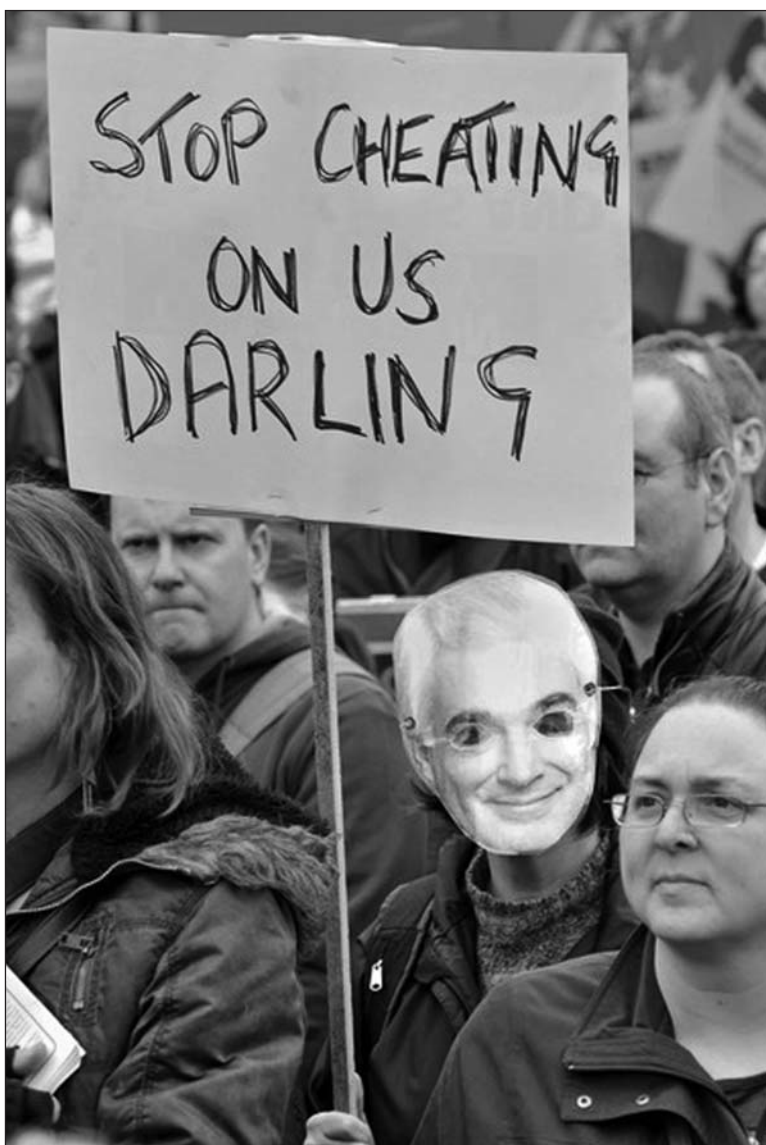


General election *general fraud*

As the general election approaches, the opportunist left is urging us to vote for the Labour Party, claiming that it is still a working class party, or that it is still somehow better than the Tories, or that we need to vote for it to keep out the BNP. The position of **Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!** is quite clear: the Labour Party is, and always has been, an imperialist party, absolutely committed to the defence of British capitalism's worldwide interests. To support it in the general election would be to vote for more war, racism and repression, and for further attacks on the living standards of the working class.



Civil servants on strike outside Parliament on budget day

Contributions by: Anthony Bairstow, Jane Bennett, Hannah Caller, Robert Clough, Susan Davidson, Nicki Jameson, Mark Moncada, Trevor Rayne and Cat Wiener

Today's economic crisis is a crisis of the imperialist system as a whole. The ruling class can only solve it at the expense of the working class. The depth of the crisis is such that the British banking system would have collapsed on Friday 10 October 2008 if the Labour government had not intervened with its rescue plan, which, with the Bank of England, involves a total commitment of £1.04 trillion. In relation to public sector finances, the net amount added to the overall public sector debt at the end of 2009 was £130bn. Now there is to be a reckoning for this: with a public deficit estimated to reach 11.8% of GDP this year, and net public debt to rise from 38% of GDP in 2007 to 75% in 2014, savage cuts in public spending are required: 8% of GDP over the next eight years. This is the context in which the general election will take place.

The proposed cuts will cost hundreds of thousands of jobs and decimate essential services for the working class. Already tens of thousands of local authority jobs are under threat in the new financial year. Although the main bourgeois parties – Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats – are absolutely committed to these cuts, none of them will say where they will fall or how deep they will be, as to do so would cost them the votes of sections of the middle class that also depend on these jobs and services. The general election will be about little more than presentation. It will be a complete fraud, and, whatever its outcome, the working class will be made to pay for the crisis.

Just when socialists should be denouncing this swindle, yet again the opportunist left is giving it credibility by participating in it, whether as the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), the Respect Party or the Communist Party of Britain (CPB). Even worse, all of them are urging a

vote for Labour in the 600 or so constituencies they are not able to contest themselves, despite the fact that millions of workers will abstain out of disgust at Labour's record. Hence:

- *Socialist Worker* (13 February 2010) reported that the SWP's National Committee has agreed to 'vote Labour against the Tories where there is no serious left of Labour candidate'.

- TUSC recognises 'that there will be Labour and non-Labour candidates who agree with our policies, who share our socialist aspirations and who will be supported by left and labour movement organisations participating in our coalition'.

- The Respect Party at its November 2009 conference agreed that 'The election of a Tory government would be a further setback for those who want to see a fairer Britain ... Where there are good Labour MPs who deserve this support, we will back them'.

- The CPB says it 'will also support some other left-wing candidates standing against new Labour types while stressing its overall preference for a Labour victory over the Tories'.

We should be absolutely clear, a vote for Labour is:

- a vote for British imperialism and the City of London;
- a vote for more wars;
- a vote for state racism: attacks on asylum seekers and immigrants, racist policing and racist prisons;
- a vote for attacks on human rights, civil liberties and the right to protest;
- a vote for more privatisation of the NHS and education and for savage cuts in public spending.

It does not matter what subterfuge the opportunist left use to justify this. At exactly the time when they should be exposing the Labour Party, they are serving up the illusion that it is still a working class party and that it is still somehow better than the Tories. These so-called socialists will never

break from Labour no matter what crimes it commits.

The Labour government's record over the last 13 years has been one of unceasing war, racism and oppression. Yet there has been no serious opposition. Through their ties with the Labour Party, the opportunist left and the trade unions have together prevented a movement from emerging. The movement against war in Iraq was killed off as the leadership of the Stop the War Coalition sought an alliance with respectable bourgeois politicians and drove away radical new forces and anyone who wanted to fight back. The trade union leaders, concerned to protect their assets and investments, have refused to fight the anti-trade union laws and have time after time sold out working class struggles in favour of supporting the government. The so-called socialist candidates in this general election represent nothing – no serious struggle, no new movement, no real opposition to Labour. Drawn from the petit bourgeoisie, they do not want to see beyond their privileged position in society. They are the forces of the past, a barrier to the development of anything progressive.

Whatever the outcome of the election, the ruling class will have to step up its offensive on the working class. The resulting economic and social conditions will inevitably lead to working class resistance. The opportunist left are the biggest obstacle to creating a new movement out of this opposition as they try to prevent it from going beyond the bounds set by the Labour Party and the trade union leadership. To be a socialist today, to help create a new movement out of the resistance, means irrevocably breaking with Labour and shattering the stifling grip of opportunism. The first step is to expose the general election for what it is: a general fraud. •

British trade unions *no stomach for a fight*

With unemployment approaching 2.5 million for the first time in more than ten years, there are few signs of serious trade union resistance. They have refused to fight the Tory anti-trade union laws that Labour kept on the statute books and remain committed to supporting the Labour Party, accounting for about 75% of its funding.

Trade unions continue to form larger and larger monopolies: the combined membership of the two largest TUC-affiliates – Unite and Unison – stands at 3.3 million, over half of TUC membership. These institutions have immense wealth: in 2008, the ten largest TUC-affiliated unions had an annual income of £600m and gross assets in shares and property worth

£614m (up over £100m since 2005). Their leadership continues to be paid extravagantly: in 2007, eight general secretaries from the ten largest TUC-affiliated unions earned more than £100,000. Many general secretaries of smaller trade unions also earn more than £100,000: Brian Caton of the POA, for instance, was on £120,000 including benefits. They have no intention of jeop-

ardising such wealth or position.

The opportunist left say the trade unions represent the mass of the working class. In fact they continue to organise preferentially amongst a narrow section of the working class, mainly better-off workers in the public sector. By the end of 2007:

- 58.6% of trade unionists worked in the public sector compared to 27.2% of all employees.
- More than half of trade unionists, 52.7%, were either managers, professionals or associate professionals (41.9% for all employees).
- 45.7% of trade unionists had a degree or other higher education qualification compared to 33.9% of all employees.

At the end of 2007, when the median wage for full-time workers was £457 per week, approximately 4.5 million, or 60% of all trade unionists, were earning between £500 and £999 per week. This was nearly ten times the number of trade unionists in full-time employment who were earning less than £250 per week.

The number of days lost through industrial action in 2009, at 437,000, is the third lowest figure since records began over 120 years ago; the average has been 600,000 since 1997.

Trade unions are no longer fighting organisations of the working class and they will remain that way until they break with Labour. •

● No vote for imperialist war



Palestinian children in the ruins of Gaza. The Labour government continues to support the Zionist war

Britain is an imperialist power and will never hesitate to go to war to defend its interests. The British state has been almost permanently at war since 1945, with 1968 the only year since the end of the Second World War when no British military personnel were killed on active service. In representing a section of the working class whose privileged position depends on the defence of British imperialist interests, Labour has proved as warmongering a party as the Tories.

In 1997 then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook proclaimed 'an ethical foreign policy'; five years later the RAF had dropped more bombs than in the previous 18 years of Tory rule. Iraq, former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan had been bombed, British soldiers were deployed in:

- Congo (1997-98)
- Yugoslavia (1999 onwards)
- East Timor (1999-2000)
- Sierra Leone (2000/2003)
- Afghanistan (2001 onwards)
- Iraq (2003 onwards)
- Cote d'Ivoire (2004)
- the North of Ireland (throughout)

As Cook put it, 'nowhere in the world is so far away that it is not relevant to our security interests'.

After the Soviet Union and socialist bloc collapsed between 1989 and 1991, the US made a bid for global hegemony, seeking to expand its sphere of influence into former socialist countries, Central Asia, the Balkans and the Caucasus, while ensuring the Middle East and its oil was under

US control. British imperialism has allied itself with US military strength to protect its worldwide assets and to elevate its influence relative to those of its German, French and Japanese counterparts.

Yugoslavia

Labour government ministers have been the most belligerent of the imperialists. Prime Minister Blair said of bombing former Yugoslavia in 1999: 'We will redouble and intensify our campaign. We will carry on pounding day after day.' Not for nothing Noam Chomsky described Britain as 'the US attack dog'. The Labour government was the first to propose a ground invasion of Serbia and turning Kosovo into a protectorate. Clare Short, then Secretary of State for International Development, described anyone who opposed the war on Yugoslavia as 'fascist sympathisers'.

Afghanistan

When NATO troops invaded Afghanistan the British contingent was the largest. Between October 2001 and April 2002 over 22,000 bombs and missiles were dropped on Afghanistan. Aid agencies estimated at least 8,000 civilians killed and a further 20,000 dead from starvation and cold at the time. Clare 'Bomber' Short opposed any break in the bombardment to allow in humanitarian supplies. In July 2009, Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth said there were 'compelling reasons' for Britain's war in Afghanistan adding that: 'It goes to

the heart of this country's national security and to the core of our national interests ... The entire region in which Afghanistan sits is of vital strategic importance to the United Kingdom.' There are now 9,500 British military personnel in Afghanistan. By mid-March 2010, the death toll for British forces in Afghanistan was 275.

Iraq

The US and British governments secretly agreed to attack Iraq in 2001. The Labour government connived in promoting the myth of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that could hit British targets in 45 minutes. In March 2002, Labour Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said, 'I am absolutely confident, in the right conditions, we would be willing to use nuclear weapons.' Prior to the March 2003 attack on Iraq the Labour government succeeded in pulling part of the EU away from French and German government opposition to the war, easing the way for the US-led assault. Then Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said that Iraq was in breach of existing UN resolutions and that no further resolutions were necessary for the war to be started.

By the end of 2009 the total cost of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars to the British government was £20.5 billion. The human cost for the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, meanwhile, is appalling: the United Nations estimates over 5,000 Afghanistan civilians killed in the three years to 2010. Iraq's dead since the invasion number approximately one million.

Palestine

Labour has given continual support to the Zionists' barbaric occupation of Palestine:

- In the days that followed the start of the Intifada on 28 September 2000 Britain, along with the US, abstained when the UN General Council condemned the Zionists' excessive use of force.

- In February 2002, during the massacre at Jenin, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said: 'It is necessary to understand why Israelis have been reluctant to demand their government's serious engagement in peace negotiations while on their own streets they are continually subjected to appalling terrorism.'

- In July 2006 Labour offered tacit support to the Israeli blitzkrieg on Lebanon, supporting the US in blocking calls for a ceasefire at both the G8 summit in Russia and the UN Security Council.

- At the beginning of 2009 as Israel launched its savage onslaught on Gaza, Britain once again blocked attempts in the UN to call for an immediate ceasefire.

This is the warmongering Labour Party that declares civilisation from atop a mountain of corpses. Those who argue that 'good Labour MPs' can change anything should consider the facts: just 13 voted against the war on former Yugoslavia; 11 voted against attacking Afghanistan and 11 voted for an inquiry into the war on Iraq. A vote for Labour in any shape or form is a vote for relentless war in the service of the ruling class. ●

A vote for Labour is a vote for the City of London

In Britain ruling class parties, whether Labour, Conservative or Lib Dem, have to sustain Britain's financial sector and the City of London's vast international interests and connections to ensure the British economy remains a 'world centre of finance'. Half of the world's top 100 banks, 46% of asset managers and 46% of top insurers have a presence in Britain. 80% of Europe's £440bn hedge fund assets and around 60% of its private equity firms are in Britain. The assets of UK banks are five times Britain's GDP. Britain's foreign assets are also around five times Britain's GDP and 60% of those assets in 2008 (£4,261bn or nearly three times the GDP) are loans and deposits abroad by UK banks, a gigantic usury capital extracting wealth parasitically from the rest of the world. The City is the financial arm of British imperialism and has always been at the heart of the British state.

The Labour Party was elected to office in 1997 as the preferred party of the ruling class, and promptly set about showing why. Within days, the government had handed control of the Bank of England to the City of London. Lord Sainsbury became science minister, Lord Simon from BP advised on trade policies and Martin Taylor, Chief Executive of Barclays Bank, advised on tax and benefits, David Edwards from NatWest was appointed Director of OfTel, Sir Colin Marshall of British Airways became head of the task force on saving

energy in industry and Sir Peter Davis of Prudential advised on 'Welfare to Work'. The chair of Shell advised on the environment, arms manufacturers Rolls Royce, Vickers and BAE Systems all had staff at the Ministry of Defence. BP inserted staff into the British embassy in Washington and the Foreign Office's Middle East desk. It was government by the ruling class for the ruling class: there was never a question of the working class, not even Labour's trade union allies, getting a look-in.

Nothing changed when it came to dealing with the present crisis. The City expected the government to socialise the debts of the banks and financial institutions, and it did so. The City expected its representatives to be directly involved in deciding government policy, and they were. Brown set up the National Economic Council (NEC) in which former investment banker Baroness Videra, now Minister for Economic Competitiveness, plays a leading role alongside the Minister for the City, Lord Myners, who served on the board of GLG Partners, one of the largest hedge funds in the world. Advising the NEC are 17 'business ambassadors', including the chairs of Barclays, Lloyds TSB, Standard Chartered and the London Stock Exchange.

During October and November 2008 the government spent £61.6bn saving the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and HBOS. The following year, one month before announcing

losses of £24.1bn, the largest loss in British corporate history, RBS chief executive Sir Fred Goodwin took early retirement with a £12.3m pension. This March, the deputy chief executive, Gordon Pell, retired on £13.6m. Bob Diamond, head of Barclays investment wing, is being paid £6m as part of an 'incentive scheme' and was given an additional £27m in 2009 for selling his shares in the bank's asset management arm. Labour hasn't the slightest intention of seriously challenging this state of affairs: the City has made it clear that without these bonuses, pension schemes, or golden hellos and good-byes, it would not be possible to sustain its position as the world's leading financial centre. ●



Fred Goodwin, RBS Chief Executive retired with a £12.3m pension



●●● Labour sleaze:

While the opportunist left peddles the illusion that the Labour Party has some connection with the working class, Labour MPs have at every opportunity shown otherwise. Throughout the last 13 years, while relentlessly persecuting the working class, they have shared the same avaricious lifestyles as the rich they so admire, taking favours from millionaires, milking their expenses and lining up lucrative jobs for themselves. Their greed has exposed Parliament for what it is: a cabal of those on the make and the take, a den of corruption, of greased palms, fraud and deceit, and a stepping stone to even greater fortunes.

While regularly denouncing the 'benefit fraud' of the poor, Labour MPs have maximised their income through the parliamentary expenses system which could give them over £150,000 per annum on top of their £64,000 salaries. Many made fraudulent claims for a second home allowance of £24,000 per annum, including:

- Home Secretary Jacqui Smith (while she was living with her sister);
- Employment Minister Tony McNulty (for his parents' home);
- Hazel Blears (for three different properties in a single year).

A succession of Labour ministers has had to resign for doing favours for themselves and others:

- Multi-millionaire Labour MP Geoffrey Robinson resigned in 1998 after making an undeclared loan to Labour

● No vote for racists



There are those on the so-called left who argue that a vote for Labour is vital to keep the fascist BNP out. But it is a Labour government that is using the police to harass black people and Muslims, that is driving asylum seekers to destitution, incarcerating and deporting them. It is under Labour that black and Asian workers suffer far higher rates of unemployment and poverty than the white working class, poorer housing and worse educational outcomes.

The BNP demands the deportation of illegal immigrants and 'foreign criminals', financial incentives for immigrants to return to their country of origin and the rejection of the applications of asylum seekers who have passed through safe countries to get to Britain. The Labour government has made all of these demands law. In 2008 Immigration Minister Phil Woolas boasted the government was deporting one person every eight minutes.

Draconian immigration laws, accompanied by increasingly strident racism and hostility, are used to control asylum seekers, who are the victims of Britain's imperialist wars and plunder, and regulate the supply of cheap migrant labour, encouraging temporary immigration when needed and expelling it when no longer

required by capitalism.

When Labour came to office its job was to modify immigration policy to meet the immediate needs of British capital, restructuring the workforce to make it more flexible and – because more European – more white, a move that conveniently panders to the most racist sections of the electorate.

Racist immigration laws

Key parts of the agricultural and food processing industries depend on immigrant workers from the European Union who work in conditions of near servitude and are paid at poverty levels. As apprenticeships have dried up, so a shortage of skills has developed in certain trades, especially construction. Hundreds of thousands of East European workers have filled these as well as less skilled jobs. When there was a shortage of nurses and doctors to meet the requirements of the 2000 NHS Plan, Labour switched on the tap to allow in thousands of doctors from India and nurses and social workers from South Africa and Zimbabwe. The reserve army of labour has become international with the great advantage that the British economy has not born the cost of training the skilled immigrant labour it has imported – a particular expression of parasitism.

Until 2008 there was a variety of routes through which immigrant labour could gain access to jobs in Britain. Now the government has replaced this with a single points-based system for non-EU migrants which rates all immigrants according to their age, qualifications and skills and experience, and directs them to specific sectors of the British economy. Workers from the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe are managed through the Workers' Registration Scheme; although generally highly educated, such workers are overwhelmingly (80%) employed in unskilled jobs. For the first year they have limited rights to benefits; if they are from Bulgaria and Romania their right to work is also limited.

Racist asylum policy

The Labour government has become ever more repressive and brutal towards those migrants, overwhelmingly black, fleeing the devastation created by imperialist war. Labour has:

- fought to prevent asylum seekers from coming to Britain in the first place, and expelled those who do make it as quickly as possible;
- constantly increased the powers of immigration officers to arrest, detain, search and seize property, whilst re-

ducing rights to legal advice or appeal;

- made it illegal (since 2002) for asylum seekers to work and then kept them in destitution, withdrawing benefits from those who do not lodge their asylum claims on arrival;

- denied failed asylum seekers the right to any support unless they agree to 'voluntary return'. It was estimated that 283,500 failed asylum seekers were living homeless in Britain in 2008.

- expanded Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) and Short Term Holding Facilities so that they had 3,105 places in April 2009;

- detained hundreds of children in IRCs, sometimes for months on end, in breach of international treaties on children's rights;

- implemented the New Asylum Model, a 'fast-track' system which gives asylum seekers 11 days to make their case.

In March 2009, then Home Secretary Jacqui Smith stated: 'The message is clear – whether you're a visa overstayer, a foreign criminal or a failed asylum seeker, the UK Border Agency is determined to track you down and remove you from Britain.' The BNP could hardly express it better. ●

'In March 2002, Labour Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said, 'I am absolutely confident, in the right conditions, we would be willing to use nuclear weapons'.

No vote for state terror No vote for repressive laws!

The main parties are united in promising more policing, more repression and more surveillance. This is no accident. The power of the capitalist state, as Engels pointed out, 'consists not merely of bodies of armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds...' In periods of crisis, organised force becomes a vital necessity for the ruling class to deal with working class resistance.

Labour's 13 years in government have shown it to be an avid promoter of these 'material adjuncts'. It has created a staggering 4,200 new criminal offences since 1997. Under the blanket of 'national security' and its spurious 'war on terror', Labour has attacked civil liberties, terrorised communities, colluded with torture and allowed state agents to get away, quite literally, with murder.

Terrorising communities

The purpose of anti-terrorist laws has always been to attack supporters of national liberation struggles. The original Prevention of Terrorism Act, introduced by the Labour government in 1974, targeted supporters of the struggle for Irish self-determination and the whole Irish community in Britain.

With the new Terrorism Act (TA), introduced by Labour in 2000, the government massively widened the scope of what is defined as 'terrorism' and banned membership or support for a long list of political and religious organisations from around the world. This was followed by the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (ATCSA) 2001, Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, Terrorism Act 2006 and Counter-Terrorism Act 2008. With the exception of some of the proscriptions of 'terrorist' organisations under the 2000 Act, these laws have all targeted Muslims. The 2006 Act created a long list of new criminal offences, including encouraging terrorism, dis-

seminating terrorist publications, making terrorist threats relating to devices, materials or facilities and trespassing on nuclear sites. The Bill originally contained a further specific offence of 'glorifying terrorism'; this was later made part of the provisions of the 'encouragement' section. In 2005, Labour failed in its plans to increase the maximum period of pre-charge police detention from 14 to 90 days – but it was extended to 28 days. A further attempt in the Counter-Terrorism Bill to increase the period to 42 days also failed. These catch-all laws set out to terrorise and criminalise, in particular, the Muslim community.

No vote for war criminals and murderers

Alongside this domestic legislation, Labour also introduced a policy of collusion with torture and illegal rendition. Rendition – the extrajudicial kidnapping and transfer of detainees to a shadowy network of CIA-run or approved 'dark prisons' across the world – is illegal. Collusion with such an operation is also illegal. Torture contravenes international treaties including the Geneva Conventions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and British domestic legislation. Collusion with torture constitutes a war crime.

Yet in 2002 a new official policy on torture was drawn up by senior government lawyers and security service chiefs and sanctioned at the highest levels of government. As Tony Blair put it, 'the rules of the game have changed'. The new guidance stated that, while agents must not be seen to condone torture, if detainees 'are not within our custody or control, the law does not require you to intervene'. Thus terrorism suspects were 'outsourced' to countries such as Pakistan, Morocco, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates to be tortured on behalf of the British security services and convicted on testimony extracted through

torture. In March 2009, the United Nations found that Britain:

- co-operated with the US rendition programme to places where detainees were likely to be tortured;
- sent British intelligence officers to interview detainees being held incommunicado and tortured in Pakistan;
- sent interrogators to Guantanamo Bay.

Labour has also proved its willingness to murder. In 2005 Jean Charles de Menezes became another innocent victim in a long line of murders committed by the British state. In April 2009 Ian Tomlinson died after being attacked by police at the G20 demonstration in London. His death highlighted the lengths to which police are now willing to go to intimidate anyone who dares to protest. Press photographers, environmental campaigners, young demonstrators opposed to Zionist murder in Gaza, have all been attacked. These are warning shots fired across the bows of any future opposition to government repression.

Preparation for martial law

In 2004 the government passed the Civil Contingencies Act. Like the TA and ATCSA, this purports to be a response to 'serious threats to the nation', be they man-made or natural. It gives the government unprecedented power in 'an emergency' to prevent people from leaving or entering any area, to deploy troops, ban gatherings, requisition property and disregard existing legislation. Local and regional authorities are required to draw up detailed plans to be implemented by regional 'resilience bodies' made up of Regional Co-ordinators, Regional Military Commanders, police Chief Constables and local council Regional Controllers. They will have complete power in the regions they oversee. In February 2010, Labour published proposals that would see the British Army patrolling city streets. This is a blueprint for martial law. ●

●●●●●●●● cabs for hire



Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Mandelson for his luxury London home. Mandelson also resigned.

- Mandelson then resigned a second time in 1999 after trying to hide his role in helping the millionaire Hinduja brothers to gain British passports.

- In 2005, the vindictively self-righteous David Blunkett had to leave the government twice for lying and deception.

- Shahid Malik (Justice Minister) and Jacqui Smith had to resign in 2009 after their fraudulent expenses claims were revealed.

The Labour government has been more than happy to dish out favours to its supporters. Both Lord Gavron and Lord Drayson donated £500,000 when they got their peerages. Labour donors Dr Chris Evans, David Brown of Motorola and Ronald Cohen of Apax Partners were all knighted. Vice-President of the Formula One Association Bernie Ecclestone donated £1m to the Labour Party at the beginning of 1997. A few months later, Formula One motor racing was the one sport exempt from a bill banning tobacco advertising and sponsorship in sport.

In 2006 Tony Blair, backed by Jack Straw, now Justice Minister, forced the Serious Fraud Office to drop criminal investigations into BAE's bribes to prominent Saudis when it won the £43bn Al Yamamah weapons deal with Saudi Arabia. In February 2010 the company was found guilty of false

accounting in this and other deals with the Czech Republic, Tanzania and Romania, but not of bribery. The fine of £285m was a small slap on the wrist for being found out.

In return, Labour MPs, and especially former ministers, have expected rewards for service rendered to big business. David Blunkett received £150,000 'other remuneration' in 2007; Charles Clark £50,000 from three directorships. Among 11 other former Labour ministers finding lucrative jobs in the private sector at the beginning of 2008 were former Health Secretaries Patricia Hewitt (£25-30,000 per year from Boots) and Alan Milburn, (£30,000 per year from Lloyd'spharmacy Healthcare). Former minister Stephen Byers described himself on Channel 4 Dispatches as a 'cab for hire' – for up to £5,000 a day; Hewitt and former Defence Minister Hoon pitched their stalls more modestly at £3,000 a day – roughly what someone on JSA would get in a year.

Top of the list is Tony Blair: since resigning as Prime Minister in July 2007 he has made £20m. He controls 14 different companies and foundations as well as serving as an adviser to JPMorgan Bank and Zurich Financial. In March it was revealed that he had kept secret a deal advising UI Energy Corporation, which was given oil drilling rights in Iraq, as well as a £1m deal advising the Kuwaiti royal family.

Some working class party! ●

War on the working class

The daily harassment of working class people, particularly black and ethnic groups and the young, is being stepped up. Labour has given permission for drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) to spy on civilians. With 4.2 million CCTV cameras in operation, Britain is the most surveilled society in the world.

Using powers under section 60 of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, the Metropolitan Police

force has vastly increased stops and searches aimed at harassing black youth. These powers, introduced to deal with 'football hooligans' and 'gang fights', have replaced the infamous 'sus' laws and allow police to stop and search without grounds for suspicion in designated areas. In 2008-09 the number increased to 80,000, from 4,400 in 2003-04. Additional stop and search powers, again without grounds for suspicion, can be used

under the Terrorism Act 2000. Under section 44, 200,444 people were stopped in the year ending September 2009. How far these powers are a vehicle for harassment is revealed by the arrest rate of 0.5% and the fact that black and minority ethnic people are much more likely to be stopped.

Anti-social behaviour

In 1998, the Labour government introduced Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

(ASBOs). These orders forbid people from doing certain things or going to certain places. The prosecuting authority only has to show on the balance of probabilities that the conduct is anti-social, and once the order is imposed, breaching it becomes a criminal offence carrying a possible five years' imprisonment. By 2007 there were nearly 15,000 ASBOs in England and Wales.

In 2003 Labour widened the attack

with the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (ASBA) creating new powers to issue injunctions and 'parenting orders', close premises, designate 'problem' tenants for eviction and set up dispersal zones, whereby any group of two or more people can be compelled to leave or face arrest. ASBA also amended the Public Order Act so that the police can impose conditions on any 'static demonstration' of two or more people. ●



Vote Labour to lock up the poor

More repressive policing and laws mean more people go to prison. During 18 years of Conservative government to 1997, the prison population of England and Wales rose from 42,364 to 60,131. Since 1997 it has risen to 84,073. Britain has more life sentenced prisoners than Germany, France, Russia and Turkey put together. Having already added electronic tagging, minimum sentences, the two-strikes life sentence, ASBOs, control orders and indefinite detention for 'foreign terrorists' to the pre-existing regime, in 2003 the government overhauled the entire sentencing structure and created a system where open-ended sentences are the norm for all violent or sex offences.

All this needs new prisons. Within a week of Labour's election in 1997, Home Secretary Jack Straw announced that all new prisons would be privately built and run. Under Labour, punishment has become big business with Serco, G4S, GEO and other corporations competing to run prisons, immigration removal centres, court services, electronic monitoring, prison transport and a plethora of other 'services'. Current plans are to create a

further 20,000 privately-run prison places by 2014 in a programme costing up to £4.5bn. ●

Vote Labour for more inequality

Inequality has increased during the years of the Labour government. Significant economic growth until 2008 could not re-create the conditions of the post-war boom when it was possible to guarantee the relatively privileged conditions of higher paid workers and the middle class while sustaining adequate living standards for the working class.

Between 1996/97 and 2007/08, the income share of the poorest 20% fell from 5.9% to 5.3% whilst that for the richest 20% rose from 43.2% to 45.6%. The ratio of the income share of the richest to the poorest 20% rose from 7.3:1 to 8.7:1. A report, *The effects of taxes and benefits on household income 2007/08*, concluded that 'the large increase in inequality which took place in the second half of the 1980s has not been reversed'. A recent London School of Economics report shows that households in the top 10% have a total wealth 100 times those in the bottom 10%, with households in

the top 1% each possessing a minimum wealth of £2.6m. ●

Labour cuts benefits

On coming into office in 1997 Labour proceeded with the draconian Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) regime, and over the years has continued to tighten eligibility for the miserly income it provides. Today's JSA has fallen by 25% against average earnings since 1997, and now stands at 10.5% of average earnings, half of what unemployment benefit was on average from its introduction in 1912 until 1979 when the Tories tied it to inflation.

Income support levels for those who are not working have fallen under Labour. For single people over 24 without children, they fell from 65% of the poverty line in 1997/98 to only 50% in 2008/09; for couples without children they fell from 60% to 46%; for couples with children, income support levels remained 20% below the poverty line. Labour has punished such people as the 'undeserving poor'. Over half a million suffer fraud investigations each year to ensure they get no more than the pittance they are due, while the recent Welfare Act demands that virtually everyone claiming benefits will have to do forced labour. ●

Vote Labour for more poverty

The number of people living in poverty (defined as below 60% of median household income after housing costs) in 1979 was 7.9 million; by 1997, it had risen to 14 million. After 12 years of Labour, however, it was still 13.5 million and growing under the impact of the financial crisis. Pensioners fared better: 29.1% were living in poverty in 1996/97; this fell to 17.6% in 2004/05 but is now rising and stood at 19% in 2007/08.

Although the proportion of children living in poverty fell from 34.1% in 1996/97 to 28.4% in 2004/05, it then started to rise, and by 2007/08 had reached 31%. In 2007/08 there were 4.0 million children living in poverty (2.1 million in 1979 and 4.3 million in 1997), of whom nearly half lived in persistent poverty (below the poverty line in three out of four successive years). Labour failed to meet its initial target – reducing child poverty by 25% by 2004/05, and its second target as well – halving child poverty by 2010. As increases in state expenditure on child-related tax credits and benefits tailed off from 2004, the proportion living in poverty began to rise again. ●

A vote for Labour means health and education privatisation

The state provision of health and education has become a barrier to capitalism's desperate search for new sources of profit. Why? Because health workers and teachers in a nationalised system do not produce profit – they can only do so under a privatised system. That is why Labour has continued the privatisation of state assets such as council housing and services, and especially health and education. Inevitably the working class gets poorer provision.

Labour is bad for your health

Labour used the NHS Plan in 2000 and the associated increase in NHS spending to extend private sector involvement. It forged ahead with PFI contracts, where private companies build new hospitals which the NHS leases back. Currently, PFI is funding over 100 new hospitals worth £10.9bn. The cost to the NHS by 2048 will be an enormous £62.6bn.

From 2002, Labour started to recreate the internal market through Payment by Results whereby Primary Care Trusts commission services from hospitals and pay them according to how much work they do. This requires an army of accountants, managers and management consultants. There was a 133% increase in the number of senior managers from 2001/2 to 2005/06 and

a further 91% increase since; more than double the 35% increase in the numbers of doctors and nurses.

Labour has handed private companies lucrative contracts for clinical services. First were the Independent Sector Treatment Centres that carry out the simplest procedures leaving the NHS with the most complex cases, wasting £220m. Now Labour plans to privatise services worth some £15bn a year provided by 400,000 community health professionals (district nurses, speech therapists, health visitors, etc) and 200,000 support workers. Labour is also pushing the creation of hundreds of polyclinics run by the private sector, and wants to sell hospital sites worth over £20bn and lease them back.

The resultant obsession with targets has killed patients. In Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust in Kent, 269 people died from *c-difficile* infection; there were hundreds of deaths on filthy wards at Basildon and Thurrock University NHS Hospitals Foundation Trust, and an enquiry into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust revealed 1,200 excess deaths over three years and that patients had been treated with appalling contempt.

Inevitably there was no reduction in health inequality: people living in the poorest areas will die on average seven years earlier than those in the

richest areas. Labour also failed in a commitment to reduce infant mortality for the poorest from 13% above the national average to 12% over a 13-year period. In fact the gap has widened: in 2004-06 infant mortality among manual workers was 5.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, 17% higher than the national average of 4.8 per 1,000.

Education for sale

'Education, education, education', Labour's slogan for the 1997 general election, was the call of a market stall trader. Whatever could be marketised, has been: school cleaning, dinners, pay roll services, insurance, building maintenance, teacher training, examinations, skills training, playing fields, transport, sports facilities, special needs. Where it has not been able to outsource educational provision, the government is now prepared to give away schools to anyone 'accredited'.

The extra money that Labour has provided for education has gone into the pockets of charities, churches, city businesses, high wages for managers, inspectors and cronies in hundreds of quangos. In 1997, Labour promised to reduce infant class sizes to below 30; today over 22,000 classes still have more than 31 pupils. Average class size in British primary schools is the fourth worst in the OECD group of 30

developed nations. More pupils are being taught by non-qualified staff as the number of poorly-paid teaching assistants has increased by 200% over the last ten years compared to a 10% increase in qualified teachers. No wonder Britain was ranked 17th out of the 21 most advanced nations on educational attainment in 2009.

Educational inequality remains. By the age of 11, students receiving free school meals (FSM – an inadequate measurement that excludes the majority of the low paid) are twice as likely to miss basic literacy and numeracy standards. Just over 6% of FSM pupils take A levels, compared to about 40% overall and in 2008 a mere 176 (about 0.5%) of these students received three A grades. Today as ever, parental income remains the most significant contributor to educational success.

Alongside this, Labour strengthened the grip of centralised directives on educational institutions. Children's records of achievement follow them throughout school life. Incidents of bad attitude to school and any action that fails to conform to state standards are permanently recorded.

In 2007, the United Nations international children's organisation ranked Britain's young people at the bottom of the well-being league table of all developed countries. ●

Vote Labour for more council house sales

In 1997 Labour planned to sell 250,000 council houses a year. As a result of its policy not to build new council housing, it is estimated that by 2011 there will be five million people on local authority waiting lists and, according to the National Housing Federation, households on the waiting list in some areas would have to wait 280 years for a home.

One in seven children grows up in poor housing. Labour broke its 2004 promise to update the 1935 overcrowding standard. In 2010 more than a million children live in overcrowded homes, while the number of households in overcrowded accommodation has risen to more than 650,000, the highest level for over 14 years. Despite the desperate housing crisis for working class people, Labour built only 375 council houses in 2009. Housing association rents are £8.96 a week higher than for equivalent council houses, and more working class people are forced into substandard private rented accommodation.

More than half of social housing tenants have an annual income of less than £10,000, and 55% are unemployed. In February 2008, Housing Minister Caroline Flint suggested that unemployed people in council housing could risk losing their homes if they don't prove that they are looking for work. Later, Labour proposed that continued council tenancy should depend on continual means testing. The principle is the same: Labour wants to means test council house tenancies and so maintain its drive to abolish council housing completely. ●