

Newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

Progressive Governance Summit

The Progressive Governance Summit took place in South Africa on the weekend of February 11-12, 2006. The summit was structured around

two main themes: "Development and Africa – what progressives should do following the New York summit", and "Policy Challenges of the 21st Century".

Attending the Summit were the leaders of Brazil, Britain, Ethiopia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea (south Korea), Sweden and South Africa.

Since 1999, when the Network

for Progressive Governance was set up, meetings have been held once a year. Membership of the network is by invitation only, and changes from time to time as

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WHO IS TONY BLAIR TO BE ATTACKING CUBA AND VENEZUELA?



International May Day celebrations held in Havana, Cuba, last year.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has recently gone out of his way to criticise other countries in a manner that graphically illustrates his government's approach to foreign policy, its

contempt for the sovereignty and peoples of other countries and its own chauvinism. In the course of Prime Minister's Questions on February 8, Tony Blair was asked if he shared the satisfaction felt by

some Labour MPs about political developments in Latin America that were "bringing Governments into power who will be in the interests of the many and not the

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Commentary

On the "Budget Deficit" in the NHS

RECENTLY, NUMEROUS REPORTS HAVE SURFACED IN THE MEDIA THAT THERE IS A "BUDGET CRISIS" IN THE NHS. As a consequence, patients are having their treatments postponed or denied because these are "too expensive" and various Trusts are instituting job freezes and job cuts. Reports are circulating that up to 3,000 staff in the English NHS could lose their jobs because of these "deficits" which it is estimated could hit at least £1 billion for the 2005/06 financial year. The

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Youth & Students

Taking Control of Our Future!

The Crisis Threatening Science Education

When the centenary of Einstein's $E = mc^2$ was being marked last year, 2005, it was also reported that physics in Britain is in crisis. "Profound problems face science education," said the Royal Society, while the Institute of Physics said that the "shortage of physics teachers [is] worse than ever".

The reports were prompted by the Centre for Education and Employment Research (CEER) at the University of Buckingham, which in November published the results of a national survey into the current state of physics education for 14-18 year-olds in England and Wales.

They summarised their findings, based on a survey of 432

schools and colleges, as follows:

- Physics is in danger of disappearing as an identifiable subject from much of state education, through redefinition to general science and teacher shortage.
- Nearly a quarter (23.5%) of 11-16 schools had no teacher at all who had studied physics to any level at university.
- In 26.8% of state schools one in four or fewer of the teachers of physics had studied the subject to any level at university, including in 56.3% of the secondary moderns, 40.1% of the 11-16 comprehensives and 17.5% of the up-to-18 comprehensives. None of the grammars, sixth-form colleges or FE colleges, and only 7.8% of the up-to-18 independents, found themselves in this

position.

- Overall, in the schools and colleges of England and Wales, 37.7% of the teachers of physics/physical processes to 14-18 year-olds had physics as their main subject of qualification.
- Teachers' expertise in physics as measured by qualification is the second most powerful predictor of pupil achievement in GCSE and A-level physics after pupil ability.
- Pupils' opportunity to participate in physics and be taught by teachers well-qualified in the subject is reduced if they attend an 11-16 school.
- The age profile of physics teachers qualified in physics is skewed with almost double (31.1%) aged 51 and over as 30 and under (16.6%).

- The stock of physics teachers qualified in physics is diminishing. Whereas 39.0% of the leavers in 2004 had physics as their main subject, this was true of only 32.8% of newly appointed. More of the 21-30 year-old teachers of physics hold a degree in biology than have one in physics.

- Teachers of physics in science specialist schools were, on average, less well qualified in physics than the teachers of physics in arts or language specialist schools.

- About a tenth (10.8%) of the teachers in schools with a degree in physics were not teaching physics. Nearly three-quarters of those (72.3%) were teaching maths or computing.

- A quarter (25.1%) of the teacher trainees with a degree in physics were training to be maths teachers rather than physics teachers.

- It is estimated that the physics teacher training output needs to be raised from the current 450 to 750 a year to replace the teachers retiring and otherwise leaving, and enable all schools during the next five years to have the prospect of at least a quarter of their teachers of physics being qualified in the subject.

The Royal society also noted, "While, compared to 1991, the overall numbers of A-level entries in 2005 were 12.1 per cent higher, entries in physics were 35.2 per

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The Crisis Threatening Science Education

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cent lower, entries in mathematics were 21.5 per cent lower, and entries in chemistry were 12.6 per cent lower."

Lord May of Oxford, President of the Royal Society, said: "The profound problems facing science at A-level extend well beyond physics. We have consistently highlighted the general downward trend of students studying the sciences apart from biology and maths at A-level. If we fail to address this then we risk losing the ability to train the next generation of scientists, technologists and engineers."

"The Government, and particularly the Department for Education and Skills, needs to wake up to the problems facing science education. It does not have a detailed strategy for tackling the problems in science and maths education and the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State did not even acknowledge that there are any problems in their speeches on education last week. These trends in science simply cannot be allowed to continue if the Government is to meet its own targets as set out in the 'Science and Innovation Framework' published last year."

The Institute of Physics commented, "This report confirms the anecdotal evidence that, although the problem was identified more than 10 years ago, government initiatives have had little impact on the number of physicists entering teaching and as a consequence physics in schools is heading for a crisis that will have major ramifications for the UK's economy."

What is happening in schools and colleges is not isolated. A crisis is also ongoing in the universities. There has been a trend in recent years for universities to restructure their science sections

towards industry, engineering and technology (genetics and biotechnology in particular), while physics and chemistry departments have been under attack. In many cases, they have been shut down altogether.

So one might ask, what do young would-be physicists have to aspire to? And with a dwindling number of physics departments, where will new teachers be educated? Science is losing its prestige as society continues its decline.

Increasingly, the educational institutions at all levels are becoming what in capitalist jargon is called demand-led. Even the argument that physics education

should be more "attractive" to students is a part of this, as well as passing the buck to the schools and letting the government off the hook. Demand is the means by which market forces are being introduced into schools, colleges and universities.

The government has a social responsibility to defend science. But while the ruling ideology of New Labour is pragmatism, that "truth is what works", the development of modern science and education is held back even further. Arbitrariness becomes the determining factor in putting everything into the service of the monopolies. The right of the monopolies to compete in the

global market is determining the direction of education, as well as of research and science as a whole. Science is being replaced by technology and education by training.

Society is in need of renovation, and a modern society is inconceivable without science; science is crucial to human development. It is extremely important for the future of society that science is defended. This will involve serious discussion of the way forward and opposition to the prevailing ideology, so that the youth and students are equipped with an enlightened outlook, and the future of a society fit for human beings is safeguarded.

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Tony Blair's hypocrisy in attacking foreign democracy

WHO IS TONY BLAIR TO BE ATTACKING CUBA AND VENEZUELA?

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few". The questioner, one of his own Labour MPs, then asked him to agree that "it would be bad news for all concerned if we allowed our policy towards those countries, especially Venezuela, to be shaped by a really right-wing US Republican agenda".

Not surprisingly, in response the Prime Minister made it very clear that he did not agree and although he did not state that he was opposed to governments "in the interests of the many not the few", it would be impossible not to draw that conclusion. In short, the Prime Minister arrogantly stated: "It is rather important that the Government of Venezuela realise

that if they want to be respected members of the international community, they should abide by the rules of the international community. I say with the greatest respect to the President of Venezuela that when he forms an alliance with Cuba, I would prefer to see Cuba a proper functioning democracy." He then added that "the most important thing is that countries in south America and north America realise that they have much in common, much to gain from each other and much to gain from each other particularly through the principles of democracy".

It is to be wondered what gives the Prime Minister the right to criticise Venezuela and its foreign policy in the first place, but not

content with insulting one country he then takes the opportunity to insult another. Is it not the height of arrogance for Tony Blair to lecture anyone on the principles of democracy and the norms of international conduct when his government daily breeches international law and violates the norms of the UN Charter and only last week has been publicly criticised by the UN Commissioner for Human Rights? It was not surprising that this was a point made by the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, who responded to what he referred to as an attack on his country and labelled Tony Blair a "pawn of imperialism". President Chavez added that Britain "flouted international law" more than most by its alliance with the US and invasion of Iraq.

The Prime Minister's attack on Cuba and Venezuela, countries that not only defend the rights of their own people but also strongly oppose US imperialism particularly in regard to its interference in other American countries, also

Is it not the height of arrogance for Tony Blair to lecture anyone on the principles of democracy and the norms of international conduct when his government daily breeches international law and violates the norms of the UN Charter and only last week has been publicly criticised by the UN Commissioner for Human Rights?

highlights the Labour government's slavish subservience to the US. It is striving to be that country's principal ally in all circumstances, whatever the consequences for the people of Britain and other countries. It points to the fact that one of the key features of the government's foreign policy is the arrogance and contempt with which it deals with other countries. The government is particularly zealous in criticising others for alleged democratic

failings or alleged breaches of international law, based on its view that Britain is a model democracy, and that the values of the British ruling class, its government and main political parties are

The arrogance and great power chauvinism of the Labour government must be opposed not least because it does not stop at mere criticism but also gives itself the right to openly interfere in the affairs of others, by military means if necessary, to safeguard the strategic and economic interests of the big monopolies.

"universal values" that by definition must be adhered to by all. The Labour government takes a particularly highhanded approach with former British colonies, and in general with the countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, who it treats as if it were still a major colonial power and they were still colonies. This was once again demonstrated this week by the Prime Minister's public criticism of the government of Ethiopia. However, the government often exhibits the chauvinism of a great power even when dealing with European countries, while it reserves special contempt for those countries which do not adhere to its values or which take a stand in opposition to its policies.

The arrogance and great power chauvinism of the Labour government must be opposed not least because it does not stop at mere criticism but also gives itself the right to openly interfere in the affairs of others, by military means if necessary, to safeguard the strategic and economic interests of the big monopolies. A stand against this arrogance and chauvinism must particularly be taken by class-conscious workers in Britain in order to lay claim to their independent programme and carry through their proletarian internationalist duty.

Response of VIC to Blair's Attack on Chavez

Response of the Venezuela Information Centre to Blair's Attack on Hugo Chavez

KEITH SONNET, CHAIR, VENEZUELA INFORMATION CENTRE*



Hugo Chavez of Venezuela together with Fidel Castro of Cuba.

The Venezuela Information Centre regrets the tone and content of Mr Blair's reply. Venezuela has held the most thoroughly monitored and audited elections of any country and independent international observers have consistently certified them as free and fair.

It is extremely unfortunate that the Prime Minister failed to take this opportunity to acknowledge Venezuela's democratic credentials under President Hugo Chavez and to congratulate him and his government on the major advances made in tackling poverty and social exclusion. Mr Blair's attempts to undermine the authenticity of Venezuela's democracy

by reference to its relations with Cuba were particularly unfortunate. Part of President Chavez's approach has been to promote regional integration through building strong alliances with all his neighbours in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Prime Minister's ill-informed remarks have caused great offence in Venezuela, particularly following on from last week's intemperate comments from Donald Rumsfeld when he compared Chavez to Hitler. Mr Blair's response betrays his adherence to the hawkish, neo-conservative, view of Venezuela fostered by the Bush administration.

The recent UK trade union

fact-finding mission to Venezuela headed by Rodney Bickerstaff was told by Jose Vicente Rangel, the Venezuelan Vice President and Ali Rodriguez, the Venezuelan Foreign Minister that they placed great value on good relations with the United Kingdom and hoped to strengthen ties in 2006.

Whilst the PM's comments were regrettable, VIC hopes that they may generate a meaningful debate which will allow for some redress to the general media distortion in reporting of events in Venezuela. Those who visit Venezuela, as opposed to those taking their information from State Department-sponsored wire services, invariably come away

convinced that it represents one of the most positive examples in today's world of a participatory democracy working to make poverty history and redress decades of corruption and misgovernment.

* The Venezuela Information Centre (VIC), which has been in existence since May 2005, was formally constituted at its January meeting at UNISON headquarters, London. A broad-based VIC Management Committee was established which includes wide representation from the trade union movement, NGOs, MPs, students, academics and the media. The VIC website is: <http://www.vicuk.org>

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

"Progressives Have to Put the People First"

Speech of Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, at the Progressive Governance, Africa Conference, Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, 28 – 29 July, 2005

In welcoming all to the conference, the president noted that he was pleased that the progressive governance group chose to gather in Africa for the first time. The global South faced many questions, including what defined the progressive agenda. The progressive movement came to the African continent as it strove to address a number of issues. One of this was the issue of peace and stability. There was a lot of work going on in this area,

because it was seen as a prerequisite for development. Peace was critical because it was people who died in conflict. In his view, conflict had to be ended in order to save the lives of people. The issue was not only about peace-keeping, but structuring the tensions that exist in African societies, which was difficult. This also included the struggle to establish stable democracies with the respect for human rights. In his view, that had to be part of a

progressive agenda.

South Africans were celebrating the freedom charter which said – the people shall govern. The president noted the capacity of the people to govern had to be an important part of the progressive agenda in Africa. The challenge of the reconstruction of African economies also needed to be included in the agenda – the promotion of equitable societies and the creation of a better life for all the people of Africa.

He asked what had to be done to achieve these objectives.

In his view, the progressive conference had to focus on these

challenging issues. As a result of all these interrelated interventions of the progressive movement the focus had to be on the matter of social cohesion. He said he believed therefore the theme of the conference was correct: the agenda had to put the people first, in all areas, whether political rights, peace, culture, etc.

"apolitical intellectuals"

Mr Mbeki quoted a revolutionary poet who died at the hands of the Guatemalan junta in 1967, who said in a poem entitled *apolitical intellectuals* – 'One day the apolitical intellectuals of my country will be interrogated by the simplest of our people. They will be asked what they did when the nation died slowly, small and alone. No one will ask them about their address, their long siestas after lunch...No one will care about their higher financial learn-

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ing. They won't be questioned on Greek Mythology. They will be asked nothing about their absurd justifications, born in the shadow of their total lie. On that day the simple man will come. Those who had no place in the books and poems of the apolitical intellectuals, but daily delivered their bread and milk, their tortillas and eggs, those who drove their cars, who cared for their dogs and gardens and worked for them – and they'll ask, what did you do when the poor suffered, when tenderness and life burned out of them. Apolitical intellectuals of my sweet country, you will not be able to answer. A vulture of silence will eat your gut, your misery will pick at your soul, and you would be mute in your shame.

In his view this constituted a challenge to the conference. Progressives did not have to be condemned to the "vulture of silence" because they refused to answer the important question of what constituted the progressive agenda of the African continent. The president quoted Peter Anyan 'Nyong' o who argued that Africa made a false start with development – a rollercoaster from one development model to another. One of the starting points for progressives was that neo-liberal economics – the Washington consensus – drove the world (namely dependence on the free market to solve economic problems, and the notion of the minimalist state). In his view, although progressives had to accept that as the dominant paradigm, they could not agree with its propositions. Therefore, what was the alternative progressive development paradigm? The answer to this question was urgent: for example, the Cotonou agreement and related economic partnership agreements were

based precisely on the Washington Consensus, namely the leading role of capital, a minimal role of the state, and the creation of space for capital. In the context of Africa, negotiating the Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU was underlined by these assumptions. He asked whether African economies could be reconstructed based on the policies of the neo-liberal paradigm. The president noted that one of his colleagues told him of the pressures they faced from the world: the demand to privatise the telecommunications company in his country. He said no because the government needed to extend the ICT infrastructure into the rural areas, something a privatised company would not do. This refusal has created problems, including no access to foreign bank financing. The construct that we had to rely on the free market to solve our socio-eco problems was problematic, and that the neo-liberal paradigm was not able to solve the problems of Africa.

What defines the progressive development agenda?

The president again asked what defined the progressive development agenda. He noted that some time ago he was surprised to discover there was poverty in Switzerland. In Geneva, there were soup kitchens for citizens. Switzerland could say that it subscribed for many years to the neo-liberal paradigm. But, there was income inequality in Switzerland, and if that paradigm could produce such results in a developed country, what could Africa expect? It should be obvious to progressives that Africa's development was going to require large resource transfers from the rich to the poor. He noted that South Africa was trying to achieve that. He pointed out that it had two societies – wealthy (as in Sandton)



and dire poverty (as in Alexandra). He argued that the development of the poor parts of South Africa required large transfers from the rich to the poor, and that the progressive movement had little choice but to take this position. He noted that it might be difficult to find a way to do so without destroying the rich part, but he saw little choice. He noted that a government delegation went to Brussels to say to the European Commission that the EU has taken precisely the same position with regards to itself – large resource transfers from the rich to the poor parts of the EU. The EU said one needed a conscious decision to effect the transfer and not rely on market forces, and the president said he was taking a similar position.

A progressive movement

For the president, the discussion of global poverty and fighting underdevelopment had to draw on this reality. The developed world had to make a serious contribution to this transfer. The development of Africa and the defeat of poverty meant talking about capital. In his view there was a need to generate and mobilise domestic capital in Africa and he pointed out that a public sector pension funds investigation found that they managed \$130 bn. – with the absurd situation that some of the money was invested abroad, because Africa could absorb such investments. There had to be an additional capital transfer from elsewhere to bring about change – the market cannot do that. In his view Malawi could not rely on the market to bring about such transfers. The state had to intervene in order to assist people in meeting these challenges. Given the dominance of the neo-liberal paradigm, he believed it might be very difficult to agree to this. Even Soros has complained about "mar-

ket fundamentalism" and the president said he suspected that has had an impact on progressives, "so the right thing to do becomes, how do we place ourselves in the market?" It was clear to him that in Africa, continuing poverty will continue in the scramble for scarce resources that caused much of the conflict today (e.g. Ivory Coast – falling cocoa prices contributed to xenophobia). It will also result in social stratification with elites at the top, which is not what the progressive agenda wanted. He argued that structures of inequality would result in a minority monopoly with access to resources and would result in repression and conflict. Instability made development impossible. A progressive agenda must not allow progressives to become market fundamentalists. He asked what could replace the latter. For him, progressive change required a progressive movement. He reflected on whether a progressive movement existed on the African continent, and whether it was able to elaborate such an agenda and mobilise for success.

Put the people first

He also asked whether it existed globally, where the need was to change the global paradigm, to change the poverty in Switzerland as it changed poverty in Africa. With globalisation of the markets, he asked whether a progressive response was possible. It would be difficult for individual countries to pursue a progressive agenda when the rest of the world was going in another direction. He referred to Marx who saw it would not be possible for workers to mobilise separately but had to unite. In the president's view, to achieve that power balance, to depart from the dominant paradigm, progressives had to put the people first, throughout the world.

On the "Budget Deficit" in the NHS

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Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has highlighted the link between these "deficits" and the government's "reforms of the NHS" and Dr Keith Palmer of the King's Fund, a think tank which focuses on health, has stated that the present "deficits" would increase once the government reforms begin to bite in earnest.

Addressing directly the damage that would be done to the health service if these cuts were implemented, Beverly Malone, General Secretary of the RCN, declared: "We are putting a spotlight on this issue now before it is too late. Valuable, highly experienced frontline staff could be lost and we simply cannot afford to let this happen. It will hit patient services and put even more pressure on the nurses that are left. Nurses have delivered huge improvements in the NHS services and they have led the way in modernising the NHS. These job losses are a slap in the face for them and suggest their past, present and future contributions are of little value." The National Officer for Health from the Amicus union, which represent 80,000 staff in the health services including therapists, scientists and laboratory and maintenance staff, echoed these sentiments. Gail Cartmail stated: "Our members are already bearing the brunt of these deficits as many trusts are resorting to job cuts and multi-skilling to save money. We

have not fought hard for greater spending in the NHS to see the extra money transformed into job losses and a poorer service for patients." In response to the clear concerns expressed by those working in and familiar with the NHS, Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Health declared that the government's reforms were the solution to, not the cause of NHS "deficits". She continued, "Three quarters of NHS organisations are in balance or surplus, with most of the deficit concentrated in about 40 organisations, just 7% of the total number. But we have to get them under control, and the reforms will help us do just that."

What are the facts?

But what are the facts about the NHS "deficits"? Why is it that, as Gail Cartmail points out, increased spending on the NHS is resulting in worsening services and job cuts? Where is the money going if not to improve services and pay those who work in the NHS in a way that recognises their hard work, expertise and the essential contribution they are making to the well being of the whole society? In a recently published report into financial management in the NHS, the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission declared that "the Department of Health achieved financial balance across the 600 bodies of the NHS in 2003" and continued that in fact there was "an aggregate underspend for all

NHS bodies ... of £72 million". It further pointed out that although 24% of NHS Trusts and 14 % of Primary Care Trusts "failed to keep expenditure within their revenue resource", in most cases the "deficits were small both in absolute terms and in proportion to turnover." The report also stated that in the financial years 2002/03 to 2007/08, expenditure on the NHS would rise 7.3% per year in real terms, taking the NHS budget from £63 billion in 2003/04 to £93 billion in 2007/08 and making healthcare "the fastest growing area of public expenditure". It also noted that the government's "ambitious reform programme" would place "an unprecedented level of pressure on the NHS financial regime from 2004/05".

Mechanism to pay the rich

The government's reform programme for the NHS, as for all the public services, is to open these up as a source of profit for the monopolies and in so doing to use the Treasury as a mechanism to pay the rich. The NHS, which has historically been a source of profits for the drugs monopolies, is now being opened up to monopolies from other sectors of the economy. The notorious PFI programme, which was introduced by the Conservatives in 1992 and has been expanded by the Labour government since 1997, has been one such scheme to pay the rich. Allegedly

designed so that the state would be relieved of the "burden" of financing capital projects like the building of new hospitals, these are now widely recognised as a means of handing money from the state treasury directly to the monopolies. Professor Allyson Pollock, Head of Health Policy of University College, London, who has carried out extensive research on PFI contracts in the NHS, has pointed out that these proved so profitable for the monopolies, that the construction giant Jarvis sold off its construction arm in order to concentrate on PFI projects. It is also known that these PFI contracts are now bought and sold by city financiers and have become a further source of profit for financial speculators. Professor Pollock notes that since Trusts have to repay the interests and charges on the capital raised privately to build hospitals under PFI contracts, "the cost of private capital as a percentage of trusts' annual revenue expenditure rises from an average of 8% to 27%". In this way funds are diverted away from patient care into the hands of the money-lenders. She added, "Without a concomitant increase in revenue, local services will struggle." However, at the same time, NHS Trusts, as a result of the government's "cost improvement programme", are under a requirement to find "savings" of around 3% per year. It is therefore hardly surprising that since 1997 some

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MAY DAY MARCH AND RALLY FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

1st may
may day
2006

It has now been confirmed that the May 1 March
and Rally for Employment Rights will assemble at
Clerkenwell Green in London N1 at 12noon with the
rally in Trafalgar Square starting at 2.30pm

Progressive Governance Summit

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government leadership changes. Its orientation has been aimed at “finding ways to make globalisation into a more stable and inclusive process and to further international co-operation”, in the words of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). But the balance of participants has changed considerably since the Berlin conference in 2000, or even the London conference of 2004 in which the Anglo-US optimism that “globalisation” would sweep the world had evaporated and the agenda of the “war on terror” had shattered illusions. New social actors such as Mbeki and Lula have come to the fore. Nevertheless, it can be seen from the contributions of Tony Blair that the aim of bringing the continents of Africa and Latin America within the orbit of neo-liberal globalisation and attempting to isolate those leaders who take a stand against Anglo-US hegemony has not been abandoned. In this

sense, the Summit for Tony Blair represented an exercise in the doctrine of pre-emption by any means. For the Prime Minister, the goal of imposing the G8 “Plan for Africa”, structuring a “centre-left” network against radicalism, and pushing for the values of “good governance”, the “rule of law” and the “war on terrorism” is never very far away. In this respect, the attempt is to drive a wedge between leaders such as Lula and Thabo Mbeki and the leaders of countries such as Cuba and Venezuela, so that instead of the unity of developing countries of the G77, the dictate of the values of “progressive governance” is applied and the right of all peoples to choose their own path of social development is negated. These attempts must be condemned.

The path to progress and eradicating world poverty lies in ending the unjust and exploitative relations between the big powers and the developing countries, and recognising and acting on the principle that all countries have the sovereign right to determine their

own path of social development, co-exist peacefully and conduct their trade on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. However, the British

government, far from declaring a break with colonialism and neo-colonialism and putting an end to such relations, is more than ever determined to impose an official ideology on the world, and punish those that step out of line.

The working class and people must aim their fire at Anglo-US imperialism, as well as at the European Union, and other big powers, and must demand that Britain end all its attempts at international coercion and attempting to justify the unjustifiable under the signboard of “progressive governance”, which includes the attempts to outlaw communism and use the issue of “human rights” to violate



countries' sovereignty. The path to justice lies not in the big powers justifying how the benefits of “globalisation” must be “realised”, but in upholding the sovereignty of all nations and building opposition and resistance to the imposition of reaction, war, annexation and the plundering of human and material resources of the world's people. *Workers' Weekly* calls on the British working class and people to condemn the British government for its arrogant stands and to demand that it respects the rights of all countries and nations. We call on the British working class and people to intensify their struggles to bring into being a government which puts the rights of the people at the centre.

On the “Budget Deficit” in the NHS

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13,000 NHS beds have been closed.

The government has made clear its intention to press ahead down its road of “investment with reform” in order to divert even more public money away from caring for patients and into the coffers of the big monopolies. The next wave of reforms includes, among others, establishing more foundation hospitals, merging strategic health authorities and PCTs and turning these into “commissioning bodies” which would open up clinical care as a source of profits for the monopolies already active in this sector. Reports indicate that companies like BUPA and the American companies Kaiser and United Healthcare are

already lined up to enter this “market”.

It is apparent that far from there being any “deficit crisis” in the NHS, the crisis is being caused by the government's programme of paying the rich, regardless of the consequences to the public good. In this regard, Dr David Lister of Health Emergency noted, “Patricia Hewitt in May announced £3 billion was available for the NHS to buy in more services from high-cost private hospitals, despite the capacity of the NHS to deliver better value: the money is clearly available to rescue vital services and save our NHS. If she refuses to act, it will be clear she is happy for NHS organisations to fail.”

The question is, what does it mean to speak about a “deficit”? It

is quite irrational to set a budget on an arbitrary basis and then if the Trusts “overspend” declare that there is a “deficit crisis”. What are the criteria for setting these limits? Who decides? Healthcare is not a production industry than one can determine the costs of production, the value of the product and whether it is being sold above or below this value. There is no serious discussion generated in society about the budget criteria, still less a scientific approach to investment in social programmes as an appropriation of the national social product. There is simply a declaration and a hysteria that something must be done to end NHS “overspending”.

The state must provide the funds that are needed to respond to the healthcare needs of the people. The government has never made its wars of aggression and colonial conquest conditional on them staying within budget. On the contrary, they declare that whatever

money is needed will be found. Therefore, the so-called budget deficit of the NHS is a direct result of the government's refusal to face up to its responsibilities to society and provide the funding that is needed for healthcare. In any event, the money that is set aside in the budget for the NHS is immediately diverted into the hands of the monopolies and then the patients are told “your treatment is too expensive”, while the NHS workers are criticised as “inefficient” and told that they must find “more savings”. This is the way the government's strategy of paying the rich wrecks the healthcare service. It cannot be hidden under a smog of disinformation about NHS “deficits”.

This situation must be ended, monopoly right restricted, and the working class and people must intensify their demand: **Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes!**