

UNIONS SQUARE UP FOR PENSIONS WAR

by Caroline Colebrook

OCCUPATIONAL pensions are under threat all round as public sector unions prepare to defend existing retirement ages, and industrial workers who have paid into pension schemes for years, even decades, now see them vanishing before their eyes.

Local government

The GMB general union is one of those threatening to ballot its 250,000 local government members for strike action if it is not allowed to negotiate over proposed changes to the local government pensions scheme.

Currently unions are barred from negotiating on the proposals from Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott to change the contribution rates and benefits for local government employees.

Among the proposals included in the new Local Government Pension Scheme 2008 are:

- Increased contributions for nearly all of the scheme members;
- A significant reduction in benefits, which will impact most heavily on the lowest paid;
- A reduction in costs for local authorities, despite the extra £1 billion set aside in the pre-Budget report to help local government and reduce the pres-

sure on council tax.

GMB public services national secretary Brian Strutton said: "These proposals as they currently exist will create a new generation of pension paupers and unless the Government allows us to negotiate on behalf of GMB members over the terms of LGPS 2008 we will ballot our members on strike action."

"Many of the employees that GMB represents are extremely low paid and cannot afford to be members of the existing scheme. The proposed new scheme will reduce take-up even further and will lead to poverty in retirement for tens of thousands of employees."

"My office has been inundated with calls from angry local government employees who are worried sick about what the future might hold for them."

"The Government must act quickly and announce formal bargaining arrangements so that we can sit down and talk about these proposals."



"Platitudes about consultation are just not enough."

The giant public sector union Unison took a similar stance and predicted "conflict with the Government, if not this year then next" and possibly the biggest strike for 25 years.

Unison general secretary Dave Prentis pointed out that local government workers have always endured low pay but had been able to look forward to a decent pension.

"Now all that is being taken away," he said.

"What really riles me is the breathtaking hypocrisy of MPs who recently voted themselves the best pension scheme in Europe but say they can't afford it for anyone else."

Civil service pension "assault"

The PCS civil service union also warned the Government that it is facing widespread industrial action over a planned "assault" on public sector pension benefits.

The union says it fears

the Government is about to attempt a "historical transformation" of the civil service final salary pension scheme and switch to a pension based on "career averaging" with a resulting fall in pensions. The union also fears the retirement age may be raised to 65.

A Treasury spokesperson admitted that the Government is looking for ways to cut its pension liabilities. But added: "Any proposals to change the current system will be put out for consultation."

The unions want more

than "consultation". A PCS officer said: "If there is an assault on a single source – all public sector pensions – there should be a common response. We have our 280,000 members to consider."

Changes in the structure of the civil service – breaking parts of it down into agencies like the benefits agency – have already undermined the pensions of many civil servants.

These agencies take on many staff for short fixed-term contracts and they have no pension rights. The PCS has battled long and hard to extend the benefits and conditions of "established" civil servants to these temporary workers.

Other public sector workers, including firefighters, police, teachers and the armed forces will also be affected by these proposals.

The Fire Brigades Union pensions officer Paul Woolstenholmes said: "The pensions of millions of public sector workers are under threat – apart from MPs and judges who have the most generous pension arrangements in the country."

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FUND

Our first December fund total is £601, leaving us £2,399 to raise by the end of the month to meet our £3,000 monthly target – and only a short time to do this because of the annual two-week seasonal break.

We thank our regular London pensioner paper seller comrade for £27.40, our London Scot for £10, a Yorkshire comrade for £10, an East Anglian comrade for £6.40 and another friend for £5.

We also thank another East Anglian comrade who sent £20 in memory of James O'Hare. The rest comes from the regular banker's orders that some supporters make to contribute direct from their bank accounts to ours every month.

This is a difficult time of year for our paper, with just a short month because of the Christmas break. Even in the two weeks when the paper does not come out, costs continue, including the wages or our workers. Then in January, like most people, we get a small mountain of bills.

So remember this paper on your Christmas present list and send what you can to the *New Worker* Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

Iraq resistance – renewed fury

by our Arab Affairs Correspondent

THE IRAQI resistance offensive continued with renewed fury last week with heavily-armed commandos attacking American patrols across the country, while other partisans concentrated on dealing with collaborators and traitors. Nowhere is safe for the US troops and their lackeys – least of all Baghdad, the most-heavily garrisoned hub of the army of occupation.

Resistance sources accuse the Americans of using banned napalm and chemical weapons in the assault on Fallujah. This was confirmed by Fallujan refugees living in Baghdad who said the main US assault was preceded by clouds of a sweet "apple-smelling" gas which created open wounds on the skin while those who inhaled it began to vomit blood.

In Baghdad the resis-

tance has virtually cut the city off from the international airport. When Australian defence minister Robert Hill landed last week he was unable to visit his own embassy in the capital. Partisans hunting collaborators in central Baghdad clashed with American troops in broad daylight after shooting an Iraqi traitor dead in Haifa Street just three blocks away from the heavily fortified "Green Zone" US military compound.

Other Iraqi traitors, lackey troops selling truck-loads of loot plundered from Fallujah in a market they set up in Baghdad's al Haswah neighbourhood were reminded of the fate that awaits them when a barrage of mortar rounds poured down on them on Tuesday.

In general Iraqis wonder at what role the "national guard" (sometimes dubbed "Alawi's army" after the quivering "interim premier") is supposed to play, as their speciality seems to be robbing and killing civilians. In the south-

ern British-occupied zone the "national guard" are little more than highway robbers and no lorry coming from Kuwait or Basra can get past their check-points without greasing their palms.

In Fallujah the resistance is continuing hit-and-run attacks in the near-deserted ruins of the town.

still control

Resistance sources claim that they still effectively control half of Fallujah and this seems to be confirmed by reports that the Americans are seeking talks with representatives of the town's police and civil defence militia, as they did last April when the marines were driven out last time.

It was a less than triumphant George W Bush who addressed his marines at their base in California on Tuesday. Gone was the "bring them on" bravado that followed the capture of Baghdad last year. Now a

sombre Bush spoke of an insurgency that was getting worse. The US leader, who stood under a banner reading "Mission Accomplished" in May 2003 to claim that combat operations in Iraq had ended, now could only speak of *eventually* stabilising Iraq.

And in Kuwait US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld faced a grilling from American troops complaining about their shoddy equipment. The troops, mainly US National Guard and reservists on their way to Iraq, cheered when one soldier told Rumsfeld they had been forced to root through rubbish for scrap metal to reinforce their armoured cars. Others complained about the extended tours they now endure and that regular soldiers got better equipment than reservists or national guard units.

Anglo-American imperialism is now putting all its bets on the bogus Iraq elections set for 30 January,

which they hope will fire up sectarian and ethnic divisions in Iraq and allow them to divide and rule for years to come. But nobody believes that any poll under the bayonets of the US-led army of occupation can be anything like free and fair. Few think it can even take place.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is one of them. He told visiting Iraqi stooge premier Alawi in Moscow: "I honestly say that I cannot imagine how elections can be organised under a full occupation of the country by foreign troops. I also cannot imagine how you, on your own, will be able to restore the situation in the country and stop it from breaking up".

Next week's issue of the *New Worker* will be the last before the two-week Xmas break

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Counting the dead

FORTY SIX eminent figures including five former ambassadors, bishops, a retired general and the former assistant chief of defence staff have signed an open letter to Tony Blair urging an inquiry into civilian deaths in Iraq. The call for an independent inquiry into the number of Iraqis killed or wounded, along with the reasons for the casualties follows the study by the British medical journal *The Lancet* that put the death-toll at around 100,000.

Nobody knows how many Iraqis have been killed during and since the Anglo-American invasion last year. What we do know is that neither the Blair government nor its masters in Washington want to tell us what their own assessment is.

The weasel words of the Government, in response, have been to bleat that only the Americans can provide the answers. This is undoubtedly true as the Americans are responsible for most of the deaths. But it doesn't stop the Government from claiming that the puppet regime's own low estimates are the most accurate data available.

The imperialists have no hesitation in producing figures of human rights violations when it suits their interests. Colossal casualty figures for the conflict in Darfur are cited to justify possible intervention against Sudan, despite the fact that they are seriously and vigorously disputed by the Sudanese authorities.

The British government, as a major occupying power in Iraq, has the responsibility to assess the death toll amongst Iraqi civilians who are theoretically under its protection. If the British occupation authorities haven't got the means to do it then they must ask the Americans for it. Then they must tell the British public what really has been done in our name over the past 18 months.

Blunkett must go

Home Secretary David Blunkett has been in the media spotlight this week but not of his choosing. He's admitted to paying for his former girlfriend's first-class travel tickets out of public funds. He claims it was a "genuine mistake" and the money has subsequently been repaid. More seriously, Blunkett's been accused of using his position to advance the visa application of her nanny.

Though the allegations have been referred to an inquiry there can be little confidence in it, given the past whitewashes over the "dodgy dossier" Iraqi arms scandal or the mysterious death of the Iraqi weapons inspector, Dr Kelly.

Blair and his cronies have closed ranks around Blunkett to dismiss media attacks as intrusions into the Home Secretary's private life and personal misfortunes with a reticence they never displayed in opposition when it came to Tories under the sleaze scrutiny. Blunkett is one of Blair's loyal henchmen who has given the task of pioneering the most reactionary legislation in Labour's history in the new parliament. No-one in the labour movement will miss him if he goes.

The issue is clear. David Blunkett must resign if he is found to have abused his position by fast-tracking the visa application of his former girlfriend's nanny.

BNP Christmas

British National Party members walked out of their own Christmas party after inadvertently hiring a black disc jockey.

A member of the neo-Nazi group booked the entertainer over the phone. BNP organiser Bob Garner admitted: "There was a bit of a cock-up. The chap who booked him didn't realise. The DJ sounded white on the phone. Everyone was a bit alarmed when he turned up with his lights and console. A lot of people weren't happy. I wasn't really. One or two walked out."

The man who booked the DJ failed to tell him who the audience would be – and we he arrived they didn't have the nerve to tell him. The ones who did not walk out had to mind their language all evening.

Lost luggage

The BBC World Service last Monday reported that

Say no more

French airport security forces, in a security exercise to train and/or test explosive-sniffing dogs, planted plastic explosives in random pieces of real outgoing luggage, intending of course to remove them all before they were loaded on planes.

Unfortunately one of those pieces of luggage got away. French airport security has sent out an all-points alert to the world's airports that an unsuspecting passenger is carrying explosives he or she knows nothing about. The luggage is blue.

Tea and sympathy

A woman who is fighting against deportation to Pakistan last week received an invitation from the Queen to a Christmas reception at Buckingham Palace. A letter that came with the invitation explains that the reception is to recognise those "who have made a significant contribution to national life".

Farhat Khan fled with her children from a violent husband and fears that if she is sent back she could become the victim of a so-called honour killing.

Khan has spent 17 years working to improve education standards in the Peshawar area of Pakistan where she lived and from 1997 was employed by the British Council. But her husband and his family resented her work. She came to Britain four years ago with two sons and three daughters after her mother-in-law betrothed two of the girls, aged six and eight, to local men in their 20s.

Since arriving in Britain she has worked as a volunteer at a community centre in Cheetham, Greater Manchester.

Telling the truth

American soldier Michael Hoffman, a co-founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War, last week wrote in the *Guardian*:

TUC takes a lead against Aids

THE TRADES UNION Congress last Saturday hosted a major international conference on demands for action in the workplace to combat the Aids pandemic.

Those attending the conference, entitled *Beating the pandemic – a workplace response to the global challenge of HIV and AIDS*, represented the United Nations, the British Government and health campaigners.

It was organised by the TUC and the Bill Morris Testimonial Campaign and took place at Congress House in London.

The Aids pandemic is still growing, with 40 million people affected throughout the world and 14 thousand new infections daily.

In Britain 53,000 people are living with HIV. Most are of working age and improvements in drugs and therapies mean they are able to live and work much longer than ever before.

clear and effective

The TUC is campaigning for employers to introduce clear and effective HIV and Aids policies in the workplace.

Speakers at the conference included Gareth Thomas MP, the International Development Minister; Stephen Lewis, UN special envoy for HIV and Aids; Peter Busse from South Africa, who has been living with HIV for 19 years; Clementine Dehwe, Global Unions HIV and Aids Campaign Co-ordinator; Franklyn Lisk, director of the International Labour Organisation programme on HIV and Aids and world of work.

Other speakers included TUC deputy general secretary Frances O'Grady; and former TGWU general secretary Sir Bill Morris, who chaired the conference.

Bill Morris said: "The HIV and Aids time bomb has exploded in the face of the world with 40 million people now affected.

• Aids is not just a gay or African issue – the facts need to put across.

"In Britain HIV positive numbers are growing and the majority of those affected are of working age. That means unions and employers must work together to introduce policies and procedures to end prejudice and discrimination and help those living with HIV to enjoy full working lives."

UN special envoy Stephen Lewis said: "Globalisation has failed abysmally to deal with the global Aids pandemic. Corporations are influencing every decision made by African governments struggling to cope with HIV and Aids and the results are tragic.

"Africa has great sophistication in its ability to deal with the myriad of issues connected to Aids. It's not a lack of knowledge on their part – it is a lack of resources. The saddest thing is that the pandemic increasingly has a woman's face. Gender inequality in response to Aids is fatal."

Gareth Thomas MP said: "The UK government is committed to the fight against Aids. We are committed to spend at least £1.5 billion in Aids-related work over the next three years and make Aids a centrepiece of our GB and EU presidencies.

"Working in partnership with trade unions and employers we can reduce the spread of HIV, to provide care and treatment to those with HIV and Aids and to ultimately reduce the impact of Aids on workers and businesses."

Peter Busse, director of South Africa's National Association of People Living with HIV and Aids, said: "I have been living with HIV for 19 years, and have learned we must share experiences, both personal and in the workplace.

unique role

"The workplace has a unique role in the prevention and management of Aids, and to protect people living with HIV and Aids from discrimination and stigma.

"We urgently need a workplace response to the global challenge of HIV and Aids."

TUC deputy general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "With a year on year increase in the numbers of people with HIV in the UK and with the majority of those of working age, there is no room for complacency among employers.

"That is why the TUC is demanding that an HIV and Aids policy is adopted in all workplaces."

700 train building jobs cut

THE CANADIAN manufacturing company Bombardier last week announced more than 700 job cuts throughout its train-building operations in Britain.

The biggest cuts will be at Bombardier's factory in Derby, with 561 jobs to go from a workforce of just under 2,000. Another 165 jobs will go from its train maintenance plant in Ilford, Essex.

These cuts follow 1,360 redundancies earlier this year in Bombardier's British division, 600 of them at Derby.

Bombardier has blamed a reduction in orders throughout Europe, including delays of an expected Government announcement on a replacement programme for Britain's 30-year-old fleet of Intercity 125s.

Unions square up for pensions war

Continued from page 1...

Women's pensions

The TUC used the current turmoil over the Government's proposals to call for action on women's pensions, pointing out that they are being very badly let down by the current pensions system.

The TUC, in a new report *Time for Action*, points out that unless major changes are made, young women just starting work are likely to face poverty in their old age similar to their great grandmothers.

A combination of career breaks to care for children, low pay, part-time work, jobs that don't come with pensions and shorter working lives mean that women are always going to be short-changed in their old age.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Our pensions system was not designed with women in mind. It is out of date and condemns millions of women to an uncertain and precarious retirement."

"Our pensions crisis has a very definite female face with women being penalised and losing out for taking time out of work to bring up their children."

"The Government needs to act to put a stop to this continuing pensions gender inequality. A few small changes would make a major difference to women's lives and at a cost that won't break the bank."

Women tend to be found in low paid jobs such as waitressing, care work, hairdressing, retail, cleaning, secretarial and admin work.

The TUC warns that

through the next decade the number of women employed in traditionally male dominated work such as manufacturing is set to decline, the number working in the caring and educational sector is set to increase.

Time for Action calls for:

- A compulsory scheme where employees and employers are all forced to pay into a pensions scheme, which would make a huge difference to the lives of women with little or no pension entitlement;

- The abolition of the "25 per cent" rule that stops women with fewer than 10 years of national Insurance contributions getting any state pension;

- The Government should allow women to buy back more than the six years of national Insurance contributions that they are currently limited to. Allowing further backdating would permit many women to fill the gaps in their contributions and increase the level of their state pension;

- Given the large numbers of women who work in the public sector, proposals to raise the retirement age from 60 to 65 will disproportionately disadvantage women and the Government should look again at other alternatives for reforming public sector pensions.

The private sector: T&N

Negotiations between the trustees of the Turner and Newall pension fund and Carl Icahn, the American financier who is trying to organise the US parent firm, collapsed last week leaving former T&N employees facing a huge hole in their pension fund.

The trustees have been

negotiating with the parent company, Federal Mogul, over an agreement to cover the £875 million-pension fund deficit.

Those already drawing a pension face a loss of 20 per cent and those who have yet to claim their pension face an 80 per cent cut in the pension benefits they were promised.

The means the 40,000 members of the T&N pension scheme, if it collapses, will be the first claimants of the Government's new Pension Protection Fund, which is due to begin in April.

The PPF is to be funded by a levy on all companies with final salary schemes and will total around £300 million a year.

Carpets International

Carpets International, based in Newbridge, South Wales, went into administration in 2003. Now almost 500

factory workers have lost 60 per cent of their pensions after the company took a pension fund contribution holiday – just before going out of business.

Some of the factory workers will lose £2,500 a year – after paying an average of five per cent of their wages into the Abingdon carpets pension scheme.

This case echoes that of former steelworkers employed by Allied Steel and Wire (ASW), with plants in Cardiff and Sheerness in Kent.

The steelworkers sued the Government after losing 90 per cent of their pensions when ASW collapsed. The case has now been referred to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

Haydn Nelmes, who retired from the Carpets International factory in September 2004, said he received a letter from the factory in November telling him his pension pay-

ments would drop from £3,500 a year to £1,059.

"Even in the letter it said I would be shocked and I was shocked," he said. "It came as a shock because in April of this year I was still expecting my full pension."

"It's not only my plight; there are people in a worse position than I am. We will manage."

Workers had been paying into the pension scheme for 20 years and more.

The "citizen's pension"

Pensions Minister Alan Johnson last week announced he was considering a proposal, to be included in the Government's new pension plans, for a flat rate state pension of £105.45 a week – the current guaranteed minimum income – for all pensioners, regardless of gaps in the National Insurance record.

This would solve a lot of

problems and iron out many of the inequalities between men's and women's pensions.

It would save those currently getting only the basic state pension from having to go through incredibly complex bureaucracy to claim pension tax credits to bring their income up to the minimum.

The scheme would cost between £5 billion and £10 billion – depending on where the basic pension level was set. But much of this would be recouped from removing the need to administer the pension credits. And wealthy pensioners getting the increase would be likely to pay it back in increased taxes.

It would also benefit those with very small savings or private pensions who are not currently eligible for the pension credit top-up and so get no real benefit from their savings.

Johnson has called this proposal the "citizen's pension". It would be linked to price inflation but not to average earnings – the link that the pensioners have campaigned for over many years.

Michelle Mitchell, speaking for the pressure group Age Concern, welcomed this proposal, saying that the current system is "rigid, inflexible and littered with obstacles for people with non-traditional working patterns – in particular women carers and part-time workers."

The Cabinet is said to be divided over this proposal, with Chancellor Gordon Brown favouring "targeting money at the poorest pensioners" – in other words continuing with means testing, even if it is difficult to apply for and expensive to administer.

Brown's electioneering pre-budget report

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown last week delivered his pre-budget report, giving a glowing view of Britain's economy and proposals for family-friendly spending policies as expected in the run-up to next year's general election.

He predicted that economic growth would be between three and 3.5 per cent – significantly higher than most financial experts are forecasting.

He said the growth would finance an "opportunity Britain" with increased investment in education, skills and childcare.

Councils will get £1 billion to offset next year's council tax rises – a source of great anger among many voters.

There will be longer parental leave so that parents can stay at home longer to look after very young children. Maternity leave will be extended from six months to nine months by 2007 and eventually to one year. Parents will have the option of transferring three months of that entitlement to the father.

Childcare provision for those between three and 14

will be extended to match parents' working hours. Every secondary school will have to open its doors from 8am to 6pm daily throughout the year.

There should be sport, music and homework clubs for the 11 to 14-year-olds.

For the under 11s, childcare from 8am to 6pm could be provided by a school, childminder or nursery. Margaret Hodge, the minister for Children, described it as "a childcare revolution".

There will be more help for adults with literacy and numeracy problems, who could receive a £10 a week learning allowance to help them master the basics.

moved out

Brown proposed that nearly 4,500 civil service jobs would be moved out of London and the south east initially and that eventually 20,000 could be moved by 2010.

But he also announced 9,000 civil service job cuts, the first tranche of a total of 84,000 cuts.

There is to be yet another

"crackdown" on people claiming Incapacity Benefit. They are the traditional whipping boys of all governments, who find them an easy target. All attempts in the past to dig up thousands of fraudulent claimants have failed but in the process have forced those with disabilities and the long-term sick to jump through ever more humiliating and unnecessary bureaucratic hoops to get the pitance they are warded for their survival.

Pensioners over the age of 75 will get an extra £50 a year added to their heating allowance.

The extra spending on childcare looks good – if it ever actually happens. Between the promise and the fulfilment lies an election and a widening budget deficit, not to mention a global economic downturn.

Confidence within Britain's manufacturing industry is now plunging as rising oil prices increase costs and the falling dollar makes American exports cheaper in world markets. Experts are warning of recession ahead.

Two killed at level crossing crash

by Daphne Liddle

RAIL unions stepped up their demands for improved safety at level crossings after another accident – the third at a level crossing within two months – claimed two lives at Helpringham in Lincolnshire.

A single-carriage train running from Peterborough to Lincoln hit a van at the Helpringham level crossing at 1.19pm on Monday. The two men in the van were killed but the train was not derailed and no passengers were injured but the driver and the guard had to be treated for bruising and for shock.

Last month seven people were killed when a London to Plymouth train hit a car which had been driven on to an automatic half-barrier crossing in Ufton Nervet, Berkshire. It is thought that in this case the van driver intended to commit suicide.

Monday's accident at Helpringham was just a few miles from the site of another incident where a train full of children crashed into level crossing barriers last month. There were no serious injuries.

Bob Crow, general secretary of the RMT transport union, reiterated his demand

for the phasing out of level crossings. "Two more unnecessary deaths underline the fact that level crossings are the most dangerous part of the industry," he said.

Keith Norman, the acting general secretary of the train drivers' union Aslef, said: "This latest incident adds urgency to our call for additional active safety measures at level crossings to ensure that either automatic or driver operated braking is triggered if obstacles remain on the line."

needed

"These measures are needed not only on high-speed lines, where there is a potential for a great loss of life and damage, but also on slower lines."

Aslef's district organiser, Andy Cotogno, added: "This incident has claimed the lives of two road users and shows that even on relatively slow running services there are significant dangers to both road users and divers."

- The Paddington Survivors' Group last week warned that safety recommendations made after the Paddington and Southall rail crashes still have not been "adequately fulfilled".

Concerns raised at the

inquiries included trains passing through danger signals, the fitting of train protection (automatic braking) systems and driver radios.

Around 200 recommendations were supposed to have been implemented by September of this year.

Peace protesters lose appeal

THREE APPEAL Court judges last Wednesday ruled that police who physically prevented peace protesters from attending a peaceful protest outside RAF Fairford last year did not infringe their human rights.

More than 100 anti-war demonstrators were kept from attending the demonstration at Fairford in Gloucester.

But the judges ruled that the police did infringe their human rights by forcing them to stay on their coaches.

• North East pensioners protest.

Features

The Iraqi Arab Renaissance Socialist Party [Baath] has formed a large national, patriotic and progressive front to drive Anglo-American imperialism out of Iraq. At a congress recently held in secret in Lebanon, Izzat al Duri was elected president of the party that operates underground throughout occupied Iraq. Last October a leading member of the Rashid branch of the Baath in Baghdad agreed to speak to the Jordanian weekly, *Al Majd*, on 11 October. He would not reveal his identity for security reasons.

Could you give us an idea about the actual situation of the Party in Iraq?

First of all we have to confess that the impact and the consequences of the invasion, given the enemy's material and military potential, was severe not only for Baathists but also for all Iraqis and all the Arabs. I can't say that this was any surprise to us; in fact we had many plans for action during and after the aggression.

The most important plan was for the creation of the popular resistance that has proved to be successful and able to invest the battlefield and has produced the fastest growing resistance in history.

Here I am not going to divulge a secret when saying that we proceeded to rebuild the organisational corps of our party from anew in every Iraqi town. And here, allow me to stress, *in every Iraqi town*, thus allowing the Party to play its vanguard and leadership role in the heroic Iraqi resistance and do whatever was possible to defeat the enemy and his stooges.

The enemy knows very well that many areas in Baghdad and other cities in Iraq are now under the total control of the Baath and the Iraqi resistance. What happened in the city of Samara is striking proof of what I am telling you.

Yes, we lost lots of members who had joined the Party when it was in the Government.

There are two reasons for this. First of all we asked some of our known comrades to withdraw from the front line to safeguard their lives. Secondly, some newcomers with little experience in the Party, joined other political movements in the hope of some kind of benefit or protection.

But here let me assure our brothers in the Arab nation that our Party is in good health and today with its members, it leads one of the most dignified and most honourable battles of the Arabs in contemporary times.

How did you cope with the 'de-Baathification bill' imposed by the Occupation and its stooges?

I say and history will be a witness of my words, that Iraqi society is now uprooting those who adopted the "de-Baathification

bill" immediately after the occupation. The Baath remains strong, invulnerable and hard to crack despite all the enemy's efforts.

Everybody should know that the Baath is not a temporary phenomenon in Iraq. It is not a weed. It's a party which has deep roots in Iraq. We are very proud to assert that the Baath has the clearest and most evident political analysis which has united Iraqis despite all their differences. The Party was able through its thought, principles, positions and politics to put the interest of the nation and the country as its top priority. That is why the enemy and their stooges are doing their best to ignite divisions in Iraq.

Those who conceived and adopted the "de-Ba'athification Bill" are the ones who today are asking for its repeal. They're the ones who now call on Baathists to join the new political arena of the occupier and its tools.

We would like here to confirm that the Baathists together with the heroic resistance will uproot the occupation and its stooges, with the clear help of our people and our nation.

This is our resolution, and it will be the only conclusion

There's been some talk in the media about negotiations between the Baath and the US administration concerning the future of Iraq. What do you say about that?

Whatever the media say about this doesn't concern us at all. I think this was US wishful thinking used for election purposes. The only dialogue which exists today between the Occupation and us is the dialogue of arms and resistance.

Any negotiations with the US administration cannot be possible under occupation.

This is clear to us. These are the clear and precise directives we got from Comrade Party Secretary General Saddam Hussein and members of the Party leadership before their imprisonment. So far there is nothing on the ground which pushes us to change this strategy.

Here I would like to warn our Arab brethren and their political parties and the media to ignore these CIA invented and wishful rumours concerning the so-called negotiations which are being used by the US Administration to distort the Baath's position and standing amongst the Arabs.

Today many of the Iraq Baath leadership members including Secretary General Saddam Hussein, are in the custody of the Occupation authorities. How much has this affected the

course and structure of the Party?

What happened to the comrade leader and other comrades in the leadership wasn't a surprise to us. That is why we planned for every possibility – imprisonment or martyrdom – from the start. Based on this premise, the leadership in the field in all the provinces of Iraq have played their role in the battle, and today they act, every one of them, according to the directives taken from the very start.

The Party organised extraordinary sessions in many towns to elect leaderships responsible for daily actions. Defining the Party's politics and strategy falls within the competence of the Party leadership, which is headed and supervised by comrade Izzat al Duri.

What I would like to stress here is that not a single one of us was duped concerning the nature of the invasion, its results or its agenda. Today and after a year and a half of the occupation, the world all over knows that the evil US Administration and its allies are the ones who were taken for a ride based on their assumptions of what would follow the invasion.

Some reproach the resistance for lacking a political agenda with declared tactical and strategic objectives. What are your feelings about that?

All honest people in the whole world know that the Iraqi resistance has been misunderstood, even by those who are very close to us. Unfortunately well-intentioned people have started to parrot the propaganda of the enemy camp which tries to present the resistance as a bunch of wild and incoherent gangs.

To answer this question, we would like to refer those who repeat this kind of allegations, to the frequently published statements of the Arab Renaissance Socialist Party [Baath], which assessed the political changes in and outside Iraq. The Baath statements and the *Resistance Policies and Strategies Programme* published in September 2003 would be a good tool to answer these questions, which are not innocent at all but aim to hurt the Baath and the resistance, thus giving the occupation and its stooges false justifications.

The Baath and the resistance have a clear tactical and strategic vision on how to combat, and how to drive the occupation forces from the land of Iraq, God willing! This vision comes from the Baath vision and its perspective for the future political life and national pluralism in liberated Iraq.

The Iraqi Baath Party and the Iraqi resistance



• Izzat al Duri, deputy president under Saddam Hussein.

A year and half after the birth of the Iraqi resistance, its composition is still unclear to some observers outside Iraq. Could you give us an idea about the components of the Iraqi Resistance?

It not out of bravado or out of pretension that we say that the Iraqi resistance is the legitimate daughter of the Arab Renaissance Socialist Party [Baath], and the principal element of this heroic resistance is composed of Baath militants and Iraqi army elements, Republican Guards, members of the security services, Saddam Fedayeen [youth militia] and the Al Quds army [militia].

All these components, as everyone knows, report to one political leadership, that of the Arab Renaissance Socialist Party [Baath]. Our people know it and the enemy of our people knows it too. And because we don't want to appear to monopolise the whole scene, let's say now that there are, indeed, other currents and organisations who entered the resistance battlefield through the gateway of the Baath.

Yes, there are national, Islamic and progressive forces who fight with us in the great battle for liberation. We provide arms and training, funds, protection and intelligence to these groups. We acted from the very first day of the invasion to broaden the circle of popular and direct participation in the resistance and we still do now. A large national and unified front exists, fighting a sacred battle for the freedom and the independence of Iraq.

Why don't you claim responsibility for military operations against the occupying forces?

We realised from the very beginning that this kind of political information could sow divisions amongst the resistance and

facilitate the enemy's efforts to penetrate it. Thus our clear decision was not to waste time on this media game. Our objective is to inflict the highest number of casualties on the enemy; to hurt him and free the country from the filth of occupation.

A year and a half later all of us can see that our position was correct. This has sown more confusion amongst the ranks of the enemy while depriving them of information about the resistance, despite all the powerful intelligence at their disposal.

And here we would like to warn our extended family in the Arab world not to give any credit to the lies and propaganda the enemy spreads especially those terms and names that are the mere creations of its sick imagination.

This is an opportunity for us to say, and in a loud voice, that the heroic resistance that covers all the land of Iraq, is an Iraqi resistance in the patriotic, national and human sense. It has no other outside identities. Trying to refer the resistance to one side or the other is a plan to hurt Iraq, its people, and its crystal clear militant history.

What is your relationship with the Mahdi army? Do you have any kind of cooperation with them?

We make a distinction between those who combat the occupier and those who cooperate with him. Every one knows that a large number of the Mahdi Army fight against the occupation for patriotic reasons.

We keep secret the kind of relationship we have with all the elements of the National and Islamic movement in Iraq to prevent the enemy from getting any intelligence about our broad front.

Why is the resistance linked to the "Sunni triangle"?

The "Sunni triangle" is a term invented by the enemy and its

Letter from the Iraqi Patriotic Alliance to the world

THE IRAQI resistance is confronting the illegal and brutal Zionist and Imperialist occupation of Iraq. Our resistance is legitimate according to international law and the United Nations Charter, including the right to resort to armed means. We are claiming our right to national self-determination and real sovereignty.

The different resistance groups in Iraq have developed a network between each other in order to achieve their ultimate goal. This goal was clearly addressed in their political programme released after the liberation of Fallujah in April this year. The programme of the Iraqi resistance is as follows:

- 1. End the occupation and liberate the country.**
- 2. A transition period of two years.**
- 3. A united Iraq with a national government for all.**
- 4. An Iraqi constitution written by Iraqis themselves.**
- 5. Democratic rules.**
- 6. Free elections with the full participation of all political parties.**

To implement the strategy of liberation, the Iraqi resistance is attacking the occupying forces and their institutions and those who serve them with food, oil and other supplies. The Iraqi resistance is also preventing the occupiers from using Iraq's as a political weapon.

Schools, churches, mosques and other civilian places have never been the target of the Iraqi resistance. We have to be very critical and careful about any kidnapping or killing of foreign workers in Iraq. The resistance gets no benefit from seizing people like Margaret Hassan, the two Simona's and others. These actions are meant to discredit the legal resistance of our people.

Here, we would like to share with you some of the heroic achievements of the Iraqi resistance:

The Iraqi resistance has been able to inflict heavy losses in material and soldiers on the occupying forces.

The resistance fighters were able to liberate 30 cities, creating a suitable environment for the resistance fighters by forming a death-zone for the occupying forces and their agents.

The Iraqi resistance defeated Spanish imperialism and has forced nine of the other armies of occupation to leave Iraq. The Netherlands, Hungary and Poland are leaving Iraq next year. The Iraqi resistance has forced the plunder corporations – the so-called contractors' "reconstruction companies" – out of Iraq.

The Iraqi resistance has renewed the spirit of resistance in the whole world by defeating the US imperialism in Fallujah, Samara, Najaf and other Iraqi cities.

The heroic resistance in Iraq has isolated Britain and the United States in Iraq and temporarily prevented the continuation of the "war on terror" against Syria, Cuba and north Korea.

The resistance in Iraq is the resistance of the Iraqi people and it is mainly represented by the major political forces: the patriotic, Islamic and the pan-Arab groups. We want to stress the fact that our resistance has an anti-imperialistic profile that includes Islamic and patriotic elements as well as the effective participation of members of the dismantled Iraqi army and the Baath party.

Some object to the participation of the Baath party in the resistance. But there are more than three million active Baath party members in Iraq. So when we mention members of this party we do not mean just those who were in the former Iraqi government but those who believe in the Baath ideology expressed in their slogan: Freedom, Unity and Socialism.

The fear of the Islamic character of the Iraqi resistance could be answered by the fact that after the liberation of Iraq, the Iraqi resistance will then be the only legitimate representative of the Iraqi people. A transition period will then give the Iraqi people the chance to choose their representatives to form a united national government with the full participation of all parties including the Islamic forces. We have then to accept the choice of the Iraqi people.

As for the Iraqi Patriotic Alliance, we are proud to inform you that our secretary general in Iraq Mr Abdul Jabbar al-Kubaysi was arrested on 3 September in Baghdad. The house he had temporarily stayed in was surrounded and stormed by about 50 US occupation soldiers employing helicopters and tanks.

Mr Al-Kubaysi has led the IPA since the 90's against the economic sanctions and the Zionist and imperialistic plans of the US against Iraq. During his latest activities building a united political front of the resistance against the occupation, he was arrested without charges. At this moment we know nothing about his situation. Even his family is unable to contact him. We hold the occupying forces responsible for the health and life of Mr Al-Kubaysi and all other prisoners in Iraq.

We hope for further coordination between you and ourselves in our shared struggle against occupation and imperialism.

Long live the Iraqi Resistance

In Solidarity,

Nada Al-Rubayi
on behalf of the Iraqi Patriotic Alliance (IPA)

• Above and left centre: the resistance operates everywhere.

stooges to drive a wedge between the people. Towns such as Fallujah, Ramadi, and Samara entered the limelight because the media had access to what was happening inside them. In fact the resistance operates everywhere in Iraq from Zakho in the extreme north to Fao in the extreme south.

The Resistance is in Basrah, Nasiriyah, Amara, Diwanya, Hilla, Najaf, Baaquba, Mosul, Kirkuk, Tikrit, Karbala, Samawah, Arbil and Sulaymaniah, just as it is in Baghdad and al Anbar.

The Party has taken a negative attitude towards Shia organisations in Najaf. How can you justify such a position?

The attitude of the Party concerning these organisations is not because they are Shia, but because they put sectarianism before the motherland. Many times they have facilitated a way out for the enemy when he was trapped by the resistance.

Some of these organisations – but not all of them – have given cover for the enemy's criminal actions against our people. The Baath will never hesitate to expose those who collaborate with the enemy regardless of their position or their standing.

We have reliable information that these shadowy organisations are trying to carry out agendas imposed by external forces aiming at dividing Iraq and igniting civil strife amongst its people. But our position is clear and liberal towards those who we think still have time to return to the fold of the country and the motherland.

• Protest in New York against the internal aspects of aggressive imperialism.

Home News

LETTERS

Dear editor,

I am an animal lover and staunch anti-vivisectionist. I do not believe that animals are "means of production". Do others on the left share this view, I wonder?

Yours in peace,

Phillip Duckworth, Surrey.

Dear editor,

I was very pleased to come across another issue of the New Worker. I was especially impressed with your articles on China and Ukraine.

I promote organic farming from co-operative to state-controlled collective farms. Cuba is a powerful model to refer to.

I would be very pleased if your paper could cover the work of the Daily Worker in reporting on the Korean War.

Communists have long been the most critical of global imperialism. Lenin's great work, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism is a blueprint for all that followed as critique.

With very best wishes, For green/industrial communism,

A Scottish reader.

PS Some of the "orange" protest in the Ukraine comes from bourgeois opportunists.

The editor welcomes letters from our readers. If you have a contribution to make, please make sure it reaches us before Wednesday. You can send your letters to: PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ, or email party@ncp.clara.net

Passenger groups attack fare rises

PASSENGER groups last week described proposals from the privatised train companies for train fares to rise by four per cent - well above inflation - as "economic idiocy".

The companies claim the extra money is needed to pay for "the huge investment going into the railways".

The Rail Passengers' Council said that customers would be "extremely disappointed" over the rises. "Passengers shouldn't be asked to foot the bill for improvements before the number of trains arising on time has got significantly better," said Stewart Francis, who chairs the council.

The increases will come into force next January and some will be higher than four per cent.

Rail unions also say that the costs of improvements should not fall on the passengers.

BBC faces savage cuts

BBC DIRECTOR Mark Thompson last Tuesday announced a programme of restructuring and savage cuts in spending aimed to save £320 million and safeguard the licence fee into the era of digital television.

The cuts are likely to cost around 6,000 jobs from a workforce of 27,000. Of these 2,500 jobs will go from support services, which include human resources, finance, property, legal, marketing and communications.

Other jobs cuts will come as all divisions of the corporation will have to make 15 per cent cuts, including television, radio, new media, news, nations and regions.

Another 1,800 staff will

see their jobs transferred from London to Manchester and have been given 18 months to decide whether to move or resign.

Broadcasting unions have reacted angrily and threatened to ballot for industrial action. Gerry Morrissey of the broadcasting union Bectu said: "Many staff want to know why these savage cuts are necessary, when all the areas affected have already made significant savings."

And Jeremy Dear, general secretary of the National Union of Journalists also warned of industrial action.

"Some of the top brass in the BBC seem to think they have got to strip away or sell

off whole areas of staffing and production to keep the Government happy and to hold on to their public service status and licence fee," he said.

"But if they do that, it won't be a proper public service anymore. To meet the diverse needs of the digital age, the BBC needs to maintain or expand its range, not to restrict it," he added.

Meanwhile the same unions are also protesting at plans to cut more than 50 jobs in ITV's regional newsrooms in Leeds and Manchester.

The cuts follow controversial plans to halve the output of non-news regional programming.

Glaxo faces action over 'happy pill'

LAWYERS acting for 1,700 people in Britain have issued a pre-action letter of claim against the giant drugs company GlaxoSmithKline, claiming that the anti-depressant drug Seroxat has caused serious side-effects in their clients.

The company is facing increasing controversy around this drug. On Monday, the Government medicines watchdog, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), warned general practitioners that anti-depressants like Seroxat were being prescribed too readily.

This class of drugs, known as selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs), have helped many patients. But they have also been associated with a wide range of side effects, including causing the depressive symptoms of some patients to become much more severe. It has also been associated with suicides and with violent attacks. Others have serious problems when they try to withdraw from the drugs.

The Government has already issued guidelines saying SSRIs should not be prescribed for children.

But the MHRA announcement on Monday did clear the SSRIs for general use, if with a little more caution than before.

Members of the users' group and their psychiatrists are concerned that the MHRA reached its conclusions without seeing the unpublished raw data from the trials of the drug. The MHRA admits it has used only the data supplied to it by the drug companies.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists and the mental health charity Mind both refused to attend the MHRA announcement of its findings on SSRIs. Richard Brooke, the chief executive of Mind, resigned from the MHRA last March, accusing it of sitting on evidence that Seroxat has been prescribed in unsafe doses for 10 years.

GlaxoSmithKline is being

investigated for alleged failure to disclose information about risks to children that it would have known about for several years before it passed the information on to the MHRA.

"It's amazing that the inquiry was set up two years ago and the MHRA has still not seen the original data," said Richard Brook. "This surely raises questions about their ability to get to the heart of the matter."

The MHRA said it could not look at all the data because of the sheer amount.

Seroxat is also facing legal challenges in the United States, where it is sold as Paxil. The regulators there want the packaging changed to warn of the risk factors, while lawyers are claiming compensation on behalf of some users.

No one is looking for a ban on the drugs but for more caution in prescribing and awareness of contra-indications.

Mark Harvey, one of the lawyers representing the group of users in Britain, said the 1,700 clients are of different age groups and were selected from around 4,000 people who contacted the firm with complaints about the drug.

"We have screened the complainants carefully so as to include only those whose symptoms we feel strongly have been brought on by the use of the drug."

Funeral workers consider new offer

THE GMB general union is balloting workers employed by Co-operative Funeral Care with an improved offer, which will be backdated to last January.

The new offer was made after persistent strike action by workers belonging to the GMB and to the Transport and General Workers' Union, backed up by e-mail and letter writing campaigns.

GMB national secretary Phil Davies said: "This is a powerful victory for the GMB and the TGWU. We have used traditional strikes, backed up by modern web-based campaigning to make our case."

"The Co-op has tried to play down the effect of strikes but managers have admitted privately that our efforts have been causing damage to their 'brand'."

"We are recommending that GMB members vote for this improved offer."

Diary

FRIDAY 10 December Meeting against the London Olympic bid. 7.30, London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Lane, E1. Details: Carolyn 020 7739 3435.

SATURDAY 11 December Forward with revolutionary Pan-Africanism. Albert Moutoudou, Union of the Peoples of the Cameroon. 4pm, Unity Centre, 2-4 Ravenstone Street, Balham, London SW12. details 07984 405307.

WEDNESDAY 15 December Demo for solution of the Kurdish question. 12pm, EU Commission, 8 Storey's Gate, London SW1.

FRIDAY 17 December Xmas social. Brighton NCP. Details: 01273 410177.

Please contact us if you have an item to place in the diary. We advertise meetings for free. Ensure that you let us know before Tuesday, so we can place it in the next issue of the paper.

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Ukraine – the new Cold War?

THE CONFLICT in the Ukraine is a further grab for complete economic, political and military power by the United States, supported by the European Union.

Outgoing President Leonid Kuchma has maintained a semi-state controlled economy and favours relations with Russia over the Nato alliance. He backed Viktor Yanukovich in the recent presidential elections.

A pro-big business, pro-Nato banker Viktor Yushchenko was the main opposition candidate.

The tactics used by the United States and European Union to interfere in elections are familiar. They have been tried and tested in Yugoslavia, Georgia, and earlier in the socialist states of Eastern Europe. They were tried in Venezuela recently where they failed and in Belarus and Zimbabwe where they also failed.

These tactics are:

1. Huge quantities of money are provided by the capitalist states:

2. Opposition parties and groups are brought together behind one candidate who is

acceptable to the West – preferably some big business figure or as in the case of the Ukraine a former banker.

3. Money is provided to the youth, together with the technical know-how to set up web-pages and make use of the internet.

4. A colour is selected together with some simple logo and catchy slogans which are drummed into the minds of the population by constant repetition.

5. Street demonstrations are organised – a bit of action for the young – who are being told of the wonderful life in the West and the attractions of getting an education in a private school, preferably in the United States.

6. When elections are to be held the campaign is stepped up to fever pitch and the population is told that the existing regime, the “old” government has to be replaced by the “new”.

7. Agents and organisers from the West are sent in large numbers to help organise the

campaign with election material, tactics, slogans, the necessary printing equipment and unlimited money to buy key individuals.

8. Election observers are part of the game, both to station themselves in the vicinity of polling booths and to organise exit polls, which are the first to get to the airwaves and the TV with results. They will come up with the necessary accusations that the poll was rigged if the chosen candidate fails to get a majority vote as was the case in the Ukraine.

9. It's all under the slogan of democracy, regardless of what electoral processes previously existed in the state concerned or not.

10. If ethnic or language differences exist they are played up, for example, the west of the Ukraine that speaks Ukrainian and the east that speaks Russian.

From Nato to anti-Nato

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the victory of counter-revolution on

the territory of the Soviet Union, the present Ukrainian President, Leonid Kuchma, initially followed a pro-West line but later warmed relations with the Russian Federation. He had initially proposed bringing the Ukraine into Nato but then rejected the idea.

Yanukovich also campaigned on an anti-Nato policy in the recent elections.

This development was not acceptable to the US and EU and the wheels of counter-revolution started to turn again. They wanted their own man at the top as in the case of Georgia.

Henry Kissinger, John McCain, Richard Holbrooke and other US leaders all visited the Ukraine in recent times.

Some background

The western part of the Ukraine was formerly a part of Poland and provided the Nazi armies with hundreds of thousands of traitors during the Second World War. These never accepted the defeat of Nazism or being part of the Soviet Union. They remained a political cancer in the body of the Soviet Union and to-

day, provide the chosen candidate of the US with their strong support even to the point of plunging the country into civil war.

The eastern part of the Ukraine was solidly against the candidate of the West. The workers in the industrial heartland of the Ukraine, the Donbas region, where only two per cent voted for Yushchenko, are threatening to hold a referendum and secede to the Russian Federation.

They point out that they provide the manufactured goods and feed the other regions. The Ukraine also receives its necessary oil and gas supplies from the Russian Federation.

When a part of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine was one of the Soviet Union's most prosperous republics. But independence and capitalism did not bring prosperity but widespread poverty. Many Ukrainians emigrated and looked for work in Europe and in the Russian Federation – at cheap wages, of course.

The furious response to the electoral failure of pro-Western candidate Yushchenko in the Ukraine is

indicated by the threatening and inflammatory comments of US Secretary of State Colin Powell. (The very same Colin Powell who has been exposed for his litany of lies regarding Iraq's alleged WMD, that he delivered to the UN Security Council to justify the invasion of Iraq.)

He now threatens Ukraine, demanding that the Ukrainian Government listen to the voice of the people and that it reconsiders the election result.

The simple meaning of these allegations and threats is that the Ukraine should install the candidate favoured by the US.

Behind the colourful mass rallies, the threats of a general strike and civil war, the raucous condemnations coming from the US, the European Union and the corporate media is the steady march of the US and Nato to push its frontier to the heart of the territory of the former Soviet Union and to further surround the Russian Federation. At yet, the outcome of the conflict is not clear.

Guardian (Australian communist weekly)

REVIEW

by Pat Abraham

Not on the Label by Felicity Lawrence, ISBN 0-141-01566-7, £7.99. Available from high street bookshops and internet (Amazon website). Felicity Lawrence is an award winning journalist and editor who has been writing on food-related issues for over 20 years. She is consumer affairs correspondent for the *Guardian*.

THE AUTHOR has achieved a mind-boggling exposé of the global food industry, from farms, factories, pack houses, lorry depots, supermarkets to unscrupulous advertising techniques aimed at children to guarantee sales of unhealthy junk food.

Travelling the world, she meets those involved and reveals the extent of exploitation, corruption and manipulation of markets in a ruthless drive by powerful corporations for maximum profit, squeeze at every level of production and distribution.

Corn sugar, soya, palm and rapeseed industries are concentrated in the hands of a few powerful corporations. The crops are among the most highly subsidised, unlike fruit and vegetables which get no subsidies.

All these products are used extensively in the junk food industry, generating huge profits and at the same time having a disastrous effect on health. “We are being fed junk and it is making us sick,” says Felicity Lawrence.

The food companies Dreyfus, Cargill, Bunge and ADM control 75 per cent of the United States and European Union soya markets, Cargill also controls 42 per cent of all US corn exports.

Think before you eat

Three companies: Cargill, Dreyfus and Tate & Lyle dominate the sugar industry – trading and refining.

The author has left nothing out. In coffee, a Ugandan ex-diplomat described how “five men from the big companies are deciding the fate of 25 million coffee farmers”. Concerning food miles – the distance food has to be transported from where it is grown to where it is consumed – for mangetout peas from Peru it is 6,312 miles and for baby corn from Thailand it is 6,643 miles.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank push for liberalisation, encouraging overproduction, leading to poverty and starvation at one end and big profits at the other. Added to that is the destruction of the environment.

Then there is the lucrative petrochemical industry, supplying emulsifiers, a major additive in food products as well as polythene tunnels for agriculture and packaging.

Capitalism can only tinker with correcting the problems it creates and the Blair government will achieve little in its mini-crusade against obesity and ill health.

That's where the pharmaceuticals will eventually step in, after all, profit is the life blood of capitalism, wherever it comes from, and those that serve it are not going to cut it off.

Felicity Lawrence states that she is neither anti-globalisation, nor anti-capitalism. But she has unwittingly described the nature and working of capitalism within the food industry. This is a truly good read.

REVIEW

by Andy Brooks

Albert Einstein: Ed: Jim Green, 90pp, Ocean Press, £8.95, Melbourne 2003.

ALBERT EINSTEIN, an icon of the 20th century with his mass of white hair and boyish grin, has won eternal fame for his contribution to physics and science on general.

Few outside the scientific world fully understand his general theory of relativity and even less know that the German Jewish professor who eventually made the United States his home was an active pacifist and an outspoken critic of capitalism.

This slim volume is part of the *Rebel Lives* series of publications by the Australian Ocean Press that is now available in Britain. These are not biographies but simply collections of writings, letters and speeches from and about remarkable men and women whose radicalism has been concealed or forgotten by the bourgeois media.

Professor Einstein was born in 1879 in the German town of Ulm and won the Nobel Prize in physics in 1921. By the time he died in 1955 he had become a household name all over the world. But in urban myth Einstein is the father of the atomic bomb even though his only contribution, as we see in his own words, was to urge Roosevelt in 1939 on the eve of the Second

Einstein the rebel

World War, to conduct large-scale experiments to explore the production of an atomic weapon. In fact Einstein was a life-long pacifist who renounced his German nationality in 1896 but returned to scientific work in Germany as a Swiss citizen – courageously signing a peace manifesto in Berlin just four months after the outbreak of the First World War.

Einstein was an emotional Zionist who nevertheless blamed British colonialism for the communal strife in Palestine and declined the offer of the presidency of Israel in 1952. And his humanist and socialist views led to his inevitable

post-war branding as an “enemy of America” by the Red-baiting Senator Joe McCarthy in the days when the *New York Post* could splash on “Einstein Red Faker, Should Be Deported, Rep. Rankin Screams”.

This anthology of letters and articles is an excellent source of reference. It captures the essence of Einstein's political thinking throughout his long life together with a time-line and a useful introduction its editor, Jim Green.

Albert Einstein is distributed by Pluto Press in Britain and it can be obtained from any high-street bookseller.

International News

Web: www.newworker.org

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Just collateral damage?

THE PRICE of cocaine and heroin in the streets of the United States is today five times lower than at the beginning of the 1980's, when then president, Ronald Reagan, declared war on drugs. A new study indicates that cocaine prices dropped from \$550 a gram in 1981 to just a \$100 a gram in 2003. While in 1981 it cost \$350 to buy a gram of heroin, last year the same amount went for just \$150.

Falling prices of illicit drugs is the most convincing evidence of the failure of US drug policy, designed on the assumption that a reduction in supply would push prices up and consequently drive sales down.

In line with that strategy, Washington attempts to lay the blame for increasing sales on growing social alienation outside the United States. This, despite the fact that the concept of attacking the vice by simply reducing production has had little success and has sparked new dramas and conflicts.

The report, by the non-governmental organisation, the Washington Office on Latin America, (WOLA) states that the "the problem of drug consumption continues to severe in the United States" where "the demand for cocaine, crack and heroin is at least stable, if not rising", according to expert John Walsh, who participated in researching the paper. "After 25

years and \$25 billion in the fight against drugs in Latin America, we are not a step closer to winning the war on drugs", said WOLA executive director, Joy Olson.

The US government, added Olson, "spent billions of dollars on anti-drug forces in Latin America and they have nothing to show for it except pure collateral damage." This is an allusion to the environmental havoc caused by defoliants and social problems created among peasants who were forced to give up producing coca, from which cocaine is extracted.

"The current policy doesn't work" said Coletta Youngers, co-author of the 400-page report, *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: the Impact of US Policy*.

Washington has earmarked more than \$3 billion for its so-called "Plan Colombia", which though presented as an anti-drug trafficking initiative, is really directed at defeating leftist guerrilla forces. But has still not managed to raise the price of cocaine and heroin in the United States.

Despite all this, President George W Bush continues to reiterate that his government will continue the policies and so it also appears that drug dealers will continue making a true "killing" in Latin America and in the United States.

Radio Havana Cuba

GUNMEN STORMED the US consulate in the Saudi Arabian port of Jeddah, triggering a three-hour siege that left at least 12 dead last Monday. Officials said that five staff members of the consulate and four Saudi guardsmen were killed, in addition to three of the attackers.

Eyewitnesses said that the attack on the Red Sea beachside compound took place amid a hail of bullets and explosions that set off a fire and sent smoke billowing into the sky. The attack was the first of its kind on a diplomatic mission in Saudi Arabia but was the latest in a series of bombings and shootings in the oil-rich kingdom since May 2003.

Initial reports said staff at the consulate had been seized by the attackers before security forces moved in, but a police officer at the scene later said no one had been held hostage.

American officials told reporters that all Americans at the consulate were safe and accounted for, although a spokesman at the US embassy in the capital Riyadh said five non-American employees and contractors were killed.

Saudi security forces sealed off the consulate, where a fire raged inside the compound and sent black smoke into the sky. Witnesses said that at least two explo-

sions were heard in the area. Two Saudi security men outside the main gate were hit by bullets from within the consulate, but it was not known

if they were among the four reported dead.

The US embassy in Riyadh and Washington's consulate in the eastern oil

city of Dhahran were reportedly closed as "a precautionary measure".

Radio Havana Cuba

Rising tension in central Africa threatens peace process

by Ssekandi Ronald and Chen Cailin in Kampala

TENSION is rising in the Great Lakes region of central Africa following the deployment of the Ugandan army along its border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and an incursion by Rwandan troops into eastern Congo.

Rwandan troops are marching in to root out the Hutu rebel *Interahamwe* militia that the Rwandans accuse of masterminding the 1994 genocide which claimed nearly 800,000 lives. Rwanda sent troops into eastern Congo in 1996 and 1998, citing the security threat from the exiled Hutu rebels.

Panic is spreading amongst the local population in the province and some Congolese are fleeing the country fearing an impending war. And the crisis may derail the DR Congo's preparations for its first presidential election in decades, as the government concentrates its efforts on the crisis in its eastern provinces.

The Congolese government has ordered thousands of troops to the border with Rwanda, while the Ugandans called their moves a "a precautionary deployment along the border... especially in areas we think are possible crossing points for some negative elements based in eastern DR Congo" where two Ugandan rebel groups – the People's Redemption Army and the Allied Democratic Forces operate. Both are based in DR Congo.

Relations between Rwanda and Uganda are rapidly cooling. Last week Uganda expelled a Rwandan diplomat for activities "incompatible with diplomatic sta-

tus" connected with the People's Redemption Army rebels. A Ugandan diplomat was expelled from Rwanda in retaliation.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame has assured the African Union that his troops will only have a short stay in the Congo, while the Uganda government told its parliament that relations with Rwanda are improving despite the recent diplomatic incident. Defence minister Ruth Nakabirwa stated that Uganda had a security problem with the DR Congo but not with Rwanda. A reconciliation meeting between the Ugandan and Rwandan leaders has also been arranged by the British government for January next year.

These disputes are reminiscent of the events that led to devastating war between 1998-2003 between Uganda,

Rwanda and some other African states in the eastern part of the vast DR Congo and they threaten the peace process the volatile region has been going through since.

Last August Rwanda, Uganda and DR Congo signed an agreement in Uganda committing themselves to the urgent task of the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and resettlement of the armed rebel groups in the region, vowing to achieve significant results within six months and complete the efforts within 12 months.

And only a few weeks ago the Great Lakes region heads of states signed a peace declaration in Tanzania expressing their determination to transform the region into one of sustainable peace, shared development and cooperation.

Xinhua news agency

Beyond the Kyoto Protocol

WE LIVE ON a sick planet. Its temperature is rising and though we are well aware of both the cause and the remedy of the disease, we have been unable, so far, to assure ourselves that our home will ever be healthy.

It's not for lack of trying. A decade of summits and meetings to attempt to solve the global warming crisis is concluding now in Buenos Aires. Nor is it a question of lack of information, or technology, or even that no adequate instrument exists to deal with the problem. It does exist but it is not used.

We are referring to the so-called "Kyoto Protocol", under which polluting nations are to reduce emissions of six toxic gases between 2008 and 2012. This is in order to prevent the greenhouse effect responsible for a rise in temperatures on the planet of between 1.5 and 4.5 degrees centigrade. The protocol clearly establishes that the developed countries, in which a fifth of the world's population lives, are responsible for 60 per cent of the world's pollution. That means that those nations must make most of the ef-

fort and that is exactly what was agreed in Kyoto.

The European Union agreed to lower its emissions of toxic gases by eight per cent, the United States must lower its emissions by seven per cent and Japan by six. The Ukraine, the Russian Federation and New Zealand pledged to reduce emissions to 1990 levels.

this year

But although it was approved in 1997, Russia ratified the accord just this year, which allowed it to finally take effect, despite strong opposition from the United States which this week refused in Buenos Aires to take any action to reduce its toxic emissions.

The health of our planet is deteriorating each year causing ever more human, economic and material losses. One only has to look at recent floods in the Philippines that took more than 1,500 lives. And the future looks dim. Tropical diseases are spreading beyond the Tropic of Cancer, forests are being destroyed, hundreds of animal and plant species are disappearing, crops are failing and storms are stronger and

more destructive than ever before.

All of this means critical economic and social problems that affect all of us. And, though it may be true that at the moment the most developed countries, like the United States, have the resources to face these disasters, soon there will be no way to contain the damage that humanity has created.

Even now, before the Kyoto Protocol has even started to be applied, its requirements are already insufficient. Unfortunately, there is nothing to indicate that the political will necessary to win this battle exists.

The industrialised nations, especially the United States with its uncontrolled emissions of toxic gases, its opulent way of life and irrational consumption, totally clash with any kind of environmental harmony.

As an African delegate recalled this week at the 10th Convention on Global Warming which is underway in Argentina, for the poor, developing countries, destruction of the environment is a threat worse than terrorism and war.

Radio Havana Cuba

