

WORKERS

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Out of Baghdad...

Out of Basra...

**BRING THE
TROOPS BACK
TO BRITAIN!**



The Labour attack on our schools

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WORKERS

“ First thoughts

IT'S A LOSE-LOSE SITUATION. For the Iraqi people, occupation by, among other, British forces is a denial of national independence, accompanied by oppression, killing and the normal savagery of an imperialist army of occupation. For us in Britain, we have the shame of seeing our army used in this way, our prime minister following orders from Washington, our soldiers killed and injured (see feature article, page 6).

That now, on top of everything that has passed, the Black Watch should be sent to relieve the Americans around Baghdad shows that our rulers have no shame, and no sense of our national interest either. In this they are ably abetted by placid ranks of time-serving MPs, bloated on expenses that have risen by over a third in two years (with, oddly, no increase in the number of MPs!). And helped,

too, by the scheming trade union general secretaries who in return for permission to grovel allowed the Labour Party conference to go through with no censure on the government.

Blair tells us that whatever people think about the invasion, surely everyone sees that the occupation is a good thing. It sounds like the logic of the madhouse, but in reality it is the logic of the Pentagon.

The troops must be brought back to Britain. Now. No delay. Not in a few months when things “will have settled down”. Because the presence of the troops is the surest guarantee of all that things will not “settle down” – it may seem blindingly obvious, but the attacks on the occupying troops would stop once the troops left. Anything less than complete withdrawal would be a betrayal not just of the Iraqi people, but of the British people, too.

Second opinion

BEFORE ONE SOD has been turned or one brick laid for the proposed new Thames Gateway Bridge, which will link Beckton in East London with Thamesmead on the south bank, the European Union has intervened. Local residents and businesses were to be charged lower tolls as part of the regeneration of the Thames Gateway, but the EU has

declared this unlawful.

You cannot cross the Thames without EU permission. You cannot cross the Thames for free as the EU is imposing a toll. You cannot determine what that toll will be without EU dictat. Who has the greater authority – the people of London or the EU, supported by the Mayor of London?



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New fight for motor jobs

WORKERS AT JAGUAR, Rover/MG Rover and Land Rover are facing up to another fight for jobs. Jaguar (owned by Ford) production at Coventry is under closure threat – 2000 jobs are at stake. Production would either be transferred to the Castle Bromwich site or directly to the US. All Jaguar sites in Britain are already on short time working. Land Rover (also owned by Ford) is seeing sales fall in the US. This is expected to lead to company proposals for a rationalisation of sites – closures and transfer of production, again possibly to the US since it remains the major market.

Land Rover will stop buying Phoenix engines from the Rover group from 2006. This will add to further production difficulties for Rover and may be presented as another excuse for transferring production to China. This will put 5,000 Rover jobs under threat.

Rover's famed phoenix recovery seems doomed. The British market for Rover and MG Rover has fallen to 1.65% and 1.33% respectively – a drop of over 35% in less than a year. Rover has now entered into production arrangements with Shanghai China Brilliance Group, coupled with an import arrangement with the Indian manufacturer Tata. Rover/MG Rover are simply re-badging these imported cars with a Rover logo.

If Ford via Land Rover and Jaguar is seeking to close excess capacity and consolidate production either at remaining Ford plants or in the USA, then the strategy entered into less than 5 years ago to seize prestigious competitors' labels and assets will dramatically re-shape the British car manufacturing industry. Ford will remain the prime player especially if Rover fades and becomes a mere import company based in China.

Amicus and the TGWU have responded jointly to these threats with a clear view that in the event of a Ford-inspired closure programme in Jaguar and Land Rover, they will take the fight directly to Ford, cutting through all the nonsense of secondary action or not. Ford is the owner, orchestrating job loss across its subsidiaries. It will be almost impossible to unravel which car component is produced where and is fitted where – so the battle needs to be taken into every Ford plant in Britain.

- THE SURVIVAL of the Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence, opened recently by Blair with much trumpeting, is in doubt. The running costs of the £32 million complex at the Ford Dagenham site do not add up and the future of 600 students is now in the balance. The centre is funded by Ford, the London Development Agency, a host of higher and further education institutions and various regeneration quangos. The concept of an engineering institute providing skills training from the most elementary level to the most sophisticated is exemplary, but the maths skills required to sort out the day to day running costs seem to be beyond ministers, fund holders and Ford.

MILITARY PROCUREMENT

German lorries for Army

THE MINISTRY of Defence has given a £1 billion order for 5,000 trucks, the biggest military vehicle contract for 25 years, to a German company. MAN ERF will carry out half of the order in Austria, half in Britain.

The rejected bid, by the Birmingham-based commercial vehicle maker LDV, would have given Britain a strategic military truck manufacturing capability once again. It would have created 600 jobs in Britain and would also have provided work for 140 other British suppliers.

The Ministry claims that LDV overstated the number of jobs that would have been created. The Transport and General Workers' Union, Amicus and the Birmingham Economic Information Centre all stand by their assessment that LDV would have created far more British jobs.

PFI

Meltdown in west London

The largest NHS Private Finance Initiative scheme in London, involving three hospitals, two of them specialist heart hospitals (The Royal Brompton and Harefield), plus Imperial College, is teetering on financial meltdown.

The Paddington Health Campus is now overspent by £418 million, nearly half the £900 million of additional government spending in the last 12 months on the whole of the NHS. The scheme has been beset with secrecy, design failures, hugely lucrative land swap deals between the builders, developers and the NHS, and possible takeover bids of the lead property company.

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

NUM**The spirit remains**

THE MEMBERSHIP of the National Union of Mineworkers has fallen to approximately 3,000 working members. Tens of thousands of miners have retired and many others have been forced out of the industry by pit closures.

The coal industry has contracted down to 11 deep mines and 50 open cast mines. The NUM may have to consider a merger with other industrial unions in order to survive.

The decimation of the NUM is the result of the politically motivated policies of the Tory and Labour governments of the last 20 years. In fact Britain still has coal reserves equivalent to 1,000 years of extraction at a time when British gas reserves from the North Sea are nearing extinction – and the price of oil is hitting the highest ever levels in recorded trading, up over \$50 a barrel.

But the union has no intention of losing its identity and merging with another union, such as the RMT. Keeping the spirit of the NUM alive is critical to the future rebuilding of the industry and reinforces the need for Britain to have an independent, balanced energy policy.

MINING**The cutting edge**

UK COAL is demonstrating British workers' technological genius and innovation at the Daw Mill Colliery in Warwickshire. A £20 million investment in one of the world's largest and most sophisticated coalface-cutting pieces of equipment is being installed.

In one year the new equipment will cut 5 million tonnes of coal and pay for itself seven times over. It demonstrates that coal can be mined and profitably.

The commitment here is to a mining industry using 21st century technology, productivity at record levels and the skilled workforce required to oversee it.

The government's short-sightedness and failure to invest in new technology to keep the pits open, in clean coal-burning power stations to utilise Britain's greatest natural asset, in skills development and manpower planning to ensure that a new generation of miners is available, borders on idiocy.

When the gas runs out, the oil fails to flow, the nuclear stations are antiquated, the wind and solar farms fail to deliver, the clamour will be to re-open the pits. That decision is for now, not in 10, 20 or 30 years.



London march against the occupation of Iraq; see *Bring back the troops*, p6

Photo: Richard Searle/www.stopwar.org.uk

University boycott grows

SINCE 20 SEPTEMBER, the Association of University Teachers has been boycotting the University of Nottingham. The AUT called the boycott because Nottingham's Vice Chancellor is refusing to honour his commitment to negotiate a pay and grading settlement in line with that agreed between national university employers and the principal teaching unions, AUT and NATFHE. Many universities have honoured this agreement and begun to implement changes whilst others, particularly London Metropolitan University, are trying to sack staff and worsen their working conditions.

The Nottingham Vice Chancellor is bent on introducing performance-related pay for staff, with loss of earnings of around £9,000 over six years for some. Other staff would lose the entitlement to belong to the national university pension scheme.

Reaction to the move to introduce PRP has been swift, as lecturers recognise the threat, not only to immediate earnings, but also to academic standards. A successful university functions on teamwork and collegiality – both are threatened by performance related pay. In addition, the scheme is seen by many to involve a high degree of arbitrary managerial discretion, which can encourage subjective bias and result in systematic discrimination. This is born out by evidence which shows PRP results in more inequality between men and women, and staff on fixed-term contracts rarely receive a full share of discretionary awards.

The boycott is already successful. Visiting lecturers are cancelling lectures and delegates are withdrawing from conferences. Organisations are also relocating their conferences away from the Nottingham campus. For example, the Historical Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society was due to hold a conference for research postgraduate students in Nottingham's School of Geography on 3 November. As a result of the AUT action, the Research Group will now hold its conference at the Institute of Historical Research in London.

NUCLEAR ENERGY**Bailing out the privateers**

THE SAGA of British Energy, Britain's privatised and bankrupt nuclear electricity industry, sees new twists and turns. Rebel shareholders trying to undermine the rescue deal agreed with the government are seeking an extraordinary shareholders' meeting.

The company has responded by threatening to "de-list" the shares on the Stock Exchange. Effectively this would put

BE into administration and bring on the formal insolvency.

The government has not only underwritten the company's £1.5 billion debt but is also underwriting decommissioning costs – estimated at over £4 billion. So in a further bizarre twist, the company's debts have been transferred to the government's accounts. We have a nationalised industry originally given away, which then promptly goes bankrupt, is bailed out by the government and then becomes the first private company to appear on the register of state assets.

MANUFACTURE**Glasgow factory victory**

THE EFFECTIVENESS of industrial action combined with public support was clearly shown last month by the favourable pay settlement at the Soapworks factory in Glasgow, which supplies goods to Superdrug and other retailers.

Workers in the Transport and General Workers Union started by banning

overtime from end of August. This was followed by a series of 48 hour strikes, which escalated to a one-week strike at the end of September.

The agreement reached as a result of the action was overwhelmingly adopted and included an 11.5% wage rise over 3 years. The regional industrial organiser thanked the people of Glasgow for the support they had shown for the workers over the last three months.

Region drive in trouble

THE GOVERNMENT'S attempt to break up Britain into European Union Regions, each with a regional assembly, is running into problems in the North East of England, where there will be a referendum on the issue on 4 November. Similar referenda in the North West and Yorkshire have been abandoned because of the strength of opposition, but the North East is considered to be a soft target because of the active collaboration of unions, particularly UNISON, and the Regional TUC.

A televised debate by both sides held late on a Sunday night, helped a weary population to get off to sleep early. The Yes campaign criticised the No campaign for engaging a public relations guru from London in the hated South. This is sheer hypocrisy as the Yes campaign is run by a company set up by redundant Labour Party head office staff, who ran the election campaign for the Croatian Social Democratic party which subsequently lost to the Croatian fascists!

They also said that the Regional Assembly would give the North East a voice in parliament, although the North East has probably had more Cabinet members and ministers than any other region, including Blair, Milburn and Byers. Of course most parliamentary powers will be handed over to Brussels anyway if the EU Constitution is in place. The North East region "voice" would then be in competition with over fifty other "voices" in EU regions from Valga to Valetta and from Braga to Bratislava. Maybe in future this would stretch as far as Kars in Eastern Turkey – but why stop there?

The shameful role of the unions and regional TUC has assisted the government in its plans. UNISON's regional secretary has claimed that Whitehall will no longer make decisions on the region's behalf. On this she's quite right; they'll be made in Brussels. She also complained that public sector jobs are not being relocated to the North East to replace lost industrial jobs. This interesting argument suggests that the North East should be turned into a public sector version of Bangalore, at the expense of workers in the south. Why not a campaign for industry instead?

With all the local media backing the government line as well as the unions, most Labour councils, sports celebrity Brendan Foster, John Hall, who owns most of Newcastle United Football Club and most of the North East, and not forgetting Robocop Ray Mallon Mayor of Middlesbrough and the Bishop of Durham, you could be forgiven for wondering where the opposition is. In fact the No campaign has been simple and effective. Why on earth do we want more politicians?

EUROPEAN UNION**Get me out of here**

NO WONDER Pro-Constitution campaigners want to use "Celebrities, supermodels and sports stars", including David Beckham, to reach out to "younger people". (DAILY MIRROR, 16 October). A "senior government source" admitted, "The last thing we want in the campaign is politicians like Tony Blair, Charles Kennedy or Chris Patten sitting on a stage."

Beckham was to be used as the face of

the Yes campaign – but it was later reported that Beckham is snubbing it.

Referenda on the Constitution are supposed to be held in EU member states before October 2006. We are told that ours is likely in spring 2006. We must assert our national sovereignty so effectively that we make it impossible for the government to hold and win a referendum on the Constitution.

If they don't call a referendum by spring 2006, we will have won a famous victory, as we did when we made the government too frightened of defeat to hold a referendum on the euro.

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****NOVEMBER**

Saturday 6 November, 10am–5pm

Unions for Cuba, TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1

Despite US attempts to isolate Cuba, the British trade union movement has a proud history of solidarity with Cuban workers. The conference aims to build on this history. There will be a number of workshops and many opportunities to meet Cuban trade unionists. The conference will be followed by a fiesta at 8pm. For more details, see www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk

Tuesday 16 November,

Pensions Lobby, Houses of Parliament

Public service unions are set to lobby parliament over proposals to raise the retirement age from 60 to 65. Details (not available at time of printing) should be up soon at www.tuc.org.uk

EU CONSTITUTION**Deep distrust**

A RECENT ICM opinion poll finds that 59% of voters oppose the EU Constitution, with only 28% in favour. The most strongly opposed age-group is the 18-25 year-olds, who oppose it by 62% to 27%. The majority of the supporters of all the parliamentary parties oppose it: 57% of Labour supporters are against, with 31% in favour. Even 54% of Liberal Democrat supporters are against, with just 34% in favour.

The poll also shows that we do not trust pro-Constitution politicians. Taking the balance of those who trust these politicians minus those who would not trust them, the poll finds that Tony Blair, Neil Kinnock, Chris Patten and Peter Mandelson all have negative trust ratings. 45% of voters agree with the statement: "Tony Blair mostly lies about Europe" – 41% disagree. And 51% of young voters agree that Tony Blair "mostly lies", as against 39% who disagree.

Kinnock and Patten, who have both joined the Britain in Europe campaign recently, have negative trust ratings of minus 1% and minus 2%. Peter Mandelson, the recently unelected EU Commissioner, scores a remarkable minus 49%. Even among Labour voters, Mandelson's net trust rating is minus 30%.

THE GAMBLING BILL

The government is pushing its Gambling Bill through Parliament, and aims to make it law before next year's general election. The bill will open the floodgates and make Britain easy pickings for the world's casino operators — and reported cabinet splits over the bill are still only at the level of scale: a big expansion of casinos, or a massive one?

The bill paves the way for hundreds more massive casinos, open 24 hours a day, offering much larger cash payouts. US companies, such as MGM and Caesar's Palace have plans to move in, and will be free to offer local councils an annual percentage of their profits, in return for planning permission. This would severely impair councils' impartiality, and open the door wide to corruption.

Former welfare minister Frank Field has warned there would be "no turning back" once the door had been opened to such operators. But some in government appear to have been taken in already. Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, said, "Levels of problem gambling are low in Britain and I am totally committed to keeping it that way. That's why the bill is so important." She said the legislation was about "new protections, not new casinos".

Problems

But in the real world, Britain has the world's third biggest gambling problem, after Australia and the USA. We have recently seen a huge increase in gambling, due to the National Lottery and internet betting games.

In Australia gambling deregulation in the 1990s has led to 2% of the adult population, 330,000 people, becoming problem gamblers (defined as those with a habit costing them more than £4,800 a year). This has caused rises in bankruptcies, thefts and frauds.

In the USA there are an estimated four million problem gamblers, and its citizens lose in excess of \$50 billion in legal betting. Those who can least afford it, lose the most, so it's no surprise that Labour wants to increase gambling here — it's a great way to redistribute money from the poor and give it to the rich.

The British people have a far better attitude than Labour: a recent NOP poll showed that 93% of us thought that there were already quite enough places to gamble. But the crooks who run the US casinos are laughing all the way to the bank. They must see this Labour government as the softest touch in history, or easily bought.

Meanwhile, THE TIMES revealed on 16 October that 14 of the 16 members of the parliamentary committee that scrutinised the Gambling Bill have links to the betting industry. One of them, Lord Donoghue, forced under Westminster rules to declare it, made public that he holds shares in the casino firm Stanley Leisure — which is planning to build a £125 million casino in Leeds. But, said the newspaper, he did not reveal — because the rules do not require it — that his son is chief executive of a lobby group called The Gambling Consultancy.

According to its website, this outfit promises: "An intimate involvement in the whole deregulation process and debate and a detailed knowledge of parliamentary and local authority process enable us to effectively lobby government...deep contacts into the parliamentary and civil service community...makes us an effective conduit for influencing the political agenda."

It is time to stop pretending. The illegal foreign invaders and mus

Bring the troops home -

THE IRAQI PEOPLE are asserting their right to expel the invaders, liberate themselves and settle their own affairs without foreign interference. The Pentagon now estimates that the number of insurgents has quadrupled, to 20,000. The British former commander of coalition forces says 50,000. All the more surprising, and disgraceful, that 8,500 British troops are not only in Iraq but being put at even greater risk around Baghdad in order to boost Bush's election hopes and deepen Britain's entanglement.

The occupation is oppressive and insulting to a proud, educated people. 80% of Iraqis are unemployed now, and poverty has risen sharply. 27% of Iraqi under-5s are chronically malnourished. Unrepaired water supply and sanitation has led to 5,460 cases of typhoid in the first quarter of 2004. Tuberculosis, measles, mumps and jaundice are rife. Iraq's state of health is now as poor as that of the Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen.

The US/British coalition has killed at least 13,000 civilians, possibly more than 15,000 — and injured 40,000. Not surprisingly, the Allawi administration now follows the US policy of censoring the figures on civilian casualties. US dead number 1,056 (77 in September alone), British 64, other occupying troops 67. So many lives destroyed for what Peter Hain called "a fringe issue". And deeper analysis shows that at 1:125 the death rate among British troops is already higher than among US troops (currently 1:130).

Human rights are being denied. A UNICEF report has revealed that British troops in Basra are arresting children "for alleged activities targeting the occupying forces" and handing them over to US forces for indefinite detention in prisons including the infamous Abu Ghraib. The International Committee of the Red Cross has registered 107 juveniles, some as young as ten, being held in six different coalition jails. Not surprising then that the US and the European Union, on 22 July 2004, blocked a UN resolution condemning the abuses in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay and calling for human rights and liberties to be protected.

An illegal war

As Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, said on 16 September, the war on Iraq was illegal. The Nuremberg verdict was, "To initiate a war of aggression...is the supreme international crime." It follows that the consequent occupation is illegal too. This is not a "second war", as Blair claims, but the same illegal war.

Occupying powers are supposed to obey the Geneva Conventions (which the White House lawyer called 'quaint'), but the US/British forces in Iraq are instead copying Israel's illegal behaviour in Palestine. They are attacking and killing women, children and the elderly. In law a defendant is equally guilty of murder whether he desired the death of a person, or merely knew that his act was likely to cause death. Part IV of Protocol One to the Geneva Conventions forbids all attacks "which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects." If it is reasonably foreseeable that an attack would cause damage, injury and death, then the perpetrator is liable in law. So the perennial US-British excuse,

the occupying forces in Iraq, including those from Britain, are to be withdrawn and the sooner the better...

— now!

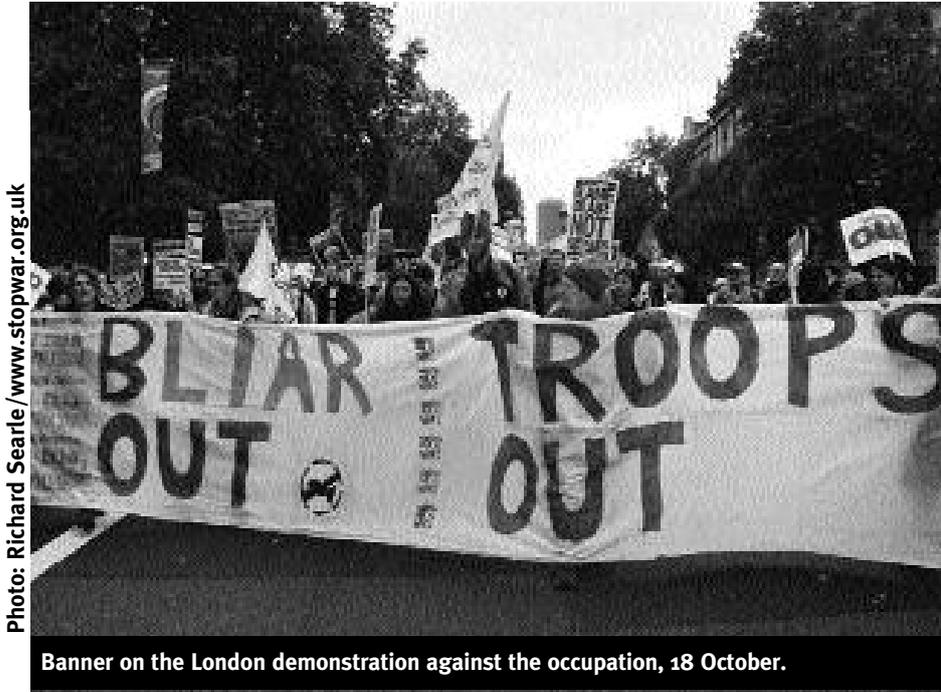


Photo: Richard Searle/www.stopwar.org.uk

Banner on the London demonstration against the occupation, 18 October.

that their forces do not target civilians, fails.

Labour claims it is helping the USA to achieve democracy in Iraq. But it is overriding democracy in Iraq, and also overriding it at home. In a poll of 26 September, 52% of the British people called for troops to be withdrawn by the end of January; so do more than 85% of Iraqis. Parents of British troops have gone public attacking the whole Iraqi adventure. Now the US government wants to use British troops not to support Iraq's election, but to support Bush in the US election.

No sovereignty

No sovereignty was transferred to Iraq on 30 June, and no sovereignty will be transferred on 31 January either. The US state intends to stay in the country permanently – that is why it is building 12 military bases there, and why the only places they control are the oilfields. The US ruling class has hijacked the war on terrorism to cover its drive for supremacy. It aims to dominate the world through “preventive” wars, which are indistinguishable from aggressions.

However, the US state has feet of clay

– it cannot use its military muscle to shape the world the way it wants. Unable to prevail over China and Korea, defeated by Vietnam, it is now trapped in the quagmire of Iraq. The US army is not geared to occupying a country, still less to nation building; it is designed for the old tactic of “butcher and bolt”. Cheney said, “We will be greeted as liberators.” But Iraq is not post-1945 France, or Germany or Japan. Rumsfeld forecast in February 2003, “It could last six days, six weeks, I doubt six months.” Blair sneered, “They said we would be facing another Vietnam.” Eighteen months ago, he promised troops would be in Iraq for a maximum of six months. Then he shamelessly told them they would be home by Christmas. (This Christmas he seems only to be promising the Black Watch a break.) The US government said that just 75,000 troops could occupy Iraq and only “several thousand after a year or two”. There are 160,000 troops occupying Iraq now, and there is talk of sending more. The government encouraged British citizens to go to Iraq, and now fails to protect them. Foreign workers, including journalists, are leaving.

Bush has jumped from counter-

attacking al-Qa'eda to attacking terrorists more generally (those whom he chooses), then to attacking “those who harbour them”, meaning a state like Afghanistan, and then to attacking states that didn't harbour them, like Iraq. His approach has diverted the USA from pursuing al-Qa'eda – perhaps the Bush administration thinks it needs al-Qa'eda. The notion of an undifferentiated threat, like that of a “clash of civilisations”, can be cover for unending aggression, as in the 1960s when the US state portrayed Vietnam as an agent of China, which in turn it portrayed as an agent of the USSR. We must learn to ignore what aggressors say and watch what they do.

Blair's deception

The Iraq Survey Group report proves – once again – that there were no WMD in Iraq, and not even any active programmes for their production. So Iraq was not in breach of UN disarmament resolutions, and posed no threat to Britain or anyone else.

Yet early in 2002 Blair secretly changed government policy from containing Iraq to invading it, from peace to war, by promising to join Bush's illegal war of aggression, without telling the Cabinet or Parliament or the British people. As the British Ambassador to the USA said in March 2002, “We backed regime change.” And Sir David Manning, Blair's foreign policy adviser, also in March 2002, told Condoleezza Rice, Bush's National Security Adviser, Blair “would not budge in (his) support for regime change”.

Under the occupation, Iraq's nuclear facilities have been looted, but the US government (note, not the “sovereign” Iraqi government) refuses to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency back into the country, or to give it any information. The US government has just sold 500 bunker-busting bombs to Ariel Sharon: is this to wage further attacks on the Palestinian people? Or to attack Iran's nuclear facilities? Or both?

Every minute that British troops are in Iraq, the worse it gets. No parliamentary party will say what the British people want – Bring the Troops Home Now!

In a radical dismantling of the state comprehensive system, the sector within the education system...

Regeneration for youth – or a “five year str



The government aims to give extra funding to specialist schools – and penalise those that don't accept this “challenge”

“MARKET FORCES create winners and losers,” said Steve Sinnott, new NUT General Secretary, to a recent meeting of Divisional Secretaries from around the country, “and it is absurd to expect those forces to come to the rescue of those who have lost.”

Sinnott was speaking about the government's stated intention to promote competition and the private sector within the education system. Apart from its obviously divisive effects, the strategy fails utterly to address its own published analysis of why so many children fail to achieve anything like their educational potential.

Poverty and achievement

Within the first few pages of the DfES publication FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNERS (see Box opposite) there is a graph showing the

influence of “socio-economic status” on educational achievement. This demonstrates that the poorer the child, the more poverty, family unemployment, poor housing etc that the child experiences, the less successful that child is likely to be in educational achievement.

It shows that even such children who score highly in their very early years decline in achievement as time goes on.

‘Poverty goes together with capitalism as brain damage does with being continually battered about the head. It's going to happen...’

The fine-sounding analysis in the strategy concludes:

“We also fail our most disadvantaged children and young people... internationally, our rate of child poverty is still high, as are the rates of worklessness in one-parent families, the rate of teenage pregnancy and the level of poor diet amongst children. The links between poor health, disadvantage and low education outcomes are stark.”

This conclusion is damning of the current economic and political system – but it is hardly a new discovery. Proponents of state education at the end of the 19th century were pointing to it. Research throughout the 20th century demonstrated its truth over and over again. Now the government restates it for the twenty first century.

How enlightened! You might think that they would go on to detail policy for

government is planning to promote competition and the private strategy” of destruction?

overcoming poverty, putting right disadvantage in order to raise education achievement. You might...but of course you would be wrong. They know that poverty goes together with capitalism as brain damage does with being continually battered about the head. It's going to happen.

No challenge

And of course their project does not, cannot, include a challenge to capitalism. So instead of dealing with the causes of low education achievement that they rightly identify, the five-year strategy immediately turns to promoting radical change within the education system.

All the research – most recently the Pisa (Programme for International Student Assessment) research conducted by the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – shows that the state comprehensive education system is the most effective system in terms of providing opportunity for all young people, including those brought down by poverty.

Not only does the government's strategy fail to tackle the disadvantage it condemns, it sets about the most radical dismantling of the state comprehensive system.

All this is in the name of “diversity”. It clearly fragments and divides, but this is held to be positive – as the resulting competition together with “rigorous teaching and learning reviews” – particularly in schools that continue as state comprehensives – is expected to (of course) drive up standards. Never mind the findings of research, feel the spin!

Alongside the five-year strategy policy of disintegration, differential funding and competition between schools, the Tomlinson Report appeared. Mike Tomlinson, ex Chief School Inspector, no doubt genuinely wanted to reduce children's underachievement. But again, instead of attempting to deal with the social damage caused by capitalism and destroyed communities, he recommends

Continued on page 10

How the government aims to transform state education



THE GOVERNMENT'S new plan for education was published, typically, shortly before the summer holidays, leaving teachers and educationists little time to react. But now the full impact of the proposals is becoming clear. Within the five years the government plans a number of points of attack:

- **DEVELOP 200 ACADEMIES**
These schools are state funded, and also receive substantial funding from private profit making companies and from other bodies such as religious foundations. These run the academies outside of local education authority or state control and accountability. There are currently 12 of them. When quizzed about these, and asked if they should be subject to evaluation, Charles Clarke, Education Secretary said, with disarmingly honesty, “You might argue that. The problem with any

policy announcement is that you have a set date, and I do not think we could postpone that.” The five-year growth in academies is planned to be “just the start”.

- **BOOST FOUNDATION SCHOOLS**
It aims to dramatically increase the number and the level of individual independence of foundation schools. These are the old opted-out schools and those fundamentally run (sometimes in both senses of the phrase) by the Christian church. More religion to be rammed down our children's throats.

- **ALLOW OVERSUBSCRIBED SCHOOLS TO EXPAND**

The government wants to do this against even the advice of Ofsted, which warned that this would create a spiral of decline in others. They will give half-million pound grants to allow the expansion – and nothing to those that decline as a result.

- **CREATE DIVERSITY BY CREATING SPECIALIST SCHOOLS**

The plan is for a radical acceleration of the process of designating secondary schools as specialist schools and colleges, giving extra funding to those that accept this status and none to those who do not. Specialist schools need to find funding from private sector sources as part of the challenge, and so double up their additional funds.

- **MORE RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS**
It will encourage more charities, religious bodies and interest groups to set up their own schools with state funding.

The report is available at www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/5yearstrategy/

Continued from page 9

changes to the school system to remotivate these children.

There will be a new diploma to replace GCSE, A levels and any other exam route that schools might be offering. It will start at 14 and end at 19. It will include both academic and vocational learning. So far so good. But though the diploma will include both academic and vocational training, not all pupils will have the benefit of both. Vocational education is not in the core to be followed by all. It is an option. In fact, it will be the basis of study for those disaffected from the broad curriculum that others more motivated will continue to study.

Does this matter? Of course it does. It strikes at the dignity and the unity of the working class, the vast majority in our society.

The Tomlinson proposals would use the education system to divide workers, between the manual and non-manual workers. At 14 many young people will be studying that version of the diploma dominated by vocational training. They could have effectively left school as part of this process, attending instead further education college and working on employers' premises. They would even be said to be following young apprenticeships.

Back to the 1950s?

Put this together with the five-year strategy. Will we see doubly funded academies for some, and underfunded schools offering young apprenticeships for others? Will we have schools designated specialist academic and specialist vocational, selecting children at 11 according to their likely pathway at 14? This paints a picture reminiscent of 1950s education, long discredited, with secondary modern schools for the failures.

Let's look further. The government proposes to remodel the school workforce by putting people without teaching qualifications in charge of teaching whole classes of children.

'Why educate your own workers when you can either export capital and employ workers abroad on the cheap...'

Not all classes, of course. They are particularly keen – though not exclusively so – to see such unqualified staff taking classes in which specialist skills might be required. Will our specialist vocational school prepare its young people by drafting in teaching assistants without teaching qualifications to supervise them, while the academy or the foundation school down the road staffs its academic curriculum with qualified teachers?

Attack on pay

Just to make this process complete, the government is proposing to the STRB, the teachers' statutory pay review body, that it promote local pay structures and individual pay bargaining within every school.

To sum up the destructive effects of the government's plans for teachers and pupils, they will foster:

- Competition between teachers and non-teachers for jobs.
- Competition between members of school staff for pay – including the race to the bottom of low pay if teachers see their jobs being taken by teaching assistants.
- Competition between schools for different types of status and funding – and for pupil "bums on seats" to get the money for expansion, at the expense of the school next door.
- Diversity of provision – and varying pathways for which pupils will be selected by their degree of disaffection and poverty.
- Teachers' jobs – particularly in such vocational pathways – being taken by those with no or minimal qualifications in

teaching children.

What a "strategy"! What "proposals for change"! What "remodelling"! It is a recipe for anarchy on top of low educational achievement.

We need to state our alternative future for education very clearly. After his telling remarks about government strategy, Steve Sinnott went on to describe how the NUT would be delivering its own major Statement on Education in November and how this would become part of a focus of work to bring together all properly interested parties to develop an alternative strategy for education.

Real regeneration

Natural participants? Certainly teachers, other school staff, parents, governors and LEAs. But also all those who want to see a real regeneration of our economy, our manufacturing industries, our city centres and our countryside. Because that is what is needed to stop pupil disaffection, to overcome low education attainment, underachievement and waste of young potential.

We need a diverse but integrated and fairly funded system of lifelong learning, training and full employment. How about that for a challenge to government?

But of course they can't take it up. They are wedded to capitalism, and to all the ramifications of it, including the deregulation, fragmentation and privatisation inherent in the globalisation agenda.

Why educate your own workers when you can either export capital and employ workers abroad on the cheap – or create the conditions under which hundreds of thousands of workers are roaming the globe as economic migrants, and you can simply import them when you want them?

That is the twisted logic of capitalism in the twenty first century. That's why they don't want an integrated and systematic delivery of education. That's why they are prepared to write off big sections of working class youth.

But we are not so prepared – and we are stronger than they are if we wish to be. Let's make a start!

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Will Podmore

Shunning Blair but continuing their love affair with the Labour Party down to some good debate on the EU and on organisation, particularly

After the TUC: reassert the need for workplace

IT IS TRADITIONAL to give a muted response at the TUC to a Labour Prime Minister just before a General Election, as too much association with the unions might spoil his chances. But this year's was a bit more muted than usual as the Prime Minister gritted his teeth to read a speech pledging good faith to the Warwick agreements – agreements, of course, which he and employers alike detest. Yet they are weak agreements and no previous trade union movement would have settled for them.

In return for confirmation (in the Warwick agreements) that bank holidays are holidays, the trade unions will give the Labour Party £3 million (at least), keep fairly quiet on the destruction of manufacturing, the privatisation of public services, the plunder of pensions and the continued occupation of Iraq. The message is that the unions should be thankful for small mercies. All the alleged Left and Right in the trade unions are lined up to commit to this confusion. Lower your sights as British industry is destroyed, pay no attention to what we ourselves said yesterday. We can have bank holidays off while the bankers find new ways to fleece us. Such mucking about with politics to keep a warmonger in power, waging war on workers at home and abroad – is betrayal.

Follow Blair for a quick buck

Capitalists get uppity even about Warwick because they have been very cocky of late and made billions out of their exploitation of workers. The rate of profit is phenomenal. The quickest buck brigade has gathered round Blair, who is good news. This is why the almost Pentecostal calm of Brown seems so alluring. It is also why the monarchy is struggling to keep a place in the pecking order of the Establishment, inventing scandals to draw attention. They own the land involved in agricultural production mainly. Blair's lot are less rooted, but riding high on the capitalist wave for the moment.

Actually Ian McCartney, Chair of the Labour Party, won the hearts and minds of trade unionists in a hilarious speech at the usually private General Council dinner. He made a heartfelt and subtle appeal for



Does he care? If that was a question four years ago when these Rover workers marched for their jobs, the answer must be clear to all by now.

Photo: Andrew Wiard/www.reportphotos.com

support for a third term as well as telling a great joke about corgis. Not a third way however. His was a traditional speech, another go at getting it right for workers using Parliament. Behind the scenes the Labour Party and the largest trade unions are every bit as much in love as ever in the illusion over parliamentarism.

Ultimately this means the trade unions love Blair, the lover of billionaires. What they and the Labour Party are ignoring is that the EU Constitution would take away their chances of government, let alone a third term. The madness of social democracy is coming to a funny end. Blair has destroyed the Labour Party as Thatcher did with the Tories. We are left with the Liberals, national chauvinist parties, UKIP and the extreme right. None of these options are for workers. We need our own party.

The TUC Congress this year had the

task of asserting the independence of trade unions for the independence of Britain. There were positive signs that there is renewed thinking with some cultural and political changes as well. Trade union speakers from South Africa, Colombia, Palestine, Iraq and above all Cuba reminded delegates of the sacrifices trade unionists still make for trade unionism and national sovereignty.

This gave an undercurrent of sincerity and clarity to much of the proceedings this year. There was an air of recognition that trade unions are not about national posturing, but about achieving change at the workplace and from this, developing the politics of social change. There is a gradual return to basics and there is no one in the trade unions obviously getting in the way. All unions want to grow and prosper and support their members. This will be the downfall of the Labour Party

Party, delegates at the recent TUC Congress nevertheless got participation and control in the workplace...

Workplace organisation

corruption within them: The stronger the workplace, the weaker a bourgeois Parliament.

When delegates stood in ovation for Pedro Ross, General Secretary of the Cuban Trade Union Federation, they made an important bit of history. The fact that this came as a result of a motion last year from one of the smallest affiliates is ultimately a credit to the democracy of the TUC. For the first time a European trade union centre gave unanimous support and built abiding links with Cuba.

Even sly, dishonest wording in the General Council report was rejected, following pressure from unions, by the General Secretary of the TUC himself. He described as clumsy and misleading wording which must have originated in the Pentagon. This had the effect of neutralising the General Council Report on this matter. So the British TUC can now only espouse unreserved support for Cuba's struggle against the blockade and increasing US aggression and to protect its own way of life. More unions will now make links with Cuban counterparts. The question will be not how we support Cuba but how we learn the struggle for self-determination in our very different circumstances.

Support for the struggles and sovereignty of others is not yet matched by a willingness to fight here in the defence of our independence and for trade union rights. Coat-tailed to US foreign policy and the EU's laws and political economy, Britain now faces a new challenge. Plans for an EU Constitution, described by one speaker as the "biggest slow-motion coup d'etat in history", were opened up to honest debate by the RMT, NUM, CYWU and NATFHE. Previously those opposing the euro had been attacked. The same people had been scorned when they called for a referendum. Now there's recognition that they were right.

The animosity was more subdued this year. No John Monks to wheel over ETUC Presidents to convince us of the glories of the EU. No John Edmonds with his quack economics. This no doubt will happen big style next year. No physical intimidation as previously. A Foreign Office and secret

'Our task now is to demonstrate that no union can achieve its objectives within the confines of the current EU set-up...'

service-sponsored conference for trade unionists in October will no doubt start the brain-washing and speech writing for the debates ahead. But at the TUC the debate was conducted maturely, and a fierce assault on the pathetic quality of TUC briefings on the EU so far brought a commitment from the General Council that there would be no spin in future. We will see. There will no doubt be regrouping by the miscreants.

Debate the EU constitution

This sets the scene for every single trade union having to debate the EU constitution as a priority. Already many like Amicus are organising regional events and educational courses. Despite all the so-called victories for the self-appointed left in Amicus, they remain insufficiently alert to the dangers they face. The new General Secretary is scarcely better than the last one.

Our task now is to demonstrate that no union can achieve its objectives within the confines of the current EU set-up and that the European Constitution will intensify capitalism's attacks. This needs to be done in practice. No theoretical debates about the 900 pages of the constitution – there must be practical demonstration of the immediate difficulties key clauses of the constitution will cause in real workplaces.

These difficulties revolve around the question of power. Power over most workplaces in one shape or another is in the boardrooms and Westminster. Under the EU, power would rest exclusively with the unelected Commissioners and unelected bankers of the European Central Bank. To be clear on this threat we will

need to return to basic ideas about democracy and power, and in that process throw aside all of the anti-union legislation that the new EU Constitution seeks to keep in place. A new generation of union leaders is in place at national level. We now need a new generation in every workplace. Communist leaders must emerge from this. Without communist leadership in the trade unions now the stage is set for complete incorporation into the designs of capitalism. This could bring extreme dangers.

Organise the workplace

The most important thing Congress did was reassert the need for workplace organisation. This has been done before – several times in fact, but with nasty edges. For a lot of years, weak attempts have been made by trade unions to reconnect with the workplace. These were embodied in the concept of the organising model.

This was a hollow – organise for what? It left out the key question that has interested trade unionists since our beginnings, that of power and control. No sense recruiting or organising in the workplace unless you have control over it. What do you do to control your workplace?

This is the question for the next TUC, and it is always a shame that so few who have started to address this question actually bother with getting involved in the trade union movement and therefore getting elected to the TUC structures. We have one trade union centre – we might as well try and make the best of it.

In contrast to the European Union, the best written words to come out of the TUC were: "It is vital that the TUC should measure itself by how well it helps unions to win in the workplace and to bring more people into unions. Congress believes that building membership and organisation is the most urgent priority for the coming year."

We need now to put these words into action but we will only do so if more workers take an interest in running their unions and getting elected through the official structures to the TUC. Westminster is empty. We should fill our own democratic structures.

The Conway Hall in London, home of the South Place Ethical Society for free speech, celebrated its 75th birthday this autumn in style – with attacks on Blunkett's attempt to introduce a law banning 'religious

What's so sacrosanct about religion?

THE OPENING of Conway Hall in London's Red Lion Square, where free speech has been exercised for 75 years, was celebrated there in a fitting manner with a meeting tackling the current wave of assaults upon free speech. The Communist Party of Britain, having the tradition of holding May Day meetings in the main hall for over 30 years, was represented amongst the guests at this special celebration.

The evening took the form of a very lively meeting with four speakers and contributions from the floor of the hall. The speeches had great practical import and urgency with fire directed at the Home Secretary's renewed attempt to introduce a law on religious hatred.

The first speaker of the evening was Barbara Smoker from the South Place Ethical Society (SPES), which moved its base to Conway Hall when it opened. The Society was founded in 1793, and Barbara gave a very entertaining account of how it came from being a dissenting religious group to the non-religious ethical society

it is today, after a decision in 1869 to reject the idea of a personal God. When in 1887 the Society abolished evensong as it moved away from its religious root, the members substituted chamber music instead, a tradition which continues unbroken to the present day. This explains why, when it moved to Conway Hall, the Society insisted on a hall with excellent acoustics.

Just an ideology

After the historical introduction, Barbara Smoker turned her fire on the proposed incitement to religious hatred legislation. The key point, she said, is that religious ideology is no different to any other ideology. Why could it not be challenged, criticised, indeed ridiculed? The cartoonist Martin Rowson spoke further on this theme and also showed some of the best of his cartoons on a screen. He described them as part of the rich vein of British culture which uses humour to challenge and provoke thought and dialogue. The audience rocked with laughter at his

famous strip cartoon, called the Failure of Intelligence, depicting Bush and Blair as personally suffering a series of intelligence failures in their decision-making on Iraq. Just because the cartoonist had described one of the phases of intelligence failure as "religious mania" he had been subject to several letters of complaint.

In addition to the unifying theme of the meeting, all the speakers had one other thing in common – they had all been on the receiving end of copious hate mail for daring to challenge religious ideas and they had all been accused of being racist. Polly Toynbee, another of the speakers, has received both hate mail and death threats since an out-of-context extract from an article she wrote in a national newspaper challenging the concept of Islamophobia, has been placed on an Islamist website.

Richard Dawkins, the scientist, was the fourth speaker of the evening. He discussed his work in both Britain and the United States. He pointed out that the



Communist Party meeting at Conway hall from the 1970s: the party has held a May Day meeting in the hall every year since 1968

society and centre of
with trenchant
ous hatred'...

common mantra is that we must "respect" religion. Why? Why should we respect ideas which cannot stand scrutiny, was his challenge.

Evolution and atheism

He pointed out that no politician in the United States, whether at local or national level, could admit to being an atheist and still stand any chance of being elected. He pointed out that his American scientific colleagues constantly ask him to hang back and not admit out loud that an understanding of evolution and scientific thought might lead someone to question the existence of a higher being. In order to allow the science of evolution to at least get an airing, they urge him to say that the teaching of evolution is entirely compatible with Christianity.

All the speakers asked the audience to reject the political correctness, which stifles the challenge to religious ideology. As one speaker from the floor pointed out, the BBC in the post-Hutton era has already succumbed and lost its way. On the very same day as the Conway Hall meeting, the BBC had cancelled a new series called Popetown for fear of causing offence to the Catholic Church – with cowardly actions like that, David Blunkett hardly needs a new law.

Speaking out

Fortunately many are already speaking out, including the comedian Rowan Atkinson who has pointed out that the whole BLACKADDER series would have been suppressed had this law been in place.

Many people, however, seem to have forgotten that this is the Blair government's second attempt to bring in a law of incitement to religious hatred. The last attempt fell because the House of Lords said that religious discrimination was "too complicated" and refused to back it. The audience was given a stark challenge: If we do not have the courage to challenge fundamentalist religious ideas, then we have actively connived in allowing "organised unreason to get its hands on the levers of power".

WHAT'S THE PARTY?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Step aside capital. It's our turn now.

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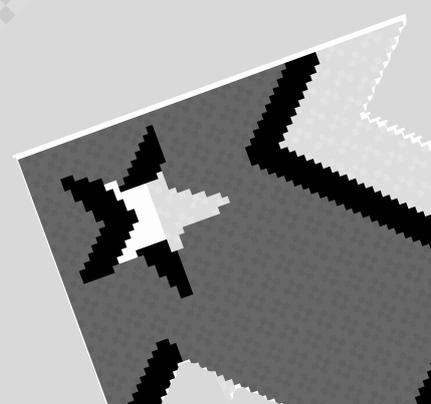
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Back to Front – A very Brussels coup

‘Multinationals and bankers want ultimate power over a superstate...’

IT'S BEEN DESCRIBED as the biggest slow motion coup d'état in history. The drive towards one legal and political entity under one constitution, known as the European Union, has reached a crossroads. The multinationals and bankers want ultimate power over a superstate in which nations cease to exist.

Any talk of welcoming this as a progressive counterweight to the evil empire of the United States is no more than support for the growing economic and ultimately militaristic conflict between the great blocs around the dollar, the deutschmark and the yen. The difference between a US President and an EU President could be, as their tensions continue, no more than between Pepsi and Coke.

And what would be the consequences of an EU Foreign Minister getting in the way of the US on any issue of substance? One thing's for sure under the Constitution, our citizens could be called up to fight for the EU and not their own country.

A war between the EU and US is ever more likely and necessary in the eyes of some corporations, which is one reason why the EU desperately wants its centrally controlled foreign policy and armed services. Whatever the complexion of the US and EU, as competing blocs they are on a collision course.

Strangely enough we are in the middle with a Foreign Office currently split over the Atlantic and Channel and never looking at its own people.

If you are between a rock and a hard place, you must choose a different way – an independent socialist Britain. The struggle for revolutionary change in Britain has reached a new critical phase and the national question is the primary one to which all others are subsidiary.

This is the case, for all workers throughout the continent and workers in the US have an opportunity to reclaim their nation from the gangsters and foreign powers, particularly the Saudis who own so much of their economy.

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