



Labour Against the War

The Labour Party and trade union campaign against military action against Afghanistan and neighbouring countries in the aftermath of 11th September 2001



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- LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR unequivocally condemns the terrorist outrages in the US on 11th September 2001 as a violation of human rights and an attack on working people of many races.
- LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR believes that military action in response to the events of 11th September 2001 will neither eradicate the threat of terrorism nor create a stable international framework in which the rule of law will be observed. UK support for such wars is not in our name.
- LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR calls on the British government to pursue non-military solutions to the War on Terrorism including diplomatic and political initiatives, to bring the alleged perpetrators of terrorism to justice - including state terrorists who act in violation of international law - and bring

- real humanitarian aid to the people of the world.
- LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR is totally opposed to any war on Afghanistan, Iraq or any other wars of military adventurism.
- LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR opposes any clampdown on civil liberties and asylum seekers on the pretext that this is required by the current situation and will stand up for civil rights in an open, democratic society. We shall oppose racist scapegoating of the Muslim community.
- LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR will work within the Labour Party and Trade Union movement to promote these aims throughout the labour movement, stating our case to the wider public and supporting the Stop the War Coalition in a determined quest for justice, not vengeance.

AFGHANISTAN:

ENDING THE

UNWINNABLE

WAR



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Labour Against the War JOIN US

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Please make cheques payable to **Labour Against the War**. We seek sponsorship from individual members of the Labour Party, BLPs, CLP, trade union branches and Co-operative Party branches. For more information contact us.

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AFGHANISTAN: ENDING THE UNWINNABLE WAR

NATIONAL MEETING

The **New Labour War Legacy** was the title of this year's Labour Against the War fringe meeting at Labour Party Conference, this year held in Brighton on Sunday 27th September. For eight consecutive years we have assembled a powerful platform of speakers. This year was no exception. **Gabriel Carlyle** (Voices UK) spoke to a powerpoint presentation which was mostly concerned with the media under-reporting (or un-reporting) civilian deaths in Afghanistan, but splashing on deaths of soldiers. So the *Guardian* had a front page "The bloodiest day" when several soldiers were killed, but of course it's not the bloodiest day from an Afghan perspective when hundreds of civilians are being killed in air strikes. **Milan Rai** (co Editor of *Peace News*) said how the war had to be seen in the context of a Mafia Don who maintains his power through fear - if people are afraid of what you might do to them, they don't cross you. The US is therefore behaving in the same way, taking terrible vengeance for 9/11 to deter any future attacks - it's all about their credibility as the planet's only superpower. This view was later confirmed by Bob Ainsworth, speaking to Conference, who said we couldn't withdraw from Afghanistan because our credibility was at stake. **Christine Shawcroft**, as secretary and founder member, expressed regret that LATW was still fighting to get troops out eight years after the invasion, and said that she had told the NEC at the time that the war would be unwinnable. Several times, resolutions had come before the NEC calling for an end to the fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, but each time she was heavily defeated as the majority of the NEC, including senior trade union leaders, voted against, despite it being union policy. **Jeremy Corbyn MP** spoke about the need for a true ethical foreign policy. The event was chaired by **Alan Simpson MP**.

LOCAL MEETING

In October Labour Against the War held a local event in Leytonstone. Leyton & Wanstead CLP have a long record of support for Labour Against the War so when asked if we could hold a local meeting for Labour Party members and supporters we responded enthusiastically by organising an event titled **Afghanistan: Ending**



Jeremy Corbyn MP, Christine Shawcroft (Labour Party NEC), Alan Simpson MP, Milan Rai (Peace News), Gabriel Carlyle (Voices UK), LATW fringe meeting at Labour Party Conference. Brighton, September 2009

the Unwinnable War at the Epicentre on Thursday 8th October. Our platform consisted of **Mohammed Azam** (coordinator Coalition Against Racism – Unite to Stop the BNP), **Walter Wolfgang** (Vice Chair, Labour CND) and **Christine Shawcroft** (Labour Party NEC and Secretary of Labour Against the War). The event was chaired by local Labour member **Richard Price**.

Mohammed Azam spoke about how opinion polls show that 56% of the public oppose the war in Afghanistan. He stressed that we need to make our elected representatives accountable for their decisions

and that this must start locally with members choosing their candidates for the local and general elections. The campaign against the war is a campaign against injustice and the rise of the BNP was something that all Labour members must challenge head on. **Walter Wolfgang** spoke about how counter productive war is. He said that those many MPs and members of the NEC who had opposed the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were right. He stressed his fears of the US sending more troops to Afghanistan and of the war spreading into north west Pakistan. He called for a Middle East nuclear free zone.

Christine Shawcroft spoke about how campaigners should step up a gear: with budget cuts expected in the public sector the war in Afghanistan was unaffordable as well as unwinnable telling the meeting that Bob Ainsworth MP (Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence) had revealed that the war was costing £3 billion pounds a year! She called for lessons to be learnt from history: Alexander the Great, the Persian Empire, Great Britain, the Soviet Union – all failed in their military occupations of Afghanistan. She called for an immediate end to indiscriminate ariel bombing of Afghan civilians and for a phased troop withdrawal to start as soon as possible.

WAR WITHOUT END?

As the first flakes of snow settle in the high passes along Afghanistan's eastern border, only a few weeks remain before the routes from Pakistan are blocked to the Taliban and the upland areas of Afghanistan become unsuited to guerrilla warfare until the spring thaw – when the whole bloody cycle will begin again.

This spiral of death and destruction has spread across the boarder into Pakistan – a nuclear power! The Labour Government is committed to the ongoing occupation and the Tories (the only other party likely to form a UK government in the foreseeable future) have no alternative policy. Public opinion on its own is, again for the foreseeable future, unlikely to shake either Party from its course. The best hope we have is to mobilise the labour movement in a campaign to make the Labour Government's policy untenable and to force a UK troop withdrawal. How do we do this?

■ Where the failed "war aims" are indefensible, **we must bring together anti-war demands into a set of "peace aims"**. These can become the basis of interim campaigns that can help establish a more focused momentum against the occupation itself. We need to make the issue of Afghanistan visible in the Labour Party: in this, the trade unions are vital, but there is much for ordinary members to do, as there is for Labour supporters and all community and peace campaigns.

■ **To find out how contact Labour Against the War.**



l-r: Walter Wolfgang (Vice Chair, CND), Mohammed Azam (Coalition Against Racism, Unite to stop the BNP), Christine Shawcroft (Secretary, LATW), Richard Price (PEO, L&W CLP)