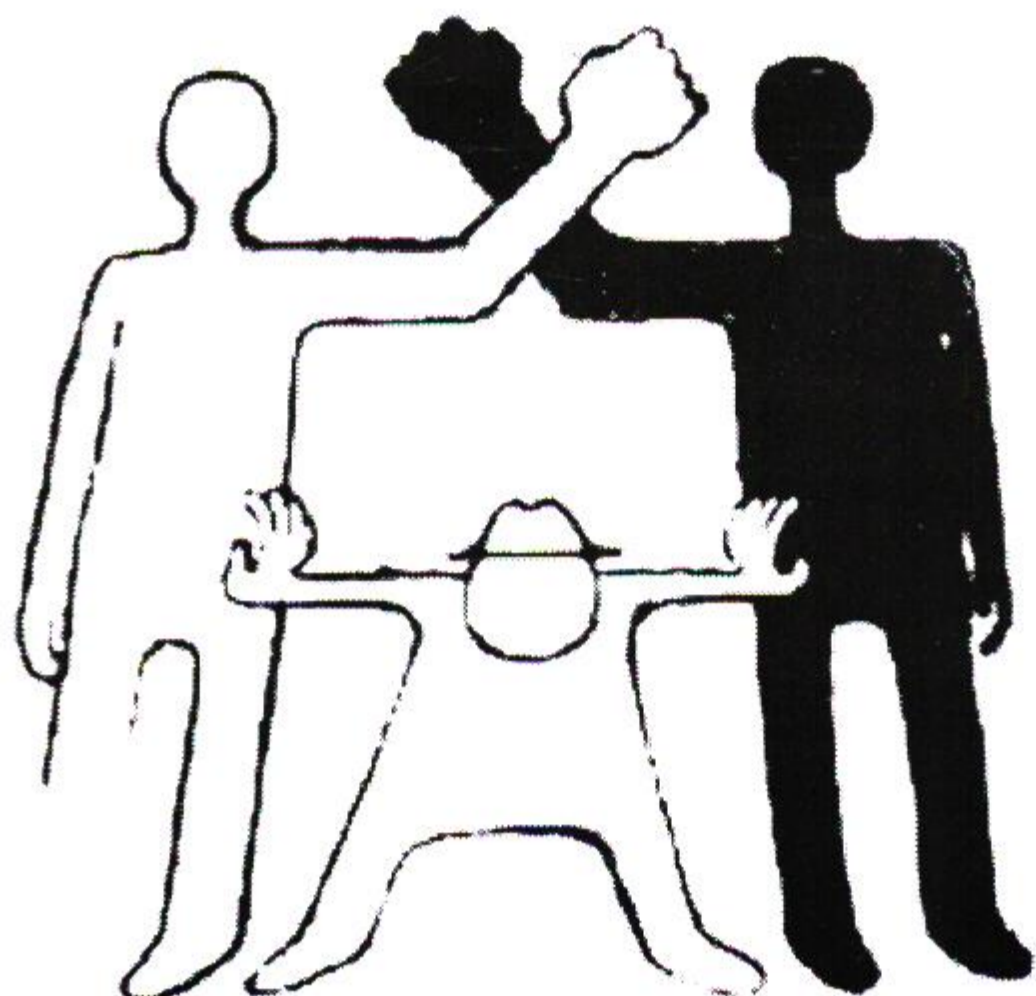
A new mass working class party will not spring fully formed out of the ether. Trade union activists and

socialists must begin the work of organising such a party. That is the urgent task of the hour.

The general strike against sectarianism a little over a year ago was a reminder of the great traditions of united working class struggle. Tragically, the trade union leaders failed to build upon that. The workers organisations must now mobilise to defend communities from sectarian attack. They must mobilise to fight against the attacks of the government and the bosses. United in struggle the working class of Ireland can sweep away the filth and poison of sectarianism once and for all. Once again the potential for that unity was demonstrated at the magnificent anti-war demos. All those who have argued that workers' unity is impossible or utopian have been proven wrong. In fact what has been proven to be utopian is the idea that any one of the problems facing Irish workers can be solved by sectarian parties, by Stormont, or by any government or body within the confines of the capitalist system.

Ultimately, without the intervention of the working class there will be a new descent into chaos and violence. Under modern conditions there can be no solution anywhere to the national problem within capitalism. We have entered a new period in world history dominated by wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions. Ireland will not be immune from this turbulence. The Irish working class will take their rightful place in the struggle for socialism in the coming years. United by the need to struggle over social and political questions, the working class alone can provide the only realistic lasting peace in a Socialist united Ireland linked by a free and voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain and a Socialist United States of Europe. □

WORKERS



TOGETHER

May Day Greetings from
Jeremy Dear
General Secretary,
(personal capacity)

NUJ

- Fight low pay
- Repeal the anti-union laws

**"Mayday greetings to all those
in struggle around the world"**

Reclaim the Workers Parties in the struggle
for Socialism.

**Workers of all
lands unite!**

From Edinburgh supporters

May Day Greetings from **Andover**
and **Salisbury Marxists** to
Socialist Appeal supporters
workers of the world unite!

May Day greetings

Harlow Trades Union Council

Sends May Day Greetings

For a Socialist, Peaceful, Democratic World!

May Day Greetings to *Socialist Appeal*
from **Dawn Stuart T&GWU GEC**
(personal capacity)

For Workers Unity to Defeat Sectarianism!

Greetings to Socialist Appeal on International Workers' Day

From **Nigel Pearce NUM NEC** (personal capacity)

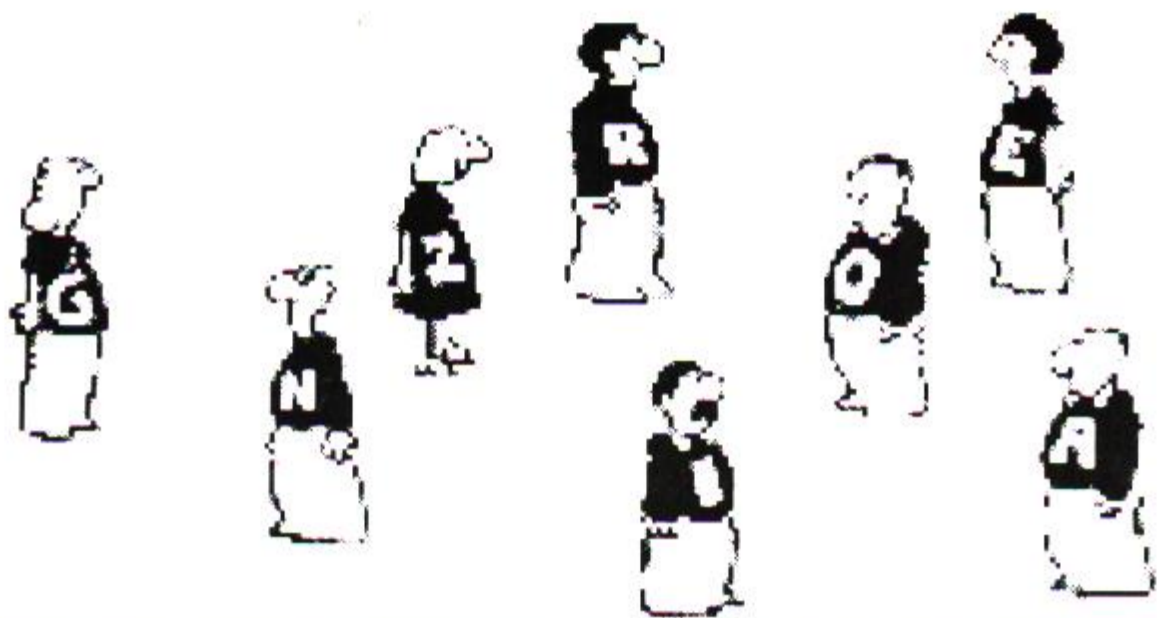
**Defeat Blairism, no to social partnership
Trade Unionists fight to reclaim Labour**

May day Greetings *Socialist Appeal* from
Phil Waker CWU NEC
(personal capacity)

**Repeal all anti-trade union laws
For a socialist Labour Government**

**CWU London 7
May Day Greetings**

For the repeal of all Tory anti-
trade union laws



London *Socialist Appeal* Supporters
send May Day Greetings to
workers in struggle everywhere!

Amicus Socialist Appeal supporters send May
Day greetings

Now, fight for a left executive committee!



Socialist Appeal supporters in UNISON
wish all workers in struggle Socialist
greetings

No to privatisation!
No to Blair's attacks on public services!



YFIS

May Day Greetings from
Youth For International
Socialism

Kent Supporters send
May Day Greetings to Socialist Appeal

Greetings from the editorial board of
Socialist Appeal to all readers and sellers.
Thank you for your hard work!

PETERBOROUGH TRADES UNION COUNCIL

May Day Greetings To *Socialist Appeal*!

- ★ Repeal the anti trade union laws.
- ★ Full employment rights for all workers.
- ★ For a £6 per hour minimum wage,
with no exemptions.

NO MORE PRIVATISATION!
RENATIONALISE THE RAILWAYS!

**Revolutionary May Day Greetings from
"Der Funke", Marxist journal in the German
labour movement.**

- ☆ Down with capitalism, imperialism and militarism.
- ☆ For a social regime change and socialist democracy all over the world.
- ☆ Long live working class internationalism!

www.derfunke.de

**May Day greetings to
Socialist Appeal from the
comrades of 'The
Struggle' in Pakistan**

**Forward to the socialist
revolution!**

editor Lal Khan

Red May Day greetings from the US!

Your comrades in the USA send their best wishes and solidarity to *Socialist Appeal* for May Day 2003. On this day of international working class and trade union unity and action we are certain that our British comrades and their paper will make another wonderful intervention with the ideas of genuine Marxism. Have a militant May Day! Chase Blair out of the Labor Party and back to his church!

from the birthplace of May Day,

Workers International League,
Socialist Appeal (US.)

www.socialistappeal.org



Fraternal greetings from the Marxists of "El Militante" in Argentina to the workers in struggle all over Latin America and around the world.

The future is ours!
Forward to the socialist federation of Latin America
and the defeat of imperialism

www.elmilitante-ar.org

**UNISON NORTH WEST ANGLIA
DISTRICT HEALTH BRANCH
Sends May Day Greetings to
*Socialist Appeal***

- ☆ **NO! To PFI and privatisation!**
- ☆ **YES! To a democratically controlled NHS free to all at the point of need!**
- ☆ **"THE RIGHT TO LIFE IS HIGHER THAN THE RIGHTS OF PRIVATE PROPERTY."**



In Defence of Marxism



Greetings to our readers
worldwide!

May Day is our day!

Falce Martello

Mensile marxista per i lavoratori e i giovani

Comrades!

In the revival of the class struggle that is now shaking Western Europe, the British working class has taken its right place. We witness it through the wonderful strikes of the public sector and of the firefighters and through the magnificent antiwar movement in the last months.

We are sure that the Socialist Appeal supporters will play a key role in the future struggles.

Revolutionary Mayday greetings,

Falce Martello Editorial Board
Monthly Italian Marxist paper

www.marxismo.net



The workers and youth from the Marxist paper "El Militante" send our revolutionary greetings to the comrades of Socialist Appeal. The work of the Marxists in Britain has been an inspiration for us. The important events that are taking place worldwide have shaken up millions of youth and workers. The opportunities for the ideas of Marxism are huge at this time, where the experience of millions of oppressed people increasingly identify with the programme of Scientific Socialism. Armed with such ideas they will become an unstoppable force.

Your success is our success!

Long live to the workers' international struggle

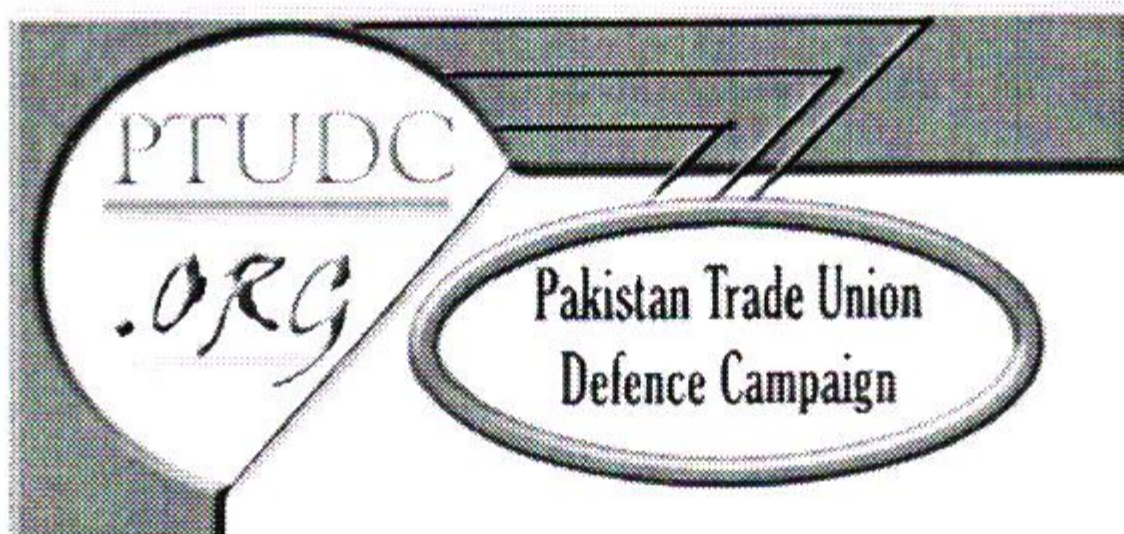
Editorial board of "El Militante"

www.elmilitante.org

SOCIALITISK
STANDPUNKT

Marxists in Denmark congratulate Socialist Appeal comrades for their hard work and wish them a revolutionary May Day.

www.marxist.dk



Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign. Workers of the world unite!



Revolutionary greetings from
Manzoor Ahmed MP (Pakistan)

Seize the future!
Forward to the world socialist
revolution!

Comrades of the Socialist Appeal,

With the favourable conditions developing in Britain, the Socialist Appeal is becoming a vital weapon in placing the socialist alternative before the workers and youth.

We in Mexico are confident that you will continue to fulfil this vital task in the struggle for a socialist society.

We want to send May Day revolutionary and militant greetings from the Marxist paper "Militante". We wish you all the success for the future in the struggle for genuine Marxism.

Comradely
Editorial board of "Militante", México.

www.militante.org

The Marxists of Venezuela and its newspaper "El Militante" send revolutionary greetings to the workers of the world

Your solidarity inspires us in the struggle to deepen the revolutionary process in Venezuela.



Workers are on the march!

May Day is the international day of working people. Revolutionary greetings from Greece

Comrades from Canada send militant greetings to Marxists in Britain.

For international Socialist revolution!

Israeli general strike called off... for now

by Fred Weston

Tension has been mounting between the Sharon government and the Israeli trade unions. It looked as if a general strike was about to be called, but last minute deals were being made to avert it. In the end the Histadrut leaders climbed down and called off the action, in response to a Ministry of Finance agreement to open negotiations with the unions.

The conflict is over the government's so-called "economic emergency programme" which includes severe attacks on the Israeli workers, in particular in the public sector. The problem was that the Minister of Finance, Netanyahu, had reached agreements with everyone except the trade unions. He had agreed it with the US administration, who had placed conditions in exchange for aid to Israel mainly on "security" issues. He also agreed the contents of the programme with the Bank of Israel. The Israeli economy is in recession and there is pressure to bring down interest rates, but again the Bank of Israel had posed its conditions before these cuts could be implemented. It wants serious cuts in public spending before it will implement any measures to "stimulate" the economy.

However, in spite of its harsh rhetoric the government revealed its weakness in all this process. Under pressure from the military it decided to increase military spending. It also gave in on salaries for policemen, and on other issues such as university fees and public transport fares. This shows that this is a weak gov-

ernment that is forced to satisfy the different forces that make it up, each with an electoral base to appease.

The only section it was holding firm on was the government workers! The plan is to sack workers and cut wages, as part of an overall target of cutting back the public sector. Netanyahu also added the further provocative measure of deciding to unilaterally rescind any agreement with the Histadrut. Thus a so-called government of the people of Israel (overwhelmingly populated by Jewish people) was seen as giving greater importance to US pressure than to that of the Jewish workers! But the workers were not prepared to stand for this. A series of strikes started among government workers and Amir Peretz, leader of the Histadrut union was forced to threaten a general strike.

And up until the last minute it seemed the strike would go ahead.

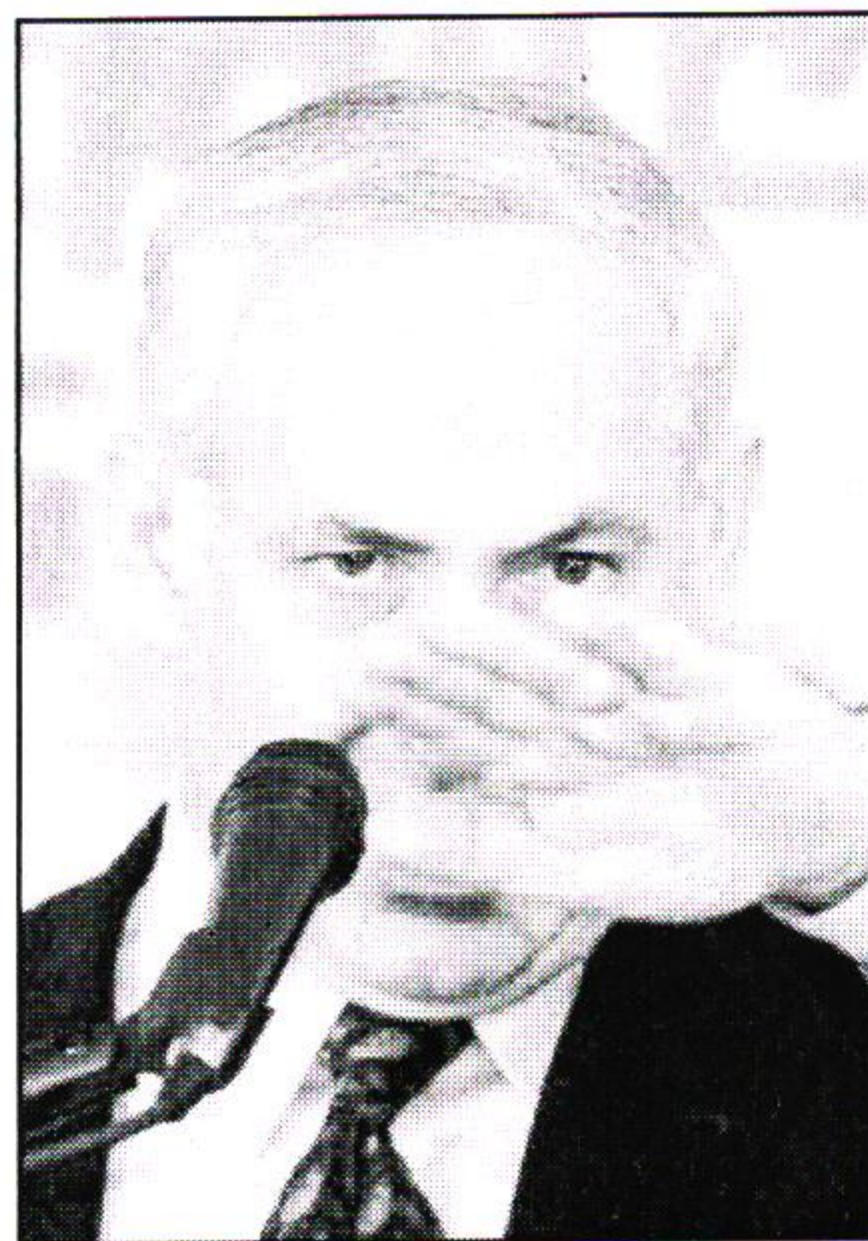
Under pressure the government backed off and opened negotiations, hoping to reach an agreement with the unions so as to be able to get the whole package passed through the

Knesset (Israeli parliament) by the middle of this month.

The government and the bourgeois media in Israel have been mounting up the pressure on the Histadrut leaders, reminding them of their "sense of responsibility". They are saying that the workers, especially the government workers, must share the burden of sorting out the economic crisis the country is in. It is the same song we have heard so many times. When times are good the capitalists make fat profits and share out the crumbs to the workers. When their own system goes into crisis, who is to pay? The workers of course.

Union leaders

The Histadrut leaders are behaving like typical bureaucrats. They believe they gone avoid a strike by reaching some kind of deal with the government. The point they ignore (or want to hide) is that



the government will come back again and again with these attacks. If they are forced this time round to make some concessions, they will keep the rest of their plans for the next budget. It will be a relentless and long term attack

on the workers of Israel. The economic situation dictates this road.

If this government fails to provide the programme the Israeli capitalists, and their US backers, want, then what will be the purpose of this government? It could lead to another government crisis, another reshuffle of the cabinet, a remixing of the coalition members and possible even early elections at some point. This has happened before, and we are back to another anti-working class budget.

As the *Jerusalem Post* recently commented, "if the policy package (however it turns out) is delayed too long, the guaranteed further deterioration of the economy will dictate even harsher measures than the current ones." The onslaught is inexorable, and it will be the workers of Israel who will be made to pay.

The Histadrut leaders will not be able to avoid this scenario. They may get away with it this time, but the pressure will continue to build up. For the time being the strike has been called off, but the conflict between the unions on the one side and the bosses and their government on the other will not go away. Over the coming period the class struggle will heat up in Israel and in the process the workers will draw the conclusion that they need trade union leaders who genuinely represent the interests of the workers of Israel. The task is to build an opposition inside the unions around which can be organised a struggle to transform the Israeli unions into genuine fighting organs of the working class. □

Iraqi museums, art and the values of the market place Capitalism -

A threat to culture

In the epoch of capitalist decay, the bourgeoisie is no longer capable of advancing human civilization, but the decay of the capitalist system threatens to poison every aspect of social life. The most negative effects of this decay are to be found in the world of culture.

by Alan Woods

The present period in the history of capitalism is characterised, among other things, by the absence of any great artistic creations, original thinking or philosophy. It is a period of extreme shallowness, intellectual poverty and spiritual emptiness - a period in which a George W. Bush can become the President of the most powerful nation on earth and Jeff Koons is considered to be an artist of stature.

The American pop-artist Jeff Koons may not represent the pinnacle of artistic genius, but his productions certainly make a lot of money. Recently somebody sold a statue of Koons called Michael Jackson and Bubbles which depicts the famous pop singer in the company of a monkey. The purchase price of this modern masterpiece was a mere \$250,000 in 1991, but it was later sold for \$5.6 million. Thus a shrewd investor made a handsome profit over just ten years for a modest outlay. With such profits to be made from "art", why should anyone in their right mind bother with productive investment?

Reporting on this outstanding achievement the London Evening Standard (March 28, 2003) wrote: "Contemporary pieces are by far the best performing sector of the art market at present." The recently published Zurich Art Market

Research Art and Antiques Index shows that "contemporary art" has doubled in value since 1996 and by 26 percent in 2002 alone. The interest of the capitalists in art increases in inverse proportion to its desire to invest in the development of industry, science and technology and to create things that are of real use to the majority of the human race.

There is a thriving international art market, where investors eagerly buy up anything available, often for the most absurd prices. For anyone interested there is even a website with a database including details of some 290,000 artists and worldwide auction records from 1700 onwards. Its economic department provides price indices, price levels by category, trend of bought-in lots, number of transactions, breakdown of artist's turnover between markets and between types of medium and sales compositions. There is much here to delight all those who love graphs, charts and diagrams, though nothing at all about art itself. Art is here presented as just another saleable commodity - like chewing gum, underpants or Iraqi oil.

Britain, which has lost most of its manufacturing base and become a largely parasitical rentier economy, now accounts for some 23 percent of the world contemporary art market,

because it produces a large quantity of shoddy productions of so-called art which, in the present speculative climate always find a buyer. In this way, one branch of parasitism feeds upon another.

A typical advertisement for this branch of "production" asks: "How would you like to turn £5760 into £7152 in the short term?" The short term is nowadays all that the capitalists are interested in. British capitalism is no longer capable of producing cars, but it has cornered the market in shoddy "art". What a devastating comment on the former workshop of the world! Is it any wonder that Britain has ended up as a mere satellite of American imperialism?

The biggest centre of this trade is, naturally, the USA, which accounts for no less than 56 percent of it. Needless to say, this huge expenditure on works of art has precious little to do with aesthetics. Most of the works thus purchased are not intended for display but as an economic investment - or, to call things by their right name - as speculation. They will not be seen by the public, and most of them will not even be seen by their purchasers, which tend to be the big banks and corporations.

Some of these works of art (the cheaper contemporary variety) will be leased for display in

company boardrooms and receptions. Most of the good stuff, however, will be locked up in the vaults of banks until the price is right to resell them. In the case of such works as Michael Jackson and Bubbles, this is probably the best place for them. But among the works of art that are thus disposed of are real treasures of world art. Priceless old masters that ought to be the common property of all humanity are concealed in a miser's hoard where they will never see the light of day. In this way the human race is being robbed of a precious part of its heritage.

The looting of Iraq

The most heartbreaking example of the way in which capitalism is destroying the cultural heritage of mankind is what has just happened in Iraq. This vast treasure house of human civilization dating back for over four thousand years has been systematically looted, smashed and destroyed as a result of the Anglo-American rape of Iraq.

The obscene orgy of plunder of some of the richest archaeological museums in the world must have filled all civilized men and women with a feeling of disgust and indignation. The criminals who performed these acts of vandalism were not just disorganised mobs. They acted

so quickly and their activities were so thorough that it is impossible to believe that they were just the usual city poor acting spontaneously. The museums were systematically targeted, not just in Baghdad but also in Babylon, the cradle of world civilization. The Sunday Mirror (April 13) reported:

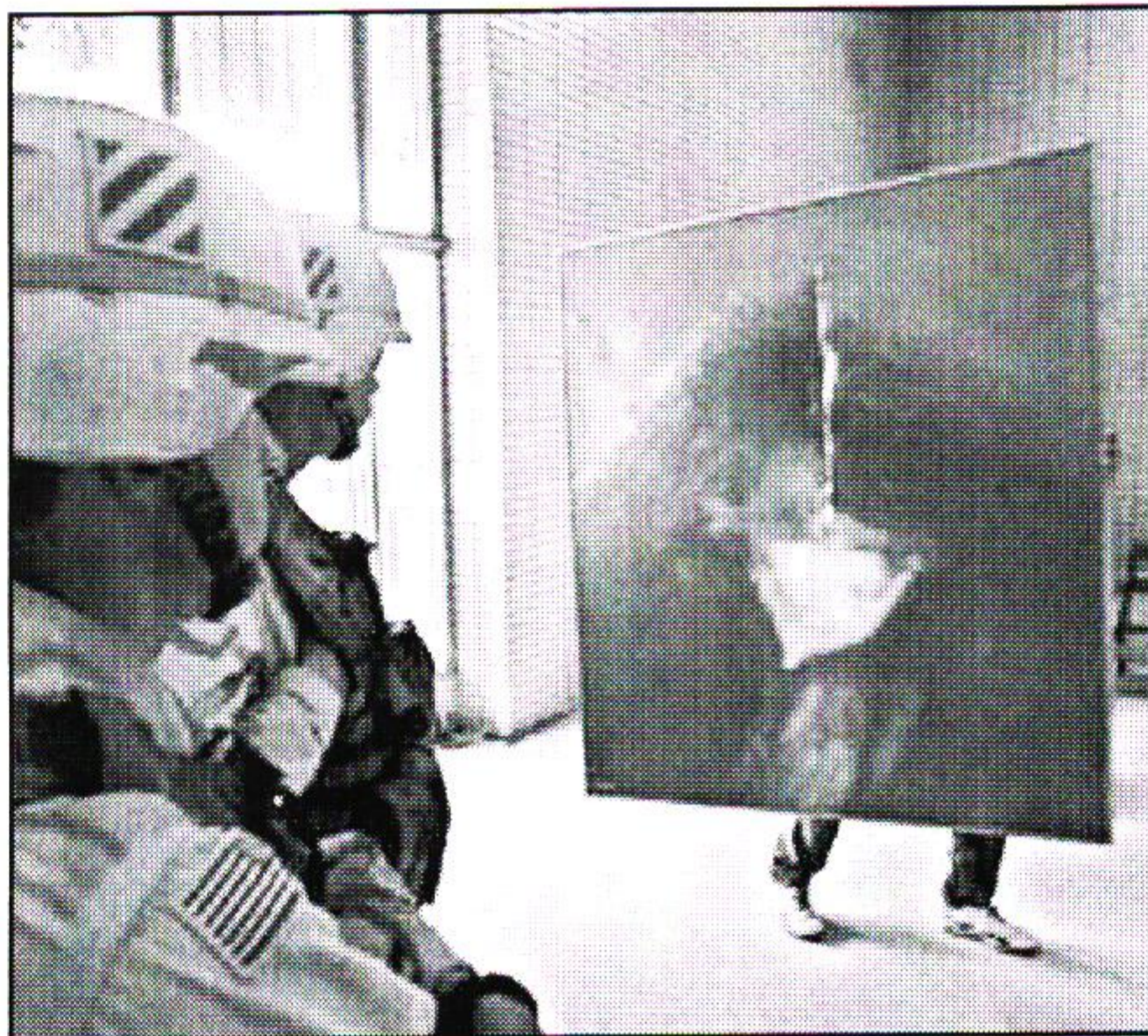
"Yesterday Nabhal Amin, deputy director of the National Museum of Iraq, wept after seeing mindless vandals loot and pillage the building.

"It housed nearly 200,000 priceless antiquities, spanning 8,000 years - irreplaceable sculptures, inscribed stone tablets and carved reliefs from half a dozen cultures, including the Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

"Mr. Amin broke down as he said: 'They have looted or destroyed 170,000 items from antiquity [...] They were worth billions of dollars.'

The dozen or so individuals who performed this act of cultural vandalism knew what they were doing. They were seen hauling away an ancient doorway, while others searched through items including a 4,000 year-old silver harp from the ancient kingdom of Ur. This was not blind looting but a purposeful action, planned in advance. Probably the items that were smashed were wrecked by other, less conscious elements, or damaged by these gangsters in their haste to get what they were looking for. It is unthinkable that this was the work of ordinary Iraqis. It is also clear that whoever these people were, they were highly organised and were aware of the value of the stolen objects and where to dispose of them. Their final destination must be outside the frontiers of Iraq.

Zainab Bahraini, an Iraqi-born professor of Mesopotamian art now living in the USA, warned: "Many of these pieces will disappear into international art markets and never be seen again. If



these mobs start going into other museums and looting them, the loss will be horrendous." And so it was. The curator of the museum in Babylon attempted to preserve his priceless treasures by bricking up the museum's entrance, but to no avail. The organised gang that broke into the museum cut a hole in the side of the building and looted everything except the heavy stone friezes they could not carry. The museum's curator wept at the spectacle of his desecrated museum, and the whole world will weep with him.

But some people will not weep. Some people will be very happy at this rape of an ancient civilization. The gangs that stripped the museums of Iraq and stole its ancient treasures were organised by a ring of international art dealers. These vultures were waiting for the opportunity of a lifetime once the forces of American imperialism had battered Iraq into submission. Their agents were prepared to act quickly, and were sure that the occupying troops would not interfere with their activities. Nobody would ask what they were doing. Nobody would interfere with the transportation of the stolen goods. Nobody would stop them at the frontier with Jordan. It was all so childish-simple!

It cannot have been easy to transport big statues without being detected. It is entirely possible that there was some kind of collusion on the part of the Americans. At the very least they were responsible for criminal negligence in the matter of looting, standing by while hospitals were smashed and robbed of their medicines. They displayed an attitude of callous indifference to the suffering of the Iraqi people they claimed they had come to liberate. And their contempt for the dignity of Iraq is also shown in their indifference to the destruction of its culture. These attitudes show, not the human concern of genuine liberators but the arrogance of imperial conquerors.

Rumsfeld and the freedom to loot

The most revealing comments came from Donald Rumsfeld. When asked about the looting and mayhem in Baghdad he replied with supreme tranquillity that freedom was a very fine thing, and that free people sometimes do bad things. Because they are free they may loot, rob, burn and smash museums and hospitals. But surely this is a small price to pay for the achievement of liberty? Mr. Rumsfeld's fervent commitment to free market princi-

ples, including the sacred right to loot, evidently do not extend to the oil business. American troops immediately moved to defend the ministry of oil and the ministry of defence, while abandoning hospitals, schools and museums to their fate. This little detail accurately reveals the values and priorities of the capitalist system everywhere.

To the capitalists art, culture and education have no intrinsic worth. They are only of interest insofar as they provide a source of enrichment to those who are already obscenely rich. If they can get away with closing schools and hospitals in Europe and the USA in order to save on taxes, they will cheerfully do so. If they can make people pay for public services like museums, libraries and art galleries, they will privatise them. If that does not provide enough money, they will close them.

The cultural world of the early 21st century is a desert in which everything is subordinated to a single principle - profit. Donald Rumsfeld is not perturbed about the disappearance of a large part of the common cultural heritage of humanity because he does not believe in common heritages but only in private property. Why should all those old statues be left to moulder in a museum in Baghdad when they can be put to profitable use by an efficient art dealer in New York?

For people like Rumsfeld works of art are only of interest when they become transformed into commodities. If he had his way the contents of every museum and art gallery in the world would be put on sale and given to the highest bidder. These are sound market principles. This is the stuff of which democracy is supposed to be made!

The fact that this peculiar brand of "democracy" signifies the untrammelled rule of a handful of giant corporations run by tiny unelected

cliques of billionaires is unimportant. The fact that these "free market principles" mean the systematic dismantling of all the gains made by the working class over the past 100 years and a return to the dark ages is a trifling detail. The fact that these "principles" constitute a threat to culture and civilized values is to be disregarded. All that matters is that Capital rules and is allowed to carry out the plunder of the whole world without let or hindrance.

Bush's morality

In the ancient civilizations of the Middle East there were many barbarous features - though never as barbarous as the conduct of our present day imperialists. They worshipped barbarous and bloodthirsty gods. Among these was the god Moloch who demanded a constant stream of human sacrifices, usually little children. Devout Christians like George W. Bush and his lieutenant Donald Rumsfeld take this as proof of the moral superiority of their religion, which they now seek to foist on the people of Iraq through the services of an army of evangelical missionaries from the Bible Belt of the USA.

We doubt very much that these missionaries will receive a warm welcome in Iraq, despite the fact that they will be well equipped with money and food with which they hope to bribe the hungry population into changing their religious allegiances. The people of Iraq have had plenty of opportunity to observe the moral superiority of Christianity as practiced by Bush and Rumsfeld and will have drawn the following conclusion: that this is the most bloodthirsty, the cruellest and most barbarous creed that the world has ever seen.

In the last twelve years the barbarous economic blockade of Iraq killed over a million children. Nobody knows how many innocent men, women and children have been killed in the recent fighting. But it is



clear that many more will die in the coming months as a result of the destruction by bombing of what was left of the infrastructure. In comparison with the conduct of the American imperialists in Iraq, Moloch seems like a benevolent deity.

The real religion of George W. Bush and the class he typifies so well is not Christianity, but the worship of Mammon, the god of wealth. They are willing to sacrifice any number of men, women and children to this pitiless god. This is a religion that has no heart, no soul and no mind. It is entirely dedicated to the piling up of riches in this world. The next one will then take care of itself, for a rich man is said to be pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

Capitalist decline

In its period of ascent the bourgeoisie played a progressive role in developing the productive forces and pushing

the bounds of civilization and culture forward. But in the period of its senile decay, the capitalists are no longer interested in developing the productive forces. The narrow limits of capitalism cannot even contain the productive forces that have been already created. The world economy is in crisis because there are too many cars, too much steel, too many shoes, too many computers. In a world where 35 million people are starving, farmers in Europe and the USA are being paid not to produce food, because there is said to be too much grain, meat and milk.

The wars that constantly devastate one country after another are a symptom that the whole system is in a deep crisis and is rent by insoluble contradictions. Fault lines and cracks are appearing everywhere in the capitalist world order. In a system that sets no value on human life, that is wholly indifferent to the sufferings of millions of little children, what chance is there for

culture? Who can talk seriously about the beauties of art, music and literature, when we are everywhere surrounded by barbarism?

We are in the midst of a general regression of what used to be called civilization, and this is the inevitable result of the fact that the present socio-economic system has outlived its historical reason to exist. Civilization is being held back by two gigantic fetters on progress - private ownership of the means of production and the nation state. But the bourgeoisie is not capable of recognising that it has become a reactionary barrier to human progress. It is clinging to power like a dying man clinging to life. In so doing, it has condemned the world to a prolonged period of convulsions, wars and chaos. All its attempts to save itself are ultimately doomed to fail. Its decline is irreversible, but it nevertheless threatens to drag society down with it.

At the start of the 21st century, the bourgeoisie has become completely reactionary, rotten, corrupt and degenerate. This fact is written on the faces of its foremost representatives in the government of the United States of America. The actions of the class of people who now rule the world constitute an appalling threat to the future of human culture and civilization. The events in Iraq have exposed this fact with the utmost clarity.

The struggle against imperialism and capitalism has now become the struggle to defend the gains of human culture against a destructive force that threatens to crush them underfoot in order to satisfy its insatiable greed. The working class cannot be indifferent to the fate of culture. This is the foundation upon which the future socialist edifice will be built. We cannot allow the bourgeoisie to wreck it! The accumulated gains of 4,000 years of human civilization must be defended, valued, treasured and preserved for the benefit of our children

and grandchildren.

This is a hundred times truer of the youth. The youth has more to lose than anyone else from the depredations of capitalism. We must halt the assault on education and demand a decent and human education for everyone. The bourgeoisie's monopoly on culture and education must be broken! Culture is for everyone, not for the enrichment of a tiny handful of wealthy parasites. Young people must understand that their future demands active participation in the struggle for socialism. It is impossible to be neutral!

The war in Iraq has aroused

the broadest layers of society. It has had an effect not only on the working class but also on the students, intellectuals and artists who have demonstrated their revulsion at an unjust war. Now the war is over. But the struggle has only just begun. It is necessary to draw the conclusions.

It is imperative that all those who cherish art and culture should realise the seriousness of this threat to everything they hold dear. Artists, musicians, writers and intellectuals also have a role to play in the struggle for a better future. Capitalism, with its soulless creed of "market values", is the negation of the creative

spirit that moves all art and culture. The dictatorship of the big monopolies is throttling the potential for the free development of human creativity, about which it cares nothing.

The best representatives of the artists, writers and musicians are struggling to assert their right to freedom of expression. Alongside the moribund "official" art that shows all the symptoms of decay of the system that produced it, new trends will emerge that express the spirit of revolt of the new generation. The anti-war movement has aroused them to action. But meaningful action requires a serious programme

and perspective.

Art can never be truly free under capitalism. The new tendencies in art, literature and music can only establish themselves firmly on the basis of a new society, freed from the stranglehold of profiteering, greed and egotism - a society in which men and women can relate to each other as free human beings. The name of this new society is socialism. It is time to set aside all fear and hesitation and unite with the working class in the revolutionary fight to transform society and build a new world that is fit for humans to live in.

The March Of US Imperialism

by David Mitchell

Having watched the latest episodes of the escapades of the Americans, and the British in Iraq, on BBC News, I became disturbed by the latest reported words of George Bush.

According to Bush, Syria also supports terrorism and has weapons of mass destruction. The lie is now directed against another small Middle Eastern country that does not share the US view of the world. It appears that any nation at the beginning of the 21st century that opposes the USA is open to invasion and the jack boot of US military intervention, to show them the "error of their ways". In other words the US ruling class is showing it's teeth for all to see. You either serve our interests or you will be smashed and turned into a satellite colony of the US, and your people, and your resources will be plundered to serve the interests of International big business.

British imperialism is now only a minor force, in the scale of world affairs, and because Blair and the "Labour" leadership have completely capitulated in the face of the ruling class, they hope that by supporting the indefensible actions of

US imperialism that British multi-nationals will be thrown some of the crumbs. From the way events have panned out so far this has not happened, yet Blair, devoid of any perspectives, other than those of serving the interests of capitalism is leading the United Kingdom down what is turning out to be a blind alley, as far as the interests of British Multi-nationals are concerned. As has been predicted by our analysis of this war from the start, the American ruling class intend keeping all the spoils of Iraq to themselves.

Worldwide Opposition

The opposition to the war in Iraq has been phenomenal. There have been mass demonstrations in one country after the other, including the United Kingdom, and the United States, yet before the dust has settled in Iraq the main spokesman of imperialism Mr George Bush is already making noises about military force against other countries in the Middle East. This would be a dangerous, and disastrous development for the civilian population, as it has been in Iraq, where thousands of innocent men, women and children have been killed and maimed, in the name of "liberty

and freedom".

The ideas of Marxism are desperately needed by the peoples of the middle East to equip them in the task of defeating capitalism and liberating the people from the various pro-imperialist regimes that currently dominate the region.

What we are seeing is the terminal decline of capitalism on a worldwide scale. The ruling class has no way out of their impasse, and their only answer in their dying days seems to be to go into countries, with the excuse that they harbour and support terrorists and possess weapons of mass destruction, when the real reason is to open up new markets for the imperialists to exploit. That is what we really see here. "The continuation of politics by other means". What cannot be conquered economically will be conquered by force. That is the true meaning of the capitalist system at the beginning of the 21st century. War, war and more war. The actions of the US in this present period risk the prospect of the complete annihilation of the human race, because the opposition around the world will only increase.

It is the task of Marxists to explain to the working class, that what we need is to build a mass revolutionary party that

can empower the masses to transform society along socialist lines. That is the only hope for all of humanity. Capitalism has only lasted as long as it has, because of the bankruptcy of our current leadership, and that missing "subjective factor", the revolutionary party of the masses. I call on all trade unionists to go into the Labour Party and re-claim it for the working class. Go into your constituencies and kick out the Blairite clique, and re-claim the Labour Party for the people, which it was elected to represent.

We also have the task of building the ideas of Marxism across the world, from the Middle East to Latin America and beyond. Every country now is at an impasse because of the inability of capitalism to play any sort of progressive role in society.

The only end to wars and conflict is the end of capitalism

For the democratic workers' control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Production for the needs of the many, and not the few

Forward to the Socialist transformation of Society in the Middle East and internationally

Class War Heats Up in the US

As we have explained many times, the war on Iraq is nothing but an extension of the war on working people and youth here in the US. It is being fought in the interests of the rich capitalists in this country - the very same people responsible for

the power brown-outs, Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing, 50,000 workplace deaths per year, 465,000 jobs lost in the first quarter of this year, no universal health-care plan, an almost non-existent social safety net, and on and on.

by John Peterson

These people cannot be trusted to work in the interests of the American people as a whole, let alone the Iraqis. And although the formal war on Iraq appears to be winding down, it is clear that the occupation and "peace" in Iraq will not be as smooth as many would believe. There are still battles to be fought, and many problems to face in a world rent apart by the arrogant bullying of the US imperialists.

Ordinary working Americans and youth are the ones fighting and dying in this war. Their interests are not being served here at home or abroad. The rich are getting richer, while the poor get poorer and are sent to war. Many questions will be asked by those young men and women who were sent abroad to kill and be killed. Most troops interviewed on TV express their desire to get back home as quickly as possible. They have done their duty, and are now eager to get on with their lives and make their way in the world. But what kind of world will they be facing when they return? Those who were not killed or maimed in the war, may have long-term health problems as a result of the oil fires, radioactive depleted uranium ammunition, residue from biological and chemical weapons left over from the first Gulf War, and vaccinations they received before shipping out to war.

According to Dr. Doug Rokke, former director of the Army's depleted uranium (DU) project. "People are sick over there already." It's not just uranium. You've got all the complex

organics and inorganics [compounds] that are released in those fires and detonations. And they're sucking this in.... You've got the whole toxic wasteland." In what can only be described as astonishing, roughly one third of Gulf War I veterans are classified as disabled - that's 260,000 people!

Traumatized

Others will be psychologically traumatized by the things they saw and did in Iraq. In addition to the well-documented killings of innocent men, women, and children in Iraq, rumors of murder, rape, and looting by British and American forces abound. Embedded journalists have reported that the bright-eyed and fresh faced kids that crossed the

first sand berms with are now callous and de-sensitized. According to one US soldier, "The Iraqis are sick people and we are the chemotherapy. I am starting to hate this country. Wait till I get hold of a friggin' Iraqi. No, I won't get hold of one. I'll just kill him." These experiences have an effect which lasts long after the conflict is over. It is chilling to know that several Afghan War veterans have been charged with violently murdering their wives upon their return. It is also a little known fact that more Vietnam veterans committed suicide after the war than were killed during the conflict!

Those hoping to put their job skills to use in the civilian sector when they return to the US, or who wish to raise families and provide their children with healthcare, education, and

opportunity, will be in for a serious shock. Education is being gutted, quality jobs are being slashed, pension plans are evaporating, and healthcare is more expensive than ever. The alternating euphoria and pessimism over the progress of the war has led to the incredible see-sawing of the financial markets, as investors try and guess what the post-war world will bring. The relatively quick end to the campaign will result in public attention very quickly focusing on the home front and on the economy - and Bush knows that this is the key to his being re-elected next year. So while his overall ratings are still quite high (though nowhere near as high as his father had in 1991), his rating on the economy is far lower.

The economic picture remains grim - and is perhaps worse than when the war began. Executives at top U.S. companies expect a weaker economic performance this year than last, and many believe they will need to reduce payrolls over the next six months. Some economists are saying that the economy may have already slipped back into recession. Investment brokers Morgan Stanley predict a worldwide recession, and the key to any recovery - a recovery in profitability is nowhere to be seen. As one Wall Street analyst put it: "There are people saying now that the war is over we need to look at the economy and it looks pretty sick." Another was quoted as saying, "We've got to start concentrating back on the fundamentals and they, certainly whilst the war has been on, have been deteriorating." Another

Oakland police fire rubber bullets and wooden pellets against anti-war protesters on 17 April



said, "The fundamentals we are talking about here are largely not war-related (and) therefore we continue to be very concerned". This pessimism, coming even as a few hundreds of Iraqis dance upon the toppled statue of Saddam Hussein in downtown Baghdad, is a clear signal that Bush's hopes for a quick and easy war, followed by a booming economy are ill-founded.

In a previous article, we explained that the idea that the US ruling class is interested in bringing peace and "democracy" to Iraq is a farce and a lie. What we have in the US is a paper democracy - formally everyone is "equal". But in practice, what we have is democracy for the rich. Now even those basic "freedoms" which most Americans take for granted are under attack. Among the most basic rights outlined in the US Constitution are the rights to free expression and assembly. However, with the ongoing war on Iraq, and with the economic situation in the US steadily deteriorating, the state is showing its true face. Far from bringing peace, stability, and "freedom" to the people of the world, Bush and co. are accelerating the process of instability, increasing repression, and waging an increasingly open war against working people and the youth right here in the US.

So while the American military machine kills thousands of soldiers and civilians in Iraq, the police here at home are intensifying their repression of the anti-war and labor movement. It seems the successes of the US military (in which the most powerful military force on earth is pummeling a brave but hopelessly disadvantaged enemy) have inspired the US police to do likewise against peaceful protesters. In New York City, police have taken to arresting and intimidating lawful protesters just for supporting those engaged in civil disobedience. It

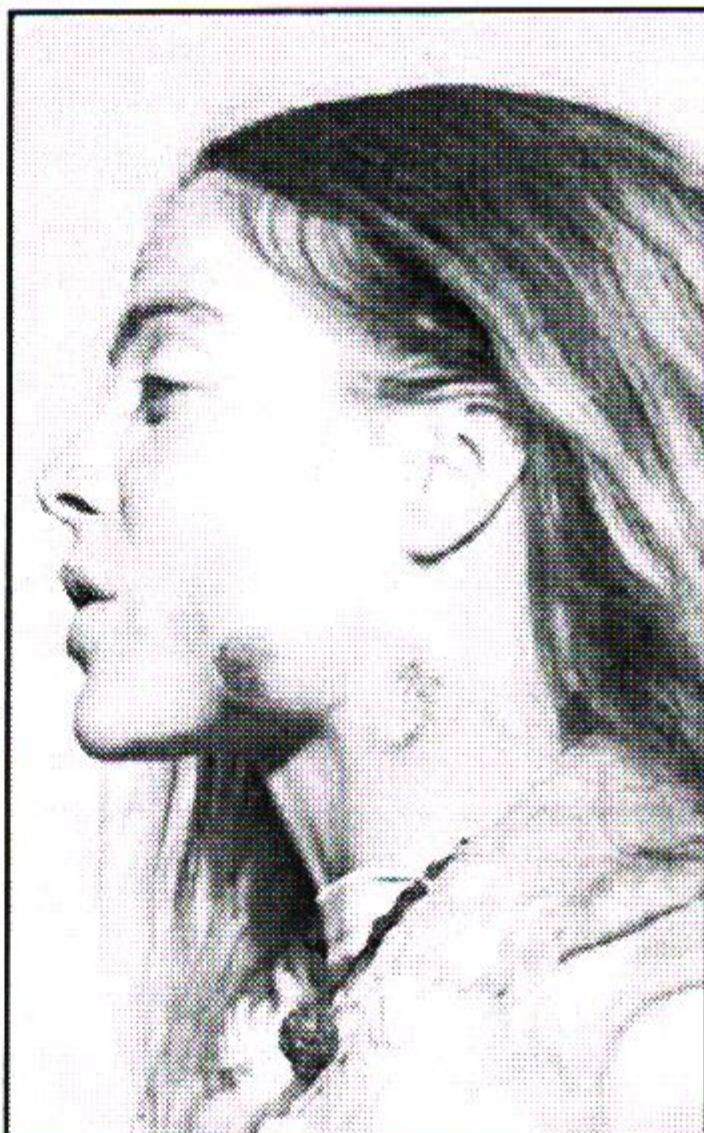
is clear that the ruling class and its police force want to discourage people from feeling confident and safe while protesting, and see the need to nip the protest movement in the bud.

It is no surprise then that confrontations with police at the anti-war demonstrations which have raged since before the war began have been increasingly violent. It is therefore worth briefly revisiting the basic ideas of Marxism and the state as outlined by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*.

The state

The state is a repressive force that exists to defend the interests of one class in society over all others. The police act as the guard dogs of the ruling class and its state. In the US, the state is the defender of the capitalist class - it defends the power and profits of the tiny minority which exploits and represses the rest of society. But in times of "peace", the police are able to dupe the majority of the population into thinking that they are there to "serve and protect" the population as a whole. However, when the class war sharpens, as is

Protestors injured by police weapons



happening on a world scale, the openly repressive function of the state becomes ever more apparent to millions of people. Most people do not learn from books and theory - but a crack on the skull from a "friendly" police officer is an easily understood lesson which will not be soon forgotten. This was the lesson learned by hundreds of unarmed and peaceful protesters when on Monday, April 7, police in Oakland, California opened fire with rubber bullets, sandbags, and concussion grenades. They also fired teargas - technically a chemical weapon - "on their own people".

The San Francisco area has been at the forefront of the anti-war movement in the US. Massive demonstrations were held before the war started, and once the shooting war actually began, daily protests erupted, involving thousands of people, with over 2,000 arrests. It is no accident that some of the sharpest confrontations with the capitalist state have occurred in the very same area where the conflict between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the PMA association of bosses (backed by the capitalist class and its gov-

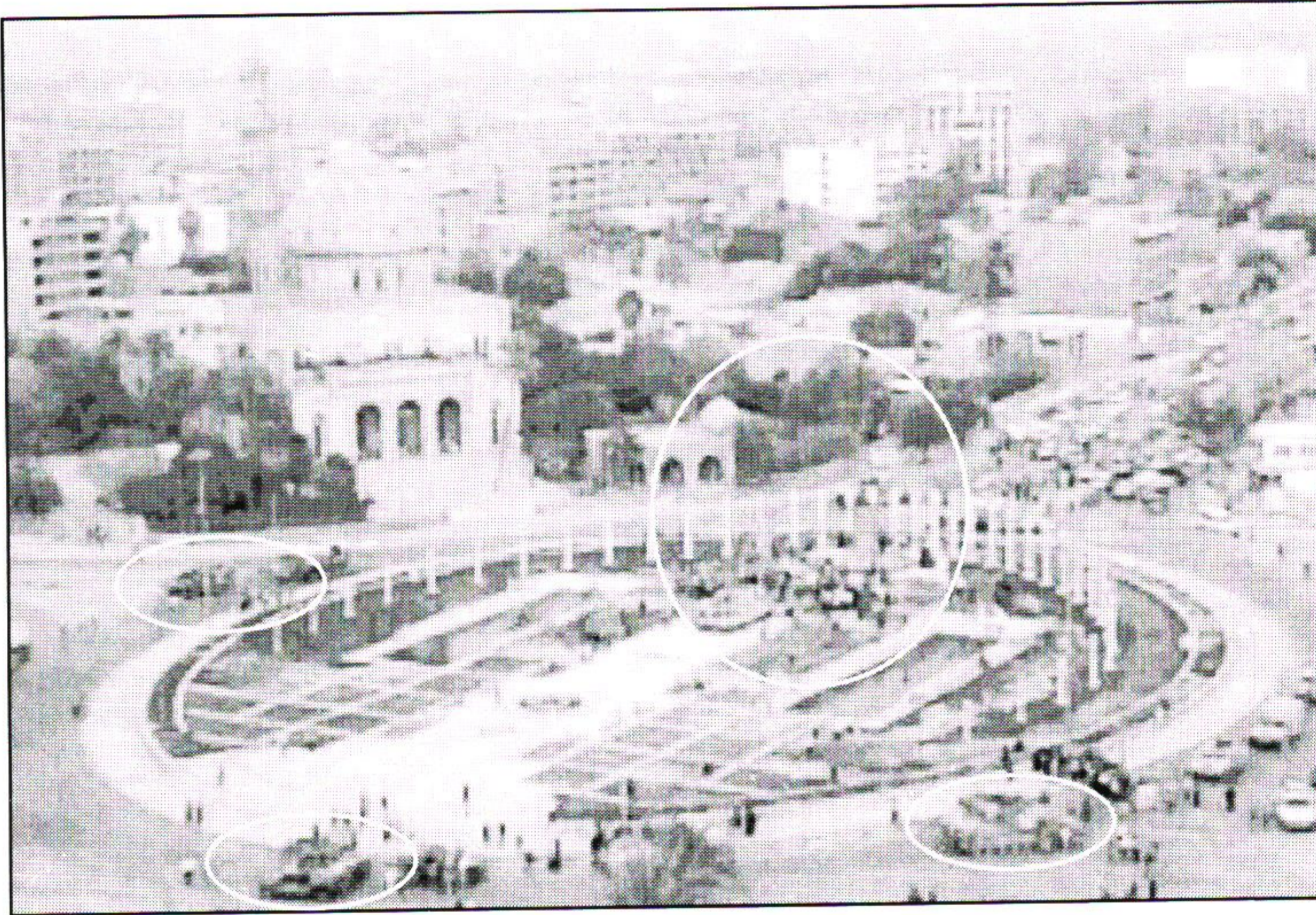
ernment) took place. Several longshoremen who weren't even participating in the picket were "accidentally" shot when the police opened fire on the crowd which was protesting the war-profiteering of at least one company using the port. American President Lines was targeted as a result of its transport of military material to the Iraqi war zone.

Six longshoremen were treated by paramedics and at least one was expected to be taken to a hospital. "I was standing as far back as I could," said longshoreman Kevin Wilson. "It was very scary. All of that force wasn't necessary." Trent Willis, a business agent for the ILWU, said angrily that dockworkers were leaving the docks after the incident. "They shot my guys. We're not going to work today. The cops had no reason to open up on them."

Repression

Although the official excuse for the attack was that protesters were throwing rocks at police, several eyewitnesses say they saw nothing of the sort. According to Ken Morgan, an anti-war and labor activist with ILWU local 6: "I saw a young woman beside me, who was doing nothing provocative get hit by a wooden bullet. I saw the cops firing concussion rounds for no reason. When they attacked us at the SSA gate they gave a '3 minute warning' to disperse, and 60 seconds later opened fire. I saw a man with a head wound, from one of these projectiles laying on the ground in pain, between two cops, and not receiving any medical attention. I saw a young man, with welts and gashes on his back, from these rounds. Do me a favor everyone. Never, never, use the words, 'brave' and 'police' in the same sentence. Those two words are a contradiction in terms. Could I ask





A picture paints a 1,000 words. A different angle on the infamous TV pictures of Iraqis celebrating the fall of Saddam.

Small circles = US tanks

Large circle = small crowd pulling down Saddam's statue

another favor? Please don't tell me Democrat wooden bullets aren't as bad as Republican wooden rounds. Concerning that 'great friend of labor' Jerry Brown. Being a veteran I understand the concept of 'command responsibility'. As Mayor, he is the 'commander in chief' of Oakland's armed force... To all of you in Local 6, Mayor J. Brown, who spoke at the last Local 6 convention, should be banned from Local 6 property, and any union gathering from now on. If I catch Jerry Brown, in any of Local 6's building, he will be physically ejected."

With the election year coming up, many workers are drawing advanced conclusions from the economic, political, social, and military instability all around us. While it is a topic for a

future article, it is clear that the discontent of the labor movement at the spineless subservience of the Democratic Party to big business is growing. Once again we have to emphasize that the war on Iraq is part and parcel of the war on workers here in the US. As one sign on a recent demo very aptly put it, "the war on terror is a war on us".

Anti-war movement

But the fact that the anti-war movement has continued despite the pressure to "support the troops" by not opposing the war is significant. During WWI you could be arrested for even writing a letter to the editor against the war. The strength of the working class is such that the bosses cannot come out

in blatant reaction. They are still forced to keep up some semblance of "democracy" and "freedom". We should also keep in mind that the war on Iraq and the tearing up of all the norms of international relations is a sign of weakness - not of strength. The capitalist class would much rather make their profits and exploit the masses with a smile on their face through "peace", and the "rule of law". This is what they were able to do under Clinton, and they made a handsome profit. But with the world economy in such a mess, the inter-imperialist rivalries have sharpened. The fight for markets and spheres of influence has become a life or death game, with all the imperialists trying to ease the innumerable contradictions

building up at home.

In this epoch of wars, revolutions, and counter-revolutions, it is truly comic to see Democratic presidential candidate Dean Kucinich propose a cabinet-level "Department of Peace" to balance the Departments of "Defense" and State. The department would "advocate non-violence and peace education, and would support international disarmament treaties and help resolve potentially violent conflicts around the world". He imagines that it is possible to legislate peace! This kind of liberal pacifism will not get us a single step closer towards ridding the world of war, poverty, hunger, and oppression. Only the end of the exploitative capitalist system can lay the basis for this. The class lines are being drawn, and intensification of the class struggle is very much on the agenda as the reality of the economic and social crisis dawns on millions of workers and young people. They are increasingly searching for answers to their questions, and more importantly, are already acting to fight back against the attacks of the ruling class.

What is needed is an orientation to the mass organizations of the working class and a socialist program for the revolutionary transformation of society. Around such a program, the workers and youth of the world can unite in the fight against the root cause of imperialist war - capitalism.

Join us in the fight for a better world!

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A year after the coup

The red tide floods Bolivar Avenue once again



Celebration of the first anniversary of the insurrection that defeated the coup on April 13

by Jorge Martin

Hundreds of thousands gathered in Bolivar Avenue, Caracas, on April 13 to commemorate the first anniversary of the popular uprising that defeated the reactionary coup of April 11, 2002. The different events that have been taking place a year after the coup give us a clear picture of the current balance of forces between the classes in Venezuela.

The mis-named Democratic Coordination, the opposition umbrella body, had called a march on April 11 in Eastern Caracas that was supposed to end with a mass rally. However the event was such a failure that not even the opposition media felt they could report on it.

This is a faithful reflection of the mood within the reactionary opposition in Venezuela. The oligarchy, the bosses, the bank

owners and the bureaucracy of the PDVSA oil company, with the support and advice of US imperialism, and its lesser ally Spain, carefully organized the oil sabotage and bosses lock-out of December-January. And they failed, again. The fight back of the people and especially of the rank and file oil workers defeated their attempt to oust Chavez. The defeat of that attempted coup (because those actions cannot be described in any other way) plunged the reactionary forces into a state of deep demoralization. Their organizations are split and their social base has demobilized.

On the other side, those who support the revolutionary process gathered in a mass rally in the Bolivar Avenue in Caracas, which was the closing event to four days of debates and meetings within the frame-

work of the Bolivarian Revolution World Solidarity Gathering (see <http://www.forobolivariano.org.ve/>). The red colour of the revolution once again flooded the centre of the capital city. The revolutionary people are perfectly aware of the significance of having defeated reaction twice, and particularly of the heroic feat of having defeated a military coup in less than 48 hours.

But it would be wrong to draw the conclusion that reaction has been buried forever. They have suffered a serious blow and it will take some time for them to recover their ability to mobilize. However, no ruling class abandons the stage of history without fighting to defend its privileges.

The most influential sections of the opposition do not have much confidence in being able

to oust president Chavez through the recall referendum that is planned to take place after August. Many of them think that the referendum will never take place and others fear that if it were to take place they would lose it, thus strengthening even more the mandate of the president (who has already won 7 different elections since 1998).

Faced with this situation the oligarchy and imperialism are following a two-track strategy; on the one hand sabotage of the economy and on the other an attempt to provoke a conflict on the border with Colombia that could justify a foreign intervention.

On the economic front it is clear that the (parasitical and pro-imperialist) Venezuelan bourgeoisie, not satisfied with having caused losses of more than 7 billion dollars during the bosses' lockout and their sabotage of the oil industry in December, is now trying to make workers pay the bill for all this. In the private sector there are more and more cases of bankruptcies, forced unpaid holidays, non-payment of wages, bonuses and other benefits, price increases, hoarding and a general disruption of economic activity on the part of the big industrial groups.

The government has taken a number of measures, such as price controls, suspension of for-



foreign exchange while control mechanisms are introduced, the holding of popular markets and, more recently, the retroactive freezing of rents to the levels they had been before the bosses' lock-out.

Despite all these measures the bosses continue to hit the working class. But the workers have started to fight back. Examples of this fight-back are still limited in numbers but nevertheless they are very significant. In a whole series of factories up and down the country the workers have taken the initiative, organised democratic unions and even occupied factories forcing bosses to resume production and pay unpaid wages and benefits.

In other cases the threat of occupation by the workers has been enough to convince the bosses to back-track, as has been the case in some car plants in the state of Carabobo. So far, none of these factories has

started to produce under workers' control, though the discussion about the example of factories running under workers' control in Argentina is quite widespread in the Venezuelan labour movement. But on April 13, after more than 8 months of struggle and after having exhausted all legal channels, workers at the textile factory Fenix, in San Juan de los Morros, in the state of Guárico, occupied the factory and decided to start producing under workers' control. They also made an appeal to president Chavez (who has, on several occasions come out in favour of workers occupying factories closed by the bosses) to supply them with raw materials (see <http://www.aporrea.org/dameverbo.php?docid=6193>).

In the current climate of heightened political discussion in the country, and after the example of workers' con-

trol in the country's most important industry, the state-owned PDVSA oil company, these actions could spread like wildfire, putting into question the bourgeois right to private ownership of the means of production.

A new trade union confederation

In this situation a number of steps have been taken to set up a new trade union confederation to replace the rotten treacherous leadership of the CTV. In our opinion if there had been a serious campaign on the basis of a plan of struggle addressing the current problems of the workers, it would have been possible to overthrow the corrupt, illegitimate and treacherous leadership of the CTV. The example of the comrades of "Topo Obrero" ("Workers' Mole") in Lara (where they have defeated the corrupt bureaucracy in the sugar cane fields and processing plants, in the Convencaucho tyre factory and in a number of other important unions) and other examples of democratic unions in the country, are proof that this would have been possible. However, now that important sections of the country's unions have taken the step to set up a new trade union confederation, which will probably organise a majority of the workers, the most advanced sections of the Venezuelan trade union movement should participate in this.

However, the new trade union confederation is coming into existence with a number of weaknesses. The whole discussion that led to the proclamation of the new trade union -which took place at the Caracas National Theatre on April 5- was mainly about the composition of the leadership, and not about the declaration of principles, statutes or plans of action.

In any case, in spite of these weaknesses of the new

National Workers' Union (UNETE), the founding meeting took place with a show of enthusiasm that clearly reflected the new mood of confidence which exists within the Venezuelan trade union movement. The political climate amongst workers is what will guarantee the success of the new trade union, but it will also be necessary to wage a serious battle within this union so that it adopts firm principles of class struggle, trade union democracy and independence from the state.

Conflict with Colombia

In the last few months there has been a series of rumours and accusations, and even downright armed clashes on the border with Colombia, all aimed at provoking an escalation of the conflict. Representatives of the Colombian government, the Colombian paramilitary forces (AUC) and the reactionary Venezuelan opposition, have all been insisting, once again, that the Venezuelan army is directly or indirectly supporting the Colombian FARC guerrillas, that the FARC have bases on Venezuelan territory and even that the Venezuelan Armed Forces are involved in supporting the FARC on the Colombian side of the border. All these allegations are totally false. The aim is clear: to accuse the Venezuelan government of "supporting terrorism", thus spreading the Colombian conflict to the whole region, so as to justify a foreign imperialist intervention in Venezuela when this is deemed to be feasible (directly or by proxy with Colombian troops).

This is not likely to happen in the short term, since the US are aware of the fact that a direct military intervention against the revolutionary process in Venezuela would not be an easy task. However this is an option that sections of the Colombian paramilitaries,



The only guarantee for the defence of the revolutionary process is to deepen it. And this is a task in which the workers must play a leading role.

the Venezuelan opposition and even the Colombian state apparatus are already preparing for.

Thus the current situation is characterised on the one hand by the demoralisation of the social base of reaction that has been forced to change its tactics, but which still continues to conspire against the government, and on the other hand by a deepening of the revolutionary process and particularly of the consciousness of the masses that the working class has entered the scene in a decisive way.

The main weakness of the revolutionary movement is still, as we have pointed out in recent articles, twofold. There is, on the one hand, the lack of a national democratic body that could coordinate the revolutionary organisations and allow the movement to generalise its experiences, give itself a democratic leadership, and on the other there is a degree of confusion regarding the aims of the revolution, particularly at the level of its leadership.

The political project of Chavez and his most trusted people is to develop the national productive forces in opposition to imperialist domination. In order to do this they insist on the development of cooperatives and collaboration with the so-called "productive" sections of the employers. The World Solidarity Gathering was largely dominated by the most reformist section of the so-called anti-globalisation movement (Ignacio Ramonet, ATTAC, etc), which defends a "new", more "humane" and regulated kind of capitalism. It even included a forum on "the role of the employers in the process of change" (see <http://www.forobolivariano.org.ve/imagenes/TallerEmpresarial.doc>)

But the whole experience of the revolutionary process in Venezuela so far has clearly shown that the decisive sections of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie are directly linked to multinational capital and imperialism and cannot tolerate the implementation of even the most

moderate reforms in the country, since these would undermine their most vital interests. The advances of the revolutionary process so far have left the economic base of the country almost untouched. The Venezuelan ruling class (which has very little to do with Venezuela) will use any levers that are left at their disposal to sabotage and destroy the revolutionary process. Therefore, to leave the banks, the means of production (particularly the processing and distribution of food) and the mass media in private hands, means leaving arms in the hands of an enemy that has already shown its willingness to use them against the revolutionary process.

The only guarantee for the defence of the revolutionary process is to deepen it. And this is a task in which the workers must play a leading role. The PDVSA oil workers have already shown that the Venezuelan working class is able to run and control one of the world's 50

largest companies with a high degree of computerisation and technological sophistication. After that experience there is no doubt that workers are indeed capable of running the country's economy under their own democratic control, that same economy which the oligarchy is attempting to sabotage. It is only the labour movement that is capable of doing this, but it must do it independently and with its own organisations. In order to deepen the revolution we must fight for workers' control of PDVSA, the nationalisation of the banks and the democratic management of their resources for the benefit of the many, the social control of the mass media, and the occupation and nationalisation under workers' control of the private companies that are sabotaging the economy. The Venezuelan revolution must advance towards socialism as the only way of guaranteeing its own defence. □

No cuts to pay for WAR

The loss of human life in Iraq is immeasurable in terms of financial cost, and as the death toll rises, Gordon Brown finds another £2 billion to make, in total, £3 billion of British Tax payers money spent on this war, the equivalent of 25 new hospitals. It has been estimated that for every month of war, the bill would rise by £750 million.

In America Bush has demanded \$75 billion from Congress to finance his adventure in Iraq. Of which, about \$1.5 billion is up for grabs in contracts to private companies to rebuild Iraq after they have bombed the infrastructure. Sensing a quick buck, companies are already wheeling and dealing to make money. According to the US Agency for International Development some contracts would be given to foreign companies but it is bound by law to give the main contracts to American firms. Money can be found for war but not for 'Medicare', a system of health care for the poorest in America. A number of States are cutting back because of cost!

While, at the same time, Bush tried to push through his so called 'jobs and growth' package of \$670 billion tax cuts for the rich. This was posed as a budget resolution which only needs 50

votes rather than 60 to get approval at the Senate. His plan failed when three Republicans broke ranks and voted with the Democrats to reduce the tax cuts to \$350 billion. They fear the growing cost of the war and the rising budget deficit of \$246 billion, which excludes the final cost of the war on Iraq.

The total cost of the 1991 war cost Britain the comparable amount of £3.3 Billion. In total the last Gulf war cost about \$80 billion though most of the cost was picked up by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and large contributions from Germany and Japan.

Different amounts have been talked about, from \$20 - \$30 billion a year to finance deployment of troops to stay in Iraq, rebuilding the country and humanitarian aid. The cost to Britain of deploying 10,000 troops has been estimated at £1.6 billion a year, based on the experience of Bosnia and Kosovo. The difference this time is the cost is not likely to be spread among as many countries. America and British capitalism could possibly endure the short-term financial costs. In the long term, it could lead to higher taxes or education and health service cuts to pay for this war. The labour movement must demand not one job loss, no cuts and no tax rises on workers to pay for this imperialist adventure. □

fighting fund

Keep the cash rolling!

If the bosses press are to be believed, Iraq is now a happy smiling place where everybody is ecstatic to see American and British troops standing around not supplying food, water or medical aid and failing to note the looting (by strangely well-armed gangs) going on under their noses. In fact the only major public buildings not to be looted (or bombed for that matter) are the Ministries of the Interior and the ministry of -what a surprise! - oil. Oddly enough no-one seems to be that concerned either to look very hard for any weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) anymore. This seems strange when you consider that this was supposed to be the central reason why we had to go to war without delay, otherwise we would all wake up one morning to find the Iraqi army rolling through the centre of London armed with God knows what fearful weapons. Yet having worked so hard to scare the living daylights out of all its readers, our great national press has now largely dropped the issue since none of these WMDs have been found, hoping that people's memories are all too short.

No wonder we need a socialist press which remembers rather than forgets - remembers and then explains. Unfortunately the likes of the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* can count on huge financial resources to push their lies. To fight them we need our

own resources - which means you. You can help in two ways. Firstly by considering giving a donation to our fighting fund. So far this month (April) we have raised £440 with a further £700 plus in outstanding pledges from the month before still to be redeemed. We need to keep this cash rolling in - we have a target to raise £1000 at least in May. So let's mark May Day by getting every reader and seller to contribute something. If this were done then our targets would be easily met.

The second way you could help is by becoming a *Socialist Appeal* seller. You do not have to take many to sell, perhaps just a few to flog to people in your workplace, union or college. But it would be a start and you would be joining an army of ordinary men and women around the country who want to ensure that the ideas of socialism are heard loud and clear. If you are interested in getting involved then contact us at the usual address where donations (made payable to *Socialist Appeal*) can also be sent, which is PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ.

We thank you in advance for your support

Steve Jones

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In the Cause of Labour

A History of the British Trade Unions

We are pleased to announce the publication in May of a new book by Wellred on the history of British trade unionism. The original idea for this book arose from the series of monthly articles Rob Sewell wrote for the *Socialist Appeal* in the early 'nineties. Although the material contained in this book is based on those articles, they have been considerably expanded, polished and revised. The conclusions are, nevertheless, the same as Rob Sewell wrote a decade ago. The only difference is that these conclusions have been confirmed by the events that have occurred since that time.

The book spans the two-hundred year history of the workers' movement, dealing with the birth of illegal trade unions, the Chartist movement, model unionism, New Unionism, the rise of the Labour Party, the war years and their aftermath, the General

Strike, and the period covering up until the present day. The book is a Marxist history, which draws on the writings of Marxism to illuminate the lessons from the struggles of the working class in Britain. It is particularly relevant today with the shift to the left of the trade unions and the emergence of a new generation of trade union activists.

A foreword for the book has been written by Jeremy Dear, general secretary of the NUJ and newly elected member of the General Council of the TUC.

All readers of *Socialist Appeal* are being given a chance to take up an introductory offer of receiving an advance copy of the book post-free. To reserve your copy as soon as it comes off the press and to take advantage of our special offer please send a cheque for £9.99 to Wellred Publications

notice board

May 2003

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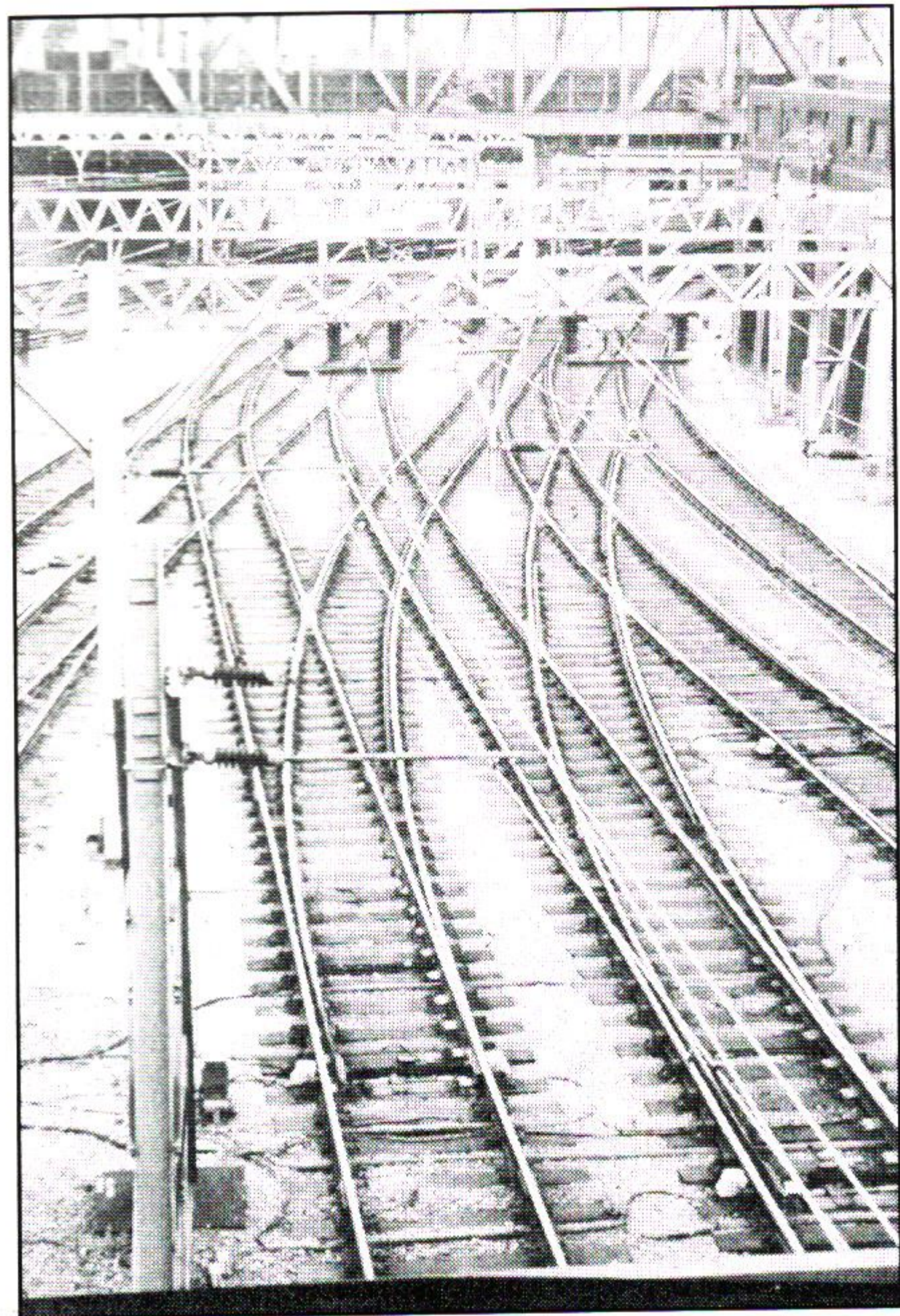
✚ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.

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Socialist Appeal

Marxist voice of the labour movement



By Steve Tree

RMT Striking for safety

RMT Guards around the country, covering 12 companies have staged three 24-hour strikes to return the responsibility of safety back to guards. Central Trains have had to cancel 75% of trains, and Scotrail 50%. Managers across all the companies are being hastily trained to try to keep the train service running.

The privatisation of the railways has led to the Railways' rulebook downgrading the safety responsibility of the guards. In any emergency, and especially in the event of a derailment, it has always made sense for the driver to protect the front of the train and the guard the back. Under the rule change the driver has to do both. The savings to the rail companies of not training new guards in a safety role are minimal. Many believe that management has provoked this dispute to show who is boss.

Eight Rail Companies have already agreed to restore the safety role of guards. What has been astounding is the way that the Strategic Rail Authority, an organisation established to act in the interest of the public purse and passengers, is prepared to bank-role companies to the tune of

around £10 million that stand firm against the RMT. This organisation has also tried to stop pay agreements between ASLEF and management, stating management are being too 'generous'!

Two new 48-hour strikes have been planned for the 6th & 7th May and the 27th & 28th May, which follow the May Bank holidays. Guards from three more companies will be joining these strikes, bringing the number of companies involved to fifteen. This dispute cannot be allowed to carry on for 14 months like the pay dispute with Arriva Trains Northern. In effect the company was able to ride out the dispute by just accepting one and two-day strikes every couple of weeks. This should not be allowed to happen in this case. Pressure must be brought to bear on the different managements. Rallies and meetings should be organised to build for an escalation of the strikes not only among the guards, but also to include signal workers, permanent way, and all RMT grades. This could be the first step to spread the dispute, to include drivers and the wider trade union movement on a key safety issue.

Renationalise the railways!

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