Direct Action

No.28 Autumn 2003 £2.00

Wage Slavery

+

Warcrimes/mindgames
Blairedvision/fascism
Congo/mineral lust
Ideas for change

+ international news, justicepage, (re)views, actions & comment

Direct Action is published by Solidarity Federation, the British section of the International Workers' Association, and is produced labour-free by the Direct Action Collective, under direct workers' control, without help from the state or rich benefactors.

Subscription Rates:
£5 Basic £12 Supporters
(form inside back pages)

All correspondence to:
Direct Action,
PO Box 29,
South West PDO,
Manchester M15 5HW,
England.
Email:
da@direct-action.org.uk
Ansaphone Enquiryline:
07984 675 281

www.direct-action.org.uk

About DA Views stated within these pages are not necessarily those of the Direct Action Collective or the Solidarity Federation. Contributions come from various places, and DA has a policy of not normally crediting these personally. If you want to know about authors or sources (including web sources), contact the DA Collective. On any other issue, readers' views are welcome, whether opinions, additional information or letters responding to articles or raising issues of interest. If you want to help out with DA, or would like to know more about the Solidarity Federation, contact us. Do not expect high pressure sales, paper-selling quotas or demands for this or that; do expect a reasonably prompt reply. "The Direct Action Collective and Direct Action Magazine are not intended to incite illegal activity of any sort" - in case you were wondering.

To Contribute If you would like to contribute more than brief opinions, we request you send articles (between 500 and 1500 words if possible) in hardcopy and on disk in either Word for Windows PC version or ASCII format. Contact us for electronic mail addresses or alternative formats. Failing that, any decent typewritten script will do, or even neat handwriting, if necessary. While unsolicited articles are welcome, they can only be returned if a request and SAE is enclosed.
Send all contributions to:
DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.
Email; da@direct-action.org.uk

Bulk Orders Bookshops: If you would like to order DA by bulk, contact AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh EH8 9YE, Scotland.
Phone; 0131 555 5165
Email; ak@akuk.com
Alternatively, you can order direct from DA's Manchester address above.

Direct Action

ISSN 0261-8753

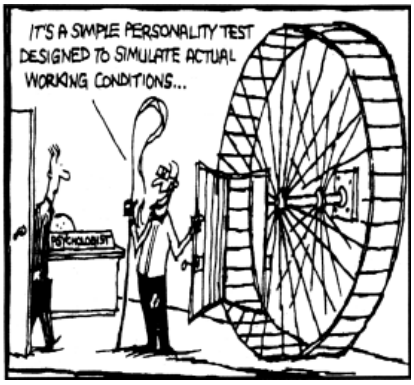
Killing for cash

**According to the International Labour Organisation,
2 million deaths every year are caused at work.
That is more than in the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, every single day.
The workplace has become a weapon of mass destruction.**

So, after 6 years of broken promises and several public disasters, Labour has finally come out with the bombshell. It has caved in to its fat cat friends, and it is not going to make company directors responsible for killing their employees through corporate neglect, after all *(Corporate Killing, p.21).*

New Labour are making wage slavery worse, and yet, their stated aim is to 'cure' poverty. The stark fact is that wage slavery and poverty are hard-wired together. The worse wage slavery gets, the poorer we all are. Today's widening inequality is not only bad for the poorest; it creates desperation and living for today, and social problems stacking up for tomorrow (those of us who lived through Thatcherism found out where short-termism gets us). To pretend, like Labour do, that you can worsen wage slavery and cure poverty at the same time is nothing less than lassez fairyland.

So, this issue, we take a look at wage slavery. Next issue, we'll tackle lassez fairyland, although there is a taster here *(The dark side of the boom, p.4).*



We are all wage slaves - since we all have 'profit' of some sort extracted from the work we do, or we depend on those who do. If you work for a business, your boss profits from other people's labour (most likely yours). If you work for the state, since it relies on taxing private work, you are also in the wage slavery chain. If you rely on other family or friends for cash, then you are equally chained in. Some of us work for nothing – bringing up kids, caring for others, etc., but we are still in the chain. The only other option is you are loaded and have a 'private income' (hee hee), in which case you almost certainly live off the backs of wage slaves through banking, investments, etc... Thought not.

Our conditions of slavery are worsening. Most of us work with others to produce goods and services, but we get only a fraction of the value we create. The rest goes to pay overheads, such as rents and interest payments to wealthy owners of property, or direct into government coffers or bosses' and shareholders' pockets. Labour have spearheaded the drive for casualisation and privatisation of public services, and these trends inevitably cause worsening health, safety and slavery at work. Some of the mass of evidence for this is scattered amongst these pages. However, the emphasis is less on sitting around getting miserable about wage slavery, and more on fighting against it.

For example, you can equip yourself with quick facts on the STUFF YOUR BOSS does not want you to know *(Know your rights, p.26).* Next up is organising, after all, working alone against wage slavery has limited scope. Unfortunately, the history of the Left and the trade unions is largely one of selling us out. Still, at least we now know that trade unions and party politicians are basically useless – the only way to effectively defend ourselves against wage slavery is to organise ourselves democratically at work *(Workplace militancy, p.18).*

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, even Big George W must have noticed when that spiritual home of wage slavery (the US 'free' market) brought hot darkness to a big chunk of the 'homeland' in the "worst power cut in history" (as the papers said). Meanwhile, in Baghdad, 6 million people had already had months of power cuts, causing hundreds of children and ill people to die from heat and lack of basic services (the papers said nothing).

Bush has also been told all is not well with war plan Iraq. If only that secret CIA convoy taking in weapons of mass destruction to plant on Iraq hadn't been wiped out by US 'friendly fire', things would have been fine.

Since the 'end' of the war, over 1,000 Iraqi children have been killed or injured by unexploded US/UK cluster bomblets, which are indiscriminate, illegal weapons. The US forces have ruined Iraqi society and its infrastructure, created millions of unemployed, and denied any responsibility for security and safety of the people.

The Iraqi Women's League summed it up: "We fear the threat of fundamentalist religious movements, which an occupying army inspires. The Iraqi people have not been liberated by the US. We have been subjected to a barbaric attack... Reconstruction is a euphemism for the daylight robbery of our resources."

US troops aren't exactly over the moon either, as one reservist in Iraq said; "US officials need to get our arses out of here… I say that seriously. We have no business being here... All we are is potential people to be killed and sitting ducks." He has sadly missed the point. The US can't just leg it out of Iraq like it did when it cocked up in Afghanistan. There's too much at stake, as a *closerlook* here reveals *(Mindgames and warcrimes, p.31).*

Slavery and barbarism - at work or war - is Capitalism showing cracks of weakness. With a 2.8 trillion dollar debt, the US economy is desperate and dangerous. What comes next depends on whether we are prepared to get together and end wage slavery, or stand by and let bunches of religious zealots, or even reformed fascists *(The changing nature of fascism, p.24)* get a look in. It is up to us all to make sure that, rather than 'out of the frying pan into the fire', it is more a case of 'out of the frying pan into a decent future'.

6-9 *actions+comment*
6; Independence from America day
7; Tiny trackers
8; Electrical storms: JIB notes
9; Mass deception: Lose the Levy
On the edge: 'Treaty no treat; Un-Fairford - State terrorism; Guantanamo Bay justice in Britain; Dropping dead; Baku solidarity action; 45-minute lies; Lowest common denominator

10-15 *international news*
Iraq, Spain, Peru, Japan, Euskadi, Palestine, Dominican Republic, Nigeria, Australia, US, India, Cuba, Canada, Colombia, South Korea, Mexico, Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh.
Features: CNT goes Full Monty; Garment workers updates.

16 *globalfocus:* Congo
Capitalist mineral lust fuels bloodshed.

22 *ideas for change:*
Change: Loose or real?
From disposable workers to binning the bosses in one nano-generation.

27 *justicepage*
Feature - Thessaloniki 8

28 *notes+letters*

29 *reviews*
SchNEWS Annual 2003; Miguel García; Weapons of Mass Deception; The Deletist, Don't take the Peace (B52 two campaign); The Age of Consent (Monbiot).

34 *DA resources*
Info., upcoming events, campaigns, friends & neighbours.

closerlook double-bill:

24 The changing nature of fascism
The new fascism, while quietly dropping biological racism and promoting cultural struggle as its new basis, appears to be adopting elements of feminism. The British National Party is on record as stating that it opposes the attitude of Islam towards women.

31 Mindgames & warcrimes ...and the debate that *should* be happening
We need to look beyond the idea that the war was all about the profits to be made from oil and find the deeper reasons - and the implications they have for us all.

wageslavery

4 *blairedvision:*
Dark side of the boom
Labour lets the bosses off the hook and moves in on poor parents instead.

18 *centrespread:*
Workplace Militancy: *the Left, the Unions & Anarcho-Syndicalism*
Why has workplace activity in Britain reached such a low point? Why is it different in France and elsewhere? The political left and trade union leaderships have a lot to do with it.

21 Corporate Killing - the proposals
After years of broken promises, Labour's proposals on Corporate Killing are out. Here's the lowdown.

26 Know your rights - stuff your boss
Wage slavery; quick facts on your rights at work.

Dark side of the boom

Labour lets the bosses off the hook and moves in on poor parents instead.

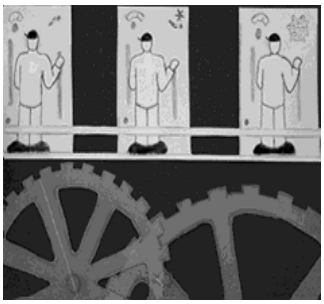
Ah, New Labour. Six years of spin later and we are all feeling a bit sick and dizzy. If you were still listening and believing, you might think it was boomtime. If, instead, you have been busy being lied to about the justification for war - and opposing it - then listen up to what they have been up to behind the scenes. Welcome to the dark side of the boom.

The legislation on family tax credits now enables government officials to randomly enter the homes of low-income families to carry out risk assessments. The fact that this draconian legislation appeared with little parliamentary opposition reflects growing prejudice towards low-income families in general and low-income single parents in particular.

Labour has sought to fan these prejudices by bringing forward a steady stream of measures that target low-income parents as the cause of their children's anti-social behaviour, from truancy to teenage petty crime. Though largely unenforceable, these measures reinforce the media stereotypes of 'feckless' low-income parents, and help to divert attention away from the causes of inequality and poverty. Through this constant focusing of attention on parenting, Labour seeks to heap blame on the actions of individuals and away from the fact that children are being raised in jobless, no hope, drug-invested rat holes that have become the modern "sink estates."

This overwhelming concern of Labour for health and safety does not seem to extend beyond the alleged crime scene of working-class homes, however. It is a pity that Labour's class-based bigotry cannot be reversed and applied to ensuring that the rich in society look after the care and safety of those in their charge better. As deregulation, casualisation and privatisation have taken hold and the profit motive let rip, the idea that companies are responsible and owe a "duty of care" to workers and customers alike has all-but disappeared. In the last ten years, some 3,000 workers and 1,100 members of the public have died in work-related accidents. Even though Labour came to power in 1997 with a manifesto commitment to do something about this corporate mass murder, thus far they have done nothing.

Even though Labour came to power in 1997 with a manifesto commitment to do something about corporate mass murder, thus far they have done nothing.



Twice they announced that they were looking to bring forward an offence of corporate killing only to back-pedal in the face of hostility from big business. Then, amid a fanfare of publicity in May, it was announced that a Bill on corporate killing would be introduced. Away from the fanfare, it was quietly announced that individual directors would not face prison under the Bill. Before the whole Bill was kicked into the long grass, in July, it was announced that the issue of corporate killing was to be put out for 'further consultation' for the third time since Labour came to power. As Mick Holder of the Hazards Campaign stated at the time; "*more consultation means it's likely there will be no Act during the next parliamentary year, which means it's anyone's guess when legislation will arrive.*"

Labour's failure to move against companies that commit murder is a reflection of Labour's attitudes in general. While those struggling at the bottom of society are treated with contempt, blamed and forced to toe the government line to the extent that we now have parents sent to prison when their children stay off school, those at the top of society are treated with deference and assumed to be blameless even when people are killed as a direct result of their criminal activities.

The fact that Labour has failed to do anything about corporate killing is proof, if proof were needed, that Labour has not the slightest intention to change the massive inequalities of power and wealth in 21st century Britain. Currently, the only law in force relating to work-related killing is corporate manslaughter. And under corporate manslaughter, prosecution can only be brought against individual company owners or directors if it can be proven they have "controlling" responsibility, i.e. in direct control of the routine day-to-day activities of the company. Though charges are brought against the owners of small companies, in the case of large corporations it has proven virtually impossible to bring charges against company directors because of the

"I know justice is blind, but do we really have to put up with Blunkett?"

difficulty in proving direct day-to-day control.

If that was not bad enough, under the laws of corporate manslaughter, not only are the company directors immune, but it is also virtually impossible to bring a prosecution against the company as a whole. This is because charges can only be brought against a company if a director or very senior manager is prosecuted; the guilt of the company is entirely dependent on the guilt of the director, and, if the director is not prosecuted, the company remains immune.

Perhaps the biggest obscenity relating to the current law of corporate manslaughter is what happens to those few who are found guilty. The majority receive suspended sentences, with the companies being fined derisory amounts as low as £4,000 pounds. Take the case of the 18-year-old unskilled labourer killed at a shipyard in Hessle in April 2000. For the young man's death, the company was fined £2,500, while the owner received a 5-month prison sentence suspended for two years. In the face of this state protection of capitalists, Labour has done nothing but make excuses and prevaricate. The best that can be hoped for is a token piece of legislation aimed at appeasing public disquiet.

The Labour Party was originally formed to defend the weak and the poor; a hundred years on, and it is imprisoning single mothers for not sending their children to school, while the owners of companies get away with murder. Not that Labour is simply allowing bosses to get away with murder - they are actively encouraging it. Tony Blair's proud boast is that Britain now has the most 'flexible' workforce in Europe. The casualisation of the British workforce inevitably comes at the cost of rising death tolls. Flexible working, casual contracts and agency working cause falling standards of health, safety and training. The evidence for the fact that casualisation kills is incontrovertible, and the more people die, the clearer the link is.

Casualisation is also a means of undermining wages and conditions. Blair's boasts are shorthand for saying that Britain has the worst working conditions (and - another link - the fattest cats) in Europe.

Labour has presided over an explosion in agency work. A keynote report "Recruitment Agencies (Temporary and Contract) 2000 Market Report" shows that the number of workers placed in temporary work increased by 46.8% in the period 1997-2000. A Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) in 1998 reported that over a quarter of workplaces use temporary agency workers. This may be good news for employers, who can now operate with a smaller wage bill, but it is bad news for the vast majority of temporary workers, who get less money and more danger at work.

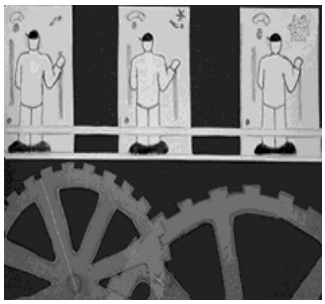
A classic example of Blair's 'flexibility' is workers at P&O Ferries, where 80% of crew members are now agency staff. Though many workers have decades of continuous experience, they work a 90-hour week from Wednesday to Wednesday and are then laid off for a week. In effect, they are employed on a 7-day contract, allowing P&O Ferries to avoid what legislation there is protecting casual workers.

Another example among thousands of workers exploited under Labour is teaching assistants - apparently, at the centre of the new knowledge-based economy. Labour Research has revealed that less than half were on permanent contracts, while 40% of schools said their assistants were not paid during holidays. With a pay rate as little as £4.98 per hour, clearly, behind all the spin, Labour has proved disastrous for the most vulnerable workers. Its promises to empower women lie broken and scattered, as its real strategy has been revealed over the past 4 years; to force single mothers into part-time, low-paid, insecure jobs.

Anarcho-syndicalists have always argued that for workers, placing faith in politicians is worse than useless. The Labour Party is living proof of that argument. Change will only come about through worker strength based on workplace organisation that forces change. The mass murder now taking place in the workplace will only come to an end when workers take matters into their own hands to ensure workplace safety.

For a summary of the Corporate Killing proposals, see p.21.

The mass murder now taking place in the workplace will only come to an end when workers take matters into their own hands...



ON THE EDGE

Treaty no treat

The new UK-US extradition treaty signed and adopted in August removes or restricts key protections for defendants. Ben Hayes of Statewatch commented: "Under the new treaty, the allegations of the US government will be enough to secure the extradition of people from the UK. However, if the UK wants to extradite someone from the US, evidence to the standard of a "reasonable" demonstration of guilt will still be required. No other EU countries would accept this US demand, either politically or constitutionally. Yet, the UK government not only acquiesced, but did so taking advantage of arcane legislative powers to see the treaty signed and implemented without any parliamentary debate or scrutiny. Guantanamo Bay, the failed extradition of Lofti Raissi, and US contempt for the International Criminal Court make this decision to remove relevant UK safeguards all the more alarming".

The full Statewatch report and documentation is at: www.statewatch.org/news/2003/jul/25ukus.htm

Un-Fairford - State terrorism

'Casualty of War - 8 weeks of counter-terrorism in rural England' is a report by human rights group Liberty into the policing of the RAF Fairford demonstrations in March and April. Liberty found a clear policy of using anti-terrorism laws to prevent legitimate protest. During the two months, 61 people were arrested at Fairford - 27 were subsequently charged with public order (but not terrorist) offences. In one case, an anti-terrorist order was served on an 11-year-old girl, in another, a coach load of demonstrators were 'kidnapped' by police. In all, Gloucestershire Police spent £3.26 million, and the MoD police, £3.79 million on stopping protestors trying to prevent planes from flying out of the airbase and bombing the people of Iraq. For copies of the report, call 0207 403 3888 www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/

Independence from America day

About 400 people came from all over the country - north, south, east and west - to the Gatecrasher's Ball at the American base at Menwith Hill, calling for Independence FROM America on 4th July.

The weather was kind - blue skies and sunshine. People came in costumes, including beautiful, imaginative ball gowns and masks (some men included!), and top hats and tails.

After an initial hold up because of problems with the generator for the sound system not working, people joined in a public reading of the Declaration of Independence FROM America (adapted from the original).

Two police horses were positioned at the front of the walk around the base - the first time police horses have ever come for a demonstration at Menwith Hill. They seemed inexperienced horses, and their riders were clearly not in control of them as they reared up, backed into protestors, and were generally dangerous.

Nevertheless, the guided tour around the base continued, with stops at various places. As time went on, things got a bit tense because of the chaotic policing. Several people walked a short distance on the base until stopped by Ministry of Defence Police Agency officers on base. The police were over-heavy and unreasonable. The public footpath was closed by a row of police, who refused to say under which Act they were doing this.

There was a wonderful line-up of artists - musicians and poets, which was hosted by Mark Thomas with his usual combination of wit and satire. There was dancing in the road, and later, a drumming workshop, before things came to a close at about 7.30 pm, by which time there had been three arrests, and people were charged with a variety of alleged offences. All in all, it went rather well, considering that there could easily have been serious injuries because of the incompetent police.

There has been a weekly witness and protest outside the main entrance to Menwith Hill for over three years - organised by CAAB every Tuesday evening (7-9 pm).
Info: Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB), 8 Park Row, Otley, West Yorkshire LS21 1HQ, England, U.K. Tel/Fax: 01943 466405 or 01482 702033
Email: anniandlindis@caab.org.uk
Website: http://www.caab.org.uk

Tiny trackers

They are every retailer's fantasy, and every privacy advocate's nightmare. They're called Radio-Frequency Identification Chips, and they're coming to a store near you soon. Tiny bits of silicon fixed with antennae, the radio chips can pinpoint the location of anything. For example, they can be forever attached to the clothes you buy, beaming all sorts of information off about you.

The benefits for retailers are enormous and, as the Washington Times' reports, researchers are in awe over the technology. "Put a tag - a microchip with an antenna - on a can of Coke or a car axle, and suddenly a computer can 'see' it. Put tags on every can of Coke and every car axle, and suddenly the world changes. No more inventory counts. No more lost or misdirected shipments. No more guessing how much material is in the supply chain, or how much product is on the store shelves." The global infrastructure that MIT envisions is an Internet tool "that will make it possible for computers to identify any object anywhere in the world instantly. This network will not just provide the means to feed reliable, accurate, real-time information into existing business applications; it will usher in a whole new era of innovation and opportunity."

Already, Gillette is running a pilot project in Massachusetts, dropping the tiny trackers into its razor packages, and Wal-Mart is set to adopt the radio chips in the coming weeks. Soon, the technology will be worldwide. While retailers claim the chips won't be used past the point-of-sale, there's very little to prevent the technology's abuse. Apparently, the US government used the chips to track its supplies during the invasion of Iraq, and the Department of Homeland Security has begun using them to monitor border crossings. As privacy advocates observe, what's to stop the government from going further? "The potential for abuse is so tremendous," said one.

Meanwhile, the government's science minister, Lord Sainsbury has launched a nanotechnology study amidst fears that this micro-scale revolution could cause us all to dissolve into a grey goo. What a relief, at least the supermarket magnate who brought us old technology tracking devices (i.e. supermarket loyalty cards) can be trusted to oversee a study which will be impartial and not pander to the corporate need and greed to label and follow our every move.

Direct Action - fighting wage slavery - past and future

Since its launch in Autumn 1996, Direct Action Magazine has kept the price of propaganda to a minimum. The cover price went up to £2 this year because of the costs of distribution. The good news is that, with no bookshop cut to pay, the £5 basic annual sub (4 issues) stays the same, so it makes sense to get it delivered to your door (the form is on page 34). Meanwhile, for previous issue(s) of DA, simply send us a quid for each one you want, or pick 8 for a fiver. DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

DA Back issue	Theme	Highlights (all have direct actions, international news, etc. too)
1. Autumn '96	Bullying&Violence	Anarchism, Blaired Vision, bullying at work, child labour and prostitution.
2. Spring '97	BreakingBarriers	The fight to be human, Liverpool Dockers, GB; old empires, national identity.
3. Summer '97	Surveillance	Preventing crime or taking liberties? Power and social control, Sex and genes.
4. Autumn '97	Work to live	Does work make you sick? Health and Safety and problems with work.
5. Winter '97-8	Greenworld	From car culture to utopia.
6. Spring '98	ManagingConsent	From management to globalisation.
7. Summer '98	Nationstates	Nationalism, Ireland, EMU, freedom.
8. Autumn '98	PersonaLife	Laddism, political parenting, youth, sexuality.
9. Winter '98-9	MediaBites	Media Corpse; from moguls to state propaganda.
10. Spring '99	2Worlds	Who ate all the pies? Africa, capitalism, colonialism, and re-invented imperialism.
11. Summer '99	Them&Us	Equality, discrimination, language, racism, sexism.
12. Autumn '99	Education	Learning to live/Teaching to fail, Free-ed alternatives interviews, Schools and HE.
13. Winter '00	counterCULTure	Nine O'clock service; NOI – Charmed & Dangerous; plus faith, gurus and mystics.
14. Spring '00	DirectAction	Dare to dream: then do it, GM, violence, anti-capitalism, new Labour clampdown.
15. Summer '00	aGendas	Gender Agendas, HIV/AIDS, feminism and postmodernism, decline of the Left.
16. Autumn '00	Mismanagement	Inhuman Resources, teamwork talk, asylum seekers, Anarchism vs. Marxism.
17. Winter '00-1	BlairedVision	The Ditch Blair Project, education, corporate killing, Britishness, Off the Rails.
18. Spring '01	The party's over	Socialist Alliance; New Old Labour, voting, UKplc on the slide.
19. Summer '01	Fortress Culture	Barbed Wire Capitalism; immigration and human rights, the state we are in.
20. Autumn '01	Casual Slavery	Casualisation, privatisation and debt.
21. Winter '01-2	Clearfutures	Apocalypse Soon, Rogue states, beyond capitalism, spirit of anarcho-syndicalism.
22. Spring '02	Safe+Healthy	Fun, risk and living dangerously; Health privatisation; Health and Safety.
23. Summer '02	Culturejams	Pop Culture, Punk, irony and apathy, racism rising, DIY alt.culture, Palestine.
24. Autumn '02	Warmakers	War, terrorism and not-so-hidden agendas, Rape in wartime, Martyrdom, arms sales.
25. Winter '02-3	Consumption	Is shopping a human right? Sense and Sustainability, Consumption & fear, poverty.
26. Spring '03	Freedom	'Free' market myths; In pursuit of Empire; Immigration; Madness of King George.
27. Summer '03	Evil Empires	SpOILs of War; Chomsky on Empire; Domin8-tricks; Anti-globalisation reflections.

ON THE EDGE

Guantanamo Bay Justice in Britain

The special immigration appeals commission hearings of thirteen alleged terrorists expected to last until next January resemble the kangaroo courts faced by Guantanamo Bay internees. The thirteen are being held without trial and without charge under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, which allows foreigners to be held indefinitely. Only now, during these appeals where most of the evidence is heard in secret "in the interests of national security", can they begin to learn even a hint of the case against them.

Dropping dead

Britain's bosses are increasingly working us to an early grave. Stress, overwork, harassment, strokes, suicides, and heart-attacks will be our top job-related killers in the 21st century. However, such deaths are not recorded as work-related. Nor is it considered a workplace problem, never mind a worsening one, to die because your job is too much to bear.

According to a recent Samaritans survey, work is considered by 36% of us – more than any other factor – as our greatest cause of stress. As British working hours are forced up, so too are our stress statistics. The HSE estimates that, between 1990 and 2002, the number of people suffering from work stress and stress-related conditions more than doubled to almost 2 people in every 100. Stress, anxiety and depression were estimated to cause 13.4 million lost working days, a fact that employers and government alike seem unwilling to recognise.

It is well-known from countries with long working hours like Japan, China and Korea, that overwork causes suicide, which both Japan and Korea recognise as a compensatable work-related condition. At present, 1 in 6 British workers are working over 60 hours a week, up from 1 in 8 three years ago. If mere compensation is not to be the best we can hope for, then British workers must begin to combat this abuse, begin to take back control over our work, begin to fight for decent wages and decent working conditions.

ON THE EDGE

Baku solidarity action

AMEC House, Warrington, was blockaded by activists from Earth First! and the Rising Tide Baku campaign in July, in protest over the construction company's part in the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project. This is planned to carry a million barrels of oil a day from the Caspian Sea region of central Asia to the Mediterranean coast of Turkey, and is part of a strategy to reduce western dependence on oil from the OPEC states (see 'Spoils of War', DA27).

The action prevented hundreds of vehicles from entering the site. In addition, AMEC staff were given leaflets detailing the project's likely environmental and human rights impacts in the region.

Project funding will come from the International Finance Corporation (IFC – the World Bank arm which lends to companies rather than governments), and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). These bodies distribute money contributed by governments, including our own, which comes directly from our taxes. On October the 9th, at the end of a 120 day public consultation period which began in June, the IFC and EBRD will decide on the financing application submitted by BP and its partners requesting $300 million from both bodies.

Further information: The Baku Ceyhan Campaign, Box 210, 266 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DL. Tel. 01865 200 550 www.bakuceyhan.org.uk

Electrical storms

Since May, there have been daily pickets outside the prestigious Piccadilly Gardens development in Manchester.

The action began when four electricians were sacked by the contractor DAF Electrical for forming a branch of the TGWU/EPIU (Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union) and insisting on their right to direct employment. A senior DAF manager recognised one of the four from a previous strike at a site in Sandwich, Kent. A further seven dismissals followed as other electricians took unofficial action in solidarity.

DAF have used the terms of the JIB (Joint Industry Board for the Electrical Contracting Industry – see below) to justify the sackings. This body represents Britain's longest running 'sweetheart deal', under which the employers pay workers' dues direct to the union, which was originally the EETPU, but now, following a series of mergers, is Amicus. No other unions are recognised.

Meanwhile, the sacked electricians' work is being handled by unskilled labourers, which itself is a breach of JIB regulations. So too are the pay (£5/hour v. £7.10 JIB rate) and out of town allowances (£5/day plus sleeping bag v. the £28 JIB rate for B&B) that DAF is paying their scabs. As usual, employers break agreements with impunity, while conniving union officials look the other way.

In a similar vein, it was sustained pressure from the sacked men, not from Amicus officials, that forced a reluctant Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into investigating DAF's unsafe working practices. At first, the HSE insisted that the use of unqualified workers to carry out electrical work was not a breach of regulations. This is despite the fact that, in order to be an electrician, you have to complete a 3-year JIB-approved City and Guilds course and a 5-year apprenticeship. Instead, the HSE maintained that qualifications are not a legal requirement, only that workers carrying out electrical work must be competent and have adequate supervision. This refusal to act and the vague reasoning behind it, despite photographic evidence, provoked widespread astonishment. It was soon realised that the HSE's approach had more to do with not upsetting the site's developer, Carillion PLC, one of the city regeneration programme's biggest players. Renewed pressure forced the HSE to backtrack. Nevertheless, the use of unskilled and low paid workers in electrical and other potentially hazardous work remains an increasingly widespread feature of the construction industry.

The T&G has given this dispute official backing since early July and is representing the workers in industrial tribunals for unfair dismissal and late payment of wages and holiday pay.

To contribute to the fighting fund, send cheques, payable to A. Jones, to: Mr S. Acheson, 13 Thompson Close, Danebank, Denton M34 2PQ. Tel: 07813 456831.

JIB notes

Since 1967, the Joint Industry Board for the electrical contracting industry, the JIB, has stood as Britain's longest running 'sweetheart deal' between bosses (the Electrical Contractors Association) and union bureaucrats (EETPU, the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union). Its immediate effect was to end a long period of confrontation and workplace militancy. As such, it represents the first major 'achievement' of a new breed of right wing union leaders like Eric Hammond. The EETPU under Hammond went on to distinguish itself in the late 1980s for the cause of Rupert Murdoch by supplying scab labour for his crusade to smash the print unions at Wapping. Meanwhile, the JIB still exists and still polices industrial militancy – (see above).

When Hammond and other right wingers came to power, they introduced a full time executive; abolished rank and file area committees; abolished the right of branches to appeal against executive decisions; and gave the executive the right to close and amalgamate branches. Even after two mergers – with the AEU (to form the AEEU), then with MSF (to form Amicus) – this rulebook still operates.

A second part of the leadership's strategy to control workplace militancy was to import the JIB idea from the USA. And of course employers were only too eager to jump on board. The principal functions of the deal, which Hammond later styled his 'first revolution', are wage negotiations; a grading system; a disputes machinery; award of NVQs; registration of apprentices; and health and safety provisions.

In fact, the JIB was registered as a trade union, despite its national board being 50% composed of employer representatives. This pretence continued until 1991, and throughout this time it benefited from tax allowances it wasn't entitled to.

Until 2001, electricians in the electrical contracting industry were uniquely denied the right to an unfair dismissal hearing at an employment tribunal. The reason for this was that the JIB dismissals procedure was deemed a satisfactory substitute.

Despite the employer-friendly terms of the JIB, and despite the fact that British electricians are among the lowest paid in the EU, greed is getting the better of some bosses. Contractors are increasingly undercutting each other by using unqualified labour and paying below JIB rates. One outcome is that workers and public alike are put at risk by badly installed electrical equipment. Another outcome will be the undermining of the JIB and the loosening of Amicus's grip on electricians. In these conditions, perhaps it is not over-optimistic to say that we may be seeing the beginnings of a return to workplace organisation in the construction industry.

Mass deception

The Hutton inquiry is only the latest in a long line of political games intended to throw a veil of openness over a box of dark secrets.

In July, US Defence Secretary Rumsfeld let it slip that there had been no major new evidence for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq before the US/British invasion. At the same time, the White House has disowned British inspired claims of the Iraqi dictator attempting to buy uranium from Niger. These claims were part of Downing Street's dodgy dossier which, along with the whole Iraqi adventure, has become a weapon of mass self-destruction aimed at Blair himself.

As lies about Iraq's weapons capability are revealed, as the realisation spreads that no 'smoking gun' exists, Blair's grip on power may be loosening. Already there have been calls to resign, while other cabinet members are noticeable only by their silence. Meanwhile, the campaign against the BBC by Blair's right hand, Campbell, has succeeded only in drawing the media spotlight ever closer to the weakness of the case for war. First, the Commons inquiry into the BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan; then, the David Kelly affair culminating in the former UN weapons inspector's apparent suicide; then, the Hutton inquiry into the events leading up to that suicide – if Campbell's plan was to divert attention from his and Blair's own misdealings, he couldn't have got it more wrong.

Yet, Blair and Campbell may well survive by limiting the scope of Hutton's investigations. And they are past masters in front of parliamentary committees, in the words of one commentator, 'ducking and diving and mangling meaning as if their political lives depended on it'. Even so, survive or resign, trust in Blair has plummeted. Let's hope that the anti-war and anti-capitalist movement can build on this mistrust, can help translate it into an increasing rejection of the whole parliamentary process, and can promote the direct action alternative of politics without politicians.

The seasons of rhetoric:

Spring 2003...

Summer 2003...

Lose the Levy

Some unions are thinking of switching their members' political contributions away from New Labour to 'other' so-called 'left' parties. Here at DA, we say balls to all party politicians. Why not save yourself some cash by completing and sending the form below to your Union HQ - and don't forget to copy it to your pay office for immediate relief.

Political Fund Exemption Notice

I hereby give notice that I object to contributing to the Political Fund of the union and am in consequence exempt, in the manner provided by Chapter 6 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (consolidation) Act 1992, from contributing to that fund.

Address.....

Signature..... .....

Name..... .....

Membership number..... **Date**.....

Payroll No..... **Union & branch**:.....

ON THE EDGE

45-minute lies

Pointing the finger at Gilligan, the BBC journalist, Tony Blair's manager Alastair Campbell told the foreign affairs select committee; "I find it incredible… that people can report based on one single, anonymous, uncorroborated source."

This was his attempt to silence claims that the government was blatantly lying when it made the false claim last September, that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction which could be launched in 45 minutes. As everyone knows, the claim was inserted into the so-called 'intelligence' dossier by the government, and the Hutton inquiry revealed that the information came from hearsay. So, in fact, the foundation for the government's claim was a single, anonymous, uncorroborated source quoting another single, anonymous, uncorroborated source. In other words, the government's main justification for going to war against Iraq was a playground rumour.

What next? "We got a tip-off from someone in the pub that the Iranians were planning something, so we had to act in the country's interests?"

Lowest common denominator

Following its decision to raise the retirement age for women from 60 to 65, the Labour government is now encouraging everyone to go on working until they are 70. At the same time, they are reducing statutory redundancy payments for workers aged over 41, from 1.5 weeks pay per year service down to 1 week. These and other abuses and affronteries are being forced on us in the name of ending discrimination. It would not, of course, occur to New Labour to do some rounding up instead of rounding down. Why can't we all retire at 60 and get proper redundancies? That wouldn't do, as it would leave less profit for creaming off by their business buddies.

No longer willing to fund pensions, they have decided it is far better to force us all to work 'til we drop dead.

CNT goes Full Monty

Spain

Back in February 2002, in Tomares (a small town outside Seville) a group of cleaning workers decided enough was enough. The street cleaners and rubbish collectors went on strike, demanding permanent contracts and various improvements in working conditions. After 20 days on strike, the bosses at the company, Ferrovial Servicios S.A. caved in. Both parties signed an agreement, the contracts became permanent, and all demands to improve working conditions were accepted by the company.

A year later, the company broke the agreement, and the CNT (the largest union in the workplace), initiated another strike on 17th March. This time, it got bitter, and six of the striking workers started a hunger strike. The demands were clear, among others; reinstatement of permanent contracts; improvements in working conditions as regards duration of shifts, increase of wages and basic rights related to holiday allowance and sick pay, and recognition of the workers assembly – any new rules and conditions introduced by the company would have to be approved by the workers assembly first.

Seventeen workers were sacked during the strike, as the company hired workers from a neighbouring province (Huelva) in an attempt to break the workers' will. The workers started legal action against the company for breach of fundamental rights, i.e. recognition of union affiliation and the right to strike. Protest actions took place every day, with a noisy wake-up call every morning outside the City Council, followed by a demonstration/blockade with loudspeakers every afternoon. Also, protests were held at the gates of the company building, especially at the times when trucks driven by scabs left for work, etc. Additional actions included weekly marches to Seville, and performance of the Full Monty show by the striking workers outside the City Council buildings.

After 134 days of action, protest, and mounting pressure on the company, the strike finally came to an end on 28th July, with the workers and Ferrovial Servicios, S.A. signing another agreement, this time binding the company to the following conditions, among others:

- Reinstatement of the sacked workers and cancellation of all displicinary actions filed during the strike.
- Annual salary rise, and increased pay for night shifts.
- Extra pay for handling of toxic substances.
- Recognition of union affiliation and the workers assembly.
- An end to compulsory transfers.
- Full pay during work-related accidents and illness, as well as any other cases of accidents and illness requiring hospitalisation or surgery.
- Reduction and re-evaluation of shift working hours.
- In the event of a driver losing his licence, an alternative position within the company will be granted.
- One extra day holiday allowance.

Needless to say, the workers and the CNT will be keeping a keen eye out for any more signs of funny business from the bosses. However, the general feeling is that now they have proved what they are capable of, the bosses will steer clear of them in the foreseeable future. The workers told the IWA Secretariat they couldn't have done it without the solidarity received from all the people in Tomares, all other CNT locals in Spain and IWA sections around the world. **For more info, pics, posters, etc., visit www.cnt.es**

This international news could not have been brought to you without the following excellent WebSources:
A-Infos News Service; www.ainfos.ca/
IWA (International Workers' Association); www.iwa-ait.org
SchNEWS; www.schnews.org.uk
Labourstart; http://www.labourstart.org/
ASeed - Roots; http://antenna.nl/aseed/
Earth First – Action Update; http://host.envirolink.org/ef/
Corporate Watch; www.corpwatch.org
No Sweat; http://www.nosweat.org.uk
Hazards; http://www.hazards.org

Peru

The Camisea Gas Project is one of the world's most destructive current developments. It extracts gas from the pristine Amazon rainforest, an area of extreme biodiversity where indigenous people have lived for centuries. Some of them live in voluntary isolation from the rest of society, which makes them much more vulnerable to outside interference. They have no immunity to diseases like the common cold, and, although a reserve was established for their protection, three-quarters of the project is located inside this reserve. Over its 40-year life, the Camisea project will have irreparable impacts on the lives of those who live in and around the reserve.

In addition to its social impacts, the Camisea project has already caused massive erosion, sedimentation, and biodiversity loss. Long-term impacts also include open access to a region previously protected by natural barriers, and the project threatens one of Latin America's most important marine reserves on the Ramsar protected Bay of Paracas.

In August, under intense pressure from environmental and human rights groups, banks backing the project delayed scheduled votes on the controversial $2.6 billion loans. **There is still time to tell them not to support destructive activities like the Camisea project. A sample letter plus contact information can be found at www.corpwatch.org/action/PAA.jsp?articleid=7792**

Japan

In common with many other pro-US governments, new legislation has been hitting the Japanese statute books outlawing people's rights to gather innocently in the street, etc. Apparently, stopping us from moving around is all in the name of giving us our freedom (from terrorism). Getting into the spirit of this irony, 300 people took to the Osaka streets to protest against the anti-protest legislation.

50 police turned up to the Reclaim the Streets street party protest against the war. Many people were there to assert their individual right to be on the street, although eventually the police successfully asserted their control of the street in an overtly aggressive way. Ravers, anti-war, anti-Bush and anti-Brand America protesters, as well as other political activists were led by a truck loaded with speakers and a DJ. They were followed by drummers, an electric guitarist, flag-wavers, and a team projecting onto buildings images of dead and injured Iraqi children as well as messages against American Imperialism.

More at http://japan.indymedia.org/newswire/display/581/index.php

Euskadi

Itoiz dam – The landslides begin

Despite 18 years of protest from the local population (see DA21), the destruction of 3 nature reserves, and warnings by geologists that the dam could destabilise the foundations of the nuclear power plant further down the river, the Spanish and Navarran governments closed the flood gates of the Itoiz dam earlier this year.

Already, the first landslides have begun around the dam's base and bordering zones. People living in Itoiz village and their cattle had to be evacuated for three days. As it fills, there will be a permanent risk of flooding cutting off the roads leading to and from the village.

In Agoitz, a town of 3,000 people located downstream of the dam, locals took part in a two week sit-in in the town hall to draw attention to their demands for an independent study of the dam's safety. The protest ended with a 3,000-strong demonstration. Afterwards, four protesters got into the reservoir in a boat, and chained themselves to a tree on a small island in the middle.

Meanwhile, the European Tribunal of Human Rights in Strasbourg has decided to proceed with a complaint denouncing the dodgy legal footwork by the Navarran government in 2000, which it used to avoid the earlier 1995 ruling of the Spanish Supreme Court, which had declared the dam's construction illegal.

The Itoiz dam will not produce much electricity, and there are no serious plans for irrigation. However, there must be some reason for all this persistence. You don't have to look far for the motive, judging by the fact that one former minister of Navarra and a former minister of public works have already been jailed for fraud relating to the funding of the project. The Navarran government is prepared to risk an environmental catastrophe for this monument to corruption and bribery.

To get in touch, or for more info and updates, email stopitoiz@yahoo.co.uk

Palestine

On 5th August, more than 40 Palestinian, Israeli, and international human rights activists were detained while attempting to block the demolition of part of a Palestinian family home, near the village of Mas'ha. The building was to be demolished by the Israeli Military because it lay in the path of the Apartheid Wall that Israel is constructing on occupied Palestinian land.

The official reason for building the 'security fence', which is three times higher and longer than the Berlin wall, is to prevent the unauthorised passage of Palestinians out of the West Bank. However, the route of the wall is not following the internationally recognised pre-1967 borders of the State of Israel, and the Israeli authorities have refused to publish any details. Research carried out by the Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, shows that the fence will isolate a number of Palestinian villages and rob a great many more of their farmland, enabling the acquisition of even more Palestinian land.

For info, visit www.palsolidarity.org

Dominican Republic

In August, police raided the office of a local trade union, and opened fire on those inside in order to prevent them from carrying out a planned protest in the capital, Santo Domingo.

At least three trade unionists were said to have been injured, and up to six others were detained by police on unspecified charges. At the time, they were organising an alternative version of the march which had opened the 14th PanAmerican Games in Santo Domingo on 1st August.

The alternative march, entitled 'Antorcha contra el Hambre' (Torch against Hunger), featuring a flaming cookpot on a dustbin as a mock 'torch', was organised in the context of months of repeated protests around the country against cost of living increases, price hikes for fuel and other commodities, power shortages, recent banking scandals, and the impact of economic measures undertaken by the government of the Dominican Republic, in order to meet the conditions required for a proposed agreement with the International Monetary Fund.

Oil-rich fuel farce

The Nigerian general strike

For nine days in July, Nigeria came to a complete halt, as a general strike broke out in protest at the government's decision to raise petrol prices by 54%. Roads leading into the country's major cities were reported to be unusually quiet, as thousands of commuter buses and taxis stayed off the road. Many people who did try to get to work were prevented by the absence of public transport.

There were plenty of chaotic scenes in front of federal government buildings, as people used cars to block access to offices. According to the BBC, Lagos, the country's commercial capital, was "completely shut down", as banks and businesses were also closed.

The government declared the strike "unwarranted, illegal and unfortunate", and said the union had not given the government the statutory 15-days' notice. It also threatened legal action against attempts to barricade factory gates and set up pickets, and generally warned strikers to remain peaceful and not interfere with people carrying out their normal duties. It then promptly deployed riot police against demonstrators in various parts of Lagos. However, the unions were undeterred: "Nothing on earth is going to stop the strike action," said Owei Lakemfa, a spokesman for the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), rather optimistically.

There has been a general build-up of discontent since President Olusegun Obasanjo's disputed re-election in April. The decision to raise petrol prices is also pretty controversial in the oil-rich nation of Nigeria, where poor people have received almost no share in the valuable oil exports. Ironically, Africa's largest oil producer faces chronic fuel shortages as almost all of its own oil is tied into long-term contracts and shipped abroad to be wasted on gas guzzling family trucks in the US.

The government claims that the extra revenue from the fuel price rises will be spent on improving health and education services. However, whatever happens to it, the fact remains that the rich will still be driving around, while the poor will no longer be able to afford to get to work.

The strike held solid despite such problems as food shortages, day labourers being unable to work, numerous ethnic and religious tensions, and the shooting dead by police of at least five protestors. The NLC ended the strike after negotiating a halving of the proposed rise, stopping short of rolling back the entire increase – and stopping short of really challenging the right of the elite to rule. Of course, the NLC leadership is every bit as frightened as the ruling class of the power unleashed when the whole of the working class acts in unison.

While the strike ended with compromise, just as past attempts to raise fuel prices have been met by solid street resistance, this is unlikely to be the last time Nigerians leave work and take to the streets.

Australia

Last year, an independent report commissioned by the Tasmanian government highlighted the clear link between excessive working hours in Tasmanian mining and danger to occupational health and safety. Now, Tasmanian mine operators have been ordered to reduce working hours on safety grounds, in the first legally binding instruction of its kind in Australian history.

Workplace Standards Tasmania has served notice on Barminco, a contractor to Copper Mines of Australia, ordering it to replace excessively long shift patterns with ones that don't generate dangerous levels of fatigue. Ian Wakefield, the Tasmania secretary of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), hailed the orders as a "huge victory that will flow on to every other state and territory." He added: "We had the support of whole communities down here. These companies run 56-hour a week rosters. They are killing our members, and they are killing their communities as well." The new rules will prevent anyone working an average of more than 48 hours a week over a year.

US - Justice will be served

A group of Chinese restaurant workers in New York have been on strike since May of this year. The workers at David's Jade Palace, in Hartsdale, were fired by owner David Eng after demanding payment of stolen tips, union recognition, and the end of sweatshop conditions.

The workers began to organise in the self-managed independent Restaurant Workers Union (IWW 318), and took legal action to recoup lost tips money. Since the strike started, the waiters and supporters (including anarcho-syndicalists) have been maintaining pickets and putting pressure on the owner to recognise their demands.

Needless to say, the public are being dissuaded from eating at the restaurant; however, it looks like the struggle could be a long one, and the waiters are now in need of financial solidarity. Money is needed to help pay the strikers' transportation and other expenses directly related to strike activities.

Cheques and money orders (US dollars only) should be made out to the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops or NMASS, marked for the "Justice Will Be Served Campaign", and mailed to; NMASS, POB 130293, New York, NY 10013-0995.

Any donators who cannot make US dollar payments can send sterling cheques made out to Solidarity Federation, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, and we will convert and forward all monies.

To read more about the waiters' struggle, see "Boycott David's Jade Palace Restaurant" leaflet at www.workersolidarity.org

Mexico

Levi Strauss are the biggest contractor at Tarrant, where seven union leaders have been sacked and 200 more are being threatened with the same after a strike. After finding out that representatives from the LEVI'S brand would visit the Tarrant Mexico plants in Ajalpán and Tehuacán on July 29, the sacked union leaders searched for them at the Hotel Casa Cantarranas in Tehuacán to discuss the problems at Tarrant. When they finally tracked LEVI representative Carol Baxter down next day on the phone, she said she would not be doing anything for the Ajalpán workers and hung up the phone.

If you don't think that's good enough, tell Levi: cs.ukeire@levi.com

Notes and more details at: www.nosweat.org.uk

Iraq isn't working

Hundreds of Iraqis staged a demonstration outside the headquarters of the US-led coalition in Baghdad. Not the first or the last such demonstration, you may surmise. However, the world's media have generally focused on religious, factional and tribal gatherings of people opposing the US-British occupation. This time, carrying banners which read "We need work!", and chanting similar demands, the protestors were unemployed workers.

Unemployment in Iraq, already at precarious levels before the war, skyrocketed in the wake of the US-led invasion. New jobs for the Iraqi workforce is an oft-repeated pledge of the occupation forces, but little has been done to ease the unemployment burden.

So, jobless Iraqis are becoming desperate. By the end of July, the demonstrations were turning violent and deadly. In one incident, over 100 heavily armed US troops formed a cordon at the palace gates as the crowd refused to disperse, instead staging a sit-in and urging other unemployed Iraqis to join the protest. The ever trigger-happy US troops immediately started getting jumpy and started firing "warning shots", leaving two demonstrators dead. Every US soldier that gets killed warrants global media coverage, and usually an opportunity to point the "terrorists" finger (again), whereas dead Iraqis are just ten-a-penny and not worthy of western news.

A recently set up unemployed workers group staged a sit-in which lasted several days before US troops arrested 55 of them. They released a statement proclaiming; "Our union will do its best to expose the practices of the US as an occupying force in Iraq and its indifference to the agony of the masses".

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) announced the Iraq Reconstruction and Employment Programme (IREP) back in May, with the words; "The programme is necessary to bring Iraqi people to work, as unemployment has reached 60%". However, little has happened.

Of course, when a country has been bombed and looted to oblivion, even if they did consider it a high priority, it would not be easy for the occupation forces to provide jobs (except, clearly, in reconstruction). The main media and information industry was contained within the information ministry, which has been completely destroyed. One former cartographer summed it up; "We thought our life would be easier after the war, since we would have the freedom of expression, but now we are stripped of our jobs and have no choice but to go begging."

Garment workers updates

Bangladesh - Thailand - Indonesia

Bangladesh relies on the garment sector and chain stores such as 'New Look' for over 75% of its foreign earnings. Most garment workers are forced to work 13-hour shifts 7 days a week for poverty wages. This is a new industry – it employed 5,000 people in 1981, and now it employs 1.3 million in over 3,000 factories (80% are women). However, judging by the conditions they have to work and live in, export-led industrialisation has produced very little benefit for them and a lot of profit for the likes of New Look.

The National Garment Workers' Federation (NGWF – see previous DAs) has been struggling for years against the explicit ban the Bangladeshi government places on the garment sector. This year they successfully campaigned for greater health and safety measures, as well as holiday entitlements for workers.

Meanwhile, in Thailand, collective bargaining rights were won by the Gina Relations Worker Union (GRWU) in an agreement with Gina Form Bra management, after a long struggle which has been going on since last year. Almost all the key issues that the union wanted have been achieved, and the agreement marks a rare victory for workers' rights in Thailand.

As DA goes to press, there is an illegal lock-out of 537 workers at the PT Kahatex Sweater factory in Bandung, Indonesia. The workers refused to accept the sub-minimum wages that the factory was paying and, although management agreed in May to begin paying the legal minimum wage, workers' pay was never increased. They walked out in a spontaneous protest strike, and the company responded by refusing to allow any of these workers back to their jobs. The company has engaged in brutal tactics during the lock-out, bribing workers and hiring thugs to force workers to accept severance or resignation instead of their legally due reinstatement and back wages.

You can take action on this alert by going to www.unionvoice.org/campaign/kahatex/l7n36ezpj8bj
More information on Bangladesh; www.waronwant.org

Cuba

In Cuba, anarchist ideas go back a long way but, once in power, Castro dismantled anarchist organisations, and activists from the Cuban anarchist movement were killed, imprisoned or exiled. Now, they are back. This July, in the capital neighbourhood of La Víbora, a small group of some 30 independent syndicalists, young anarchists and sympathisers celebrated the anniversary of the Spanish Revolution. One of the young men present at this event, who declined to identify himself for security reasons, declared through a phone call: "The time has come to bring the anarchist ideal back to life in Cuba, condemned to hibernate for more than 40 years because of Castrist authoritarianism".

In the Cuban workplace, all officially recognised unions are government entities. Collective bargaining does not exist, and neither (officially) does anti-union discrimination, since the state controls everything. The State Committee for Work and Social Security (CETSS) sets wages and salaries for the state sector, which is virtually the only employer in the country.

Canada

The Sheraton Centre was the venue for the Montreal preparation meeting ("mini-ministerial") for the 5th WTO-conference of ministers on 29th July. Several hundred protestors gathered to disagree, and, as they approached the security fence, dozens of arrests were made. People were accused of illegal assembly and participation in a riot.

The WTO, hailed by capitalists as the bringer of global prosperity and a real chance for the weakest nations of the world, has proved to be the opposite. Successive WTO rulings have produced a 'race to the bottom' with every environmental, health or safety policy it has had to rule on deemed an illegal barrier to trade. The fifth Ministerial meeting in Cancún (Mexico) in September sees a World Trade Organisation still in constant crisis and looking out for US dodgy business interests as usual.

The US is blocking an agreement for access to cheap medicines for developing countries, while a new agreement on agriculture is nowhere in sight, as the US and the European Union defend their multibillion dollar subsidies. Brussels is on the verge of imposing sanctions on Washington for giving tax breaks to exporters, while Washington is threatening Europe with a trade war over plans to label genetically modified foods.

See demo pictures at http://cmaq.net and check out Cancún at www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/cancun, and get copies of a report on 'Unlimited Companies' by ActionAid from www.actionaid.org, which includes plenty of examples on how often big business is allowed to trample through the developing world, ignoring people's rights, evicting them from their homes, squeezing them out of business, and refusing to allow workers to join unions or get a decent wage.

Colombia

When union member Carlos Barrero was shot down and killed at a bus-stop by unknown gunmen as he left work on 23rd July, he became the 42nd victim of right-wing death squad assassins in Colombia in 2003 so far.

Carlos was a well-known trade union activist and member of ANTHOC (National Association of Health and Social Security Public Employees and Workers), and was active in protesting against the local government plans to privatise public health services in Barranquilla District. He had also denounced the hospital administration for corrupt practices and embezzlement of public funds. Workers at the hospital are owed up to 8 months in wage arrears, and there have been a number of cases of arbitrary dismissals.

ANTHOC has been opposing the privatisation of health services in Colombia, and pointing out that the government's restructuring and privatisation plans constitute a violation of health rights. With a membership of approximately 27,000, it is one of the major voices of protest against the government health services reforms. Over the last decade, the organisation has been a constant target of human rights violations. There have been 94 assassinations of union leaders and members, 8 members have disappeared, 26 have been kidnapped, 168 members are internally displaced, and there have been 20 cases of attempted murder, as well as 298 cases of death threats against members.

Send letters of protest to the Colombian government; a sample and more details can be found at www.world-psi.org/psi.nsf/Actions/

South Korea

South Korean car workers at Hyundai agreed to go back to work after a successful 7-week strike, when bosses agreed to raise wages by 8.6%, well above South Korea's 3.1% inflation rate. The strikes cost the company an estimated £500 million in lost output.

Hyundai also agreed to grant staff a shorter working week and other benefits. The 47-day strike not only saw Hyundai suffer its lowest domestic sales since 1999 in July, but also hit production at the firm's overseas plants. Hyundai said severe inventory shortages had forced it to halt production at its plants in Russia, Egypt, Malaysia and Pakistan.

India 1

Coca-Cola is in trouble in India (see DA26). Ever since the first allegations arose in Kerala of water scarcity and polluted water resulting from its bottling operations, Coca-Cola's public relations department has churned out denials, insisting that the charges are false, and that it is the "target of a handful of extremist protesters." Coca-Cola's global website carries their position on the issue and claims that the "local communities have welcomed our business as a good corporate neighbour." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Communities are taking action. The emergence of grassroots struggles against the giant's operation has made the issue more than simply a public relations problem to be spun and wished away. The campaign is beginning to raise serious concerns about control over natural resources and the right of the people to control their communities.

In Mehdiganj, Coca-Cola has illegally occupied a portion of the common property resources of the village and was found guilty of evading payment of land revenue by a local court. Protesters were met at Coca-Cola's factory gates by about 200 police, sent to "protect" the plant, along with 50 gun-toting private security guards. The demonstrators were beaten up *en masse*.

The Coca-Cola plant in Mehdiganj enjoys heavily subsidised electricity and is spewing toxins into surrounding agricultural fields, as well as causing serious water shortages as a result of its operations. Coca-Cola's arrogance should come as no surprise, as it is accustomed to having its way with governments. However, they are not getting their way so easily with people any more – the community struggles in India against Coca-Cola are just a few of many that exist and are emerging.

Visit www.corpwatchindia.org for more info and related articles.

India 2

Both Hindustan Lever Ltd., an Indian subsidiary of British-Dutch multinational company Unilever, and the American multinational Monsanto are making use of large-scale child slave labour in cotton seed production in India.

An estimated 25,000 children, mostly girls, work ten to thirteen hours a day for Hindustan Lever, while another 17,000 work for Monsanto and their Indian subsidiary Mahyco. These children get no education, earn less than 30 pence a day, and are exposed to poisonous pesticides, like Endosulphan, during their work. More than 11,000 children work under similar conditions for the multinationals Syngenta (Swiss), Advanta (Dutch-British) and Proagro (owned by Bayer of Germany).

Cottonseed production is very labour-intensive. The sector is 'unique' in the sense that nine out of ten employees are children between 6 and 14 years of age. There are 247,800 child workers in cottonseed production in Andhra Pradesh, and around 450,000 in India as a whole.

The cottonseed companies work through agents called 'seed organisers', and unilaterally fix farm prices so low that only the child labour operators survive (a child earns 30% less than a woman and 55% less than a man). In terms reminiscent of 18th century slavery, the children are generally bonded to the same employer.

More info: www.indianet.nl/cotseed.html

US

Computer giant Intel lost a major 5-year lawsuit against a fired employee who sent email protest letters to thousands of his former colleagues, in a court decision that is a major victory for free speech and workers' rights.

Kourosh (Ken) Hamidi, a 56-year-old engineer, was thrown on the scrapheap back in 1995 by the world's largest semiconductor manufacturer, after nine years of service. His response was to organise a group called FACE (Former and Current Employees) Intel (www.faceintel.com).

FACE Intel publicised the health problems, stress, and suicide that Intel's demands on its employees created. Using a company email list from an anonymous source, FACE Intel sent six emails to between 8,000 and 35,000 Intel employees, detailing the multinational's abusive practices, including; forced overtime, a ranking system used to routinely target employees, discrimination against older workers, and unhealthy conditions in the fabrication facilities.

In response, Intel first tried to block the emails, then sued Hamidi. Two lower courts ruled in favour of the company. But Hamidi, who now had been forced into bankruptcy and was struggling to support his family of four on odd jobs and disability payments, refused to abandon the case. In the end, because Hamidi did not hack into Intel's systems to send his messages, and because he removed any recipients who asked not to be contacted again, the court decided that he did nothing but use the e-mail system for its intended purpose.

Congo:
Capitalist mineral lust fuels bloodshed

The death toll from the war in the Congo, which began in 1998, is higher than in any other since the Second World War, with an estimated 4.7 million killed in the last four years alone. The International Rescue Committee (IRC), an aid agency based in New York, reports that the mortality rate in the Congo is higher than the UN rates for any other country on the planet.

According to IRC President George Rupp, the crisis in the Congo *is "a humanitarian catastrophe of horrid and shocking proportions. The worst mortality projections in the event of a lengthy war in Iraq, and the death toll from all the recent wars in the Balkans, don't even come close."* Despite these horrible facts, the crisis has gone largely unnoticed and unreported in the West. As David Johnson, the director of IRC operations in eastern Congo has stated: *"This is the worst calamity in Africa this century, and one which the world has consistently found reasons to overlook."*

The war in the Congo started in August 1998, when an uprising backed by forces of the Ugandan and Rwandan governments (which receive their main support from "coalition of the willing" leaders, the US and Britain) was launched in the country's eastern regions against the government of Laurent Kabila. The Ugandan government claimed it was defending its western borders against rebels based in Rwanda, while the Rwandan forces claimed to be defending themselves against Hutu militias on the Congo border. Apparently, this border protection required Rwandan forces to occupy the diamond-rich town of Kisangani, 700 miles inside the Congolese border. The conflict spread as combatants from Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe entered the war, ostensibly to support Kabila's government. Along the way, there has been evidence of involvement by mercenaries, including MPRI of the US, Sandline of Britain, and Executive Outcomes of South Africa.

The US government's intelligence agencies have long worked closely with the corporations seeking to exploit Congo's vast fortunes.

There is even speculation that Kabila was assassinated in 2001 because he refused to concede outright control over the enormous mineral deposits, including some of the world's most significant deposits of gold, diamonds, cobalt, manganese, uranium, copper, zinc, and increasingly important, coltan, a key component in cell phones and computers. Kabila also retracted several mining contracts signed with US and European companies. Additionally, he refused to pay back the enormous debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, accumulated during the Mobutu dictatorship.

Eastern Congo has suffered the worst fighting of the war. Fighting in the region predates the 1998 outbreak of the war, as government soldiers battled rebels seeking to overthrow longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in 1996. While government troops committed atrocities in the region, the situation drew little international response; a pattern that continues.

Western Interests

The way in which Western governments have responded to the crisis has been motivated by their own interests in the vast mineral resources of eastern Congo. The main gold exploration ventures in Congo are those of Banro, a Canadian company cited for violations by the Security Council, and the Anglo-American/Barrick joint venture. Banro Resource Corporation, through its 93%-owned subsidiary, SAKIMA SARL, controls 10 mining permits and 47 mining concessions covering an area of 10,271 sq.km in eastern Congo. After an agreement with the government of Congo, Banro came to hold 100% title to the Twangiza, Kamituga, Lugushwa and Namoya gold deposits.

Most of the gold production in Congo comes from the north-eastern parts of the country. South Africa's AngloGold, the world's largest gold producer, and Barrick Gold of Canada, the second largest gold producer, joined together on an exploration venture encompassing 57,000 sq.km of northeastern Congo in the area along the Ugandan border which has been torn by conflict. Under terms of their agreement, AngloGold and Barrick Gold will each hold 40% interest in the region's Kilo-Moto property, with the remaining 20% held by the DRC government. The agreement between the two companies established AngloGold as the manager of the joint venture properties in Congo.

In 1996, Barrick had succeeded in getting the Gold Office of Kilomoto, the government monopoly of the country's former dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, to transfer mining rights over almost all of its 82,000 sq.km of land to Barrick. The area holds an estimated 100 tons of gold in reserve. None other than George Bush (senior) was instrumental in winning the Barrick deal.

Of particular importance in understanding imperialist intentions in Congo are the interests of American Mineral Fields International (AMFI). Only a month before the fall of Mobutu in 1997, AMFI signed contracts with Kabila's rebel alliance for an investment of nearly one billion dollars in copper, cobalt and zinc mines and processing plants in Kolwezi and Kipushi. Ominously, the industrial enterprises set up by AMFI are also interested in the contract for the construction of the orbital platform that is destined to replace the Russian station MIR. The space platform is a centrepiece of the proposed National Missile

Defence system driven by George W. Bush and his Vice President Richard Cheney and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld. Indeed, the space station cannot be built without many of the rare metals located in eastern Congo.

The UN's Group of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and other Forms of Wealth in the Congo concluded that resource exploitation had led to "*an economy of war*" in the region. Illegal exploitation of resources had established a predatory network of elites, including army and government leaders and multinational companies. The US government's intelligence agencies have long worked closely with the corporations seeking to exploit Congo's vast fortunes. As one example, First Quantum Minerals, a firm with copper-mining interests, was cited for paying government ministers to obtain mining rights. According to the report, First Quantum offered the government a $100 million (US) down-payment in cash payments and shares held in trust for government officials. The payment list included the National Security Minister, the Director of the National Intelligence Agency and the former Minister of the Presidency.

The futility of 'self-regulation'

The panel concluded that the governments of the countries in which the companies are based should take responsibility for dealing with violators. Among its recommendations, the panel suggested that governments regulate and sanction the 29 companies and 54 individuals involved in "*mineral rape*" and human rights violations in Congo. This is, of course, entirely futile, since the governments have close ties, and mutually beneficial relations, with the corporations in question. In fact, the Rwandan and Ugandan forces that have plundered and looted eastern Congo are actually proxies of the US and Britain, with most of the extracted riches going to the West. The largest donors to the governments of Uganda and Rwanda are Britain and the US. The Blair government contributes £30 million per year to Rwanda, but has done little to condemn the Rwandan government for their role in the slaughter.

Similarly, while the British government has imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe for violating democratic rights, it continues to carry on what one commentator calls a "*love affair with the Ugandan government*," offering political, economic and diplomatic support. This is despite the fact that the Ugandan government has exceeded agreed limits to defence spending (African Business, 2003: 22).

As only one example of hypocrisy, in 1999, Britain and the US vetoed Zimbabwe's annual application to the IMF for the country's involvement in the war in Congo. The veto was "*to stop Zimbabwe from 'indulging in those kind of adventures'*, they said" (Apira, 2003: 53). On the same day that Zimbabwe's application was denied, both Uganda and Rwanda, whose forces were much bigger players in Congo, had their applications approved.

Real solutions

Indeed, the British government has "*long been supportive of Kampala and Kigali's efforts to 'control' rebel forces positioned outside their borders"* (African Business, 2003: 22). At the same time, the British government well knows that the real motivation behind Uganda and Rwanda's interests and involvement in Congo is mineral exploitation. A subtle shift in British relations in East Africa has only been noted since news of the massacres in Ituri province, an area dominated by Ugandan forces, raised some international alarm.

Western governments rewarded the Rwandan government for its efforts in the Congo plunder by doubling aid from $26.1 million in 1997 to $51.5 million in 1999, an increase that greatly expanded the Kigali government's capacities for waging war. The World Bank also looked favourably on the policies of the Ugandan and Rwandan governments, and singled out Uganda's recent economic performance for special praise, without a hint of embarrassment over the fact that much of that performance was attributable to illegal exports of gold and diamonds from Congo.

Rather than look for relief from the very governments that profit from bloodshed in Congo, a better suggestion might be to target the corporate offices and headquarters of companies like Banro, Barrick and AMFI directly at home. Rather than viewing this as a conflict that happens "over there", people in Canada, Britain and the US need to go directly to the companies whose decisions "over here" are leading to extensions of conflict in Congo. The roots of the crises in Congo are in many respects located in G8 office towers. It's to those towers that conflict needs to be taken.

The Blair government contributes £30 million per year to Rwanda, but has done little to condemn the Rwandan government for their role in the slaughter.

Workplace
the Left, th
Anarcho-S

Why has workplace activity i point? Why is it different

Since the 1970s, there has been a dramatic drop in the level of workplace militancy in Britain. Contributing to this trend, no doubt, have been factors like mass unemployment; anti-union legislation; the fragmentary effects of flexible and casualised working; decline in industries with a tradition of collective action; and the parallel rise in new sectors lacking such organisation. But this is not the whole story.

Things would be less dismal were it not for union bosses with their desire for respectability on one hand, and left groups with their strategy of sidetracking activists away from the workplace and into centralised party and union structures on the other.

Some would blame declining union membership, but this isn't the answer either. In France, for instance, less than 20% of workers are in unions, in contrast with just under half of the British workforce. Nevertheless, there is much more militancy and workplace activism than in Britain. This is based on small groupings of politicised activists, some working inside of, and some outside of the official union confederations. Among these are the anarcho-syndicalist CNT-AIT (SF's French sister organisation). Such minorities of activists can successfully persuade other workers, unionised or not, to join them in confronting management.

Whereas there was an average of only 274 strikes per year in Britain throughout the 1990s, there was over ten times that figure (2,917) for the period 1970-4, with almost 4,000 in 1970 alone.

Strike action may not be the be-all and end-all of workplace activity, but an impression of the level of workplace activity can be gleaned from official statistics on strikes. Whereas there was an average of only 274 strikes per year in Britain throughout the 1990s, there was over ten times that figure (2,917) for the period 1970-4, with almost 4,000 in 1970 alone. Imagine – nearly 80 strikes going on around the country in a single week! Many of these would have been unofficial, organised at the level of the individual workplace, and often with little or no interference by full time union officials.

Why has workplace activity in Britain reached such a low point? Why is it different in France and elsewhere? The answer lies in the political developments surrounding the strike 'movement'.

Politics and the workplace

Throughout the 1960s, the use and threat of unofficial strike action brought the working class many gains in terms of wages and working conditions. So much so that the state, acting in the bosses' interests, sought to curtail the strike weapon through legislation. These attempts were defeated when strike action ruined first Labour's 1969 white paper; '*In Place of Strife: a Policy for Industrial Relations',* followed by the 1971 Tory Industrial Relations Act. These events also had an overtly political dimension in terms of their role in the electoral defeats of the Wilson government in 1970, and Heath's in 1974. However, politics, particularly the politics of workers' control, was largely kept away from the level of workplace organisation.

Politicised workers were increasingly attracted to rank and file groups which were aimed at linking up activists across workplaces and across industries. These came together in 1973 in the National Rank and File Movement, which, at its height, produced a regular paper circulating to 10,000 workers. However, many Rank and File groups were controlled by the International Socialists (now the SWP) and other 'new left' groups. Sadly, they never broke their Marxist-Leninist shackles, and this meant that the Rank and File Movement became little more

How unions a

Trade unions
Respect union laws
Use only tactics 'approved' by bosses and the state
Protect their privileges (rights to sit on committees, etc.)
Have bosses, bureaucrats and (in Britain) politicians to represent the interests of the workers
Organise by trade – type of job
Traditionally supports closed shop (forced union membership)
Traditionally supports national ownership
Condones different pay for different trades and levels of workers (and bosses)
Uses and practices leadership and authority

Final aim is to keep improving members conditions as much as can be negotiated with the bosses.

e Militancy: e Unions & yndicalism

in Britain reached such a low in France and elsewhere?

"See, what you don't understand is that the world needs wankers, otherwise, where would bosses come from?"

than a recruiting ground. In typical Leninist fashion, the left argued that the party should form the political leadership of the working class, and that workers should form economic organisations (unions) under the leadership of the party. They feared that the National Rank and File Movement would begin to link the economic and the political, and move towards anarcho-syndicalism. Accordingly, they worked to strictly limit its role to little more than strike support with no wider analysis or political content. At the same time, the most politicised workers tended to move from workplace activism, to activism higher up the union hierarchy in the service of the party.

Eventually, the likes of the SWP dropped the Rank and File idea altogether. Gone was a great opportunity to organise across union lines, to link together isolated workplace organisations, and to spread the political ideas of workers' control of society. Lacking such a political content and based on day-to-day economic issues alone, it is no wonder that workplace activity fell off during the 1980s world recession and the Thatcherite backlash against the working class.

This is not to say that politicised activists didn't remain in some workplaces or that such people didn't inject class politics into the workplace during some of the struggles that did occur. The point is they were just too thinly spread and too isolated. In the end, the only alternatives offered to most workers were the dead ends of electing more left wing union leaders and of waiting for a Labour election victory - all of it a far cry from the workplace.

Shocked and stunned

Thatcher's Tory government dismantled union power through a three-pronged strategy. Firstly, the government cut the TUC out of the decision-making social partnership between government, capitalists (CBI) and unions that had operated since World War II. Secondly, Parliament passed a raft of 'anti-union' laws clamping down on unofficial strikes and secondary picketing. Thirdly, the Tories attacked and picked off political targets, assisted where necessary by the full force of the State as, for example, during the 1984-5 miners' strike.

Some sporadic solidarity actions apart, steelworkers and miners, printworkers and dockers each face their industrial struggles alone. Completely shocked and stunned at being dumped from the corridors of power, union leaders are desperate to return to the good old days of 'beer and sandwiches at no. 10'. The only strategy they offer is a headlong dash to the right in tandem with the Labour Party. Efforts are made to appease 'middle England', suck up to the right-wing tabloid press, and make Labour appear electable. In the process, workers in struggle are sacrificed. Virtually the only solidarity on offer takes the shape of strike support groups which, although representing an

cont'd over page...

Completely shocked and stunned at being dumped from the corridors of power, union leaders are desperate to return to the good old days of "beer and sandwiches at no. 10".

are different...

Anarcho-syndicalist unions

...ignore union laws as pro-boss and them
...use direct action, such as strikes, occupations or sabotage as they see fit
...have nor seek any priviledges
...use only direct democracy; all decisions are made in workplace mass meetings. No-one else can represent workers' interests
...organise by workplace, including everyone there except the bosses (cleaners, technical staff, administrators, etc.)
...use no force - participation is entirely voluntary
...fight private enterprise and state control alike – their aim is to abolish both
...reject any pay or conditions split, because they only end up pitching workers against workers
...reject leadership and authority in all forms, both for organising now and in the future

Final aim is to bring about revolution, ending capitalism and the state, and replacing it with democratically-run communities and workplaces.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN THE CAPITALIST WORKPLACE

cont'd from last page...

important development, are no replacement for solidarity action in the workplace.

Another major consideration for union bureaucrats is the threat to union funds and court action consequential to flouting anti-union laws. To this end, increasingly centralised union structures and procedures act as a restraint, rather than a spur, to any effective defence of our working conditions. Union branches are increasingly shut down or amalgamated and forced to operate beyond the level of the individual workplace. Union officials increasingly negotiate behind the backs of the members, including imposing settlements of disputes and signing no-strike, single-union, 'sweetheart deals'. Union dues are increasingly paid directly to the national union in the process bypassing shop stewards, and diminishing their contact with ordinary members in the workplace.

...increasingly centralised union structures and procedures act as a restraint, rather than a spur, to any effective defence of our working conditions.

In truth, union officialdom got away with its manoeuvres and machinations precisely because workplace organisation was already so weakened. It was too late. The damage done by a constant leeching away of workplace militants into the party and union machineries could not be reversed. Instead, the left operated merely as an opposition movement within middle and upper levels of the unions. They called for right wing union leaders to organise general strikes; they called on union members to elect left wing leaders; and they called for workers to mount solidarity action when the only effective means of doing it – independent, politicised and coordinated workplace organisation – had been sabotaged by the left's own self interest. These calls echoed uselessly around a limbo almost totally devoid of any credible workplace-based militancy to back them up.

Working for workers' control

What might have been, despite the harsh economic climate, had the level of workplace activity witnessed in the 1970s been allowed to evolve into the 1980s without the influence of the left is a guessing game. What defeats might have been avoided, what gains might have been made, and what forms of workplace resistance we might now have developed are all pure speculation. What is safe to say, though, is that workplace activity at the present time would surely not have been set back so far in the face of the rabid individualism of the Thatcher-Blair era. It is likely that we would have something much more akin to the French situation with handfuls of activists, including a significant anarcho-syndicalist presence, intervening directly in the workplace to agitate for confronting management.

This type of set-up is one that has been used by SolFed members despite the limited opportunities imposed by low levels of militancy. Certainly it can be built upon. Clearly, revolutionary (anarcho-syndicalist) unions based on such concepts as direct democracy to encourage full participation, workplace assemblies giving an equal say to all, and delegates that are recallable and accountable, are not immediately around the corner. Nevertheless, these principles form a part of the politics of workers' control that anarcho-syndicalism can bring to workplace organisation, alongside the equally important 'consciousness raising' task of encouraging workers, through acting together, to begin to wrest back control of their own daily lives from bosses, union officials, and ultimately, the State itself.

To join SolFed, or find out about Workplace Networks, make contact:
Answerphone 07984 675 281
Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk.
Postal address and local groups details on Page 34.

Corporate Killing - the proposals

Southall

Zeebrugge

Paddington

Simon

After years of broken promises, in May, David Blunkett announced the government's proposals on Corporate Killing.

The targets of the new proposals are companies "where a death has occurred due to gross negligence by the organisation as a whole". Individual directors are not to be held liable, contrary to what practically everyone (except the bosses themselves) has been arguing for. Even the government itself said, in the Home Office consultation document (2000) that, attached to this Corporate Killing offence, would be 'secondary offences' that would allow a director to be prosecuted for 'contributing', or 'significantly contributing', to the offence committed by the company. Predictably, the bosses squealed and the government back-tracked.

So, the new offence of 'Corporate Killing' will simply allow a company to be prosecuted. In fact, the offence of 'corporate manslaughter' already exists, but there are few convictions, not least because the legal test depends on sufficient evidence to prosecute a director or senior manager (the 'controlling mind' of the company) for manslaughter (which requires evidence of 'gross negligence'). Hence, a corporate manslaughter conviction depends on lots of evidence pointing at the top individual. Large companies delegate safety decision to managers low down the hierarchy, and so escape prosecution even though there may well be serious management failures that caused the death.

As a result, there have been only nine successful prosecutions, amongst which £25,000 was the greatest fine, and only two proprietors have been jailed. The managing director of the activity centre responsible for the deaths of four schoolchildren in a canoeing disaster in Lyme Bay, Dorset got three years in 1994; and the managing director of Jackson Transport (Ossett) Ltd got a year in 1996, following the death of an employee who inhaled chemicals. Among many high-profile prosecution failures are the 1987 Zeebrugge ferry disaster, in which 187 people died, and the 1997 Southall rail disaster, in which seven died. The HSE decided not to bother prosecuting over the Kings Cross underground fire, in which 31 people died, and the Clapham rail crash, in which 35 people were killed and almost 500 injured. Recently, they also decided not to bother for the Paddington train crash in 1999, in which 31 people died. The only high profile case they have gone ahead with presently is charging Network Rail and Balfour Beatty over the Hatfield rail crash of October 2000.

So, a Corporate Killing law should make it easier to prosecute a company for homicide, since any management failure causing death should be permissible in evidence, including organisational weaknesses and omissions. However, there are two principal reasons why it will not work.

The first reason is that most cases will not see the light of day. The HSE will be the main prosecutors, and they are both short-staffed and invariably sympathetic to employers. Hence, they only ever take on high-profile cases after a blaze of bad publicity. Unfortunately, by definition, many more people are killed by negligence in low-profile than in high-profile cases. Some 350 people a year are killed in work-related accidents, according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, and, last year, more than 600 people were killed in Britain, according to Labour MP Tony Lloyd.

The second reason is that the government's failure to include individual director liability clauses gives a green light to companies to carry on as 'normal'. Big companies are not worried by fines, but directors would have been worried about being sued/imprisoned personally. Hence, the failure to target individual directors or others responsible for running companies will be a fatal weakness in the new law.

As widely reported in previous issues of DA, Simon Jones was killed working at Shoreham docks on his first day of a casual contract in 1998. His classic 'low-profile' killing was only eventually treated seriously by the HSE after years of dogged direct action by his family and supporters. His mother, Anne Jones, sums up the government's shenanigans over the new law, describing it as "the biggest cop-out on earth".

Not surprisingly, 65% of the British public support the introduction of a new law of 'corporate killing' with directors being made personally responsible for breaking health and safety laws, according to recent MORI research. Also, not surprisingly, the government have decided to ignore us yet again, and instead plum for the half-baked, boss-friendly option.

Change: Loose or real?

From disposable workers to binning the bosses in one nano-generation.

Everything has changed, it is not like the good old days. Exploring used to be simple, you simply went somewhere no-one had been. Now, it seems, everyone has been everywhere. Work used to be easy, you just learned what to do, then did it for 42 years.

In today's fast-moving world, it seems we all have to get used to rapid change at work. Whether it is learning the latest software, procedures, or taking on someone else's job after 'restructuring', the rhetoric is all about the challenge of capitalism – are you up to change, or are you an old stick-in-the-mud slow-coach?

Change rhetoric is a tried and tested tool of the rich and powerful. I wonder how many metaphors have been used to flog this particular dead horse? Are you an old dog refusing to learn the new tricks, or are the latest management mouthpieces just new dogs using old tricks? At the centre of the 'art' of management is to give the impression that change is new, necessary and real while, in fact, it is an ongoing chain of sly confidence tricks designed to squeeze that bit more sweat out of us.

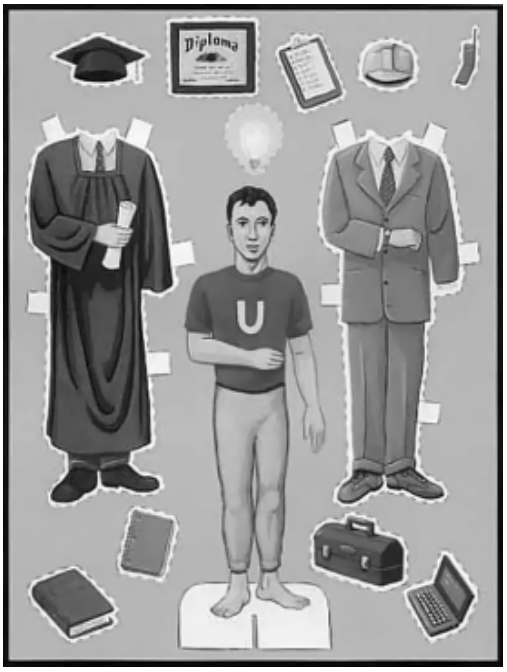
If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. Our ability to cope with change is increasingly used by 'go-getting' companies to 'weed out' the more static amongst us. In his recently-won 5-year court battle with Intel's abusive practices (see p.15), Ken Hamidi was able to show the courts that Intel now has a ranking system used to routinely winnow the ranks of employees, and it also discriminates against older workers (those old dogs just don't learn the new tricks). For many of us, work is getting more like a constant competitive exam, where, if you have an off day, or a work colleague gets a better score, you are in for the chop.

The trick is to appear 'out there' and in front with the fresh ideas, and make everyone else look stupid, slow, old-fashioned, and maybe even dangerously so (if we put up with these people clinging on to 'old' work conditions, like permanent contracts and union rights, we'll become uncompetitive, and we'll all be on the dole). Hence, as Unison goes on the attack against Labour's foundation hospitals policies this autumn, Ucatt do the same over the government's failure to expose individual company directors under the corporate manslaughter bill, and everyone rounds once again on the various PFI scandals, the spin response will always have the sub-text; "these old fuddy-duddies are out of touch, can't see the future and can't handle the cut-and-thrust change of the modern world". The finger-pointing gets even more boisterous when it is street demonstrators. By the time you read this, the World Trade Organisation's fifth Ministerial meeting in Cancún will be on or over. I am willing to bet that the mainstream commentators use the sharpest 'resisting change' rhetoric they muster against those of us demonstrating.

No-one can fail to see the irony – those of us who want real change are the ones most accused of being unable to handle it.

No-one can fail to see the irony – those of us who want real change are the ones most accused of being unable to handle it. Change has always happened and always will, and it would be foolish to pretend otherwise – the problem is the sort of change and whose doing the changes. Fake change for the valiant captains of capitalism versus real change for us. Change for the worse vs. change for the better. In fact, it is nothing to do with whether to change; it is all to do with how and what changes. It is everything to do with agendas for change; them and us.

Even the whole 'them and us' thing is made out to be an 'old and in the way' concept in our supposedly modern classless society. Er, here comes that tidal wave of irony again. How can anyone say that in the most unequal and divided society in living memory, class is dead in Britain? It is not us making up classes as an idea, it is them making the classes. They are the ones who claim the right to lead us and cream off the profits. Which brings us back to corporate manslaughter. The bosses club who have fought against this particular change are the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), amongst others. The same sycophants who crow on about modern changing workplaces and how we had better get used to working 60-hour



Bully-boys have good reason to fear future change.

weeks, stress-epidemics and job insecurity, or we'll be thrown on the scrapheap with the other old dogs, are suddenly against change when it comes to them being made personally responsible for corporate killing. Their line is that making individual company directors liable for corporate manslaughter would be against corporate practice, where decisions are shared, and there is a group ethic. I don't remember them talking about sharing when it comes to their fat cat salaries, share options, golden hello's, golden handshakes, and various other palm-greasing scams. Ok, let's talk change. Everyone in the company gets exactly the same salary, the same rights to decision making, and shares the responsibility for each other's safety…

The use of change rhetoric is not new. Indeed, 20th century fascism used it to justify barbarism, so it is not really surprising that the more reactionary right wingers tend to lean on it as a tool. Just as with fascism, we cannot afford to forget, ignore or forgive it. George Orwell summed it up nicely in his book Nineteen Eighty Four, when he predicted where reactionary-led change rhetoric was taking us; "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face - forever."

To state the obvious, the changes we are being faced with today are serious, purposeful and ongoing. If there were any wheels of international justice, Bush and Blair have replaced them with tank treads. However, this hasn't happened overnight. It was Madelaine Albright under the Clinton administration, back in 1998, who first said the US would invade Iraq with or without support. Bush just went along with the US foreign policy after he got in (in fact, he wasn't interested in foreign policy at all until he got in and was told to be). He is just the sort of right wing zealot who delights in using change rhetoric against anyone who opposes him, while at the same time standing for traditional, unchanging 'family' values.

Closer to home, the recent British Airways strike is a classic example of how change rhetoric is used these days. When the BA bosses blatantly tried to impose key contract changes on BA groundstaff through a dodgy new clocking-in system, everyone walked out, and immediately got accused of not being up to dealing with modernisation and change in the 21st century workplace. What they actually opposed was blatant bully-boy tactics by particularly stupid bosses. The fact that the union stepped in and did everything they could to stop the workers walking out again sheds more light on change rhetoric and reality. Like all trade union bosses, always desperate for a starring role (or failing that, a walk-on part will do), they were anxious to get back to the good old days, when the bosses would bother to negotiate before imposing their will. In reality, the only thing that hasn't changed is the only thing that needs to change – the system which hinges on bosses with that unique blend (detached ignorance mixed in equal parts with crass stupidity and puffed up ego).

We in the revolutionary movement have let the change rhetoric scandal go on too long. We need to revise our strategy. Instead of fighting against change, we should fight for real change more. Of course, we need to fight insidious 'changing workplace' dictats, but we should point out these for what they really are – not modernisation, but simply direct attacks on people. The only way to break change rhetoric is to constantly illustrate that we are up for a lot more change than the name-callers. When CBI suits say we are against change, we should say, "bring it on, let's open Pandora's Box and get changing". Divvy up the blame, and while we are at it, let's divvy up everything else too. We want the classless society they talk of, and we are up for making it – just as soon as we equal up wealth and power, we'll have one. Today's problem is not change, it is too many chiefs and not enough anarchists – we can soon change that.

If there were any wheels of international justice, Bush and Blair have replaced them with tank treads. However, this hasn't happened overnight.

The changing nature of fascism

Examining the ideas of Nazis, Italian fascists and Franco, reveals as many differences between them as similarities. For instance, anti-Semitism played virtually no part in the ideologies of the Italian and Spanish fascist movements. Mussolini ridiculed the idea, and he even had a Jewish mistress for a while.

Clearly, there are many common traits, such as nationalism (if not racism), the unquestioning belief in authority, anti-egalitarianism, and a belief in hierarchy. Also, there is a deep distrust of organised labour, especially those unions who take the ideas of class war seriously. Certain other groups and tendencies in society are also abominated, for example, homosexuals and modern art. In many respects, however, such similarities can be shown to be the result of the Nazi hegemony in Europe.

Fascism has always been a strange protean creature, so much so that political scientists and writers have expressed doubt that fascism as a political theory is much use in analysing the events and history of the period from the 1920s to the present. It does not hang together or remain constant; it changes in both place and time, to fit given situations. This is important to note for all of us engaged in anti-fascism, since it tells us we need to use flexible tactics to meet this changing enemy. While we need to examine the roots of present day fascism, we should also not be blinkered by them.

Alien cultures

Before the Second World War, most fascist movements harked back to pre-capitalist and pre-enlightenment societies in their ideology. This was very evident in their symbolism of, for example, the Roman Empire, Nordic myths and the reconquista in Spain. Recently, however, there have been subtle but significant shifts in fascist ideology, propaganda and policies. While the old racism has not disappeared, it is being increasingly dressed in cultural form. The biological racism which emphasised skin colour and other physical characteristics is downplayed in modern British racism. It has been replaced with a more culture-centred approach, where western civilisation and values are portrayed as being threatened by "alien" cultures.

It is paradoxical, at a time when genetics has been making great strides, and now takes centre stage in the modern world, that the fascists are downplaying this old component of their thinking, at least in the public arena. We can be sure that they will not have been thrown away, merely that the outward emphasis has changed. Race and ethnic origin are now less important, as the main recruiting ground is around Islamophobia.

While there is still a great play made of nation and community, the subtext has moved towards a position where western civilisation is itself under threat. Now, the defence and the preservation of 'our' country and culture have replaced the narrow, vulgar nationalism of the pre-Second World War period.

Inside fascism

In the past, one of the major problems in fighting fascism has been the difficulty in giving it a coherent political definition that fits all the many varied movements that use the name, or are linked to it by active collaboration. While it is fashionable to describe the supporters of fascist parties as just a bunch of boneheads or thugs; insults aside, it is necessary to take it seriously.

In analysing fascism, whether 'new' or old, our main focus must be real events. We can learn much from examining both its 'successes' and 'failures', and it is important to always localise and temper our opposition to fascism to the local form and time. For example, as we have seen, anti-Semitism has been absent or played only a marginal role in some cases. However, until recently, the Marxist left almost entirely concentrated on opposing anti-Semitism and racism, to the exclusion of practically everything else about fascism.

Subjects of hatred within fascism are not just that – they are also a source of ideas and theories. The Jews were not just a race to the Nazis, they were equated with communism, anarchism, and 'degenerate' art. Even the physics and mathematics of Einstein and others were denounced as 'Jewish science'.

In all fascist movements, extreme nationalism and authoritarianism are strongly evident, but what fascists hate above all is 'universalism'. Behind this lies a hatred of the very idea of humanity, or what Marx called "species-being". Fascism is a radical defender of the principle of hierarchy, and society, by its very nature, must be hierarchical in structure. Hierarchies are perceived to be everywhere, in human interactions and relationships, as well as in nature. They see hierarchies of peoples, races, social strata, gender relationships, cultures, and religions. Sooner or later, fascism must identify some group, whether white, nordic, or a national group, or an aristocratic cultural elite, who are the "ubermensch" or supermen, and are destined to dominate. This allows them to expel or annihilate the "untermensch", or inferior beings. The modern fascists, like their forerunners in the late 19th century, deny humanity as a universal concept. They deny the ideas that were disseminated by the French revolution; they recognise Frenchmen, Germans, Italians and Greeks, but consider 'man' and humanity as meaningless abstractions.

Common hypocrisy

Above all else, one feature that the different faces of fascism have in common is their hypocrisy. Immigrants are apparently alright if they stay in their own countries, or know their place in society. They should fully integrate, conform and accept all customs and norms of the host society.

We can see as a case in point, the succession of Joao Varela, who became acting leader of the fascist LPF in the Netherlands, after Pym Fortuyn's assassination. Varela was born in the Cape Verde islands, the former Portuguese colony off the west coast of Africa. Since

The new fascism, while quietly dropping biological racism and promoting cultural struggle as its new basis, appears to be adopting elements of feminism. The British National Party is on record as stating that it opposes the attitude of Islam towards women.

arriving in the Netherlands, Varela became Dutch youth tennis champion, and has a degree in economics from Rotterdam's Erasmus University. The hypocrisy at the heart of fascism is exposed here – according to his own political beliefs, what Varela has, others cannot have, because he would prevent them from setting foot in the Netherlands.

The current policy is exclusion of asylum seekers and refugees, no matter what their skin colour. Many recent refugees are white Albanians, Bosnians, etc., who have lighter skin tone than Varela. However, they are Muslim, and they are the new enemy.

Pym Fortuyn, a Catholic, made no secret of his homosexuality, and cited Islam as being homophobic (as if Christianity, etc. are not!). The new fascism, while quietly dropping biological racism and promoting cultural struggle as its new basis, appears to be adopting elements of feminism. The British National Party is on record as stating that it opposes the attitude of Islam towards women. In the Netherlands, Fortyn used his homosexuality as proof of his liberalism; here, the BNP is using women.

Rustern, BNP youth organiser, is trying to influence Hindu and Sikh students on the basis of an anti-Islamic policy. His father was Turkish, and it is rumoured in Lancashire that some non-Islamic immigrants have voted for the BNP. The left, unfortunately, seems only able to see fascism as racism writ large. Agreed, racism works against working class unity, but there is a lot more to fascism than just race.

Hate is still the key

These changes do not mean that hate is to be abandoned or diffused as a tactic. Instead of blacks or Pakistanis, there are simply refugees and Muslims to hate instead. Today, in Europe, including Russia (and to some extent the US) sections of the extreme right are playing down the biological racism and narrow racism cards of the old fascism. Why? Because they think they have found a better way to spread their ideas of hatred, through substituting race for cultural conflict. This new order draws on such theories as the national Bolsheviks, and what has been called the red-brown ferment.

Another idea of 'new' fascism is that the old categories of 'left' and 'right' are outdated. Talk is of the 'third way', either as the idea of transcending capitalism and socialism, or combining elements from each to make a new synthesis. Fascists have not objected to the use of the word 'democratic', nor have they objected to socialism (e.g. national socialists, or even national syndicalists).

Currently, BNP policy is a mix of social democracy with an anti-Islamic stance thrown in. However, tied up with these ideas is the concept of one Carl Schmitt, who was a leading international Catholic jurist of the inter-war period. Schmitt's idea of "grossraumordnung" ('great space order') is of a geographical zone dominated by a political idea, which is a concept somewhat beyond the nation state. This could be either a European superstate, or even the west in its entirety. Here, there can be conflicts between national movements, because many fascists are anti-EU and anti-Euro.

Clear and present danger

Recently, the far right has been resurgent through Europe, with extreme right parties in government in Austria, Denmark and Italy. They also have a significant presence in Norway, France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands. Alongside this rise, there has been an almost total collapse of the left.

Much has been made of the BNP's recent victories in local council elections. At the same time, electoral politics are increasingly irrelevant, as reflected in the declining status of politicians and in voter turnouts. In the last general election, the turnout was 59%, over 10% less than in any previous election. The New Labour landslide was in fact a result of just one in four of the electorate voting Labour.

Politicians are now rightly viewed as liars and hypocrites by a large majority of people. There is little participation in what are, to all intents and purposes, vestigial party structures. Any debate on important political issues is now conducted on TV. At election time, most parties don't even bother to canvass any more. Labour clubs are nothing more than cheap drinking dens, whereas once they were centres of working class social life, and provided meeting and office space for workers.

The parties should be worried, but their arrogance blinds them to the truth. Politics has been successfully exorcised from working class public life, and now it is like just another soap opera, with trivial plots and scenarios. Demonstrations are totally ignored, and the numbers downplayed. Only violence draws interest from the media.

Electoral politics only takes place on election day. What is needed is to take back politics from the politicians: DIY politics is the only real politics and its manifestation is direct action. It does not lobby anyone or seek re-election; it involves real choice and decision making, not the choice between two or three corrupt, self-important politicians. The struggle against racism and fascism can only be won by day-to-day direct action and propaganda. Politics is for real life, not just for polling booths!

Know your rights - stuff your boss

Casualisation kills. Almost two million of us are now employed on a 'temporary' basis. Thousands of us die through work each year, and many more are seriously injured. The vast majority of cases are easily preventable. Millions suffer crippling back pain, repetitive strain injuries, and many other long-term injuries and illnesses simply because employers put profits first.

All workplaces are potentially dangerous, and all work can kill - and the most vulnerable are temporary and agency workers. The majority of temporary and agency workers are not self-employed, but employees, with similar rights to other workers. However, our rights to basic Health and Safety are often neglected or totally ignored. As Tony O'Brien, of the Construction Safety Campaign, said; *"On average, in the UK, 85 construction workers lose their lives in what the government say are mostly predictable and preventable incidents caused by some failure of management by employers."*

Standing up for ourselves

Casualisation and so-called flexible working are ways of undermining working conditions and exploiting us more than ever. They also make permanent jobs more vulnerable. So casualisation does not only affect temporary and agency workers, but all workers.

Clearly, it is not enough having a few statutory and contractual rights at work; we need to stand together to ensure that the rights long fought for are respected. The most effective way of defending our rights is by organising ourselves and taking collective direct action. Defending our rights is just the start. Once we achieve this, we can start to take the initiative.

The text on this page is extracted from the newly updated "stuff your boss" leaflet - for free copies, write to: SolFed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. solfed@solfed.org.uk

SOME KEY EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS 2003-4

Regardless of work status (temporary or permanent, agency, full or part-time) or our contracts of employment, most of us have certain basic rights. These include:

1. The right to be told in writing how much and when we are to be paid.

Minimum pay is £4.50 per hour from October 2003 (up from £4.20). For 18-21 year olds, it is £3.80 (up from £3.60). For agency workers, wages must be paid on the agreed day, even if the hiring company has not paid the agency.

2. The right to at least 4 weeks paid leave per year.

Any employment contract should set out leave entitlements. If it doesn't, then 4 weeks must be given (which can include public holidays). All workers, agency workers, homeworkers, trainees, so-called casuals and most freelancers are included in this. Holiday entitlement starts immediately, e.g. on day 1, we get 2 days leave, and, after 6 months, we get 10 days (for part-time workers it is less, and it applies to jobs started since October 2001).

3. The right to breaks of at least 20 minutes during each 6 hours of work.

We are entitled to at least 11 hours' rest in each 24 hours and a minimum of a day a week off. Rest breaks for under 18s are minimum 30 minutes every 4 1/2 hours.

4. The right to refuse to work any more than 48 hours each week.

We cannot be forced to work over 48 hours per week unless we have agreed to it in writing (note that this is averaged over any 17 week period, so we can be forced to do more in any one week).

5. The right to sick pay when we are ill.

We are entitled to statutory sick pay if we normally earn over £77 per week and we have been working for over 3 months (or are deemed to have been in continuous employment for 13 weeks).

6. The right to maternity/paternity leave when we have children.

From April 2003, most mothers are entitled to 26 weeks' paid maternity leave and an additional 26 weeks' unpaid leave. To get maternity pay, we must earn over £77 per week and have been working for over 6 months by the time the baby is 15 weeks from being due. For the first 6 weeks, this should be 90% of average earnings, then a flat rate of £100 for 20 weeks. If pay can't be claimed, Maternity Allowance may be claimed from the DSS. Fathers/male partners get 2 weeks' paid paternity leave (subject to the same qualifying conditions as for maternity).

7. The right to be free from harassment.

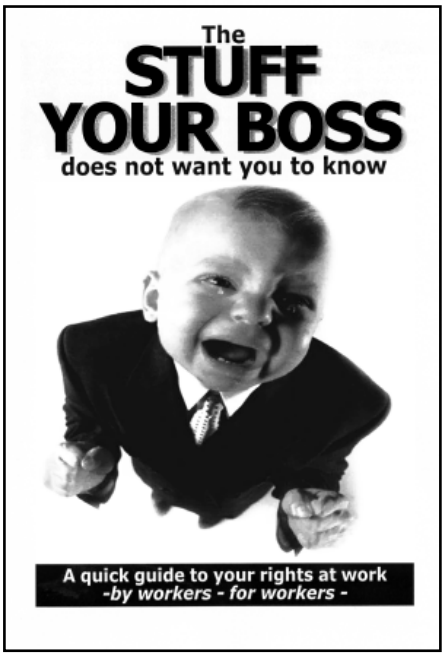
We are all entitled to a workplace where there is no racial or sexual harassment, bullying, prejudice or discrimination. Agency and part-time workers have the same rights as full-time workers.

8. The right to defend ourselves.

We all have the right to protection from dismissal for asserting our statutory employment rights. We also have the right to join with our fellow workers and organise ourselves collectively, and to join a trade union.

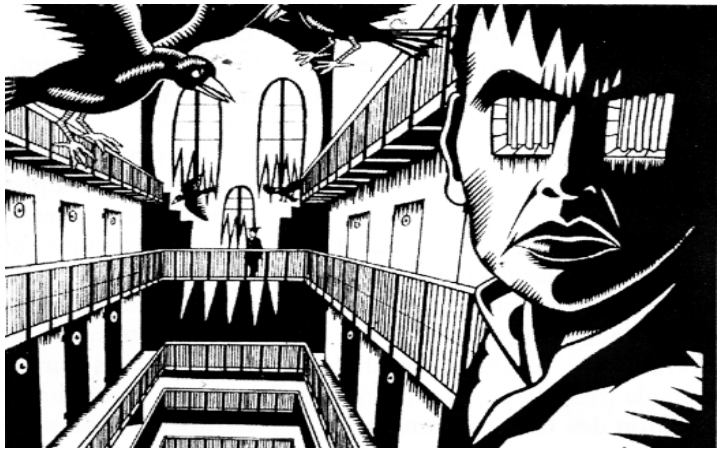
9. The right to refuse work that is unsafe or where training is not provided.

We all have the right to refuse to work if we find ourselves in imminent danger. Also, laws governing agencies mean they should not send us to jobs for which we are not qualified, and they must ensure that proper training is provided.



Solidarity call:

Thessaloniki 8



Eight people have been languishing in a Greek prison since being beaten, kicked, punched and arrested at the demo against the EU summit in Thessaloniki.

One of the 8 is Simon Chapman. Unfortunately for Simon, the Greek police also planted three bags full of petrol bombs on him. If found guilty (and there is a high chance he might be found guilty, as the Greek justice system is even more corrupt that the UK's), Simon could go down for at least 15 years.

In London, on 28th June, a protest was held at the Greek Embassy in Holland Park. On Tuesday the first of July, a screening of Greek TV footage of Simon being arrested was shown in London. On July 10th, there were solidarity actions at the Greek tourism office and the Greek airline. Greek prisoners need to pay for their own food, and the support campaign started by comrades in Greece reckon they need to raise about £30 per person per month. So, internationally, we need £240 a month just to keep them fed. If we want to get anything that will improve their conditions a bit, the campaign needs even more.

Money can be sent to "ABC", and posted to BM Automatic, London WC1N 3XX. More info: http://www.enrager.net/simon and www.indymedia.org.uk. You can write to Simon at the address below (the prison requires that you put your name & address on the back): Kratoumeno SIMON CHAPMAN, Dikastikes Fylakes Diavaton, T.K. 540 12, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Dominik Sawicki

Dominik Sawicki, an anarchist from Szczecin/Poland, is doing 6 months for alleged "incitement to sabotage". According to the charges, Dominik encouraged his fellow workers to sabotage and take direct action against management of the shipyard where he worked, by way of articles in his paper "Shipyard worker", distributed in his workplace. He has been imprisoned for exercising his freedom of speech to inform workers about methods for defence of their rights.
Info: www.FAszczecin.most.org.pl

Jeff Free

Jeff Free was sentenced to 22 years in Oregon for setting fire to 3 SUVs in a car lot. The nightwatchman testified that he intended to hurt no one. The judge was trying to send a message to the eco-activist community of the northwest.
Info: http://www.freefreenow.org/

Raymond Gilbert H10111

Framed for the Toxteth betting shop murder in 1981. He got a 15-year sentence and is still inside 22 years later - half his life - protesting his innocence. More details from DA or write to him: HMP Woodhill, Tattenhoe St, Woodhill MK4 4DA.

NEXT ISSUE: FOCUS ON UK PRISON CONDITIONS

Letter from Simon

I am sitting in my cell - shared with 9 others (Greeks and Albanians). The other people arrested for the EU Summit are on the floor above, so I only see them when the lawyers visit - as far as I know, they are well, as well as can be expected.

I'm not sure if people know what happened before/after my arrest, so I'll quickly outline it here. The march set off in militant style, and soon the air was filled with the sound of breaking glass. The first gas came in, and in the crowd surge I lost sight of X. Me, A and B continued on to a square where the gas started raining down - so far my goggles and half-face gas mask were working fine. The crowd surged again, and I lost A and B, so I headed over to the rest of my affinity group. We ended up all squashed together with maybe 600 people, with clouds of gas coming from front and back, and my skin was starting to burn, my eyes were streaming. The crowd was all crushed together, people wailing for water for their eyes, pushing this way and that. Though I knew the safest place in that type of situation was in the middle of the crowd, I decided to go to the edge to see if I could see X, A & B. Then a huge cloud of gas enveloped me and I couldn't see a thing. So I'm at the edge choking, blind, on the edge of panic - a voice inside me is saying "be cool, be cool", and I kept it together. And then CRUNCH - everything went black and sparks of light shone in the darkness. At first, I thought a badly aimed brick had hit me, but only a second later, there was another bone-crunching blow to my head and I knew it was cops. I go to run but I'm already falling, scrabbling along the wall through broken glass, still blinded by gas; as I move the batons are raining down, sometimes 3 or 4 hitting simultaneously across my body. I feel boots kicking me as well. I thought I could crawl back to the crowd, but when I look up, all I see is an empty smoky street and cop boots coming towards my face. BANG goes my goggles and glasses, and I realise I am in deep, deep shit. I try to get up, but at that moment, a hand comes down and pulls my cap and gas mask off and a final blow smacks me where my hair meets my forehead; I feel a splash of blood run down my face and everything goes black. I was only unconscious for a few seconds, I think. I'm dragged to my feet, and boots and batons are still coming, mainly at my shoulders and legs. 5 cops have hold of me, dragging my rucksack off my back. They hold me and search it, then take me to the side of the road and sit me down. A cop comes up behind me and smacks me across the back with his baton, then kicks me at the base of the spine. This STILL hurts! My face is a sea of blood - I can feel it leaking from several places, running down my neck. C and D would have seen what happens next, the cops bringing the bags of molotovs to me. I can feel a fit-up coming on!

The next 2 hours are truly terrifying - I am cuffed with 2 bags of molotovs strapped to me. Some are leaking. The cops lead me into the road where rocks and molotovs are landing among us and present me to the rioters like I am a trophy. If one of these molotovs lands too close to me, I would be a ball of flames faster than you could say "human rights". Over the next 2 hours, I am beaten with batons, fists, a hammer; wacked across the head twice with a length of wood, headbutted, kicked, slapped and constantly exposed to teargas. I could hardly walk or breathe. The whole left side of my back was purple, yellow, black, blue and I was covered in cuts, bruises and lumps. So it was quite rough! I never thought I would be so glad to finally get stuffed - well, kicked - in a cell where 10 other demonstrators were languishing!

The rest of the story can wait, but I must say the solidarity of the prisoners kept me going. As far as I know, 5 of the 7 prisoners now on remand were in that cell with me, and we all supported each other. All things, food, water, cigarettes, phone cards - were held in common. I would not have kept my head together without them.

THANKS TO EVERYONE - GLOBAL SOLIDARITY - NO PRISONERS!

letters

Send letters to:
DA-SF (letters),
PO Box 1095,
Sheffield S2 4YR.
All letters are welcome, but space is always very short. Make yours incisive, brief and questioning if you want it printed in full.

Royal scroungers

I object to the description of Marina Mowatt and, presumably, her children, as "Royal scroungers" (DA27). Just because her parents are rich, why should she be expected to go to them cap in hand?

I am sorry to see DA joining the scum of the mainstream press in attacking single mothers. Remember, being a mother is work, even though it is not employment.

DEF.

Editorial Response: The snippet referring to 'Royal Scroungers' was not an attack on single mothers, and nobody here considers raising a child to be anything but hard work. The world of Marina Mowatt, however, is a long way removed from the average single mother solely reliant upon state benefits; I think the clue in the snippet was in the fact that Ms Mowatt lives in a 'grace and favour apartment'. The granting of such an apartment demonstrates that Ms Mowatt evidently has access to resources and networks of economic support in royal circles that most working class single parents do not. These extraordinary advantages of property rights and resources, however, appear not to be enough in this case, and the article was included to point out that an aristocrat, by definition already a parasite and a drain on the body social, is seeking access to funds originally intended for those who are genuinely struggling to bring up their children alone.

Postal resistance

The Communication Workers Union has its work cut out to mobilise the membership for any sustained industrial action, and what I would like to see is like-minded postal-workers within the IWW/SolFed/anarchist tradition formulate our own campaign and not just follow the agenda of the CWU leadership, which will eventually consist of nothing much more than juggling the figures of a pay rise around to buy off one section of the union against another.

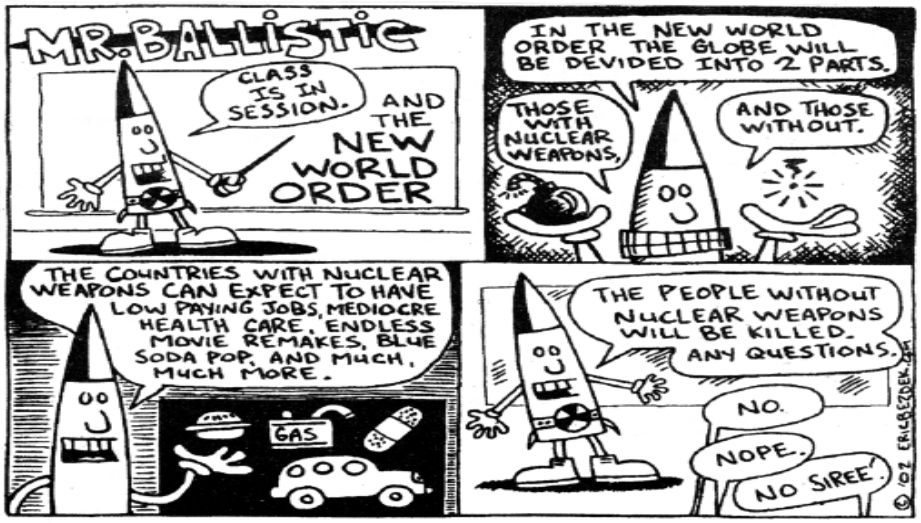
What's more of immediate interest to postal workers is that those on walks don't go out like pack-horses with bags and bags of mail and no proper rest breaks, and that the sorting staff aren't subjected to more and more imposed factory discipline from incompetent supervisors. As before, the CWU leadership will adopt the revised working practices being put forward by management, because, when all is said and done, it is a company union rather than an industrial union.

Biofuels

I read your piece on biofuels (DA27) with some interest. One BIG missing part in the analysis though!; Known as Industrial Hemp - requires no pesticides or herbicides and has named cultivars that produce major tonnage of oilseeds in northern latitudes. Also wins the prize for biomass production for when the technical means to use the whole fibre mass for ethanol production arrives. Wonder why it doesn't get a mention...?

Cheers, DC

Author Reply: Undoubtedly, Hemp is one of at least a dozen northern latitude crops that could easily be used for bioenergy. Also, as you say, lignocellulosic technology can be used, so the whole plant can be used in ethanol production - as with other crops, as well as wood coppice and forestry residues (a big bioethanol area itself). Having said this, lignocellulosics are still in development, at least in Britain. The article could easily have discussed hemp and other biofuel sources, the ones chosen were fairly arbitrary, and cut to fit space requirements.



NOT FUNNY

Go forth and smite thine enemies.

Apparently, Bush is working for God. What's more, the Lord has proven his devotion to the Crawford Crusader by crowning his military efforts with success. In fact, God is holding the door open for Middle East peace right now - but they will have to move fast, because soon the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe will have to give His attention to something far more important: the election of His little sunbeam, Georgie, in 2004.

Here are Bush's exact words: "God told me to strike at al Qaeda and I struck them, and then He instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did, and now, I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East. If you help me, I will act, and if not, the elections will come, and I will have to focus on them...."

SchNEWS Annual 2003

SchNEWS Book & BeyondTV CD-ROM.

Available from SchNEWS for £10, including P&P
(www.schnews.org.uk) or £8 retail from radical bookshops.
304 pages, ISBN 09529748 7 8

Peace de Resistance, this year's SchNEWS Annual, is well worth a look.

As in previous SchNEWS Annuals, it is based around a reprint of a year's weekly SchNEWS, plus lots of extra articles and pics. For those who read SchNEWS regularly anyway, the latter are especially of interest, with a huge range of action-oriented material, including in-depth and breadth coverage of the global protests against the war in Iraq.

Of particular note this year is the free Schnews Annual CD-ROM by BeyondTV.org, which contains a really fancyable collection of Video Files, not to mention practically the entire SchNEWS website. The video clips were put together with inspiration in mind, and that is exactly what they do. From Chomsky to Mark Thomas, to Nine Ladies to Bush remakes (including a starring role in a little-seen episode of Teletubbies), to Fairford to BNRR. If you haven't come across the actions before, it will leave you speechless, captivated and yes, inspired. If you have, it is still a must-see piece of propaganda.

Weapons of Mass Deception:

The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq

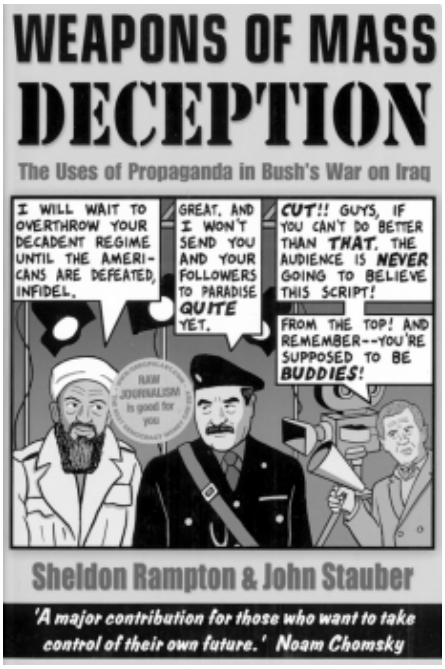
John Stauber & Sheldon Rampton, Robinson, 2003. £6.99 Paperback

> *'War is Peace',* George Orwell, "1984"
>
> *'I reminded them and their families that the war in Iraq is really about peace',* George Bush, April 2003

Rampton and Stauber have a track record in exposing the darker side of the US public relations industry. Their previous books include *Toxic Sludge is Good For You* and *Trust Us* [redacted]s.

[redacted] *s of Mass Deception,* they build [redacted] against the mainstream media, [redacted] to challenge the White House [redacted] latant lies and evasions. [redacted] utset, the invasion of Iraq was [redacted] ackaged like a commercial [redacted] asked why the build-up to the [redacted] eptember 2002, the White [redacted] Staff had this to say; "From a [redacted] t of view, you don't introduce [redacted] n August."

[redacted] nd Stauber trace the history of a [redacted] from its origins in the rubble [redacted] rade Centre to a celebration in [redacted] aghdad that wasn't quite what it [redacted] o-doing, they expose the [redacted] of the most relentless [redacted] mpaigns of recent times. [redacted] ghly referenced (although sadly [redacted] ook, which will get you angrier [redacted] y are about war plan Iraq.



Looking back after 20 years of Jail

Miguel García

KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

Miguel García died in 1981.

He was an anarcho-syndicalist from Catalunya, who lived through the Spanish revolution and fought in the Spanish Civil War. As a result, he was imprisoned for 22 years, after which he finally settled in England in 1969.

With emigration came another burst of activism, as Miguel became international secretary of the newly-formed Anarchist Black Cross, set up to help support imprisoned militants.

For Miguel, anarchism was not about abstract concepts; it was about actions. Wherever he went, he involved himself in a movement grounded in the everyday life and experiences of working class people. This pamphlet is about his activities during the civil war and its aftermath, when he worked with the Anarchist Resistance movement until his arrest in 1949. It also documents the hopes of the Spanish exiles that the Allies would invade Spain to destroy the Franco regime at the end of the Second World War, before describing his years in prison.

The second part of the pamphlet consists of a series of questions and answers about anarchism, and about Miguel's life. The result is a short, accessible and informative reference, which dispenses with theoretical jargon and theories in favour of practical ideas of anarchism. Well worth a read.

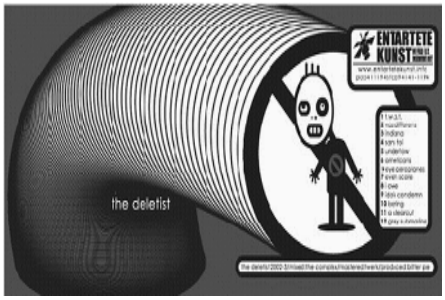
The Deletist

Entartete Kunst, 2003

www.entartetekunst.info

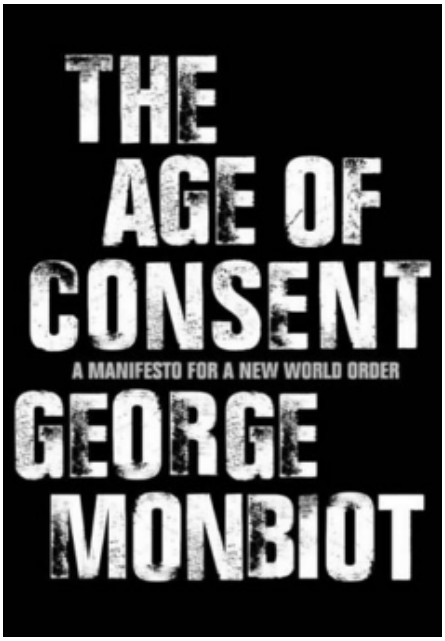
More politically savvy 'no-field electronica' from Frisco collective, Entartete Kunst.

This time a full-length, self-titled CD by The Deletist (a.k.a. Bitter Pie). Given the praise already heap on this label's releases in DA, it is praise indeed to say this could be its finest one yet. Marvellous electronic with tunes, occasional vocal bits, moodiness, anger and all POP righteously done. If you want political music without the finger-in-ear or glued-up hair and gob, then here it is - perfect pop for political bleep and click fanciers.



The Age of Consent

A Manifesto for a New World Order
George Monbiot.
Flamingo, 2003. ISBN: 0007150423 £14.99 288 pages.



Many in the anti-capitalist movement will look to George Monbiot's new book for useful debate as to how anti-capitalism can move from being a movement of protest to being a cohesive movement for change. Sadly, many will also be disappointed.

Although Monbiot delivers a searing attack on the growing gap between rich and poor, he offers very little in the way of alternatives to the capitalist system. Since this is patently the root cause of growing inequality, the book fails in its primary aim of mapping out an alternative manifesto for the anti-capitalist movement.

Few who have read Monbiot can doubt the heartfelt passion he brings to the topics of poverty and inequality. In the delivery, he makes a devastatingly detailed attack on institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, and their role in furthering the disgusting state of affairs that exists under today's global capitalism.

Monbiot's critique is based on Marxism, but peppered with anarchist ideas. For example, he argues that some form of insurrection may be needed. Here, he acknowledges the role of anarcho-syndicalism, with references to the need for community and workplace organising, and direct actions leading to general strikes.

However, while Monbiot has clearly been partly influenced by anarchism/ anarcho-syndicalism, the centrepiece of his alternative to capitalism is far removed from either. He envisages a World Parliament made up of 600 delegates, each representing ten million people. Clearly, he may borrow from anarchist traditions, but he has ignored the basic principles. Monbiot's plan argues for a social democratic world parliament, which would spawn a new class of professional global politician. At best, this would create a new set of rulers who would hold the worst excesses of global capitalism in check, while imposing their own agendas on the rest of the world. At worst, it would result in a centralised state system that would duplicate horrors of the soviet state on a global scale.

No anarchist can claim to have all the answers, but, given the failings of Marxism, capitalism and social democracy, a horrific combination of them in a centralised state can only be bad news.

The only real alternative to capitalism lies within the idea of a decentralised economy, where power is held at the individual level, and society is run by people, for people. What was/is he on? Handing over control to six hundred politicians to run the world as they see fit is truly the stuff of nightmares. DA

Don't take the Peace

Campaign pack including video.
£5 (payable to Oxford Support Group), from; c/o B52 Two, 16b Cherwell Street, Oxford, OX4 4BL. www.b52two.org.uk

The video was made a few weeks before a planned action to disarm and ground the bombers at USAF Fairford.

Clearly, planning was required for this non-violent direct action that could carry a prison sentence of up to ten years for criminal damage. The footage includes coverage of this, and discussions of the possible outcomes, from being shot by trigger happy GI's to, if they managed to achieve their aim, the whistles and flashing lights they would need to draw attention to themselves, and 'Caution: this plane is grounded' signs for the planes, so the pilots would not try to fly them.

They carried paint, nuts and bolts to disable the engines, and hammers to beat upon the fuselage. On the perimeter fence, they posted photos of Gulf War Iraqi victims, labeled 'Collateral damage?', and planted peace poppies.

In all, the B52 two spent several months planning the action and had visited Fairford on a few occasions to familiarise themselves with the layout of the base and the position of the bombers. They had also researched ways in which the planes could be easily grounded and disarmed.

The action took place just before the main invasion started, and Toby and Phil where arrested on the base for conspiracy to commit criminal damage and, along with eight others, remanded in custody at HMP Gloucester. They have been released on bail, with usual conditions that they don't go within two miles of RAF Fairford. As DA goes to press, their trial is pending. DA

Mindgames & warcrimes

...and the debate that *should* be happening

There can be no doubt that the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has damaged the credibility of the Labour Government, and the issue still has the potential to bring an end to Blair's premiership.

No doubt Blair hoped the issue would fade away as voter fatigue set in, but the death of Dr Kelly and the Hutton inquiry into his death looks set to keep the issue of weapons of mass destruction on the front pages for some time to come. The best that Labour can hope for is the discovery of some token evidence of weapons of mass destruction, or, at least, evidence that Saddam had the potential to manufacture them, which the government can then claim as justification for going to war. In any event, the invasion of Iraq has driven the final nail in the coffin of voter trust in Blair. Since this was always his major asset as leader, this sorry episode has also opened the way to a future challenge to his leadership.

The problem is that the debate as to how much Blair lied and the threat to his position as leader is not the major issue. The central question in the absence of any weapons of mass destruction should be why the US, with its client state Britain in tow, launched a war against Iraq. The debate about Blair's leadership, followed by media frenzy over the Campbell "sexing up" story, and the death of Dr Kelly, has served to bury this central question.

That the failure to find weapons of mass destruction did not spark a debate in the media as to the origins of the war is hardly surprising; after all, part of its role is distracting attention away from the issues that matter. However, the lack of debate in the mass media should not prevent real debate taking place among those who oppose the war.

Sadly, the general left-socialist line has followed the same anti-Blair-obsession as the popular papers, no doubt in the hope that knocking Blair will ensure electoral support for their parties come the next election. In focusing on Blair over Iraq, they too are distracting attention away from the real reasons for the war. This is tragic, for we need to look beyond the idea that the war was all about the profits to be made from oil, and find the deeper reasons - and the implications they have for us all.

We need to look beyond the idea that the war was all about the profits to be made from oil, and find the deeper reasons - and the implications these have for us all.

Oil is not all

Certainly, in the modern world, oil is needed to run the economy. It is also an economic and political weapon to be used against competitors. Oil is therefore vital to the maintenance of the US' position as the world's only superpower, and domestic oil production is in steep decline. As the National Policy Development Group led by Vice President Cheney acknowledged in a report dated May 2001, US oil production will fall by 12% over the next 20 years, while demand is predicted to rise by one third over the next decade, ensuring that, by 2020, the US will have to import two-thirds of its oil. The need to secure reliable and plentiful supply of oil is therefore central to continued economic growth in the US.

Nor is the US alone in having to ensure plentiful supplies of oil. The Energy Information Agency predicts that if the world economy is to experience even moderate growth, total world petroleum exports must increase some 67% by 2020. The bulk of that increase will have to come from the Gulf region, since it contains 65% of the world's proven reserves. Oil exports from the region will have to increase by 126% to meet world demand. For all the talk of green alternatives, capitalism is intent on remaining dependent on Gulf oil, at least in the immediate future.

The control of the Gulf region is not only central to future US oil needs. It will also be a critical weapon of monopoly - and will be used to impose its will on an oil-hungry world. In the past, the US has been able to control the region through the cooperation of friendly governments, principally Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Government, pivotal players in the Gulf, with a quarter of the world's proven reserves, has traditionally demonstrated its loyalty to the US by turning on the tap anytime the US government has demanded, in order to ensure supply and calm markets.

However, the rise of Muslim fundamentalism, in Saudi Arabia in

An enfeebled Iraq was seen as the best option for establishing a military platform through which the US could impose its will on the region.

There are other reasons why the US needed to capture Iraq's oil wealth; most critically, to ensure that the world trade in oil remains dollar-denominated.

British troops bringing peace to Basra

particular, has increasingly threatened US control in the region. The old tried and tested US tactic of buying the cooperation of friendly governments by providing them with US military hardware is looking shaky. Faced with the rise of radical Islam, the US government is increasingly favouring a direct military presence as a means of maintaining US control. Since the first Gulf war, the US has been building up its military presence across the region, placing military equipment and obtaining bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, in preparation for direct military intervention.

Since the rise of the neoconservative Bush administration, this tactic has been taken to the extreme. Now, military bases and direct presence are not enough; what is needed is the next step - a permanent military platform in the Gulf. This means obtaining a major client state, preferably one already crUshed physically and politically by a decade of sanctions. Hence, an enfeebled Iraq was seen as the best option for establishing a military platform through which the US could impose its will on the region. As one government source put it, the military presence in Iraq gives the US the means to "*surround and control Saudi's Ghawer oil fields in the event of an uprising by an anti-western group*".

OPEC-busting

Through a permanent military presence, the US government feels it can control the Gulf region. Iraq's proven oil reserves of some 113 billion barrels (some experts estimate its total reserves could match Saudi Arabia's), will not only guarantee US' future oil needs, it will also give the US a lever to break the power of OPEC. Ever since the oil crises of the early 1970s, caused by the non-western OPEC cartel hiking world prices, the US has been looking for a way of finally destroying it.

Iraqi oil is of such a high quality and so easy to produce, it can be brought onto the world market quickly and in large enough quantities to immediately effect world oil prices. This will effectively pull the rug from OPEC, at a time when it is already showing signs of stress. Many OPEC countries are already producing above their allotted quotas to meet their ever-increasing domestic needs.

A plan for world domination

So, through its control of Iraqi oil, the US will be able to dictate oil prices by adjusting supply. In addition to this enabling it to break OPEC's power, it will give the US massive influence over all oil-producing countries, and all oil-importing countries too - in other words, practically everyone. As Aleksei Arbatov, deputy chairmen of the Russian Parliament's Defence Committee recently noted, *"if a new Iraqi regime sells oil without limits, our national budget would collapse*".

Both oil producers and oil-hungry economies remain highly sensitive to the changes in the price of oil. Control of oil prices will give the US a big stick to use against the developed and developing world alike.

The intent of the US to use its new found oil wealth was signalled as far back as April, when Reuters reported that secret talks had taken place between Iraqi experts and US officials, at which it was agreed to recommend that Iraq stays in OPEC, but demand that there be no limitations of production.

Oil profits are useful, and invading countries in pursuit of profit is stock-in-trade for the US regime. However, there are other reasons why the US needed to capture Iraq's oil wealth; most critically, to ensure that the world trade in oil remains dollar denominated.

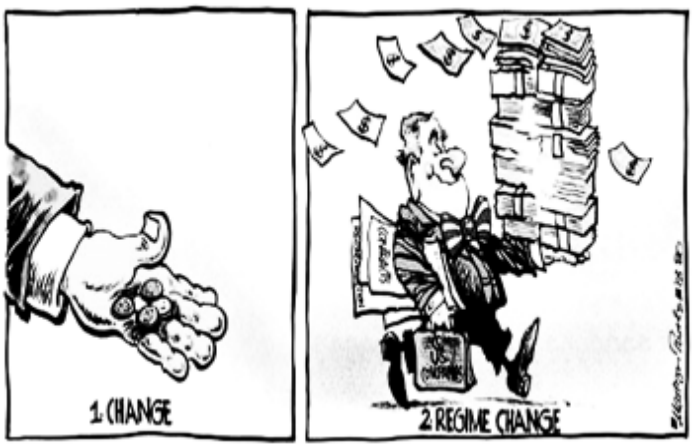
$$$$$ - currency scams

Currently, oil is bought and sold in dollars. As a result, the world's oil-consuming countries need to obtain dollars in order to buy it. This keeps demand for the dollar high, underpinning its role as the world's reserve currency. In order to get hold of dollars to buy oil and to protect their own currencies from attacks by speculators, countries must export goods and services to the US. This puts the US in the enviable position of merely having to print dollars in order to buy up the world's goods.

As one free market critic bitterly put it; *"world trade is now a game in which the US produces dollars and the rest of the world produces things that dollars can buy. The world's interlinked economies no longer trade to capture comparative advantage, they compete in exports to capture needed dollars"*.

The massive economic gains to the US from being the world's reserve currency do not end there. In order to make money from their dollar reserves, the world's central banks have little choice but to invest in the US, ensuring that vast amounts of foreign cash pour continuosly into the US. This cash bonus is further added to by the oil-producing countries. They get big bucks in so-called 'petrodollars' from oil sales, and they also have little option but to invest them in the US.

The massive amounts of unearned goods and money that flood into the US allow the country to maintain a colossal consumption habit that it otherwise would be unable to afford. As a result, an enormous imbalance has occurred in the US economy, with the US trade deficit running at $2.5 trillion. Much of the money flooding into the US



The US' increasing reliance on military might exposes its fundamental weakness; that of economic decline.

The US economy is less and less competitive and increasingly in debt, and unless this trend is reversed, it can only spell the end of US superpower status in the long run.

ends up as debt. By 2002, the US owed $2.8 trillion dollars to the rest of the world, making the US the world's biggest debtor country.

Euro-threats

The economics of the madhouse that is the US economy can only be sustained for as long as the dollar holds its status as the world's reserve currency. This, in turn, is largely dependent on OPEC oil being denominated in dollars. However, the launch of the euro ensured that oil-producing countries had a viable alternative currency with which to trade their oil. This was not lost on those countries hostile to the US, who saw selling their oil in euros as a way of undermining the dollar and reducing the power of the US. As anti-American feeling has grown across the Middle East, the US has recognised the risk that the OPEC countries will increasingly switch to euro-trading.

This is not merely US paranoia. At the end of 2000, Iraq switched its oil denomination from "the enemy currency" to the euro. Last summer, Iran looked set to follow suit. The majority of Iran's reserve funds in its central bank were switched to euros. At the time, a government official announced that Iran was proposing to *"receive payments for crude oil sales to Europe in euros…as a means of hitting back at the US government*". This was followed by Saudi Arabia withdrawing tens of billions of dollars invested in the US and exchanging them for euros, in protest at the growing hostility of the Bush regime towards Saudi Arabia. This single event put noticeable downward pressure on the dollar.

The tentative moves by oil-producing countries towards euro denomination has alarmed a US administration already sensitised to the growing threat from the euro. Quite rightly, the US has calculated that the euro poses a threat both to the US economy and its status as the world's leading superpower.

The soft underbelly

Should the move to euro denomination in oil sales continue, confidence in the dollar will plummet, risking the enormous advantages the US gains from the dollar's status as the world's reserve currency. Once the huge underlying weakness of the US economy is exposed, it will be a bit like turning a huge, armour-plated, raging beast on its back, and reavealing one very bloated, exposed and soft underbelly. The fall-out from such an event is predictable - a dollar bubble burst, and the establishment of the euro as an alternative reserve currency. Like nothing else, this would boost the status of the European Union as a global competitor and potential superpower.

With the euro already accounting for 20% of global foreign currency reserves, the US can ill-afford any further moves by the OPEC countries towards the euro. This was the main impetus for the Bush administration to invade Iraq. As anti-US countries showed increasing willingness to use the euro as a weapon against the US, the invasion of Iraq became inevitable. As one Bush insider noted; "*Saddam sealed his fate when he decided to switch to the Euro in late 2000*".

It was the inevitability of the invasion of Iraq that secured Britain's support. As a recent article in the Independent noted, Blair realised early on that the war was inevitable, and judged that it was in Britain's best interests to support the US.

In the drive towards war, the importance of the profits to be made from Iraqi oil were secondary. The main impetus for war came from the need to capture Iraq as a way of maintaining and furthering US dominance within the new world order. Through the capture of Iraq, the US hopes to secure its future oil needs, control the price of oil as a weapon against its competitors, and prop up the dollar against the growing threat of the euro. But the US' increasing reliance on military might exposes its fundamental weakness; that of economic decline.

The big, bad picture

The US economy is less and less competitive and increasingly in debt, and unless this trend is reversed, it can only spell the end of US superpower status in the long run. The biggest problem of all is that, like empires before it, the US will not go quietly, but will thrash about, armed to the teeth, getting angrier and more destructive as the spears start piercing that soft underbelly. Like a spoilt child, the US ruling elite is arrogant about US superiority, and is unable to contemplate anything else, so it is prepared to pay the highest of prices to maintain its dominance - a chilling thought.

The fact that the real motives behind US war-mongering are generally absent from both mainstream and 'alternative' commentary on the invasion of Iraq is critical. With the left split between obsession with Blair-bashing personality politics and the mantra of 'cheap oil', there is a whole debate being missed, and the complexity of US economic, cultural and military power lies unexplored. Yet, it is this very web of power interests that has the greatest and most serious implications for the world today. Blair-watching and quick-fix explanations don't even begin to touch the real reasons behind the unfolding global role of the US and the impact that this will have on all of us – and these reasons should be the chief focus for our concern.

SF Contact Point:

SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
Answerphone 07984 675 281
Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk

www.solfed.org.uk

Networks - make contact with others in your type of work-

Education Workers' Network, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
Public Service Workers' Network, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.
Communication Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

Locals - get involved locally in regular meetings and action-

North & East London SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE. Tel. 0208 3745027 jacob16@btopenworld.com
Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX. Tel. 0207 3581854.
South West Solidarity and **Solidarity Bristol**, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB. www.southwestsolidarity.org.uk
South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.
Lancashire SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF. Tel/Fax 01772 734130 solfed@solfed.org.uk http://mysite.freeserve.com/LancashireSF/index.jhtml
Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 07984 675281. www.manchestersf.org.uk
Sheffield SF, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. da@direct-action.org.uk
West Yorks Solidarity Federation, PO Box 77, Leeds LS8 3XX.

SF includes contacts across England, Scotland and Wales. Use the SF Contact Point above to make contact with people near you.

Direct Action - delivered

Why not do it here and now while you're thinking about it? With a supporter's subscription, you get DA & other stuff from SolFed. With a Basic Sub, you get it cheaper than in the shops.

- ○ Make me a Supporting Subscriber (fill in SO form/enclose £12)
- ○ Basic Sub - make me a subscriber for a fiver (enclose £5)
- ○ Rush me FREE information about DA and SolFed
- ○ Make me a Friend of DA. **I realise DA is non-profit, keeps open books, is always strapped, etc. and I'd like to help. I will get DA Collective publications, plus the knowledge that I am contributing to its long-term development (fill in SO form, we suggest £2, £5, £10 or £25 per month depending on income and circumstances - & THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!)**

Name.....

Address.....

.....

STANDING ORDER (SO) FORM:

To the manager, ...Bank, ...Branch,
Address of your Bank:
.....
Please debit my/our account no. ....., sort code ... ..-... ..-.....
Please pay Solidarity Federation - Direct Action, account no.: 98963732; NatWest, Leeds City, 8 Park Row, Leeds LS1 1QS; sort code 60-60-05. First payment of £..... to be made on ....., and subsequent payments of £..... on the same day each month until further notice.

Name(s) .....**Signature(s)**.....

All Cheques to 'Direct Action'. Overseas subscriptions: £10 basic Europe, £15 basic rest of the world, £20 supporters (add 10% for currencies other than sterling).
Return this form to: DA-SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW, England.

About Solidarity Federation...

Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994. It is a federation of groups and individuals across England, Scotland and Wales. Everyone involved is helping to build a non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian solidarity movement. The basic foundation used for doing this is the Local group.

Locals

People are getting together to form Locals – Solidarity Federation groups. Locals put solidarity into practice. Locals are organising or getting involved in local campaigns across a wide range of issues – both in the community and in workplaces. Issues are wide-ranging: defending our natural and local environment and health; opposing racism, sexism and homophobia; in fact, anything which defends or contributes to our mutual quality of life. It is all part and parcel of building a solidarity movement.

Direct Action

Apart from being the name of this Quarterly, Direct Action is the tool which Locals use in all their work. At a basic level, this can be simply the spreading of information through leaflets, local bulletins and public meetings to raise awareness and involvement locally.

However, Direct Action is not limited to spreading information. It means a physical presence in defending and promoting a better quality of life. Fundamental to Direct Action is the reality that we can only rely on ourselves to achieve our goals. While we reserve the right to take opportunities to fight for improvements to our quality of life now, the solidarity movement must always remain independent from those we are demanding from. Solidarity Federation will accept neither leadership, charity, nor guidance from government or business – instead, we must couple our principle of solidarity with the practice of self-reliance.

Networking

Solidarity Federation members who work in the same work sector have formed Networks. Their purpose is to promote solidarity amongst workers. Networks also use Direct Action to fight for better pay and conditions, forming a basis for a completely new labour movement, nothing like the Trade Unions, which are weakened by having to abide by ridiculous laws, and by hierarchical power structures and self-interested paid officials. The fundamentally different nature of Networks fits their fundamentally different aim.

Where next?

As Locals and Networks grow, they practise community and workers' self-management. Eventually, industries will be run by producers and consumers. In other words, by workers (in Networks) and people in the wider community (Locals), who want the goods and services they provide.

And this is no flight of fancy or text-book dream. As the solidarity movement grows in members and influence, so does the scope for action. Both the Locals and Networks have already established a reputation and are showing real results in membership and effectiveness.

Global Solidarity

Capitalism is international, so we need to be organised globally to oppose it and build a viable alternative. Nationalism and patriotism lead to pointless and false divisions, used as tools to fuel economic and bloody wars. Solidarity Federation opposes these in favour of a movement built on global solidarity.

Solidarity Federation is the British section of the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers' Association (IWA). This gives it essential international solidarity and experience from much larger sections, such as the CNT (Spain) and USI (Italy). Founded in 1922, the IWA has a long history of solidarity in action; by the 2nd World War, over five million people worldwide were affiliated. A combination of war, fascism, and soviet 'communism' all but destroyed the movement, but after the Spanish CNT re-emerged in the late '70s, the IWA had a new lease of life. Today, there are sections ranging from a few dozen to thousands of members, and growth is rapid. At the last IWA Congress in Granada, Spain, three new groups were welcomed into the IWA, to add to the seven new sections welcomed at the previous Congress.

Getting Involved

A global solidarity movement can only gather strength as many more people who share the same aims get involved. Contacting Solidarity Federation offers the possibility of contributing to this growing momentum.

It is not like joining a club, union or political party – rather, it is an opportunity to channel your efforts for change and, at the same time, benefit yourself from the experience.

For more info, write to the SolFed Contact Point (above left).

Events/Campaigns/Gatherings...

Solidarity Federation

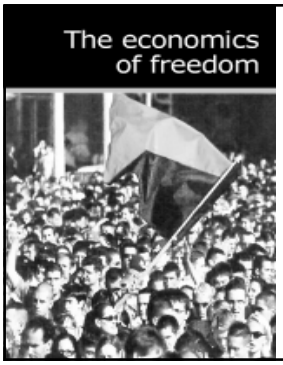
North & East London SolFed
Free Solidarity Bulletin out now. Socials: Last Thursday of the month, 8pm, near Camden Tube. Plus, advice surgeries/discussions. Also for people SE of London and along the S. Coast. Contact details p.34.

SelfEd Collective
Self-education - developing and sharing ideas and skills. Download pamphlets FREE in FULL VERSIONS from the SelfEd website. SelfEd, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. www.selfed.org.uk

South Herts SolFed
St Albans Discussion Meetings. Tel. 01727 862814.

Catalyst
Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation - IWA

If you like DA, you'll like Catalyst. New issue out now. Pissed off with the boss? Get free light relief. Send a stamp or phone for your copy - or for a bunch to hand out at work or play. Catalyst, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 07984 675281. Email; manchestersf@manchestersf.org.uk



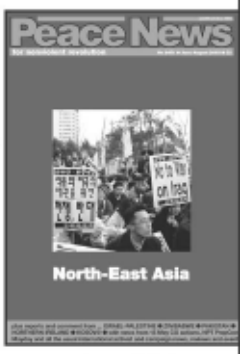
The economics of freedom

Democracy from the bottom up - no party politicians, corporate managers or union leaders. What might a future, decent economy look like? Here is a detailed model (but not a straightjacket) of how it could work.
£2.50 (payable to Solidarity Federation) from SolFed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. solfed@solfed.org.uk

Peace News
for nonviolent revolution

FREE SAMPLE ISSUE

Peace News, the antimilitarist magazine read and produced by nonviolent activists and campaigners worldwide, is offering readers of *Direct Action* a **FREE SAMPLE ISSUE**. Simply fill out the form below and send it to Peace News, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DY, Britain. Alternatively, you can claim your free copy by emailing admin@peacenews.info, quoting "*Direct Action* offer".



Please send a **free sample** of *Peace News* to:
Name:_____
Address:_____
_____
Post code: _____

Peace News will not pass your details on to any other organisations.

Office use: DA03

www.peacenews.info

Friends and Neighbours

[To get listed here, write to; DA (F&N). PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, da@direct-action.org.uk]

Kate Sharpley Library
Dedicated to recording and revealing the history of Anarchism - send SAE for new, detailed catalogue, donate documentation, reports, etc. KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1 N 3XX. www.katesharpleylibrary.org/index.htm.

Loombreaker
Send a stamp for a copy- c/o Manchester EF!, Dept 29, 22a Beswick St, Manchester M4 7HS. Now online - www.earthfirst.org.uk/loombreaker.

SchNEWS ANNUAL 2003
SchNEWS Annual and free CD with inspirational short films. News of durect action from all over the globe for £10 incl. p+p direct from SchNEWS. www.schnews.org.uk

Cultureshop
Online shop for independent/radical/political issue-based videos. Recent films include; The Summit (filmed during the Earth Summit in Johannesburg); Zapatista! (first-hand account of the Chiapas struggle; Mark Thomas Live in Brighton, Devonport Nuclear Safety Lecture (exposure by John Large, nuclear consultant). www.cultureshop.org

Anti-McDonalds Day
Oct. 16th Worldwide Day of Action 0845 458 9595 www.mcspotlight.org

Sheffield Indymedia
Independent grassroots radio: 106.6 FM Tuesdays or check www.sheffield.indymedia.org.uk

Devonport Camp
Oct. 1-5 - Six days of disarmament activity around UK Trident refit. Last year activists boarded the sub causing a security furore. Claire 08454588363 or Matt 01823601346 www.tridentplou[redacted]

Critical M[redacted]
Last Friday of ea[redacted] South Bank, unc[redacted] Email: info@cml[redacted] Forum at www.e[redacted] viewforum.php? Also third Sat of [redacted] outside Finsbury [redacted] Sisters Road.

22nd Anar[redacted]
Saturday 25th Oc[redacted] St, London - 10a[redacted] Books, pamphle[redacted] meetings and di[redacted] aspects of anarc[redacted] Creche, bar and [redacted]

Menwith Hill
Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) picket every Tuesday evening 7-9 pm at Menwith Hill, near Harrogate, North Yorks. Next demonstration, Saturday 11 October 2003. CAAB, 8 Park Row, Otley, West Yorkshire LS21 1HQ. Tel/Fax. 01943 466405 or 01482 702033 www.caab.org.uk

Awol
40 Winks, the Newsletter of AWoL, the campaign Against Working Links, from; c/o Brighton & Hove Unemployed Workers Centre, 4 Crestway Pde, Brighton BN1 7BL. To subscribe, send 5 stamps for 5 issues giving us an address. Any donations, articles or letters welcome. Email: stopdoleprivatisation@yahoo.co.uk

Networking Newsletter
Networking in Greater Manchester working for positive social change. Tel: 0161 226 9321. www.networkingnewsletter.org.uk

Toxcat
Essential exposures of polluters, pollution and cover-ups. £2 or sub £12 from ToxCat, PO Box 29, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 3TX.

Resistance
Freesheet of the Anarchist Federation. Anarcho news, views and comment from: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. www.afed.org.uk

Eroding Empire
Monthly listing of gigs, events, actions and classifieds for London. Punk, anarcho, squatting, etc. info. from: Eroding Empire, c/o 56A Crampton St, London SE17 3AE, Tel. 07890 350448, Email; eroding@eroding.org.uk

National Anti-war demo
Saturday 27th September. Assemble 12 noon, Hyde Park, London. Contact www.stopwar.org.uk or your local SolFed/anarchist group.

56a Infoshop
Bookshop, records, library, archive, social and meeting space. Anarchist, eco-activist, queer, feminist, DIY, squatting, class struggle. Open Thur 2-8, Fri 3-7, Sat 2-6. Near Elephant and Castle/Kensington tube: 56 Crampton St, London SE17 3AE

Rebel Bull
Hereford's freesheet, from Herefordshire Anarchist Group (HAG), c/o PO Box 7, Pontypool, Gwent NP4 8YB. info@herefordanarchists.cjb.net

Manchester Anarchist Youth
Organising group, meetings every other Sunday, Cafe Pop, Oldham St. 07816 420391 manchester@anarchistyouth.net

Norwich Anarchists
£1 for newspaper 'Now or Never'; PO Box 487, Norwich NR2 3AL.

Don't be a cog in the machine - be a spanner in the works!

Wage slaves of the world unite!

Join Solidarity Federation >>> solfed@solfed.org.uk 07984 675281

Get Direct Action >>> 'be a subscriber for a fiver' (page 34)

ISSN 0261 - 8753

www.direct-action.org.uk