

Workers Weekly

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

Cuba Expresses Confidence in UN's Overwhelming Condemnation of US Blockade

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said on October 3 that he expects an overwhelming victory at the United Nations

General Assembly on October 30, when Cuba will present a resolution condemning the almost 50-year-old blockade imposed by the United States

against the Cuban people.

Addressing hundreds of students and professors at the Plaza Agramonte of the University of Havana, Perez

Roque expressed his confidence in an overwhelming triumph that will show the world's support of the island's struggle against the

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UNITE IN DEFENCE OF THE WORKERS' RIGHTS AND INTERESTS! NOW IS THE TIME TO FIGHT FOR THE ALTERNATIVE!



- Call of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), October 18, 2007 -

In fighting for the repeal of the anti-trade union laws and for an Act which embodies and guarantees the rights of workers to defend their interests, it is essential that the workers themselves

consciously participate in such a movement. It is a necessity that workers should acquaint themselves with what is required for such an Act to be passed by Parliament. But even more so is it

a necessity to develop a movement to ensure that the workers' right to organise in whatever way they can to defend their interests is not restricted, and also to ensure that the workers are the

ones who have a decisive say in the economy.

The necessity is for all workers

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Postal Workers' Claims

The Fetish of Competition and Having Contempt for Anyone and Everyone

IT WAS ANNOUNCED ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, THAT TERMS FOR SETTLING THE POSTAL SERVICES dispute had been reached between the

Communication Workers Union and the Royal Mail, with Brendan Barber of the TUC chairing the talks.

This followed a High Court injunction in favour of Royal Mail to restrain the CWU from calling out its members in Mail Centres and Delivery Offices on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Royal Mail had used the industrial relations laws, which place legal restrictions on the ability of the workers to organise to defend their interests, to argue that the union had failed to state with sufficient accuracy the number of workers likely to be affected on the first two days.

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Repercussions of the US Blockade on Health Care in Cuba

- Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the UN, October 10, 2007 -

The vulnerable healthcare sector has been severely affected. During the past year the damage to the Cuban health service caused by the blockade in the period covered by this report is estimated at over 30 million dollars.

Medical institutions that provide treatment free of charge to the entire population have been affected in several departments: emergency services, care of critically ill, surgical units and other specialised services (adult and paediatric), care of mothers-to-be, due to lack of access to latest-generation diagnostic aids and medication, mostly produced in the United States. Another factor is reduced ability to obtain 'Made in USA' consumables, spare parts and essential equipment. For the same reason, health promotion and disease prevention initiatives have been held back, suffice it to mention only a few examples:

- Cuba's Ramón Pando Ferrer ophthalmology institute was unable to acquire equipment needed for studying the retina, marketed by Humphreys-Zeiss, and the drug Visudyne, used to treat macular degeneration (a medical condition that can result in blindness) among the elderly and marketed by Novartis. Both companies, being American-owned and not being licensed for the purpose by the US Treasury Department, expressed they were unable to

export to Cuba. Studies of the retinas of the patients concerned were seriously affected, causing delays in decisions as to the therapy needed.

- Other areas of Cuban medicine affected by the blockade include anaesthesia of children undergoing surgery. Cuba cannot acquire the Sevoflurane inhalatory anaesthetic, patented with the trade name 'Sevorane', which has become the standard drug for administering general anaesthesia to children. The patent is owned by Abbott Laboratories, a US concern which, in compliance with the sanctions legislation, does not sell to Cuba. Cuba has no alternative but to use inferior substitutes, purchased in more remote markets at, consequently, higher cost.
- For the same reason, the US Saint-Jude firm suspended, among others, its sales of prosthetic valves - cheaper and better quality - to the William Soler paediatric heart hospital. The patients affected are children with cardiac arrhythmia who need pacemakers that were obtained via this route.
- US pressure has induced other firms to suspend sales to Cuban concerns, and in other cases involved the cancellation of licences. This happened in the case of Med Tronic, which was compelled to stop selling external pacemakers to Cuba, affecting children suffering from congenital or acquired arrhythmia who need

Cuba Expresses Confidence in UN's Overwhelming Condemnation of US Blockade

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blockade and their rejection of the US Government's genocidal policy against the Cuban people, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law.

He recalled that for the 16th time since 1992, Cuba will submit for discussion and approval the report "Necessity of Ending the Economic, Commercial and Financial Blockade Imposed by the United States against Cuba", which last year received the support of 183 countries.

"We submit this report hoping that it will help the world learn not only about the history of the blockade and its consequences over the last year, but also about the exemplary resistance of the Cuban people," stressed Cuba's top diplomat who added that in 48 years, the US blockade has cost the island

economic losses to the tune of \$89 billion.

"Cuba will not give up. We will continue bringing this issue to the United Nations because we are confident that the Empire will not be able to ignore the world's demand forever, as it happened with the Apartheid regime and the unjust imprisonment of Mandela," Perez Roque said.

Ernesto Fernandez, member of the National Bureau of the Cuban Young Communist League, read a declaration of the Cuban youth against the US blockade at the rally. An audiovisual campaign against the blockade that will soon be broadcast by Cuban media and that was designed by talented designers, publicists, journalists and students, was also presented at the rally.

(Source: Agencia Cubana de Noticias)

this device.

- A complex situation as regards disease-vector control in Cuba at the end of 2006 called for urgent purchases at a higher cost than would have been incurred if these supplies could have been sourced in the US market. The extra cost in terms of higher prices and increased freight charges totalled around \$845,000.

The following are some of the many cases in the public-health sector that illustrate the extraterritorial nature of the sanctions:

- Following its acquisition by America's General Electric, the Finnish firm Datex-Ohmeda, manufacturer of excellent anaes-

thesia and multi-purpose monitoring equipment, with which Cuba maintained business relations, announced that it was banned from supplying equipment or spare parts to Cuba, on pain of prosecution by the US Department of Justice.

- Cuba was prohibited from obtaining equipment and other products normally purchased by our Oncology & Radiology Institute from the regional division of Merck tasked with analytical chemistry, when it was absorbed by a US corporation. The results included repercussions on cancer and other patients.
- New York, 10 October 2007*

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Postal Workers' Claims

The Fetish of Competition and Having Contempt for Anyone and Everyone

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The dispute has demonstrated the prejudice and contempt for the public good that putting in command the fetish of competition in the marketplace carries with it. The fetish of competition becomes the be all and end all, benefiting not the economy as a whole and the people's needs, but competing centres of capital. It has meant for Royal Mail riding roughshod over the rights and interests of the postal service workers in pursuit of the "flexibility" in working practices necessary to compete in the postal market. This is what is termed "modernisation".

Furthermore, the concern claimed by Royal Mail that it should serve its customers is also a fraud. The very idea of putting competition first and last, attacks the whole concept of a universal postal service, that will be of service to all and will deliver to all, irrespective of cost. Resources since 2006 have been increasingly put into competing with some 17 other companies in the profitable business mail sector, and still Royal Mail complains that it has lost 40% of the corporate sector to rivals. This is the meaning of Adam Crozier, Royal Mail chief executive, when he insists that "flexibility is the main issue at stake". The concerns of the workers and the value of the work that they carry out count as nothing in the face of the driving force of "competition". The workers are considered merely incidental to grabbing a share of the market vis a vis Royal Mail's competitors, and the consideration of serving the economy and the public good comes nowhere. In this capital-centred outlook, the demand of the workers that they should not be treated as slaves is regarded as the greatest stumbling block to being competitive, and as an outmoded insistence on what are insultingly called "Spanish practices". The workers are treated not as human beings worthy of respect and who

are the most important resource, but as adjuncts to technology and fixed capital, whose conscious participation is regarded as an overriding nuisance to be overcome or bought off.

In this scenario, the media also plays its role in promoting the anti-worker, anti-conscious ethos which is supposed to govern the way society is run. This is why, according to the Royal Mail management, it is regarded as a "stakeholder" and why they thank the media for their support. The workers on the other hand are not regarded as "stakeholders". The media, hand in glove with the business managers and the government, promote that competitiveness or the lack of it is key to everything, and that workers must suffer every indignity to increase their flexibility, productivity and in every other way prostrate themselves before the needs of capital to enrich itself. They promote the image of workers as a kind of race apart whose only aim in fighting for their interests is to cause chaos and is motivated by selfishness. In this way, the human factor/social consciousness is viciously attacked, the aim of serving the public good negated, the role of workers in building a national economy ignored, and everything is done to hide the fact that the workers are an integral part of society and are also taking a stand in favour of the fate of that society. That everyone should be able to plan their lives, take control of their future, unite as one in a common aim for the public good and the individual and collective good is buried under the propaganda that the postal workers in order to be public spirited must unite behind Royal Mail's business plan, should work together with the CEOs and government and follow the line of "mature and responsible industrial relations".

This is a pernicious form of "social Darwinism", the survival of the leanest and fittest in the market place in cut-throat competition, and devil take the hindmost. In other

words, it tries to put human beings on the level of animals, while in fact all of society's resources are marshalled by an alliance of government and big business to favour the extraction of millions and billions of pounds by the financiers, privateers and the aristocracy of capital.

In this context, the workers are finding their pensions attacked, as well as their pay, conditions and quality of life. They are finding that the monopolies and the government are attacking the collective strength of the workers, who must be isolated, cajoled and threatened individually under the pretext that individual rights are paramount. Individually in fact the workers are expected to be at the beck and call of every whim of management, who go out of their way to be provocative, and respond to the full "functional flexibility" demanded of them, covering shifts, absences, other duties, coming in earlier or later at short notice, respond to the vagaries of the weather, work different hours on different days of the week. In short, the workers' role as wage slaves is brought out to the full, and they are supposed to shape themselves around work, handing over their lives to the company. In addition, the neo-liberal agenda is one of ensuring that agency workers are the norm, and that all jobs are temporary and on contract.

The attitude of Royal Mail to industrial relations is very revealing. They have a strategic plan which they are determined to railroad through no matter what. Under the guise of "principles", Royal Mail is taking a stand, bullying the workers that "the offer is the offer, the money is the money and the words are the words", and are determined to put "business recovery" over any other consideration. Clearly the workers are right to take

up this struggle in the face of the Royal Mail's spurious moral high-ground that discussion with the unions is simply a nuisance and they have to get on with running the business, and that managers have to manage. Royal Mail is shaping its strategy and tactics very consciously with the participation of local managers, and at the very least the workers have to be equally conscious in discussing their own strategy and tactics. The objective situation demands it.

The working class and people are struggling against and cannot afford to be reconciled to the disharmony, chaos and enrichment of the few that the fetish of "competition" brings with it. Royal Mail and the government are trying to suggest that the workers are the problem and that the issue is changing the workers' heads and altering their behaviour in order to come to terms and grow to love their new working environment and flexible ways of working.

However, the postal service does not belong to the owners of capital. It is our postal service, along with social services as a whole. Even more to the point, it is our economy, we decide. This is the slogan of the working class and people. The anti-social offensive and the neo-liberal programme of New Labour must be defeated, and a pro-social agenda presented and fought for. The workers and their union have been fighting this battle against the neo-liberal agenda, and will go on doing so. The workers' stand is just, and we call on the working class to intensify their struggle to build the Workers' Opposition and to elaborate their vision for a new society against this moribund one based on individual private gain and exploitation bereft of principle. It is our economy and we must decide!

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Unite in Defence of the Workers' Rights and Interests! Now Is the Time to Fight for the Alternative!

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to take up the struggle to make their voices heard in Parliament. It is in essence a struggle for the right to be the decision-makers, to control the economy, to empower the people. This struggle takes place alongside the struggle in society as a whole against the exploitation of their labour.

What is required for this? Workers themselves must become worker politicians. What does this mean? It is to collectively identify and fight for their interests. First and foremost, it is essential that workers find ways and means to get together to inform themselves and discuss matters which are affecting their very lives, including the social system in which they exist, political and economic affairs and how they are organised at work. To be political in this sense is not simply to discuss what the Labour Party is doing, or what is happening in parliament, but to identify and discuss their interests as collectives, at work and in society, and what must be changed so that they have the power to guarantee that their interests will not be trampled but will prevail. They must determine their own agenda.

There are specific things which must be taken up in this fight. It is a reality that a component part of this fight is the campaign to repeal the anti-worker laws and to put in place legislation which will guarantee workers freedom to organise as they think fit and to take action to defend their interests without being subject to punitive action by the state and the employers. RCPB(ML) salutes all those workers, trade unions and activists who are active in this struggle. The issue is how the voice and power of the organised workers can be manifest in the legislative body. The perspective is that the economy, the society is ours, is the workers', we who create the wealth, who are the indispensable part of the socialised economy. It is the perspective that it is our economy, we decide!

What is required, what steps are needed, in order to ensure this voice is heard in Parliament and which can give voice to the demand that monopoly right be restricted and the dictate of the monopolies condemned and effectively opposed? Certainly one thing which is indispensable is that the workers must fight for the alternative, for their independent programme. This programme defends the rights of all in society, and demands that society stop enriching the owners of capital and instead invests the wealth of society in social programmes and in building an economy which is not based on relations of exploitation abroad or at home. Workers must take a stand for this programme, fight for it and defend it, wherever they are, in whatever party they are organised, irrespective of political beliefs or creed.

At the same time, to effect change, it is necessary that workers take the step of selecting candidates from among their ranks to stand as independent candidates, that is, candidates who are there to represent the interests of their fellow workers, their collectives and the whole society, for parliament. This is a movement which must grow. Already there are examples, both from the ranks of the workers and also from the ranks of the anti-war movement. There is motion to build a Workers' Opposition. This is a political movement, whether expressed in the terms of a shop stewards' network, or in terms of workers being able to vote for their best representatives. It is a movement which has the character of voting not for some extraneous force but voting for one's own collective – a movement which has the aim of placing firmly in Parliament as representative of an organised force an opposition to the programme of paying the rich and following the neo-liberal agenda of the monopolies. Experience shows that implementing this neo-liberal agenda is the role of Westminster at the present time, and this cannot and must

not continue! This is not an issue of another parliamentary party, that is, one which has the character of a machine to win votes. The issue is for workers to be political, and the requirement is that the workers' movement give rise to worker politicians.

This step itself has an aim. It is to safeguard the future, to activate and give play to the social consciousness of the mass of human beings, and to achieve that power which will guarantee the rights of the working class, along with those of all sections of society. It is to bring into being an anti-war, pro-social and pro-worker government. The workers themselves are the force, organised as a class which is conscious of its own existence and fights for the interests of that class, who will spearhead this programme.

The serious attacks on the workers and on society demand mass conscious participation of the workers as a whole to resist and to turn things around. It is not an issue of a balance of power or achieving a level playing field. The fight to defend the interests of the working class and people and to safeguard the future of society is not posed like that. This is because the ruling elite, which presently has power in its hands and is acting against the interests of working people and in the interests of capital, has the whole power of the state and its legislative body and government executive on its side.

It is crucial that this campaign to repeal the anti-worker laws and to bring into being an Act which guarantees the rights of the workers to organise does succeed. The reality is that this is a step towards restraining the power of the monopolies and the financiers. It is the organised force of the working class which must be brought to bear to restrict the power of the monopolies who act with absolute irresponsibility towards society. So the motion to bring into being a Workers' Opposition with worker politicians at the helm must

become a mass movement. A movement must be built and flourish that strengthens the trade unions on the basis of conscious participation of the workers, and on the basis of the principles of the working class that an injury to one is an injury to all, and all for one and one for all. This mass movement must be one that looks reality in the eye and is prepared to engage in a contest of strength with the ruling elite.

The economy is our economy. This society is our society. We must safeguard its future and have control over decisions that affect our lives, the well-being of our communities and the socialised economy as a whole. We have the right to say no to any agenda that will damage the economy, the society and our future.

Our Party calls on all workers to organise themselves politically to exercise their right to set the direction of the economy and to determine the course of political affairs. Plant and build the alternative by selecting and electing from amongst your peers representatives to parliament to build a Workers' Opposition! This will contribute to building a powerful force to resist the neo-liberal agenda no matter who its proponents are, a powerful force to defend the interests of the working class and to advocate and implement its pro-social, anti-war agenda. What we are fighting for is nothing less than a self-reliant economy, not one based on sucking dry the human and material resources of the peoples of the world but instead is owned and controlled by the producers. What we are fighting for is nothing less than a political system in which our say is decisive and which guarantees the rights of all members of society. Is this too much to demand?!

Repeal all anti-worker, anti-union laws!

For the rights and freedoms of the workers and their trade unions!

Build the Workers' Opposition!

