



South Tyneside Stop The War Coalition



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Time to End the Attack on Humanity

“The Manchester demonstration is taking place at a time when the “war on terror” launched by Bush and Blair has created an even more dangerous situation for the world’s people, in which war criminals at the head of these most powerful states have launched the most savage offensive on every front, with wars of occupation; attacks on rights, attacks on social programmes and the environment that have put humanity itself in jeopardy...”

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Preface

On September 19th, 2006 the South *Tyneside Stop the War Coalition* (STSWC) held a discussion forum entitled *Time to End the Attack on Humanity*. The first four articles are based on the presentations made at the Forum in South Shields Town Hall to inform the discussion. Other articles are contributions sent in by activists and friends of the anti-war movement in South Tyneside.

The STSWC Forum took place as part of the preparations for the national Stop the War Coalition demonstration which is taking place in Manchester on Saturday September 23rd.

One of the most important questions raised in the Forum and on which a number of people commented was how to stop the anti-war movement becoming part of the status quo “opposition” that will be manipulated into supporting yet another pro-war government.

Some of the comments made at the Forum form part of an increasing desire in the anti-war movement to bring about an anti-war government. Points were made about the necessity to educate, educate ourselves and others to do our own thinking and organise activities together based on that thinking.

Peoples desire to understand national and world events based on information and ideas they themselves obtain and generate rather than the disinformation and misinformation of the corporate

news agencies was very strongly grasped. Also, the idea that once this fog is lifted people themselves can understand the agenda of the finance, war, oil and other corporations whose interests stand behind cabinet government and that it is their attempt to put in place arrangements to replace Blair and carry on his pro-war and anti-social agenda.

Key in these comments was keeping the initiative in the hands of the anti-war mass movement itself, developing the organisation and tactics to intervene at every level as well as in the political process itself and unite people regardless of ideological, political allegiance, religious and other views.

All this was summed up in the words of the contributors condemning the attack on humanity that is being spearheaded by Bush and Blair, that this is not in our name and that another world is possible and that it is up to us to create it.

Hope Not Fear

by Phil Talbot

Some people noticed that when George Bush - the 'brave leader of the free world' - visited his friend Tony Blair in Sedgefield 3 years ago, he was wearing body armour under his shirt.

Mr Bush's choice of under-wear was quite revealing.

Only a very fear-filled American president would feel the need to wear body armour under his shirt when visiting the home town of his closest overseas ally.

Such a frightened, body-armoured, American president clearly had nothing but the 'politics of fear' to offer to Britain or the wider world - then or now.

Sadly, Britain under Tony Blair and his New Labour government, has found no better option than to join this frightened man from across the Atlantic in his crazy crusade of a 'war on terror'.

Hiding within security screens themselves, the fear-filled 'leaders of the free world' try to convince people that the world is more dangerous and terrifying than it really is.

According to Mr Bush and Mr Blair, there are 'tens of thousands' of 'terrorists' lurking around the world 'like ticking time bombs' wanting to 'destroy our way of life'.

That is just not true. That is just paranoid fantasy.

According to Mr Bush and Mr Blair, 'if you are not with us, you are with the terrorists'.

That is just not true. That is just paranoid fantasy.

Many of us who are, in fact, 'not with' Mr Bush and Mr Blair actually regard them as among the world's most dangerous 'terrorists'.

Small-scale non-state 'terrorists' could never threaten 'our way of life' as thoroughly as Mr Bush and Mr Blair have been doing over the past few years.

Through their lunatic 'war on terror' they have opened up a 'can of worms' and made the world a more dangerous place than it was before 9/11.

Their illegal attack on Iraq tore up existing conventions of international law.

The war in Iraq has resulted in more death and destruction than all the acts of the non-state forces they label 'terrorists' - in New York, London, and elsewhere.

In their home countries, they are destroying civil liberties - supposedly to counter a 'terror problem', which, in fact, they have largely created.

The frightened 'leaders of the free world' have attempted to scare their own citizens unnecessarily - as a way to maintain control over them.

And they have also scape-goated their own citizens in a disgraceful manner through their so-called 'anti-terror' measures.

In Britain alone, over the past 5 years, more than 1,000 people of Asian family origin have been arrested under 'anti-terror' measures. Only 27 of these people have been convicted of any offence - mostly not 'terror' related.

In fact, large parts of the British population, from all ethnic groups, are 'not with' Mr Bush and Mr Blair in their 'war on terror'. Few of these many opponents of Mr Bush and Mr Blair have any connection with the largely phantom 'networks of terrorists'.

Most of the opponents of Mr Bush and Mr Blair are in fact strongly 'anti-terror' - and part of a large loose alliance of broadly anti-war people, which, in fact, makes up the bulk of humanity.

Most people in most places would like to believe 'another world is possible' and would want to see a world without the sort of violence and war that Mr Bush and Mr Blair have been fostering.

A world without war is not an unworldly fantasy - it is possible, and we can all do small things on our local scales to start to bring it about.

South Tyneside Stop The War Coalition is a local group of people with diverse political, religious and cultural views. We were founded by a group of concerned people shortly before the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

We believe that being against a prolonged U.S./U.K. occupation of Iraq and other aspects of the 'war on terror' is not enough - we should also have positive ideas of building a better world without war.

We are not a political party with a fixed set of ideas that all supporters are expected to sign up to - indeed, we celebrate diversity and open debate, believing them key to a more prosperous and peaceful world.

More than three years since the invasion, Iraq is still an occupied country in a state of disorder - and the world is still in a state of uncertainty as to whether further military action will happen elsewhere as part of the war on terror.

It is a commonplace of politics that you depict your opponents in the worst possible light. We have not really had to do that with Mr Bush and Mr Blair and their cronies - because they have done it for themselves.

As each week has passed over the last few years more and more grotesque facts about their 'war on terror' have come to light - revealing lies, phoney scare stories, outrageous acts of violence, disgraceful abuses of the rule of law - all initially denied, then more or less admitted [though never with full explanation or apology]

First there were the machinations at the United Nations that tore up existing conventions of international law - particularly the vital convention of 'national sovereignty'.

Then there were the lies about 'weapons of mass destruction'.

Then there were the phoney 'terror plots' such as the 'ricin scare'.

Then there was the deliberate use of chemical weapons in Falluja and elsewhere.

Then there was the indiscriminate use of cluster bombs in highly populated areas.

Then there was detention of people without trial in torture camps.

Then there was a terrorist suspect 'shoot to kill' policy that led to innocent people being shot by police.

Then, just last week, there was the admission that the CIA does indeed have a secret network of prisons scattered around the world - where untold numbers of anonymous people are still being held. South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition believes that the control of world events should not be left to the decisions of Mr Bush and Mr Blair and the narrow circles of the rich and powerful they represent.

Millions of British people - including many who eventually decided to support the war - were deeply troubled by the idea of Britain being involved in a military invasion of another country - against normal United Nations conventions, and according to a plan mostly devised by a right-wing American government but with a so-called 'centre left' British government playing a major part.

The millions of anti-war voices were ignored and Mr Bush and Mr Blair got the war they wanted - a disastrous violent policy failure as we now know.

The initial anti-war movement failed to stop the war, but up and down the country there emerged numerous groups that did not exist before, acting locally but combining informally into a united anti-war movement.

In South Tyneside, and other parts of the North-East, there are now anti-war groups where nothing of the sort existed before.

More than a thousand people from South Tyneside signed our petitions against the start of the war in 2003.

Since then dozens of South Tynesiders have taken part in public meetings, demonstrations, peace vigils and other actions, locally and nationally.

During our campaigning, we also found many examples of people in the borough taking independent anti-war actions - including putting banners on their houses, taking part in prayer vigils, as well as lobbying politicians via telephone, mail, email, text messages and other forms of communication.

Large numbers of people still believe that the war was unjustified, illegal by the normal standards of international law, and likely to make the world a more dangerous place over the medium, and long terms.

Many believe that non-state terrorist attacks are likely to increase in number and severity in future as a consequence of the war.

The South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition has more than a dozen active supporters - and more than one hundred people have indicated that they want to continue to help our work in various ways.

A major focus of our present campaigning is against the war-mongering right-wing zealots at the heart of the present American government and the support they receive from the British government.

However, we are not anti-American.

We support the rich diversity of the American People and their culture - which we believe is better represented in our counterpart anti-war groups in the USA than in the present American government.

What we are seeing now with anti-war groups around the world is a shift in perspective.

Previously the anti-war movement was mostly a pressure group aimed at persuading those in power to cease their warmongering activities.

Now the anti-war movement has started to encourage people to empower themselves and consider ways of creating an anti-war government.

This has been evident in the forums such as this one that South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition has organised over the past few years.

At our first ever forum in May 2003, one speaker reflected the seriousness of the work our movement is undertaking for the future of humanity. He said:

'Wars of the 21st century are in fact an all out assault on the rights of people around the world - 'rights' that must remain sacred if we are to subscribe to notions of civilised transaction, with a view to stability of our societies, ultimately leading to a life free from molestation, threat, and danger for all the human family.'

Another speaker then stressed the importance of organising locally, making the vital point that 'people have to do their own thinking and organising and create new arrangements to give this movement for peace permanent life'.

In many different ways at that and subsequent forums speakers have elaborated this view that the movement should work to establish an anti-war government.

South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition has a local-based, do-it-yourself approach to campaigning. We operate on a small local scale, but with global concerns in mind.

The primary question we ask is: How can people acting on a relatively small-scale, locally, influence wider events nationally and internationally? We believe that 'another world is possible' - and that through collected small-scale actions, we can create it.

Phil Talbot - September 19th, 2006

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Hope Not Fear - some end-notes for further consideration.

The casualties of the 'war on terror' are not only those people suffering physical damage.

Psychological scars run deep. In August 2006 the MoD released figures showing 1,541 British soldiers who served in Iraq are suffering from psychiatric illness. Last year, 727 cases were

recorded, amounting to nearly 10% of the British deployment at that time.

People who live in fear, think in fear-filled terms, and distort their own minds. The lives people in 'security' services live, for example, - in secret rooms, talking in coded languages, constantly suspecting others - means the ordinary winds of common sense often do not blow into their world views. They are constantly looking to react to an 'enemy' in adversarial and conspiratorial terms. It is absolutely necessary to the 'intelligence' mentality that they put the worst possible interpretation upon their supposed 'adversaries'. Excited, overstimulated people, often on very short sleep, together with all the toys of secret intelligence work - the bugs, the 'Top Secret' documents, the special passes - inevitably produce irrational behavior patterns, and a kind of 'institutionalized paranoia'.

We might be better off worrying less about the few non-state terrorists who might slip through the net, and more about the ways 'anti-terror' measures and the irrationalities associated with them are corrupting our civil liberties.

The best defence against terrorism is not to behave in a terrorist manner ourselves - and actually to create the progressive and democratic societies we are supposed to need the 'security' services to 'protect'.

What we also need, perhaps, are new positive 'idealistic' dreams.

We have become relatively inarticulate and undirected in our collective thinking - and so more prone to fearful negative paranoid fantasies.

We are squandering the possibilities of peace.

Our Unity and Resistance Against the Warmongers and Scaremongers is Key

by Roger Nettleship

The Manchester demonstration is taking place at a time when the “war on terror” launched by Bush and Blair has created an even more dangerous situation for the world’s people, in which war criminals at the head of these most powerful states have launched the most savage offensive on every front, with wars of occupation; attacks on rights, attacks on social programmes and the environment that have put humanity itself in jeopardy.

There is a growing movement against warmongers in government. The British government and its members have not drawn the conclusion that is they that are responsible for the loss of life both in this country and Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, including British soldiers who are stationed on foreign soil. People are increasingly questioning the whole position, taken up by an obedient media, to attempt to sow divisions and suspicion to blame the situation on “terrorism” and lay charges of this against the Muslim community and others of extremism and to whip up the most frantic hysteria and scare mongering.

The conclusion which a wide section of the people are coming to is that the promotion and acts of terrorism serve the interests of the warmongers and scare mongers to impose the type of society that

restricts its citizens to be mere consumers of all the lies and misinformation that is dished up about the serious problems of security, of the health service, of the environment and the devastating wars that the British government has undertaken.

There is no attempt to support all people and all communities in investigating and finding solutions to these serious and dangerous problems whilst at all times safeguarding the unity of the people and outlawing any attempt to promote division. Instead there is a deliberate attempt by these hardened warmonger politicians and the obedient media to incite an atmosphere of suspicion and blame against the whole Muslim community and whoever else they want to target. The alleged terrorist plot and its thwarting has been used to attempt to gloss over and divert attention from the war and other crimes of the "war on terror". They want to subvert the growing movement of the people and intend to try and smash the precious unity that the people themselves have forged in the face of the attacks on their communities and on the nations and countries of the world. The unity of the nationalities and cultures that are reflected in all our communities in Britain and the unity of the peoples and nations is what the people so earnestly desire.

The warmongers and scare mongers are desperate people driven by an agenda set by a tiny minority who would rather see the world destroyed in their quest for monopoly over the world's resources and markets than step off the scene of history.

The growing movement against war and its justification has been joined by military families against war, the families and communities of those who have been targeted in arrests by the state, and indeed also the survivors of 7/7 who are demanding that the truth of these outrages be uncovered and now whole sections have come forward with the dangerous situation, destruction and death caused by the US-Israeli invasion of Lebanon with Britain's support.

In this situation developing our unity and resistance against the warmongers and scaremongers is key. It is this unity of the people that the government and the media are so desperate to split and they have shown already how far they are prepared to go to try and divide us. Unity and resistance against these warmongers and scaremongers is the watchword.

For the people there is no need to believe any of the “news” that the media pumps out daily to justify the “war on terror”.

Firstly, they dehumanise the people. In Afghanistan they tell us that the NATO force is there to defend the Afghans and kill “insurgents”, or “Taliban”, or to stop opium production. Of course, in reality they are an occupying force, just as in Iraq, responsible for the killing of Afghan people every day and now Afghanistan produces 92% of the worlds opium one third of which is produced in the British occupied and controlled Helmand province.

Secondly, the US and British attack on Afghanistan and Iraq and their occupation, the US-Israeli attack on Lebanon and the siege of Gaza are crimes that are worse than any in the modern world which have been undertaken by any other government or individual terror group. In this situation do we need to take a stand on any “justification” for their “war on terror”? Whether it is “weapons of mass destruction”, “tyrannical leaders”, “terrorist plots”, all the lies and disinformation have one aim to justify their attacks on the peoples and nations at home and abroad.

The “war on terror” is a war *of* terror aimed at creating the very response it claims to be aimed at defeating in order to justify a permanent war against the peoples and nations of the world. The *Independent on Sunday* ran an article on the anniversary of 9-11 stating that the “war on terror” had claimed the lives of a minimum of 62,006 people, created 4.5 million refugees and cost the US more than the sum needed to pay off the debts of every poor nation on earth.” However the special report admitted that this figure on the number of deaths in Iraq alone could in its estimate “reach as high as 180,000”

Unity and resistance of the anti-war movement has made it one of the most vital movements of the peoples over recent years in opposition to the “war on terror”. This is why it is vital that the people keep the initiative in their own hands and not allow the movement to be allied to the “opposition” created by the big parties. An anti-war government will not be brought about by changing one warmongering Prime minister for another from a war mongering cabinet, or another of the big parties. Whilst the political crisis is real and being deepened by the continuing opposition of the people it must be recognised that the “debate” conducted in the media as to

which leader should take over from Blair is an attempt by the ruling circles to find a new arrangement with which to continue these attacks on humanity.

What the movement stands for is stopping the war and replacing Blair with an anti-war government. Stopping the war means stopping this "war on terror", putting on trial those responsible, paying reparations for the huge damage to Iraq and other countries, abiding by international law, bringing all troops home from foreign soil, recognising the sovereignty of all the nations of the world and of taking a stand to resolve international conflict peacefully. The fight for an anti-war government in Britain is the greatest support the British people can give to the peoples of Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, Iran and North Korea.

What the movement stands for is uniting people politically around its programme and oppose any attempt to split the people on ideological, religious or any other ground.

What the movement stands for is that another world is possible in which the people's security and well-being is at the centre of all concerns and that warmongers are no longer allowed to usurp power and the people are able to establish an anti-war government.

Roger Nettleship - September 19th, 2006

The Ambiguities of Ownership, Self Determination, and Sovereignty

by Nader Naderi

As dawn breaks, the saga of human tragedies, and triumphs, begin yet another new cycle. The tragedies facing those in the far flung lands, translated through puffed-up, bloodshot eyes of the wailing women young and old, still mournful, and tearful from the ghastly memories, of the burial of the mangled, and mutilated remains of what used to be their offspring, husband, brother, or sister, once more registering the unfolding chaos, and carnage these victims of aggression are drowning in. But as John Pilger notes it, this is only the slow news. Pilger further explains; “When I began working as a journalist, there was something called “slow news”. We would refer to “slow news days” when “nothing happened” – apart from, that is, triumphs and tragedies in faraway places where most of humanity lived. These were rarely reported, or the tragedies were dismissed as acts of nature, regardless of evidence to the contrary. The news value of whole societies was measured by their relationship with “us” in the west and their degree of compliance with, or hostility to, our authority. If they didn’t measure up, they were slow news.”

Slow news is also the continuous unfolding of atrocities of US

soldiers, as reflected by Robert Fisk; “from Abu Ghraib to Guantanamo to Bagram, to the battlefields of Iraq and to the “black” prisons of the CIA, humiliation and beatings, rape, anal rape and murder have now become so commonplace that each new outrage is creeping into the inside pages of our newspapers”. Fisk goes on to state; “My reporting notebooks are full of Afghan and Iraqi complaints of torture and beatings from August 2002, and then from 2003 to the present point. How, I keep asking myself, did this happen? Obviously, the trail leads to the top. But where did this cult of cruelty begin?”.

Slow news includes the eye witness accounts of events by army specialist Tony Lagouranis, who recanted to Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, which can not be classified as main stream media by any measure. Specialist Lagouranis, part of an American mobile interrogation team working with US marines, during his interview describing a 2004 operation in Babel, outside Baghdad goes on record; “Every time Force Recon went on a raid, they would bring back prisoners who were bruised, with broken bones, sometimes with burns. They were pretty brutal to these guys”. Specialist Lagouranis continues; “I would ask the prisoners what happened, how they received these wounds. And they would tell me that it was after their capture, while they were subdued, while they were handcuffed and they were being questioned by the Force Recon Marines ... One guy was forced to sit on an exhaust pipe of a Humvee ... he had a giant blister, third-degree burns on the back of his leg.”

While slow news days grind on, in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the theatres of various operation freedoms, and or war on terror trademarks, the vast numbers of the dead and wounded are on the rise on an almost hourly basis. While the regular news informs us all; Blair is Labour’s most successful prime minister, winning three landslide election victories in a row and airline passengers are happy with the new security measures, designed for their safety. The surreal choices of the news items propagated by the various anonymous news editors, and back room staff, sensibly following the directions of the relevant boards of governors, or the proprietors. In addition to the well intentioned self imposed censorship of the same media organisations, are explained away as exercise of care

not to offend, and or upset the sensibilities of their audiences. This clean, and clinical approach, to clean news, that is news clean of gore, blood, torn limbs, charred bodies, and reality, has its own appeal to the sensibilities of those liberals, whom find the glimpses of reality as war pornography, and or gore-feast. However, these Liberals do not extend the same concerns for the plight of those caught up in the theatres of war whom are forced to live the nightmare, and witness the carnage first hand, young and old, man, woman, and child. After all those far flung lands are far removed from our own doorsteps, and clean cut lawns, further, those living in those far flung lands are not perhaps as susceptible to nausea in the face of torn limbs, ripped open guts with intestines hanging out, or being forced to carry their dead on the roof racks of taxis, and small trucks.

George Galloway decrying the neo conservative perpetrators of the carnage unleashed, and the ultimate perpetrators, namely Messrs Bush and Blair, the point men to these crazed Zionists. Asks do these hermits caught up in the vacuum of office, and divorced from reality, as they sit behind their mahogany desks in the White House and Downing Street. Do they imagine that the rest of us have not noticed how they do not deem those Arab and Muslim dead worthy of the same grief as attends their own?

However, Mickey Z of MickeyZ.net in his style observes the limitation of the terms of current debate, and considers transcending the usual humilities passed as descent by writing; "There's plenty of tolerated public outcry against the Bush administration and the occupation of Iraq, but it's neither fashionable nor acceptable to go as far as saying, no, I do not support the troops and yes, I hate what America does. Fear of recrimination allows the status quo to control the terms of debate". Mickey Z further elaborates; "Until we voice what is in our hearts and have the nerve to admit what we hate...we will never create something that can be loved."

On the other hand Galloway goes on to reflect; "In truth, it was the freedom of US corporate culture, the democracy of the dollar and an Arab world ruled by corrupt kings and puppet presidents just as pliant but a little less gauche, able to rig an election as the Bush's do in Florida rather than tactlessly incarcerating the opposition."

Notwithstanding the above, Galloway's latter remarks in fact point to the implicit and underlying war against humanity, that is waged by the current Junta in the Whitehouse, and Downing Street, appointing themselves as the Masters of the Planet, and universe beyond. These latter-day robber barons challenging the inherent ambiguities of the concepts of ownership, sovereignty, and self-determination, have legitimised the use of lethal force as currency in the acquisition of the resources of those lands inhabited by those indigenous populations, whom are left with little recourse to any constructs in law, and or arbitration, and are faced with the choices of death, and or surrender of their precious resources, with little recompense other than their lives being spared. These blatant disregards to fundamental human values and constructs, are then translated to a sustained assault on common place values of civil liberties, and human rights, in our own lands.

The lawlessness must end, crime against humanity, and crimes against peace must be met within the existing constructs in place since Nuremberg. The perpetrators must not be allowed to slink away into the shadows, and or to perpetuate even more wars to abstain from appearing in the relevant courts and account for their crimes of aggression, and their crimes against peace.

It would serve us all well to take note of William Blum, who declares, "I'm committed to fighting U.S. foreign policy, the greatest threat to peace and happiness in the world, and being in the United States is the best place for carrying out the battle. This is the belly of the beast, and I try to be an ulcer inside of it."

Nader Naderi - September 19th, 2006

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The Military and the Monetary

by Alan Newham

*The military and the monetary,
They get together whenever they think its necessary,
They've turned our brothers and sisters into mercenaries,
They are turning our planet into a cemetery.*

“Work for Peace” Gil Scott-Heron

Gil Scott-Heron makes reference in the same song to President Dwight D. Eisenhower who, in his farewell address to the American people in 1961, said that America had been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions and America must not fail to comprehend its implications. He said, “ In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought, or unsought, by the Military-Industrial Complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist”. Eisenhower is credited with creating the term Military-Industrial Complex.

A precursor of such a term was American Lieutenant General Smedley Butler, author of “War is a Racket” published in 1935. Looking back, Butler noticed how defence industries lobbied politicians emphasising the job creation benefits on the one hand, and on the other, concerns that without America's involvement in

World War One, the Allied countries may lose the war owing billions of dollars to American banks, munitions makers and manufacturers; money that they wouldn't get back.

President Woodrow Wilson having been re-elected in 1916 claiming that he had

“Kept us out of war” asked Congress 5 months later to declare war on Germany-

According to Butler on the pretext that it was a “war to make the world safe for democracy” a phrase people might be familiar with in more recent times.

In the 1980's there was a huge increase in US military and defence spending during the Reagan arms build up, and, what American Professor J.K.Galbraith referred to as

“...The emergence of a largely autonomous military establishment standing above and apart from democratic control” Just as worrying is Galbraith's assertion that the civilian heads of the defence establishment play a mere ceremonial role; that tenure in these positions is also brief and they move onto jobs in the defence industry, either employed directly or as consultants. In effect, all are part of a closed circle of common interest.

The same ceremonial role may apply to the Congress and its Committees whose members are given careful attention by high military officers and civilian officials.

Chalmers Johnson, retired Professor of International relations at California University gives an example of how Legislators in general are held hostage by the different firms and military installations in their home districts or states; a big project like the B-2 Stealth Bomber has the sum of its parts divided between the 48 continental states to insure that individual members of Congress can be threatened with the loss of jobs in their district should they ever get the idea that another Weapon of Mass Destruction is not necessary. As Professor Galbraith has argued – no one will doubt that the modern corporation is a dominant force in the present – day economy. Where once in the US there were capitalist individuals such as Carnegie and Rockefeller – Galbraith now claims that power belongs to corporate management – pro-active in developing ever

new-sophisticated weaponry without being asked to do so and then to present their designs to be awarded production and profit.

As corporate interest moves to power in what was the public sector, it serves the corporate interest e.g. that of nominally private firms into the defence establishment. From this comes a primary influence on the military budget, on foreign policy, military commitment and, ultimately, military action. War. Major corporate figures are also in senior positions in the Federal Government; you will know the one who came from the bankrupt and thieving Enron to preside over the US army.

The American State Department official Francis Fukuyama famously claimed the end of history following the collapse of the Soviet Union; the West had won and everyone would reap what was called the “peace dividend” – a reward, a benefit. Yet, just as before, the development of weapons systems continues apace with no plausible enemy, only to sustain the Military-Industrial Complex, so necessary to the US economy.

As governments around the world adopt and support the neo-conservative agenda of the so called “free market”; so powerful that corporations can dictate government policies; when ordinary people- the citizens of the world- appear to have less and less influence on the powerful, so the Military- Industrial Complex gathers greater power over our destiny, an undemocratic self – serving profit driven major player in shaping the world for its own benefit.

It seems as if we, the ordinary citizens of the world are deliberately being prevented from rubbing along together – the manufacturers of weapons, the manufacturers of animosity between peoples – simply won't allow it.

Smedley Butler summarised three steps that must be taken to smash the war racket.

1. We must take the profit out of war
2. We must permit the youth of the land who would bear arms to decide whether or not there should be war

3. We must limit our military forces to home defence purposes.

If those steps sound hopelessly naïve today, then it's a measure of how deeply embedded in power are those who threaten our civilisation.

The people we will see on the streets of Manchester on 23rd September this year should remind us that there are those – not only here in the UK – but all over the world for whom silence is shame and will continue to speak out and refuse to tolerate those who manufacture war.

Alan Newham - September 19, 2006

The Struggle Goes On

by Alan Trotter

Here we are in the 21st Century, the civilized homosapiens behaving like cave men slaughtering our brothers and sisters in foreign lands, we send young men to do the dirty work of our leaders, our government sacrifice young men on the alter of bigotry then bemoan their slaughter with worn out lies and phrases.

The facts are there before us and what sorry reading they make, tens of thousands killed, untold numbers suffering horrific mental and physical injuries, the billions of pounds and dollars that has been spent on creating death and destruction could have used on innumerable projects to benefit humanity. Our country or the world is no safer through our political leaders inventing Bogeyman stories to create fear throughout the land but the populace are beginning to wake from their slumber and expressing their resentment of this government.

Our movement is growing, the decent and the gentle come from all walks of life, from all religions and all political persuasions, we must hold on to our courage and remember that our strength is in our unity, we will need to draw on this when the racist backlash comes. It is time to put the real culprits in the dock and charge them with crimes against Humanity

The Three Stooges

by John Tinmouth

Suddenly, the airwaves are filled, from John O' Groats to Land's End, with interviewers thrusting microphones into the faces of hapless Muslims, or confronting them in round-table discussions. They are earnestly asked if there is anything more that "we" can do (that is, anything more "they" can do), in these parlous times, to help the "war on terror" (brainless phrase). The tone has become increasingly illiberal. The implication is that they are not fully "on board", that in some way they should, they *ought* to do more, and *they are not doing it*. Quite what the average British Muslim, living peacefully in Acacia Avenue, can do, is never fully asserted. Actively spy on his neighbours? Convert to Christianity, join the paras, and go to fight in Iraq? Approve of our foreign policy despite his instincts? Disapprove of our foreign policy, but shut up about it?

Patriotism (of the gutter variety, my country right or wrong) is not yet a social demand. We do not have to run the flag up the flagpole every morning. We do not have to think certain things, and not others. All that is required of us, Muslim or non-Muslim, is that we stay peacefully within the bounds of the law. Or at least, this is how it used to be. And no doubt the vast majority of Muslims would, like the rest of us, dutifully report a bomb factory next door.

Last weekend, in an open letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair, British Muslim groups and politicians said British foreign policy on issues like Iraq and the Israel-Hizbollah war was putting us all at increased risk of a terrorist attack.

Enter New Labour's three stooges, Reid, Howells and Beckett (Blair having gone fishing). Blair's praetorian guard know that they cannot let this one stick, or, with the likelihood of further attacks, it will be very bad for them. Thus they set about strewing red herrings across our path, and creating smokescreens to divert our attention from the real issue.

However, there is no question that British foreign policy has increased the likelihood of a terrorist attack. The facts are:

- Shehzad Tanweer, one of the London bombers, said so himself. In his recently released video statement, he stated "To the non-Muslims of Britain, you may have wondered what you have done to deserve this. You are those who have voted in your government, who have in turn and still continue to this day continue to suppress our mothers, children, brothers and sisters from the east to the west in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya. Your government has openly supported the genocide of over 150,000 innocent Muslims in Fallujah." Can any statement be clearer than this? Of course Tanweer could be unrepresentative, and the others may have done it, say, just because they hated travelling on the Tube, but it doesn't seem likely, does it?

- Tanweer also said "What you have witnessed now is only the beginning of a string of attacks that will continue and become stronger until you pull your forces out of Afghanistan and Iraq and until you stop your financial and military support to America and Israel."

- Osama bin Laden also said so himself, in a message broadcast on al-Jazeera in October 2003. He reserved the right to retaliate against all countries involved in Iraq. He said "We reserve the right to retaliate at the appropriate time and place against all countries involved [in Iraq], especially the UK, Spain, Australia, Poland, Japan and Italy, not to exclude those Muslim states that took part, especially the Gulf states, and in particular Kuwait, which has be-

come a launch pad for the crusading forces.”

- The police think so, according to a piece in *The Guardian* (July 6), headed “Police report: foreign policy helped make UK a target”, They said so in a private briefing document to senior Scotland Yard officers compiled by anti-terrorist specialists within the last few months. The paper said it had seen the document, which was marked “restricted”. The document said that the conflict in Iraq has had a “huge impact” and stated that the removal of grievances the jihadists use to justify violence will take time: “What will change them - gradually - is argument, the removal of justifying causes (Palestine, Iraq), the erosion of perverted beliefs and day-to-day frustrations.” *The Guardian* piece also said there has been debate among counter-terrorism experts about the extent to which Britain’s foreign policy has made it a terrorist target. One counter-terrorism source said: “We should not slavishly follow the government line. It damages our ability to do our job.”

- A joint Home Office and Foreign Office dossier prepared in April 2004 for Tony Blair also thought so. This was discussed in an article in the *Sunday Times* (July 10, 2005) just after the London bombings, headed “Leaked No 10 dossier reveals Al-Qaeda’s British recruits” The newspaper reported that the confidential assessment forms the basis of the government’s counter-terrorism strategy and noted that the Iraq war is identified by the dossier as a key cause of young Britons turning to terrorism. The analysis stated “It seems that a particularly strong cause of disillusionment among Muslims, including young Muslims, is a perceived ‘double standard’ in the foreign policy of western governments, in particular Britain and the US. The war on terror, and in Iraq and Afghanistan, are all seen by a section of British Muslims as having been acts against Islam.” It also said that “Perceived western bias in Israel’s favour over the Israel/Palestinian conflict is a key long-term grievance of the international Muslim community which probably influences British Muslims.”

- The spooks thought so too. In September 2003, the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) disclosed that the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) had warned Mr. Blair in February – a month before the start of the Iraq war – that al-Queda was

“by far the greatest threat to western interests and that the threat would be increased by military action against Iraq.”

- The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), in which the police and customs are represented along with the intelligence services, also thought so. Leaked extracts from a JTAC assessment drawn up in June 2005 were published in the *New York Times* (19 July 2005). The assessment included the words “Events in Iraq are continuing to act as motivation and a focus of a range of terrorist related activity in the UK” The government has not denied that this is an authentic extract from the assessment.

- Disinformation has been extensively used by the government. One particularly effective line which seems to have successfully misled many commentators has been to point out that several al-Qaeda attacks, including the 9/11 attack, took place before the invasion of Iraq. To refute this, it is necessary to look at recent history. It is 50 years or so since the Suez crisis ended Britain’s colonial domination in the Middle East – a long time for Arab resentment to considerably dissipate. Around that time, the United States, the superpower, took over, and began a long series of belligerent actions in the Middle East in general, including fomenting coups (Iraq), using sanctions (Iraq), securing permanent military bases (Saudi Arabia), and it’s aggressive support for Israel in both war and peace. It did so in pursuit of it’s own vital interests – primarily oil. As a result, it is widely disliked in the Middle East by the “man in the street” as opposed to the political elites. In other words, it became the main focus of Arab dislike by many, and hatred by some. Terrorist attacks against the USA before the Iraq war are not therefore surprising. It was Britain’s support for America in Iraq which put us in the firing line together with them, and re-energised Arab resentments towards us. This is hinted at in the April 2004 joint Home Office and Foreign office dossier referred to above, which includes the following words: “The perception is that passive ‘oppression’ as demonstrated in British foreign policy, eg non-action in Kashmir and Chechnya, has given way to ‘active oppression’ – the war on terror, and in Iraq and Afghanistan are all seen by a section of British Muslims as having been acts against Islam.”

- Another effective line of disinformation is to misrepresent

the nature of terrorist attacks. Thus Jack Straw on 18th July 2005: "...But let me also say this the time for excuses for terrorism are over, the terrorists have struck across the world in countries allied with the United States, backing the war in Iraq and in countries which had nothing whatever to do with the war in Iraq. They struck in Kenya, in Tanzania, in Indonesia, in the Yemen. They struck this weekend in Turkey which was not supporting our action in Iraq." Straw knew of course that the targets of the attacks in Kenya, Tanzania and Yemen were American, and the attack on Bali in Indonesia was against Australian tourists (Australia being part of the "coalition of the willing" in the Iraq war). He also knew that the attack on Turkey was committed by a Kurdish separatist organisation, not by al-Qaeda.

We know all this, of course, but in spin-filled times such as these it is sometimes necessary to state the obvious. No wonder we have been refused a full enquiry. Instead, we have more fact-free government spin from the stooges:

· John Reid said that "No government worth its salt would stay in power in my view, and no government worth its salt, would be supported by the British people if our foreign policy or any other aspect of policy was being dictated by terrorists." The implication, the attempted slur, is that those of us who would like a change in foreign policy wish to buckle under the terrorist threat. This, of course, is nonsense. We do not wish to change foreign policy to appease the terrorists who wish to attack us – we utterly oppose them too. We wish to change it, over Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and the Middle East generally, including our current subservience to the American line, because *(a) it is abhorrent (b) in purely practical terms it is the biggest foreign policy disaster since Suez (c) it has badly damaged our standing around the world (except, of course, with the ugly clique of neocons currently in residence in the White House).*

· Kim Howells said the letter's comments were "facile" (again, the attempted slur). He said "I have no doubt that there are many issues which incite people to loath government policies but not to strap explosives to themselves and go out and murder innocent people. There is no way of rationalising that. I think it is very, very dangerous when people who call themselves community leaders

make some assumption that somehow that there's a rational connection between these two things." The use of the words "some assumption", "somehow" and "rational" is of course a not-so-subtle smear to imply a bunch of crazies attempting to make a spurious link between foreign policy and the terrorist threat. All we can say is, read the facts we have given above. Howells is strong on assertions, but non-existent on facts.

- Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said those who blamed the country's foreign policy for the terrorism threat were making "the gravest possible error. This is part of a distorted view of the world, a distorted view of life. Let's put the blame where it belongs: with people who wantonly want to take innocent lives," she said. Again, no facts – just the bald assertion of error. Of course those who commit atrocities are to blame for them – but that tells us precisely nothing about whether they committed such atrocities because they were motivated, in whole or in part, by British foreign policy. It's a red herring.

- We could add a fourth to the trio - Transport Secretary Douglas Alexander. He told BBC Radio "No government worth its salt should allow its foreign policy to be dictated to under the threat of terrorism. The contemporary challenge we face is how do we maintain the safety of the British public, how do we uphold the perfect right of people to debate these issues but never to succumb to what I think would be both dangerous and foolish". Same old fact-free stuff, then – we're just dangerous and foolish. But who's really dangerous and foolish – us or them?

John Tinmouth - August, 2006

Remembrance

by Les Barker

South Tyneside Stop The War Coalition gratefully thanks Les Barker, a professional performance poet, for this contribution.

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I want to tell you of a dream that came to me one night; I dreamed I saw a monument, an arch of purest white, The purest, whitest arch atop the longest marble wall; I saw when I moved closer that it bore no words at all.

I heard a sound behind me; as I turned, I caught my breath; I saw a hooded figure and I knew that it was Death. "Do you like my piece of sculpture? Let me tell you what it's for; It's just one more memorial to those who die in war.

It's just one more memorial, like those in every town; Once a year, you honour them; you stand with heads bowed down In remembrance of the sacrifice of those who won't come back From Paschendaele, Gallipoli, Vietnam and Iraq.

And so," he said, "this monument; as yet it bears no text; A monument remembering the war that's coming next. You'll come here and you'll read the names and touch the ones you know; If ever you remembered.....you'd never let them go.

Look beside the wall; see, there's a mason standing by To carve the names
of sons and daughters sent away to die. If ever you remembered, he'd not
carve 'lest we forget' ... If ever you remembered; but you've not remembered
yet."

I woke and Death was gone; and I swore that very night That I would build a
monument; an arch of purest white; The purest, whitest arch atop the
longest marble wall; And strive for all my life to see it bears no words at all.

Les Barker

[tune: Roslin Castle]

For more of Les's work visit:
<http://www.mrsackroyd.com/>

An Open Letter to the ‘Contenders’ for the New Labour Leadership

by Phil Talbot

Dear Mr David Miliband, MP for South Shields

More than 3 years on from the U.S.-U.K-led attack on Iraq, will you now come clean on the ways the New Labour government of which you are a prominent member misled the people of South Tyneside?

Will you also now acknowledge some important matters of fact that we first pointed out to you in 2003:

- that the British people were tricked over the reasons for going to war?
- that you personally misled the people of South Tyneside on the issue of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ [WMD]?
- that the world is a much more dangerous place as a consequence of the Iraq war, which you fully supported?

The charge we make against you personally is very specific, and the evidence against you is overwhelming.

On 15 March 2003 you told the Shields Gazette that you had ‘overwhelming evidence’ that Iraq possessed WMD.

This claim of 'overwhelming evidence' was demonstrably untrue, as, more than 3 years on, not a trace of real solid evidence of WMD has been found in occupied Iraq.

Will you now finally admit that you did not have the 'overwhelming evidence' you claimed to have?

In a letter to South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition [STSTWC], dated 11 August 2003, you said: '... as more facts become known and more change is achieved, we can all come to a balanced conclusion about the decisions that were taken'.

More than 3 years on, with many 'more facts' now known, the 'balanced conclusions' of STSTWC are that:

- British public opinion was originally strongly against the war plans, but the British people were tricked into accepting – rather than actively supporting – the war by a mixture of lies and scare stories, which you played a prominent part in spreading.
- Without the evidence of WMD, and without proper United Nations sanction, the invasion and occupation of Iraq was illegal by any standard existing convention of international law.
- The toppling of Saddam – however odious he might have been – in the manner it was done was equally illegal.
- The illegal actions of the U.S.-U.K-led coalition, in the name of a so-called 'war on terror', have corrupted the fabric of international relations - increasing the level of general lawlessness world-wide, and making it a much more dangerous place as a consequence.
- A 'can of worms' has now been opened up – there are now untold numbers of 'terrorists' of unknown designations, and a general state of fear and insecurity.

What are your own 'balanced conclusions' Mr Miliband?

In an open letter to you first issued on 31 July 2003, we asked you a further

series of detailed questions, which you have so far failed to answer.

We now repeat them:

- Did you ever really believe that Iraq had battlefield WMD ready to use at 45 minutes notice? - as your leader Tony Blair suggested to the House of Commons [24/09/2002].
- Would you now accept that the style of the U.S-led assault with ground troops strongly suggests that war-planners believed all along that American and British troops would not be attacked by WMD?
- Do you now agree that Britain was never under direct threat of a nuclear, chemical or biological attack by Iraq and that Saddam did not possess usable battlefield WMD?
- Do you personally regret supporting an invasion that took place contrary to the normal conventions of international law, without the support of the UN, and without 'overwhelming evidence' of Saddam's possession of WMD?
- Do you agree with your leader's implication that regardless of international law and regardless of accuracy of intelligence, the 'result' justified the action?.
- Have you read policy statements by the right-wing American 'think-tank' The Project for a New American Century? In a statement of principles first published in 1997 - and signed by, among others, Dick Cheney, now U.S. Vice President, Donald Rumsfeld, now U.S. Defence Secretary - this group calls on Americans to support an increase in defence spending and attempts to 'rally support for American global leadership'. Are you happy to be, in effect, a supporter of such a project of American imperialism? Is it in the best interests of Britain and the wider world?
- Would you now agree that the invasion of Iraq was an example of the new style of American imperialism, which Britain is tamely supporting, and that the world is a much more dangerous place as a result?

We trust you will have the politeness to reply to this letter - and with the honesty and integrity that the people of South Tyneside would expect from an elected representative.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Talbot - Tuesday, September 19, 2006

On behalf of the South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition.

p.s. On 15 March 2003, you were asked by the Shields Gazette about the circumstances in which you would 'resign on principle'. Your reply was: 'My bottom lines are that the government acts in accordance with international law, pursues international co-operation at every stage, and argues for a wider settlement in the Middle East that brings peace to Israel and Palestine, stability to Iraq and democracy and prosperity to the region.' Would you now agree with our 'balanced conclusion' that the government of which you are a member has conducted its business in a manner falling well below your own 'bottom lines'?

Address at the Monument Condemning the US-Israeli Attack on Lebanon and Gaza

by Roger Nettleship

The following remarks were made by Roger Nettleship on behalf of South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition to those gathered at the Monument, Newcastle on Saturday, August 19th, 2006.

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On Behalf of South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition I bring the condemnation of the people of South Tyneside to the attack on Lebanon and Gaza to this protest today which is taking place in Newcastle and in other Cities at home and abroad.

Only this morning it was reported by Lebanese forces that Israeli commandos launched an attack 60 miles into Lebanon in the Bekeaa valley. This is in breach of the UN ceasefire resolution but It wasn't the UN resolution or unifil that repulsed this attack it was the Lebanese resistance and their heroic Hizbollah fighters.

This sums up the situation we are faced with. Just as the Lebanese people have repulsed the US - Israeli aggression which is backed by Britain, we have to organise to end British support for these war crimes against the peoples of Lebanon as well as Palestine and their direct participation in the occupation of Iraq Afganistan and other countries and their alliance with the US.

In this sense we too are the resistance and are building our resistance to defeat the warmongers here in Britain and to support the peoples around the world in opposing the dictate of the Anglo-US alliance to control the world.

This “new middle east” that Bush and Blair talk about is one where these imperialist powers wish to destroy the nation building projects of the Arab peoples, their infrastructure and political and other institutions and most of all to try and destroy their resistance. The cornerstone of this attack is their longstanding oppression of the Palestinian people and denial of their rights of sovereignty over their homeland.

It is up to the people to rely on their own resistance to the war crimes of the big powers.

Here in Britain the anti war movement is not only opposing the Labour Government’s illegal invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and its continued occupation and destruction and killings in those countries, and its support for the US-Israeli aggression against Lebanon but we have placed on the agenda the need for an anti-war government in Britain.

That we are not just a campaign but a movement of the people to bring about radical change in the governance of the country from a pro-war government to an anti-war government and end the crimes against humanity of successive British government which are not in our name. We all here are that resistance!

Roger Nettleship - August 19, 2006

The 'Ricin Plot' - Fact and Fiction

by Phil Talbot

The deceptions over 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' are now widely understood. Less well known are the deceptions involved in the so-called 'ricin plot' - which, like the phoney WMD scare, was also used for propaganda purposes in the build up to the attack on Iraq.

In January 2003, three months before the attack on Iraq, media reports were full of a so-called 'ricin plot'. The Sun, reported the discovery of a "factory of death". Other newspapers warned of "a poison gang on the loose" and that "250,000 of us could have died" from attacks by ricin - "a killer with no antidote"

The real facts of the so-called 'ricin plot' are now fairly well-established. Ricin is a liquid contact poison unlikely to be spread as a gas cloud. It can be extracted from castor oil plants - but only with great expertise.

On 5 January 2003, acting on a 'tip off', the police raided a flat in Wood Green, North London and arrested six men. They were accused of 'manufacturing ricin for a terrorist poison attack on the London Underground'. A seventh man was arrested on 7 January, when the earlier arrests were made public.

On 12 January 2003 five men and a woman were arrested in the Bournemouth area accused of 'terrorism involving ricin', but were released without charge several days later.

On 14 January 2003 three men were arrested in Manchester when a house was raided as part of the investigation. During the raid there was a violent scuffle, and a police officer DC Stephen Oake died after being stabbed by one of the suspects with a kitchen knife. On 20 January 2003 Finsbury Park mosque was raided by police and closed for several days as part of the investigation.

Seven men were arrested. Another man was arrested in London a day later.

On 5 February 2003, while making the case for military intervention in Iraq to the UN Security Council, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell presented those arrested as the 'UK Poison Cell' of a global terrorist network. More than a year later, in June 2004, a man of north African origin, Kamel Bourgass was convicted for the murder of DC Oake during his arrest and was jailed for life.

The following year, at a second trial in April 2005, Mr Bourgass alone was convicted and sentenced to 17 years for 'conspiring to cause a public nuisance' in relation to the so-called 'ricin plot'. Eight other defendants were acquitted or had their case dropped. There was a blanket ban on reporting on anything involving the two trials until the second one had ended. At the trials it became apparent that 'intelligence' in this 'plot' had been extracted under torture in Algeria.

There was in fact no 'ricin plot' - because the suspects had no ricin to plot with - and this was known to the authorities within a few days of the men's arrest. In January 2003 castor oil plants and some biological notes [of a sort that could be downloaded by anyone from the internet] were found - or planted - among the suspects' possessions. A team from the Ministry of Defence's Biological Weapon Identification Group was sent to investigate, and discovered that ricin was not present at the suspects' dwellings.

This information, that there was no ricin, was not revealed to the public until two years after the original scare story.

In the meantime, the ricin scare story had been used to 'justify' further 'anti-terror' laws, and as part of the propaganda in the build-up to the attack on Iraq.

Because the men's acquittal received much less attention than the sensational stories at the time of their arrests, there still persists a myth that there was a 'British ricin plot'.

As late as February 2006, Gordon Brown - the 'next prime minister', so we are told - was still referring to this 'ricin plot' as a 'terrorism case'. Several of the men acquitted are still under control orders, including taggings and curfews, with some facing deportation on 'terrorism' charges, apparently based on 'information' from a prisoner tortured in Algeria.

Phil Talbot - 19/09/2006

DEMONSTRATE
Saturday 23 September

**TIME
TO GO**



Troops out of Iraq

Don't attack Iran

Hands off Lebanon

No Trident replacement

Labour Party Conference
Assemble 1pm, Albert Square, Manchester

Called by Stop the War Coalition, CND and British Muslim Initiative
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To Contact South Tyneside Stop the War Coalition,

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Silence is Shame!

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