

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Socialist Appeal

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A WAR of BLOOD and Lies

Fortnightly
Socialist
Appeal
WAR special

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contents this issue

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Editorial: Coalition of bloody liars.....	3
T&G elections: 'Reclaim our Party' says Woodley.....	4
School student walk-outs across Britain.....	4
FBU at the crossroads.....	5
Shell: Shelling out	5
NUJ conference: Need to keep fighting.....	6
Bradford: strikers' struggle continues.....	6
Economy: Deaths, debts and deficits.....	7
War on Iraq: The Ministry of Truth.....	8
Giant leap forward for Marxism in Pakistan.....	11
International reports.....	12
Fighting Fund:	
£3,000 - another magnificent response.....	14
£50,000 special appeal.....	14



The deadline for articles for issue 111 is 9 April 2003

May Day greetings

To all Labour and trade union organisations

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Socialist Appeal will be carrying a May Day supplement in our next edition, featuring greetings from Labour and trade union organisations in Britain and internationally.

2003 is a very important year for *Socialist Appeal*. Last year we celebrated our tenth anniversary with some important steps forward. This year we will continue to defend the ideas of socialism within the labour movement, and report on the struggles of the workers in Britain and across the world.

Our struggle is the struggle of the international working class!
 So sending us your greetings and messages of solidarity.

Our rates (indicated below) are very reasonable and different sized designs are available.

Please send your greetings on a separate sheet to the above address. Please ensure they are with us no later than 25th April.

Sizes available are:

12cm/20cm	-	cost £65
8cm/14cm	-	cost £35
4cm/10cm	-	cost £20
2cm/14cm	-	cost £10

In solidarity,
 Alan Woods,
 Editor *Socialist Appeal*

Please make all cheques payable to *Socialist Appeal* and send to P.O.Box 2626, London N1 7SQ

Coalition of bloody liars

"We still have a love affair with Iraq. We may not like the guy who runs the store, but the merchandise in the store sure is attractive." Lucio Noto, Esso's former vice president.

As American and British planes blitz Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk and other towns in order to satisfy the American military-industrial complex, bloody shrapnel-ridden casualties amongst innocent men, women, children and babies continue to mount up. There is growing revulsion around the world, not least in Britain, where 500,000 people demonstrated against this naked aggression in the country's biggest ever war-time protest..

Despite all the propaganda being churned out on a 24-hour basis, it is clear the plans of the imperialists have gone astray. Rumsfeld and co claimed the war would be over in days as the Iraqi army simply surrendered without a fight. Their policy of 'shock and awe' would smash Iraqi morale, destroy communications, and render the Iraqis impotent. But this has not happened. Now they have to despatch up to 200,000 more troops to Iraq. The American and British military are in a mess. Within hours, after assuring everyone the 'coalition of the willing' had taken Umm Qasr, then Basra and Najaf, they were forced to admit the opposite, saying they are facing stiff resistance.

They said they were "armies of liberation" that would be welcomed enthusiastically by the population. But this has not happened either. They are seen as an invasion force. The blockade of Basra is preparing a disaster. There is a serious prospect of a cholera epidemic in the city. It is a humanitarian catastrophe in the making.

In a cynical propaganda stunt Blair claimed the Iraqis had executed two British sol-

diers, a claim vehemently denied by the relatives. Caught lying, Downing Street is being forced to backtrack.

"This war is not going to be easily won", admits the London Evening Standard. "The invading armies must now steel themselves for the possibility of a bitter battle for Baghdad - a prospect which commanders do not relish, either for themselves or for its impact on the civilian population." (24 March) However, Baghdad is not a small town, but a massive city of five million, with no prospect of evacuation. It is where the coalition will meet it's the fiercest resistance to its plans for occupation. Not all the years of "urban warfare" in Northern Ireland will prepare them for this Armageddon. It will be more like the bloody battle for the Chechen capital of Grozny.

Shrapnel wounds

We have witnessed the bombardment of Baghdad and elsewhere and the carnage created. We have seen the pictures of innocent children paralysed and reeling in agony with allied shrapnel wounds and burns. This war is being conducted live on TV around the world. As a result there is a good deal more shock than awe.

"It looks like it's the bombing of a city but it isn't", stated Donald Rumsfeld. "It's very precise targets." But the military admit that something like 10 per cent of their 'smart' bombs go astray. When 3,000 missiles are launched over two days, some 300 miss their target. 15 charred and mutilated bodies, mostly women, children and old people, were dragged from the 'smart' bombed marketplace in northern Baghdad. American missiles have struck southern Turkey and Iran, and a busload of Syrian workers fleeing Iraq was destroyed. Whether all these 'misses' are

accidental is a moot point. The Turkish regime has suddenly backed down from its stated intention of invading Northern Iraq - a policy opposed by the American imperialists.

'Friendly fire'

No wonder innocent civilians are dying in Baghdad and elsewhere. The numbers killed by 'friendly fire', a truly Orwellian term, is also testament to limits of allied technology. This is no 'clean' war. It is a bloody war, no different from the colonial wars of the past.

The shift from air war to ground war will be a massive test for the imperialist armies. The Americans will be haunted by their experiences in Vietnam, Beirut and Mogadishu. That is why they were reluctant to launch a ground war in Kosovo, and in Afghanistan they relied upon the Northern Alliance. The prospect of urban warfare sends shivers down their spines. Despite all the lies and hypocrisy emanating from Washington and Downing Street, the majority know this is a war for oil, markets and spheres of influence. It has nothing whatsoever to do with 'democracy' or 'weapons of mass destruction'. Any weapons of mass destruction are the remains of those sold to Saddam over the years by British and American governments. Near Basra, British troops found detonator fuses in boxes labelled Wallop Industries Ltd, Middle Wallop, Hampshire.

The vast majority of people are opposed to this war. The job of removing Saddam Hussein is the job of the Iraqi people themselves. The peoples of Serbia and Indonesia overthrew their dictatorships without the Royal Marines or the US Seventh Cavalry. All the Americans want to do is install a US protectorate. A 'retired' US general is already being

groomed as the next Viceroy of Baghdad. For the masses it will mean even more suffering and oppression. As always, the Kurds will be sold out. Already 10,000 Turkish troops are poised to enter the Kurdish areas of Northern Iraq to "protect their interests". They are simply following the example of the Americans and British.

"War is the continuation of politics by other means", wrote Clausewitz. It is the struggle for markets, raw materials and spheres of influence that drives all imperialist wars of aggression. Only by the overthrow of capitalism can we finally eradicate the underlying causes of war.

Tony Blair is a poodle of the reactionary George Bush. His foreign policy like his home policy is based on the interests of the market, of profit, of capitalism. He has dragged Britain into this war against the wishes of the majority. He has ignored public opinion. He has torn the Labour Party apart with an unprecedented 139 Labour MPs voting against him. A special Labour Party Conference must be convened to demand the halting of this war. British troops must be recalled immediately. The £3bn ear-marked for war, which could escalate to £10bn, must be used instead to pay the firefighters, nurses, and other low paid workers.

There are calls for Blair to be removed as party leader. We whole-heartedly support this call. Sooner or later Blair is finished, but this won't happen automatically. The trade unions, which founded the Labour Party, must immediately organise to reclaim the party. This initiative must go hand in hand with the fight for socialist policies as the only alternative to Blairism and the market.

Join us in that struggle.

'Reclaim our Party' says Woodley

unions

Tony Woodley, the left candidate for general secretary of the 800,000 strong Transport and General Workers' Union, opened his election campaign by launching a bid to "reclaim the Labour Party", which was at odds with the union in a number of important policy areas.

He told a press conference that if elected he would call a summit of like-minded unions to start a fightback "to reclaim our party and put the labour back into the party." Such an initiative would be "the biggest co-ordinated challenge" ever undertaken to the current party leadership. "Tony Blair is so blind to what he has done, he cannot see the wood for the trees", said Woodley.

He went on to say that Blair and his leadership had "lost the support and confidence of working people in this country. It is our party and it has been hijacked." The unions needed "to discuss how to get Labour back representing working people." He said he was happy to be a member of the so-called awkward squad of union leaders because it was time to fight back against New Labour.

This call comes at a crucial time when other left

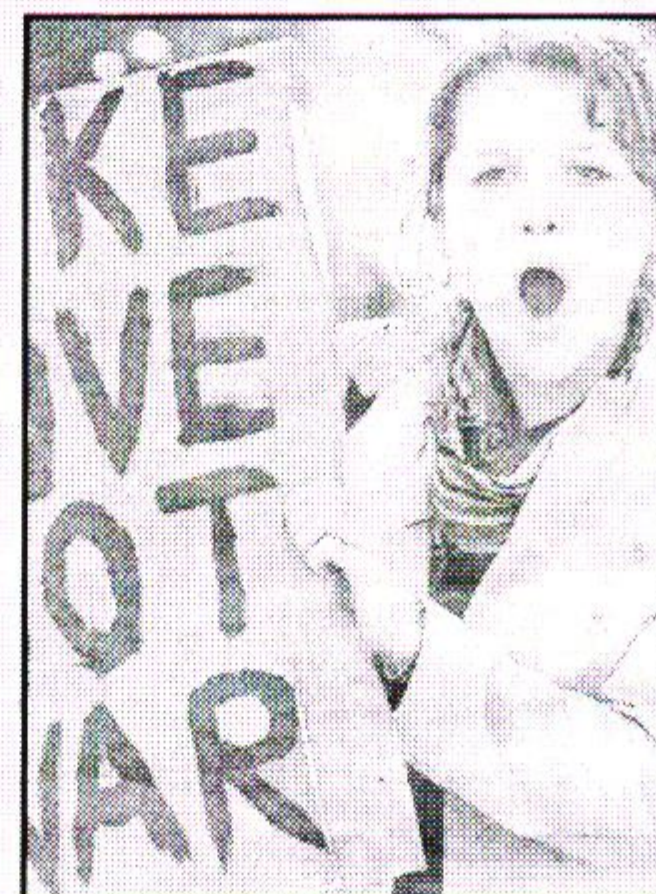
general secretaries have come out with the same position, including Derek Simpson (Amicus), Billy Hayes (CWU), Mick Rix (ASLEF), Bob Crow (RMT), Andy Gilchrist (FBU) and Jeremy Dear (NUJ). We welcome Tony Woodley's call. But it is now time to transform words into deeds. If the unions were to send in 50 members into every Constituency Labour Party, they could take it over. They could ensure the deselection of Blairite loyalists and put in their place those prepared to fight for union policy. As a first step, they should clear out all those so-

called union representatives on the NEC of the Labour Party who have continually sided with the Blairites in defiance of union policies.

It is clear that the unions can defeat Blairism, which has only a shallow basis of support within the Labour Party. It is clear for all those who want to see that the time to reclaim the Labour Party is now! There has never been a better opportunity. Don't contract out - contract in! Since its formation, Socialist Appeal has consistently argued for this position as the only way forward. Those who think they should set up phantom armies outside of the Labour Party are barking up the wrong tree. Breaking links with Labour is "a rightwing agenda", said Woodley. That is absolutely true. Experience has shown that you have to fight inside the Labour Party to get anywhere. This must be linked up to the fight for socialist policies as the only answer to the problems of working people, including the renationalisation of all privatised industries, the repeal of all anti-union legislation and a minimum wage of not less than £8 per hour. It also means the restoration of Clause Four, the party's commitment to socialism, which was ditched by the Blairites in 1994.

VOTE WOODLEY!

Tony Woodley was elected deputy general secretary in a significant victory for the left last year. He is now the Broad Left candidate for the general secretary. Nominations for general secretary have opened and the ballot closes on 30 May. We urge all our TGWU readers to mobilise support for Woodley.



School student walk-outs across Britain

What marvellous demonstrations we witnessed on the 19th and 20th of March all over the country. In Manchester 4000 demonstrated, in London 3000, 1000 in Birmingham, 400 in Sheffield, 300 in Leeds, 500 in Southampton...

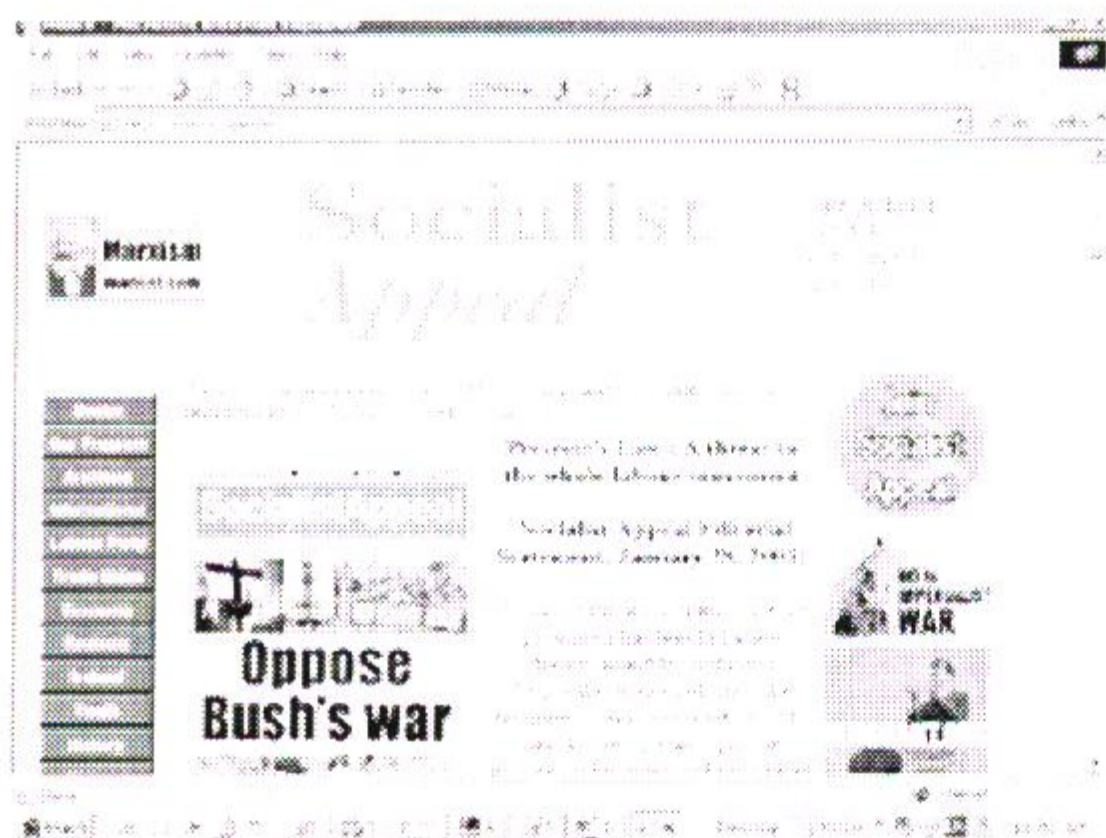
Even in smaller towns like in Dorchester and Poole we saw tens of school students walking out against the war. This was a nationwide movement of the youth. Anti-war committees have mushroomed in schools and sixth forms as well as universities.

For many years we saw the sceptics accepting the official propaganda about youth being apolitical. This has been shattered in a matter of days. Thousands of students are discussing on a daily basis the causes of the imperialist war and how to stop it.

This is the beginning of a process. The politicisation of an entire generation will be an undeniable fact. They might not stop the war, but many of them will learn the real role of the state apparatus, of imperialism and the need of permanent organizations in the schools instead of ad-hoc committees. One of the most important demands must be the right to vote at 16. They are able to work, organise, and demonstrate, but this basic political right is denied them.

Many of these school students showed a high degree of militancy, this must be used to build and develop structures to carry on the struggle.

■ In the next issue we will report further on anti-war activities in different schools up and down the country.



socialist.net

Socialist Appeal is relaunching the Socialist.net website to provide workers and youth with more up to date reports and analysis of events in Britain, the struggle against the war, developments in the unions and the Labour Party, and all the battles workers and youth are engaged in. Please e-mail reports to appeal@socialist.net

FBU at the crossroads

by our industrial correspondent

Things came to a head last month in the FBU dispute. A special conference of FBU delegates on March 19th rejected the recommendation of the FBU Executive Committee to accept the employers' latest offer. The question will now go to a special recall conference of delegates in Brighton on April 19th.

The latest offer by the joint local employer organisation is 1.6% over 3 years, which means 4% backdated to November 2002, 7% from this November, and 4.2% from November 2004. The first 4% would be paid immediately; but all the other rises will be dependent on the workers accepting 'modernising reforms' (tinkering and cuts) in the service.

The government have recently introduced legislation to ditch local authorities obligation to consult workers and members of the public before making big changes to the service. The recent bill also denies the rights of the union to challenge cuts that are put forward by the local fire chiefs and employers. This is part of the government's strategy to break up national negotiating bodies and put all future negotiations onto a local basis. The employers will be able to pick off areas individually, raising, as Andy Gilchrist has said, 'the threat of casualisation of the fire service.'

At the same time, under new plans from Prescott's office, the government will have the power to implement the proposed offer without consultation with employers or the union, even if the union rejects the deal. The plans have other serious implications for the future; the government will be given the right to order the fire authorities to close, and merge stations. The government has already let slip that they want to ditch 10,000 jobs. In addition there is now the threat to ban any further strike action under the cover of war. The FBU should stand firm and oppose any such attacks by the bosses; including the idea that they should not strike when there is a war on. The government has found billions from the public purse to fund its military adventure in the Middle East, but where is the money for the underpaid workers in the public services.

The government is trying to intimidate the workers into calling off strike action, but their recent vote to continue the dispute shows that they are still solid. However it is clear that the tactics pursued so far have not worked. Now is the time to take decisive action to rebuild the momentum. The action must be stepped up to guarantee a victory; the union must call one week strikes, building up to all out action in order to win the dispute. The whole labour movement must rally behind the firefighters. The threat to ban strikes in the fire service is an attack on the entire working class. Solidarity action will need to be organised to defeat this assault on our right to strike.

The Labour Party was elected by the workers to carry through reforms in our interests, but it has now turned on us. Not only pro big business policies like privatisation, but direct attacks on workers, threatening to ban strikes and offering to pay railway bosses to undermine the guards dispute. If we want to end the scandal of a Labour government attacking workers we must take control of our own. FBU members and all trade unionists need to organise to reclaim Labour. A few workers from each sector joining the Labour Party up and down the country would begin to transform the situation. Now is the time to contract in not out. Don't break the links but take the party over, take it back, and dump Blair and Blairism.

Shelling out

Oil multinational Shell is a slippery customer. Within a week of announcing the cutting of 350 staff from its North Sea operations, Shell had announced a whacking pay rise for chairman Sir Philip Watts.

The job cuts come as part of a six-month cost cutting review, which aims to increase 'productivity' by 25%. However Amicus expect around 200 maintenance jobs to go, a spokesman for the union warned recently. "This is an act of crass stupidity - a Piper Alpha in the making,".

A GMB spokesman condemned the job losses as short-sighted. He said: "When things change for the better in the industry it will mean recruiting new people, and training them at a very high cost."

However the short-termist destruction of jobs doesn't matter much to the bosses. They have a strange logic, which

makes them think that the best way to boost production, and increase efficiency is to cut the workforce. They are piling more and more pressure on to fewer and fewer shoulders, so that those who remain in the industry will have to work twice as hard to increase production.

And meanwhile Sir Philip has enjoyed an 8% rise, which takes his wages to £1.8m as a reward for the 13% fall in share price, and the 23% collapse in profits in the last year.

But it is not fair to say that the workers have to shoulder all of the burden; Sir Philip should take note of the fate of his chum Lord Browne of Madingly, Chairman of BP. Lord Browne has taken a 32% pay cut, in the light of a huge fall in profits, from a whopping £5.7m in 2001, to a mere £3.9m for the last year.

Act to stop the BNP

The Nazi BNP have announced they are to stand four candidates in next months council elections in Southampton.

This has provoked fury and prompted local Labour movement activists and Trade Unionists to form the **Southampton Coalition against Nazis**. The BNP will be standing in four of the working class areas in the city and so their activities cannot go unopposed. We first had dealings with them when they tried to infiltrate a ANL meeting last thursday.

If it wasn't for the *Socialist Appeal* supporters present they would have got away with disrupting the meeting. They were promptly shown the door and they ran off into the night. Action was then proposed by the Marxists present and the coalition was formed. We are in contact with local TGWU and UNISON activists and also Caribbean, Muslim and Indian community groups.

A show of strength was organised for last Wednesday evening on Thornhill Estate where one of these scumbags is standing. The rally showed the determination of all present not to let the Nazis boss things on the estates of Southampton. A Rock Against Facism gig has been organised for the end of April following a rally in the town centre. Mass leafletting has been organised on the estates. The BNP are in for an uncomfortable ride.

THE BNP MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO PEDDLE THEIR RACIST FILTH IN SOUTHAMPTON.

NUJ conference

Need to keep fighting

Kris Lawrie, delegate London Central, personal capacity

The National Union of Journalists has again shown itself to be a fighting union. There has been a surge in strike action this year including votes for action at The Independent/loS, Express Newspapers, Rotherham Advertiser, Cumbrian Newspapers, Newsquest titles in Bradford, Bolton and Kendal, Greater Manchester Weekly Newspapers, Belfast Telegraph and others. General Secretary, Jeremy Dear, said recently: "We've achieved more to tackle low pay in the past twelve months than we have in the past decade."

More than 6000 journalists have won union recognition in the past two years and 1,500 new members joined the NUJ in the same period. Union members at Butterworths publishers (part of Reed Elsevier) recently won union recognition with a resounding 94.7% of the votes in a 61% turnout - despite the added hurdle of a postal ballot.

Members working for local authorities took part in strikes with public sector unions nationally over pay and London weighting. Many union activists have actively supported the Fire Brigades Union campaign for fair pay and public services.

BBC sacks union activists

Current battles include the fight for reinstatement of two Arab journalists sacked by the BBC World Service for fighting discrimination and racism at the BBC.

On 19 February, two senior

BBC managers sacked Abdul Hadi Jiad and Adli Hawwari, two leading NUJ activists at the BBC World Service, without allowing them the right to be represented or the right to appeal. Greg Dyke, who had described the BBC as 'hideously white', supported the sackings. They were singled out because they fought too hard for their right to be treated fairly.

Adli (FOC of the BBC Arabic Service chapel) and Abdul Hadi led the legal fight to force the World Service to scrap its notorious 'Fresh Blood' recruitment policy. The BBC publicity machine and its press chums portrayed this legal fight as a series of vexatious actions, without mentioning that there have been 27 claims against the BBC Arabic Service by staff. On 7 March, a meeting of BBC NUJ reps agreed to ballot all 3,000 BBC NUJ members on strike action. They described the sackings as a 'breach of long-established BBC agreements with the unions on the conduct of the disciplinary process', which sent 'a chilling warning to all BBC staff that, from now on, anyone can be summarily dismissed in a similar fashion.'

Pensions Fight

There is another fight at Trinity Mirror where there has been strike action at the Birmingham Post and Mail and at Coventry Newspapers over proposed changes to the pension scheme. New staff will be excluded from the Final Salary Pension Scheme and offered a much more risky 'money purchase' scheme.

General Secretary, Jeremy Dear, said: "This company is the successor of Mirror Group Newspapers, from whose pen-

sion scheme Robert Maxwell stole £420 million, 11 years ago. But this time, it's legal!"

Another media company Pearson recently closed their scheme to new employees. (This issue is being taken up increasingly widely in the labour movement as more schemes are in deficit and employers, who happily took contributions holidays, refuse to bridge the gap.)

The NUJ is lobbying ministers, MPs and the TUC. Jeremy Dear said: "If this means taking industrial action against employers trying to cheat their staff to save money, then we will."

Conference Issues

The need for campaigns to support members politically, make it vital for the union to set up a political fund (motion 121) to allow it to campaign more widely, without the threat of a legal challenge.

A number of motions aim to save cash and make the union's organisation more efficient. But the idea of reducing elections to the National Executive Committee (NEC) and the current Annual Delegate conferences to once every two years would be a mistake.

Trade union democracy is highly valued within the union and moving away from elections and gatherings every year would mean a great loss of accountability. There may be good arguments for reducing the size of the NEC and costs in other ways, but the strength gained from meeting and sharing experiences between a wide-range of union activists cannot be over-estimated.

Bradford: strikers' struggle continues

The NUJ chapel at Newsquest Bradford have staged a 10-day strike in March as part of their campaign for improved pay. The company has so far not improved its below-inflation two per cent pay offer and union members are preparing to name more days of action. Graduate trainees earn as little as £12,000 and qualified senior journalists just £15,000. On the Telegraph and Argus some journalists with 30 years' service are on less than £20,000 per annum.

The strikers URGENTLY need cash to keep the dispute going, from union branches or chapels. Why not organise a workplace collection? Point out that if the chapel wins it will mean that your management has to take the union more seriously - and just talking to people about the union strengthens your organisation.

Send money to 'Newsquest Bradford NUJ chapel' c/o NUJ, Fifth Floor, Arthur House, Chorlton Street, Manchester, M1 3FH. Individual donations welcome. This is an official dispute and an official NUJ appeal for financial assistance.

■ Why not also email POLITE protests to Newsquest UK chief executive Paul Davidson? pdavidson@london.newsquest.co.uk

Deaths, debts and deficits

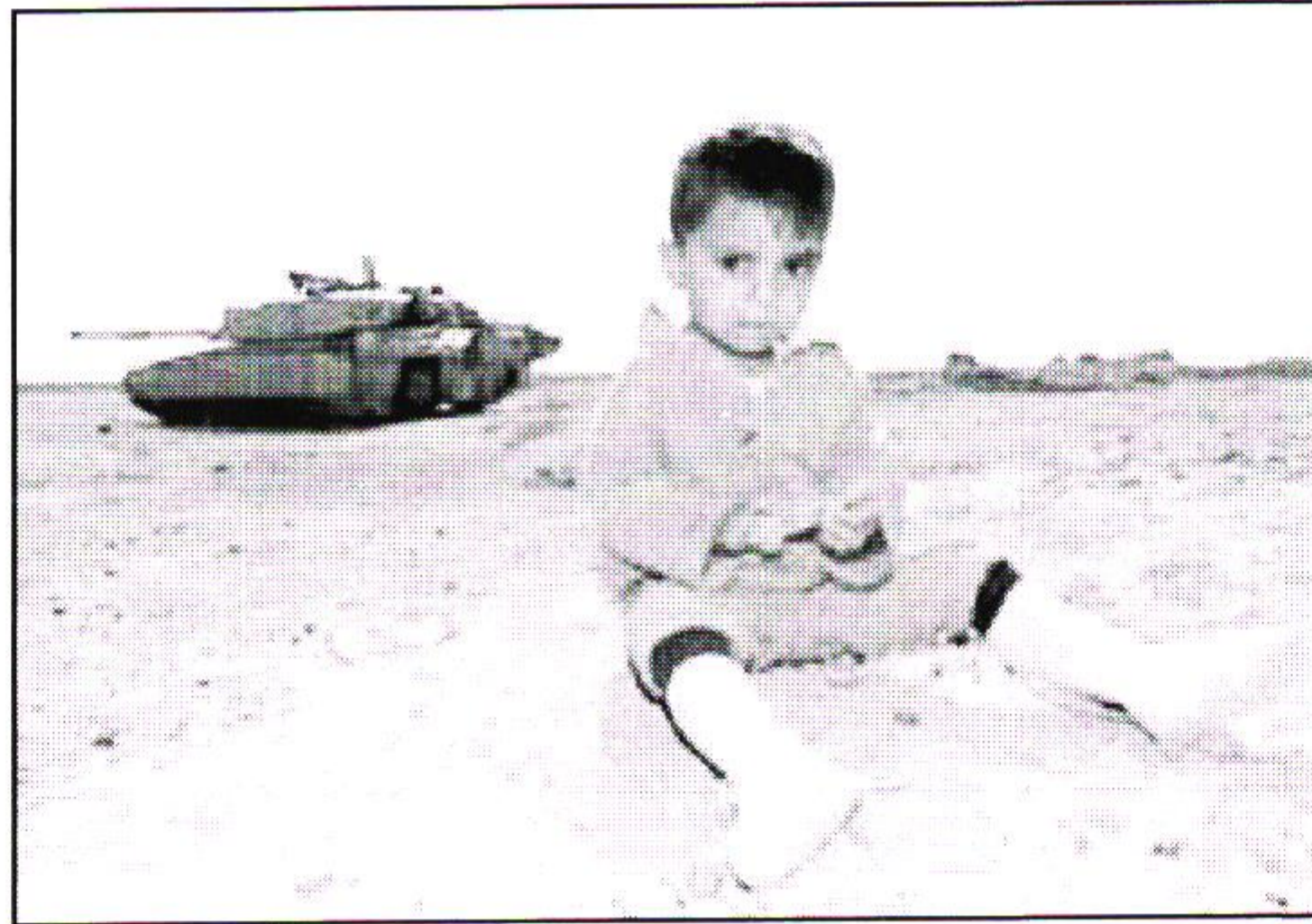
by Michael Roberts

As soon as it became clear that the US-UK war against Iraq was on, stock markets around the world rocketed upwards by as much as 20% and the price for a barrel of crude oil fell back sharply. Capitalism was convinced that the overwhelming firepower of the US military backed up by the more puny forces of the British army would quickly overwhelm the Iraqi army, which would melt away or even hand over Saddam in a coup. The war would be over by Easter at the latest and maybe a lot earlier.

After just a week all that bravado had faded. The stock markets started to slip back and the oil price moved up again. And now the real costs of this imperialist adventure are beginning to come out. For the Iraqi people, the cost is measured in death, dismemberment and destitution. For Americans and Brits, it is going to be measured in debts and deficits. The monetary costs of this war are going to hit the living standards of working families across the board significantly.

The US administration has warded off any questions about how much the war was going to cost. They couldn't say, they said, because they didn't know how it was going to pan out. With the war a week in, President Bush finally had to ask for some more money, \$75bn in sum.

At first sight, this is not much when measured against an economy that produces nearly \$11trn a year - it's just 0.7% of GDP. And it is not even much compared to the overall annual budget expenditure of the US government, of around nearly \$4trn. The second world war cost the American taxpayer 130% of its annual GDP back



in the 1940s. The Vietnam war cost 12% of GDP. So maybe this war is just a pinprick on the American economy.

But that's wishful thinking. First, every war leader underestimates its cost. Why tell the bad news on money when you want people to fight and use their resources without question? Abraham Lincoln forecast that the cost of the American civil war would be 7% of GDP in the 1860s. It turned out to be closer to 100%.

And Bush's request for extra money is just the start. There's been a lot of estimates on the cost of the war in Iraq recently. In summary, it seems that the war will cost at least \$50bn in military action. But then the costs of occupying Iraq with military forces and employing a huge civil and military service for several years ahead would add another \$500bn. And then there is the so-called reconstruction of the Iraqi economy post-Saddam. Already the US is handing out contracts for ports, transport, water and of course oil. This reconstruction could cost another \$100bn.

And it's clear that all this is going to have to be paid for by Americans. In the last Gulf War most of the cost was paid for by oil revenues from Iraq and by payments from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Not this

time. No help from the likes of Germany or France. And it is by no means likely that a post-Saddam Iraq is going to allow the US take all its oil revenues to pay for US occupation as they are supposed to be improving conditions for the people. And anyway, Iraqi oil production could be way down if the war keeps the pumps quiet and damages well-heads and refineries over the next weeks and months.

And that's not the end of the cost for US working people. Continued US occupation will mean a backlash in the Middle East. Problems could arise for neighbouring Arab dictatorships that have backed the US like Saudi Arabia. Any instability there will drive oil prices higher.

If oil prices stay as high as \$30 a barrel, where they have been recently, then US petrol and heating prices will continue to be at record levels. If American families have to spend more on fuel, they will cut back on other things. So the US economy will continue to slow. Indeed, these economic effects of the war have been calculated to cost up to 15% of GDP. At the very least, the cost of even a short war (plus a long occupation) could be worse than the Vietnam war!

And here's the problem. Already the US economy has

been crawling.

That has meant tax revenues have not matched expectations and the federal government has started to go into deficit to the tune of about 2% of GDP. The same thing has happened in the 50 states. Compounding this deficit is the Bush administration's headlong desire to boost spending on arms and the 'defence' forces, as well as cutting taxes for the rich. As always, it is socialist handouts for the rich and capitalist efficiency cuts for the poor, under capitalism! Defence spending was set to rocket whether there was a war in Iraq or not.

The result is that the US budget deficit is set to reach record levels over the next few years. To pay for this, the government will have to issue more bonds (debt). It will have to borrow more and suck up some of the hard-earned savings of the American public to pay for more tanks, planes and missiles. That means less money to invest in more productive sectors like technology, education, health and industry. Imperialist ambition will mean economic recession.

In a smaller way, British capitalism mirrors the same process as in the US. The Blair government is matching the Bush administration in hiding how much it will have to spend on the war. Gordon Brown has allocated just £1bn, or about 0.1% of GDP. Most analysts reckon it will be at least 3 times more than that at the end. And the government's budget is also slipping into a significant deficit at a rapid rate, as the UK economy starts to slow to a halt.

It may be death and destitution for Iraqis, but deficits, debts and destruction of wealth and incomes will be the outcome for Americans and Britons, whatever the outcome of the war.



The Ministry of Truth

By Alan Woods

In George Orwell's novel 1984 everything was stood on its head. The Ministry of Plenty presided over universal poverty. The secret police was renamed The Ministry of Love. Last, but by no means least, there was the Ministry of Truth, which specialised in lying propaganda.

In the first hours of the present war it became immediately evident that the systematic manipulation of public opinion was a weapon in the hands of London and Washington which is being deployed in the same way as the Cruise and Tomahawk missiles. The Ministry of Truth is now working at full steam, 24 hours a day.

This is a very necessary activity. US imperialism shows its teeth, but for the sake of public consumption, it must appear in a most civilized and acceptable light. The task of presenting a monster as a gentle giant with only the interests of suffering humanity at heart is entrusted to a certain breed of half-human creatures who appear in what are amusingly termed "White House briefings".

Nobody knows where these creatures come from, but they appear with monotonous regularity in any great national crisis, where the public needs to be reassured that its destiny is safe in the hands of the Great and the Good. The latest reincarnation of this strange breed is one Ari Fleischer, whom nobody knew before and nobody will care to know afterwards.

They are all well-dressed men of middling

age, slightly balding and of respectable appearance. The last point is vital, since one is only inclined to listen to blatant lies when they are pronounced with a person of gravitas and great respectability.

Second, they must resemble as closely as possible the robots and android creatures one has got used to seeing in films like Star Wars. Their facial muscles must be so designed as to betray no hint of human feeling. They must have no heart, no soul and no conscience, and only as much brain as is strictly necessary to read the prepared texts handed to them fifteen minutes before the start of the session by the Pentagon.

The delivery of this information that contains no information must be delivered in an absolutely flat and monotone voice,

most closely resembling a machine. So much so, that one expects from one moment to the next that the speaker will suddenly dry up and will have to be wound up like a watch or have a small coin inserted into his left ear in order to recommence.

Above all they must have no sense of humour that might betray them whilst reading the most monstrous assertions contained in these prepared sheets of paper, such as the one Mr. Fleischer has just read.

This contains the assertion that Mr. Bush is not at all isolated on the world stage, as we all mistakenly believed, but that in fact he enjoys great popularity and unquestioning backing among innumerable nations.

The Coalition of the Willing, according to Mr.

Fleischer, is a huge and growing body of nations, that are flocking to the banner of the United States. There are, we are informed, at least 35 such nations, on every continent, numbering 1.8 billion people with a GNP mounting to trillions of dollars.

Who are these most willing nations? Here Mr. Fleischer returns to his best robotic mode. Some of them, he says, are publicly willing, whereas others are only privately willing. That is to say, some of these great allies are rather timid and unwilling to give their names. Others, however, are very willing - willing, in fact, to do almost anything that George W Bush requests of them.

It is therefore strange that so few of them are willing to send troops to Iraq. That pleasure is reserved for a select group of old friends: the Americans, the British and the Australians. Never mind, though. The other 32 or so are "with us in spirit".

Among those that are "willing in spirit" though absent in the flesh are - Latvia, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. The last-named is a nation in name only, with a government whose writ does not go further than the boundaries of Kabul and whose President



is only able to stay alive thanks to his American bodyguards. The extent to which Afghanistan is able to hold an opinion of its own in world affairs is therefore open to reasonable doubt.

According to President Bush these are nations who feel deeply about "peace and freedom". Among these, Israel is one of the most willing of all. Yet the White House for some reason never speaks about it. The fervent commitment of this nation to peace is, of course, known to the entire world.

Then there is Uzbekistan. The fact that this country is ruled by a vicious and brutal dictator who tortures and murders opponents should in no way detract from his commitment to the cause of freedom.

There is also Poland and Hungary and the Czech Republic. These are the nations of Donald Rumsfeld's "New Europe", aspiring bourgeois regimes that are willing to stoop to any depths to get praise (and investments) from the USA. But this does not reflect the views of the overwhelming majority of people in some of the Coalition countries.

The latest issue of Newsweek admits: "Between 70 and 80 percent of Hungarians, Czechs and Poles are against an American war in Iraq, with or without UN sanction." Even Vaclav Klaus, the "pro-American, Thatcherite free marketer- said last week that on Iraq his position was aligned to that of his people." That is to say against the USA.

It is therefore quite clear that the whole thing about the Coalition of the Willing boils down to a gigantic fraud. Even the figure of 35 states is a trick. It has been put forward because George Bush senior had a coalition of 30 states in 1990, and junior wants to go one better. However, papa had an actual coalition of 30 real

states, including France, Russia and Germany, whereas junior has only a ramshackle and largely fictitious collection of countries of second and third rate importance.

Coalition of George with Bush

In the days of the decline of the Roman Republic, when Julius Caesar was in the process of seizing power, people joked that they were under the consulship of Julius and Caesar. Legally there were supposed to be two consuls but the other one was really only a convenient fiction to disguise the fact that Caesar held all the power and took all the decisions on his own.

In the 21st century we now have the Coalition of George with Bush.

The 1.8 billion population that is said to make up this "Coalition" is probably explained by the presence of Latvia. The colossal wealth is probably a result of the GDP of Afghanistan, and the firm commitment to democracy is doubtless explained by the

presence of Uzbekistan.

Turkey, while decidedly not willing to allow American troops to pass through its territory to attack northern Iraq, was duly thanked by Mr. Bush, (through the mouth of Mr. Fleischer), for kindly allowing the Americans at least to use Turkish air space for the purpose of pulverising the cities of Iraq.

But just at this point something unforeseen occurred. An American journalist asked Mr. Fleischer an awkward question: Had any concessions been given to the Turkish government in exchange for the favour? For instance, had the Turkish army been given a free hand to intervene against the Kurds in northern Iraq?

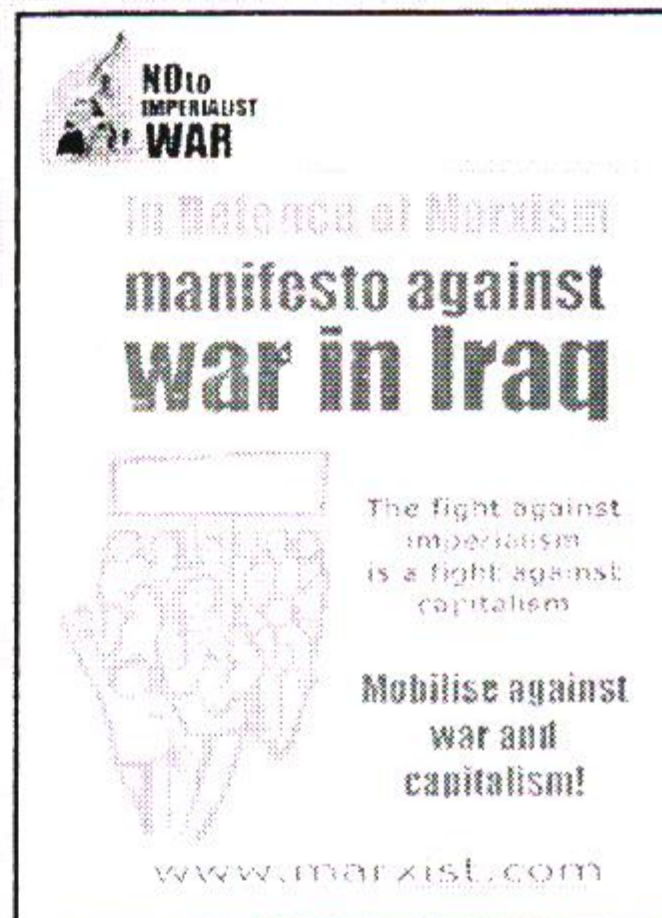
Fleischer froze for a split second, then immediately reverted to his robotics: there had been talk of a sizeable amount of money set aside to bribe Turkey into becoming Willing. This money, said the inexpressive Mr. Fleischer, was no longer on offer. "And on the second half of your question I have nothing to say."



In other words, yes we did give such an undertaking. In exchange for permission to overfly Turkish territory to massacre Iraqis, the Turkish army will be given permission to enter northern Iraq and massacre Kurds. A simple act of exchange - and as everyone knows, fair exchange is no robbery.

Blair's 'talking heads'

The Americans, to be fair, do not have a monopoly on



The *In Defence of Marxism* Manifesto on the imperialist war against Iraq

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these robotic creatures. The British, as on all other questions, have proved to be most adept at imitating styles developed on the other side of the Atlantic.

During the Kosovo conflict, we saw the emergence of one, Jimmy O'Shea (or some such name: they are too insignificant to remember) - never seen before or since. In reality our Jimmy was only selected for the same reason that Lord Robinson (the "brain of Britain") was made General Secretary of NATO - to avoid putting an American in the front line. They needed a "front man".

But as a spokesperson for NATO Jimmy (or was it Jamey?) was not entirely a success. He looked and sounded too much like a second-hand car salesman from Croydon (and very possibly was). He sometimes fumbled his lines, and even lost his temper with the journalists. This would never do! The Americans obviously gave their British friends some serious words of advice.

As a result Jimmy's place in the media has now been occupied by a

bureaucrat called (what's his name) O'Brien. This individual closely resembles the kind of flint-faced schoolmaster every schoolboy learns to hate. He is almost as good as the American talking heads, except that an imitation can never be as good as the original from which it was copied.

The improvement is immediately obvious. He has an unusually perfect ability to tell the most atrocious lies without even the slightest movement of the eyebrows. The man is a Phenomenon. He does not even blink. He never smiles. His eyes stare at the television cameras with a kind of glazed expression, as if he is not really there, as if he is in another galaxy. Maybe he is.

These talking heads come in all different shapes and sizes, but they are identical in both style and content. These "desiccated calculating machines" are a faithful expression of the hollowness, the banality, the cynicism, and at the same time the hard-hearted, cold-blooded cruelty of the political and military

machines whose servile creatures they are.

However, they have some hope of bettering themselves and even rising to high office under New Labour. They can take hope from the man who is now the Minister of Defence, Geoff Hoon. Mr. Hoon has experienced a truly remarkable rise to fame. He is a middle class nonentity, who has just realised the most treasured dream of all nonentities - to become somebody.

A couple of years ago nobody had ever heard of him. Whenever his name was mentioned, people would ask, Geoff WHO? But Geoff is now at the very centre of world attention. He is universally respected and admired, especially in the Conservative Party. This is not at all surprising, since Geoff Hoon speaks like a Tory when he addresses the House of Commons. He also looks, acts and thinks like a Tory.

Now according to the rules of Logic, if someone looks like a Tory, speaks like a Tory, and acts and thinks like a Tory - then he is a Tory. The fact that he sits on the Labour benches is really a slight accident, or a comical misunderstanding. Mr. Hoon's speeches on the Iraq war provide all the proof necessary to demonstrate this assertion.

"His boys"

Mr. Hoon takes his responsibilities for Defence very seriously. He even visits the troops at the front line - or very near it. He arrives fresh from London in a snappy suit and delivers a few words of encouragement to "his boys", most of whom are young working class kids from Sunderland and Liverpool who have joined the British army to escape from unemployment.

These lads have only recently arrived in the Gulf for a conflict of which they understand little and care less. Their main interest is to get the thing over as soon as possible and go home to their families. Their equipment is a mess. Their boots are melting in the desert heat (no problem, says the ministry, just take them off occasionally and let them breathe). Even their uniforms were the wrong colour (green is not an ideal camouflage for the desert). They are sweltering inside their protective suits, gas masks and body armour in soaring temperatures. They are about to risk their lives, to kill and be killed. But never mind, that nice Mr. Hoon has come from London to see us.

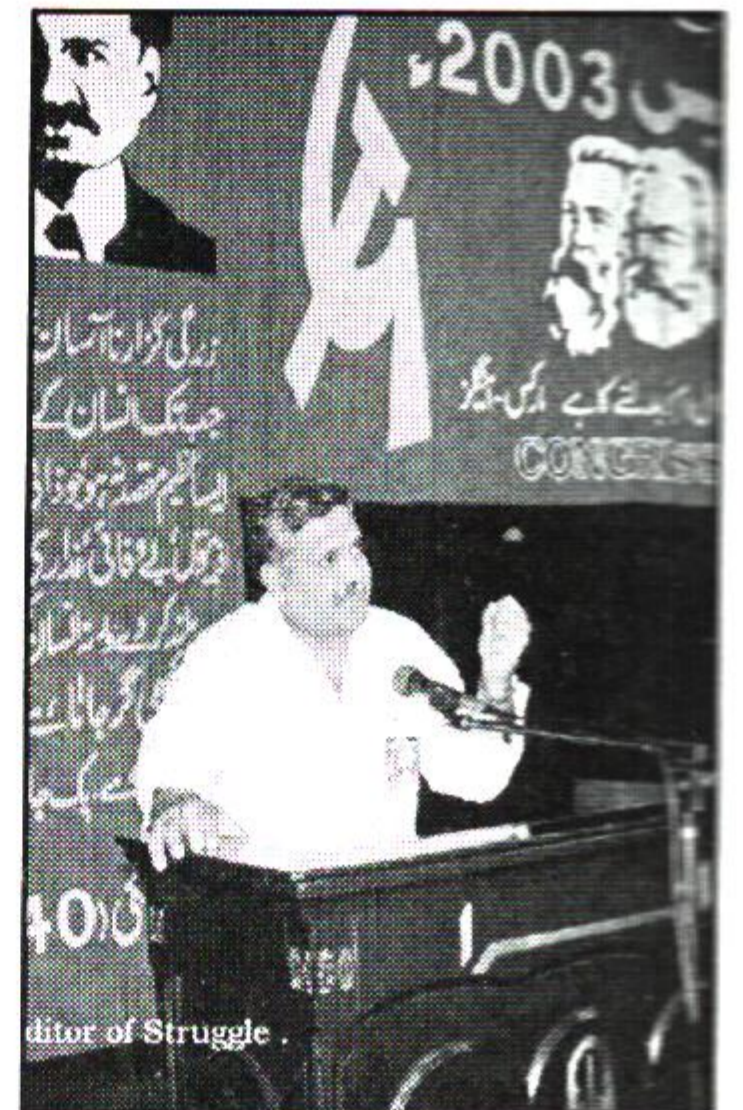
As the British squaddies were dutifully lined up by their officers to meet the elegant Mr. Hoon, we have an excellent idea of what they thought about him and the comments they passed once the officers were out of earshot. But these would be unprintable.

In this unjust war of aggression, the young working class kids are being sent by the likes of Hoon and Blair to fight in a cause not of their making. We sympathise with them and their loved ones at home. But our attitude towards the so-called Labour ministers who sent them there is one of the most profound indignation.

How long do we have to tolerate this situation? How long will the name of Labour be disgraced by a bunch of Tory politicians who only entered the Party to further their own careers and have hijacked it and turned it into a tool for big business in Britain and US imperialism abroad?

Is it not high time the rank and file and the unions took a big broom and swept the lot clean?

Now according to the rules of Logic, if someone looks like a Tory, speaks like a Tory, and acts and thinks like a Tory - then he is a Tory.



Giant leap forward for Marxism in Pakistan

On March 24 and 25, the 22nd congress of The Struggle, the Marxist tendency in Pakistan, was held. This year saw the largest attendance ever at the congress. Both in terms of numbers and in composition it was unprecedented with 877 comrades filling the Alhambra Art Centre in the heart of Lahore.

The most striking aspect about this gathering was that all the various ethnic groups that live in Pakistan were represented, Baluchis, Punjabis, Hazaras, Kashmiris, Sindhis and many more. This is of enormous strategic importance for an internationalist tendency which is working in a country where the national question has never been resolved and where bloody ethnic clashes periodically break out.

Speakers at the congress - which discussed the war and international perspectives, the situation in Pakistan and plans for building the Marxist tendency - included Alan Woods, Manzoor Ahmed (the recently elected Marxist MP), and Lal Khan. Claudio Bellotti was also present as the official representative of

the Italian PRC (Rifondazione Comunista).

There were a significant number of trade union activists and leaders present in the congress. Among these there were the comrades who led the heroic struggles at the Karachi steel-works. There were also the Quetta comrades who eighteen months ago organised a bitter strike of the government workers which paralysed the city and led to the arrest of 197 workers. One of the leaders of that struggle, comrade Hameed Khan, was also present at the congress. Those workers were only released after a massive international solidarity campaign.

In a country where the plight of women is one of the worst in the world, these comrades have shown determination and skill in recruiting women to revolutionary politics. The fact that 87 female comrades were at this congress is testimony to the success of this work carried out in very difficult conditions.

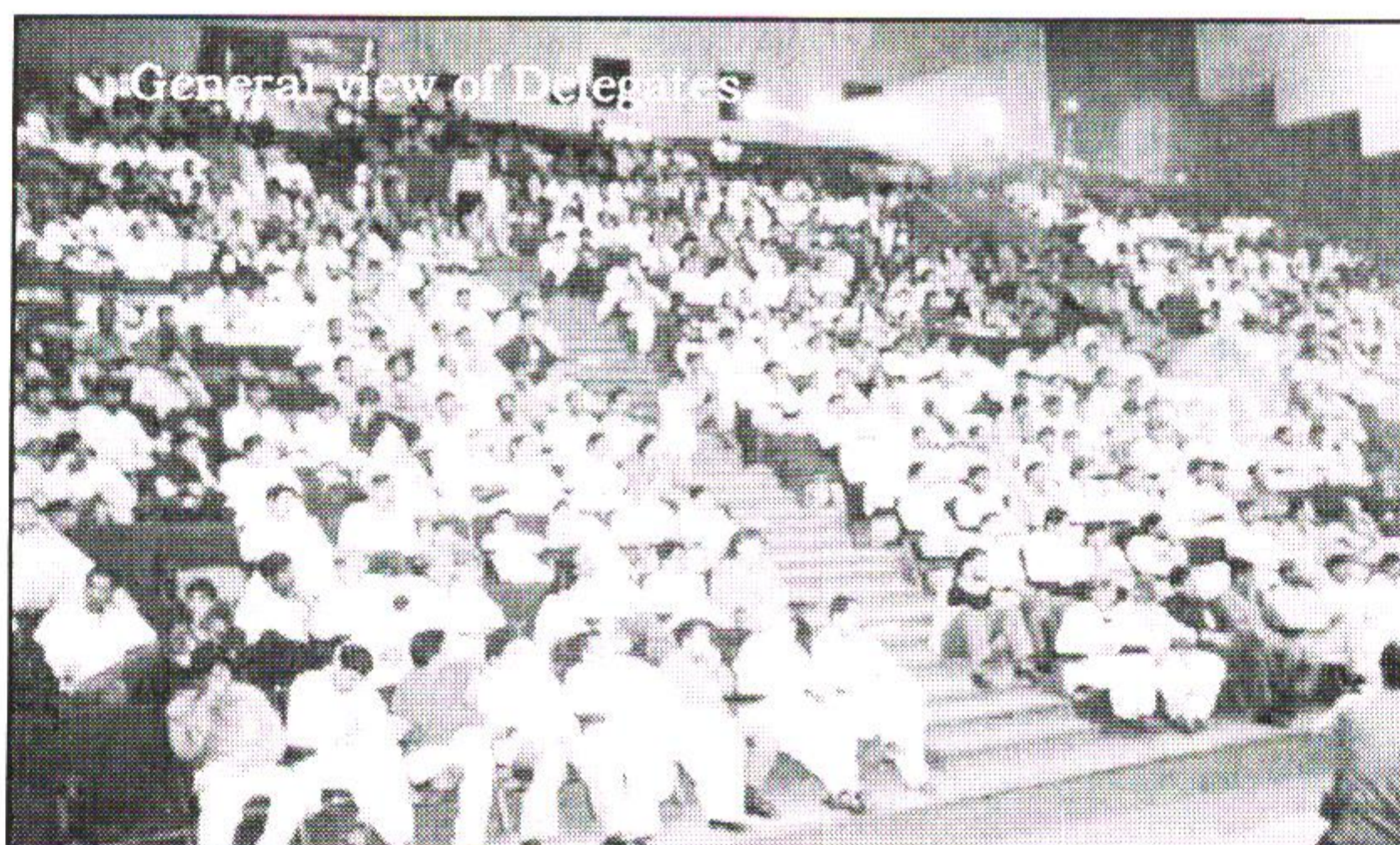
There were hundreds of youth who have become active in revolutionary politics over the past one or two years. Two years ago the JKNSF (the Kashmiri national students' federation) elected a comrade of The Struggle as its chairman and many of these students were present at the congress.

Also attending the congress were three PPP MPs, Zulfiqar Gondal, Shakeela Rasheed and Qamar u Zaman Kaira. The PPP has been gripped by a serious internal crisis. This has led to divisions opening up within its parliamentary group and from this a left opposition has begun to crystallise.

Zulfiqar was recently in Baghdad. He left on the very day the war broke out. This is what he had to say about his visit.

"The Iraqis are determined to oppose the invasion. Years of sanctions have hardened their resolve. Their feelings towards Saddam Hussein are varied, but one thing is clear: imperialism is seen as the main enemy. The sanctions have had a disastrous effect. There is widespread malnutrition, especially among the women and children. The Oil for food programme has proved to be totally inadequate, and furthermore it is completely out of the hands of either the people or the Iraqi government."

For a full report of the congress and the magnificent anti-war demo that followed it visit www.marxist.com



international reports

Following the historic worldwide demonstrations of over 100 million on February 15, workers and youth on every continent have continued to mobilise against the imperialist assault on Iraq. **Reports of strikes, demonstrations and protests reach our website www.marxist.com every day.** On these pages are just a small selection of these reports to counter the silence of the pro-war media, beginning with the United States where if one believes the TV and the papers everyone supports Bush's war.



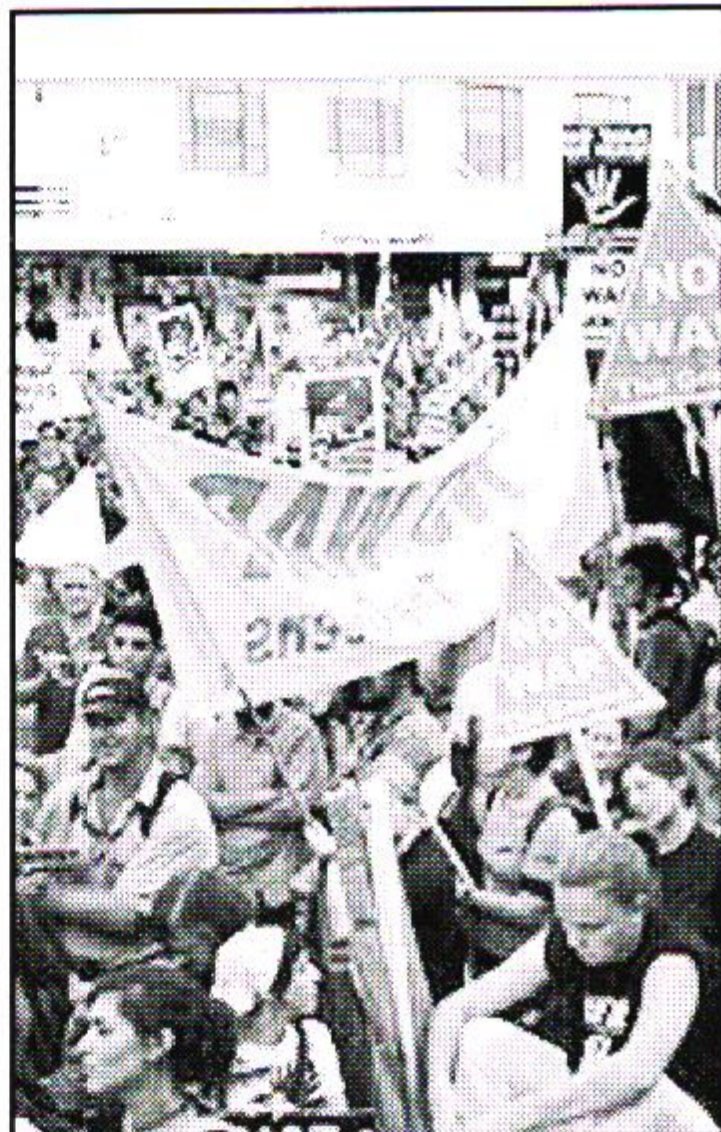
BOSTON

On March 20, at least 500-600 M.I.T. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) students and staff walked out of their classes and workplaces at 11:30 a.m. to fill the plaza in front of the Student Union Building in a demonstration against Bush's war.

After the speeches, MIT students joined students from Harvard and Tufts universities in a march to Government Center, in downtown Boston, where an enormous crowd, some thousands of opponents of the war, filled a vast plaza in front of Boston City Hall.

Around 300 copies of the WIL leaflet, "No to the War on Working People At Home and Abroad," were distributed at the antiwar rallies at MIT and Government Center, Boston. Our task is to reach as many students as possible through the anti-war movement and provide them with a Marxist analysis (from the WIL and YFIS) of what is happening.

Shane, WIL Providence



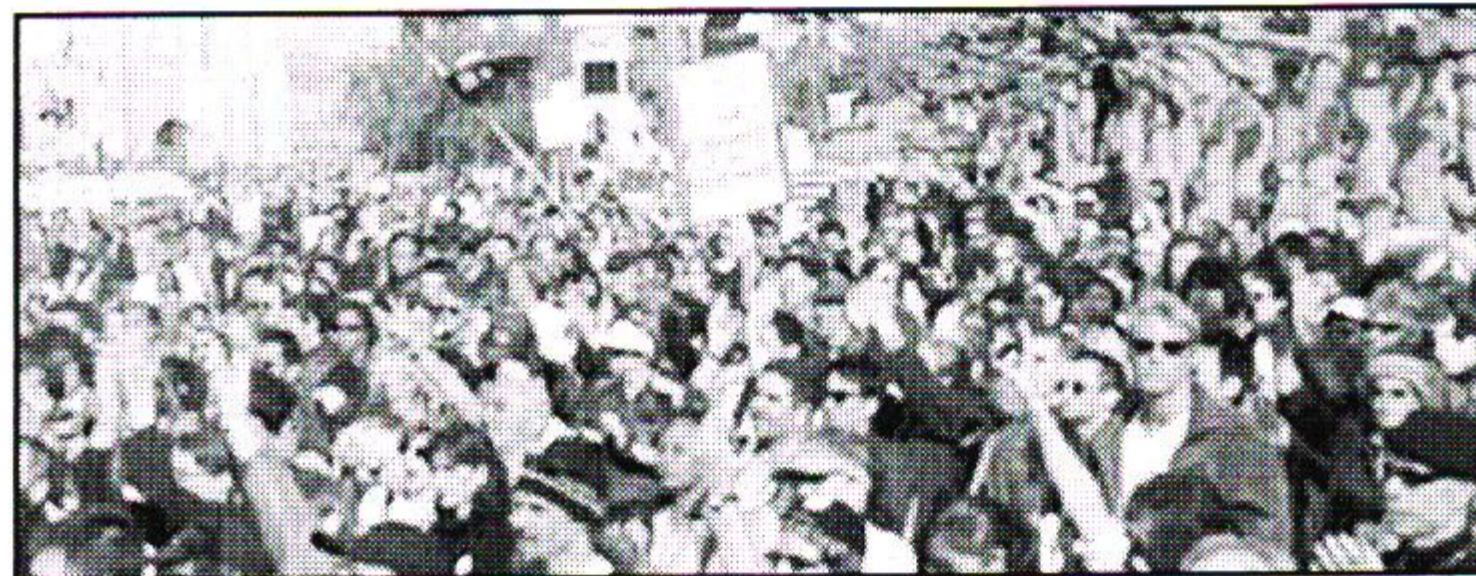
WASHINGTON

We got to some park a few blocks away from Lafayette Park (the one in front of the White House) around 10.30. Initially there wasn't much going on so we walked around with our "NO to WAR on IRAQ" sign with the YFIS/WIL websites on it and made ourselves visible handing out a few flyers here and there.

As people started showing up around 12.00 we all headed to Lafayette Park only to find cops in riot gear not letting us through even though we had a permit to be there. After lots of screaming and yelling (and in response to mobilizing police on horses) we (about three or four thousand of us) began our march down 14th street (with permit and all!). After a few blocks the police had formed a barricade, pushing us down a side street. Following their directions we went to the end of that block and found another barricade. So here we all were, trapped in a single block. We stayed here for an hour under pressure from the police. It was a good march though.

Eamon Coy,

Washington D.C. Organiser for the Workers International League



CALIFORNIA

Tens of thousands of people throughout California have been demonstrating - many engaging in civil disobedience - since last night. In San Francisco, demonstrators succeeded in shutting down both the Federal Building and the downtown Financial District this morning before gathering for a noon rally in Civic Center. Local radio news reporters were advising listeners not to go into San Francisco if not absolutely necessary.

University of California at Berkeley's famous Free Speech area, Sproul Plaza, is filled with angry, protesting students, as are many other campuses around the state. In San Jose (the heart of Silicon Valley), demonstrators have been blocking traffic and getting arrested for taking part in civil disobedience in front of the Federal Building.

Report by Karen Wald

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Today nearly 2000 people expressed their opposition to the war on Iraq by blocking traffic all day on the main drag near the University of Texas. There were signs that said, "Iraq' is arabic for Poland" and "Iraqi lives are sacred too" and "Draft the twins" (a reference to Bush's daughters) and "Not in my name" and so on.

Dozens of riot police with no names, no badge numbers, (unaccountable and anonymous) waited for night to fall and then began "clearing" the streets of protesters. About 20 or so people committed to sit in the street in an act of peaceful civil disobedience and be arrested and the rest of us stayed on the sidewalks as witnesses. With absolutely no cause a policeman sprayed us in the face with pepper spray. When we complained that it was uncalled for and that the sidewalk is public property, we were told that "tonight it's not" and "we're about to spray you again if you don't leave." We began walking with the police walking behind us and they started to walk faster and hitting us in the back with their batons, screaming "move." We screamed that we WERE walking and they had no cause or right to hit us in the back but they kept doing it. As soon we were pushed far enough away so as to block our view of those who were sitting in the street, they began the arrests. The chants of "this is what democracy looks like", quickly turned to "this is what a police state looks like."

All of this was completely, utterly, unprovoked. My name is Annette D'Armata. I am a composer and human rights activist. Please let the rest of the world know that Austin is overwhelmingly against the war and the only reason you don't hear about it is because it is not being reported.

Peace,
Annette D'Armata, Austin, Texas,

WORLDWIDE

Mass demonstrations have taken place across the Middle East, notably in Egypt and Syria. In Pakistan, the PTUDC and YFIS have organised a series of antiwar rallies and demos across the country.

Sydney, Australia

There was a massive demonstration on the day the war started. On Thursday at 5pm thousands gathered at Sydney Town Hall to hear speakers condemn the illegal actions of Bush and his favourite poodles - Blair and Howard. Building workers, teachers and students mingled with

office workers cheering speakers denouncing the imperialists. One speaker compared the event to the last time that workers poured out of offices and on to demonstrations in 1971 helping end Australia's involvement in Vietnam - this time is very different, this war is massively unpopular not at the end, when nearing defeat, but from the very beginning. Another key was the number of Labor Party supporters and placards on the demo. Crean, the party leader, has opposed the war - but his opposition is polite

and legalistic, barely catching or representing the anger of workers and youth. The next demonstration is this Sunday. The last weekend rally saw 300,000 take to Sydney's streets - Sunday's demo will certainly be larger. This is the opportunity for Labor, the trade unions and the left to take the fight to Howard and launch a campaign that drives the Liberals from power.

Mike Newman, Sydney



EUROPE

In Italy on March 20 the three main trade union confederations called a two-hour general strike against the war. The CGIL's public sector union called a full day's strike so that its members could attend the demonstrations that took place all over Italy.

In Milan all the major factories came out and joined a massive demonstration in the city centre of up to 100,000. In Turin the FIAT workers held factory assemblies and then came out together with workers from all the major factories. There were also 25,000 students who marched to the city centre from ten different areas. This was one of the biggest student demos in Turin for many years. Even the Catholic Church got involved, with the local cardinal calling on all local parish priests to ring the church bells at midday in protest!

In the Genoa and Savona docks a 24 hour strike was called. Down in Reggio Emilia the Lamborghini workers came out. In Venice the shipyard workers and chemical workers came out on strike and the major hotels were brought to a standstill. Strikes also took place all over Tuscany, in the cities of Florence, Pisa, Pistoia, Prato.

On Thursday morning tens of thousands of school students flooded the streets. In Milan 5000 school students occupied the main railway station. In Parma, 90 km from Bologna, the Committee against the Imperialist War (built, amongst others, by the Young Communists, led in this area by the supporters of *Falce Martello*) called a student demo that attracted around 1200 students, the biggest in Parma in the last five years.

Naples was brought to a standstill for the whole day. At the university the student committee set up by *Falce Martello* supporters organised a public meeting with more than 250 students. We replied to the pro-UN propaganda put forward by the leaders of the 'University Left' (linked to the DS - Democratic Left) with our class position against the war.

On Saturday 50,000 workers and youth participated in a demo in front of the Bagnoli NATO base near Naples. In Aversa, a town near Naples, the Committee in Defence of Public Education organised a student strike with more than a thousand students on the demo.

There is a thirst for genuine Marxist ideas in this movement. Proof of this is the fact that the latest edition of *Falce Martello* has already been sold out, forcing us to produce a new 12-page issue.

The demand for a 24 hour general strike is growing among the workers, but Epifani, the CGIL general secretary, spoke clearly against it. Once again the reformist trade union leaders reveal their real face. If a 24 hour general strike were called, this could lead to the fall of the Berlusconi government. But the trade unions and the reformist leaders are very afraid of such a perspective.

The task is now, more than ever, to build a mass alternative inside the mass organisations of the workers' movement armed with a Marxist programme and perspectives.

By Alessandro Giardiello,
Falce Martello Editorial Board

GREECE

A huge demonstration took place in Athens on March 20. People on the demo say they have never seen anything like it. The school student section of the demo alone was 60,000 strong! All the schools in the city were closed and the students converged on the city centre. The metro was full of school students making their way to the demo chanting militant antiwar slogans.

On Friday Greece was brought to a standstill by a massive 4 hour general strike. More than 150,000 people demonstrated in Athens, in addition to tens of thousands around Greece, while airports, banks, public services, public transport, ferry boats and passenger ships, supermarkets and stores were shut down as a result of the strike.

SPAIN

The Spanish Students' Union had called for a nationwide students' strike and demonstrations on the day the war started. In Madrid, tens of thousands of students joined a Students' Union rally while at the same time thousands walked out from the main universities and blockaded the main roads and highways.

In Barcelona the demonstration was massive with the Students' Union putting the figure at 300,000 marching in the main streets in the centre of town. Some 12,000 students, teachers and staff at the Autonomous University also walked out and marched to the nearby train station to go to Barcelona to join the main protests there. Other reports of students' demos are of 10,000 in Santiago de Compostela, 10,000 in Seville, 10,000 in Mallorca and 2,000 in Vitoria.

The Students Union has made a public appeal to the leaders of the main trade union confederations, CCOO and UGT, to call a 24 hour general strike against the war. In Galicia, at the Bazan shipyards, supporters of the left wing of the CCOO managed to call a mass workplace meeting with 1,200 workers who voted to walk out on strike and join the students' demonstration.

■ Reports of mass protests also received from Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Germany and elsewhere. For the most up to date news read www.marxist.com

fighting fund

£3,000 - another magnificent response

The decision to publish Socialist Appeal twice a month for the duration of the war and its immediate aftermath has put us, quite literally, on a war footing. It's important that during this period the journal is as up to date as possible so that the case for socialism is heard far and wide. But all this costs money - finances are the sinews of war, class war that is. In addition we have - and are - producing leaflets for various demonstrations and meetings as well as a second print run of the 'In Defence of Marxism' international manifesto against war. Again, all this costs money.

So we make no apologies for making a special appeal this issue for donations to our fighting fund. As we go to print I can report that readers and sellers have responded by donating over £2,000 this month already with a further £1000 in pledges to be redeemed as soon as possible. Clearly there are far too many people to thank individually this time, so we thank you all - keep up the good work and keep the cash coming in! Donations should be made payable to *Socialist Appeal* and sent to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ.

Steve Jones

50,000 appeal

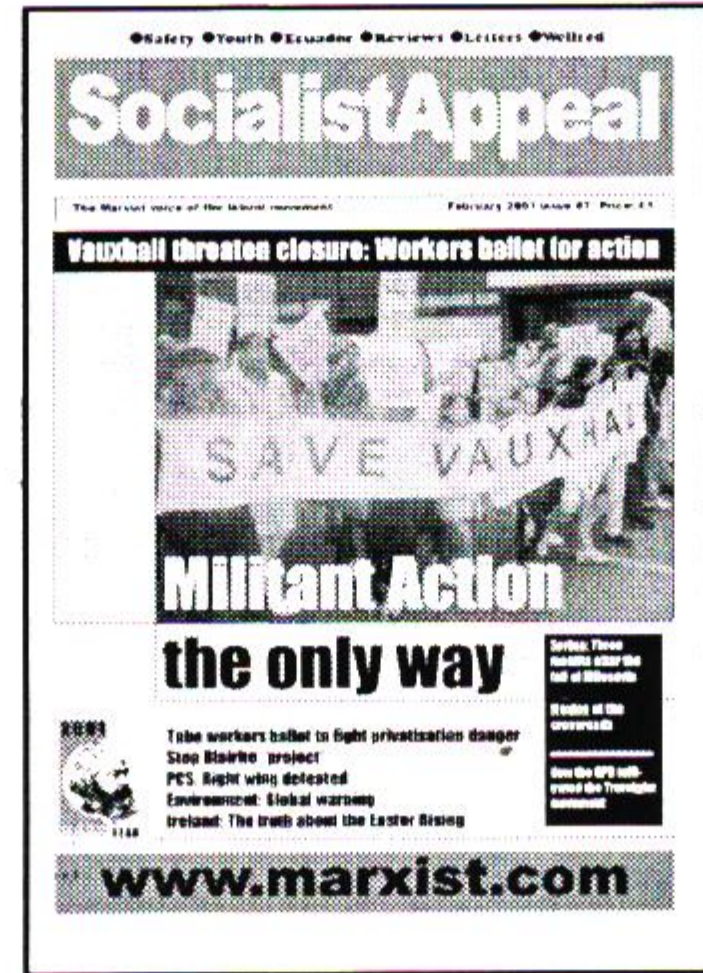
In our first ten years Socialist Appeal endeavoured to bring you detailed analysis of events around the world and reports of developments in British society in general and in the labour movement in particular. Over the past year the tempo of those events has increased dramatically. Internationally the revolutionary movements in Argentina and Venezuela have been illuminated in these pages, whilst here in Britain mounting industrial militancy from local government workers to the struggles of the firefighters have been reported and analysed each month. This was the case even before the carnage of war began. Every new development has brought home to us the urgent need to produce a more frequent publication, to provide more up to date coverage and Marxist analysis.

We therefore took the decision to launch a campaign in 2003 to begin raising the necessary finance to produce Socialist Appeal regularly on a fortnightly basis. We don't think this can be achieved overnight. However we have succeeded in producing, developing and improving this journal over the last ten years thanks to the efforts and sacrifices of our readers, our supporters and our sellers, and we are convinced that you will come through again to enable us to develop our journal as an even more effective weapon in the struggle for the socialist transformation of society. Therefore we are launching a special appeal for £50,000 to buy the necessary equipment to take this important leap forward. We need not just donations, but more sellers and more sales.

Help us provide a Marxist analysis and a Socialist alternative to the countless workers and youth now desperately looking for an answer to the outrages produced by the diseased capitalist system. Contact us today to place an order for the fortnightly Socialist Appeal. If you already have an order, increase it. Sell Socialist Appeal at demos, in labour movement meetings, in work or at your school or college.

Send in a donation, or organise a fundraising event for the £50,000 Appeal.

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Advance Notice: New book from **Wellred!**

In the Cause of Labour A History of the British Trade Unions

By Rob Sewell

Approx 250 pages

Price: £9.99

Publication date: May 2003

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

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

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

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

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

notice board

April 2003

**National
Demonstration
called by Stop the War
Coalition**

**Saturday 12 April,
London**

**For more details, con-
tact us at
appeal@socialist.net or
020 7515 7675**

Socialist Appeal stands for:

✚ **For a Labour government with a bold socialist programme!** Labour must break with big business and Tory economic policies. Vote Labour and fight to reclaim the party.

✚ **A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £8.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

✚ **Full employment!** No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits. For a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. For voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent full pension for all.

✚ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

✚ **The repeal of all anti-union laws.** Full employment rights for all from day one. For the right to strike, the right to union representation and collective bargaining.

Election of all trade union officials with the right of recall. No official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker.

✚ **Action to protect our environment.** Only public ownership of the land, and major industries, petro-chemical enterprises, food companies, energy and transport, can form the basis of a genuine socialist approach to the environment.

✚ **A fully funded and fully comprehensive education system under local democratic control.** Keep big business out of our schools and colleges. Free access for all to further and higher education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living grant for all over 16 in education or training.

✚ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay for equal work. Invest in quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

✚ **The reversal of the Tories' cuts in the health service.** Abolish private health care. For a National Health Service, free to all at the point of need, based on the nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

✚ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

✚ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people.

✚ **No to sectarianism.** For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

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

✚ **Socialist internationalism.** No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.



Socialist Appeal

Marxist voice of the labour movement

Guards on the offensive

RMT members across Britain are striking to defend safety on the railways. Guards, employed by 12 train operating companies across the UK, are taking action following a strike ballot of more than 4,000 members over restoring the safety role of the guards. RMT members voted two-to-one in favour of action which led the union to announce three 24-hour stoppages.

In the past the driver was always responsible for all things relating to the train, while the guard was responsible for all aspects of passenger safety. But since the privatisation of the railways in 1996 this has been under constant pressure. The crunch came less than a fortnight after the Ladbroke Grove disaster in 1999, in which 33 people died, when the operating companies unilaterally downgraded the safety role of the guard.

In 2001 an independent risk assessment found that the safety role of the guard should be restored. The RMT, the Rail Safety Authority, and the train operating companies, all agreed to the findings of the risk assessment. But the employers cynically walked away from the agreement and have never implemented the agreed changes. The union thinks that the companies plan to remove the guard entirely, this is a blatant attempt to save money by cutting back on safety and jobs.

The striking workers will get the support of the majority of the public who are sick of the fiasco that the privateers have created on the railways. But disgracefully

the Labour government plans to back the employers. The government's Strategic Rail Authority has already announced plans to subsidise the lost profits, not only in this dispute, but also in future disputes where the 'unreasonable demands' of the unions hit the bosses' profits. This will cost £10-12 million of taxpayers' money for this dispute alone.

This is a clear hardening of the position of the employers, if the government is going to foot the bill then they will suffer no ill effects at all; they are clearly preparing to ride the dispute out in a battle of wills with the workforce. The union should reply to this with a stepping up of their position - if the employers will not respect basic safety measures then they will have to be made to. The safety issue is of concern to all rail workers, and members of the public. If the bosses will not listen to the guards, the union will have to call out wider layers of workers, including drivers, and signalmen, in order to win the dispute.

The Labour government is intervening on the employers' side to break this strike by covering their losses. It is a disgrace that the labour government is acting in the interests of the bosses. The union must launch a campaign to encourage their members to join the Labour Party and fight for their interests from within. The working class must wage a struggle to reclaim the Labour Party, kick out the Blairite clique and demand socialist policies.

RMT

- Kick out the Blairites!
- Reclaim the Labour Party - for socialist policies!
- For a massive campaign of investment in public services!
- For the nationalisation of the railways and other key sectors of the economy under workers control, with no compensation for the fat cats!

Join us in the fight!

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