

PEACE
JUSTICE
EQUALITY

● **The Respect manifesto for the May 2005 election**

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Respect election manifesto

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Introduction

AGAINST WAR AND PRIVATISATION

TONY BLAIR has already made it clear that a third New Labour term will be “unremittingly New Labour”. By that he means unremittingly right wing; more right wing than he managed to be in either his first or second terms. This is clear from pre-election policies—from house arrest for anyone (including British citizens) the Home Secretary chooses to label a terrorist to attacks on incapacity benefit, pensions and asylum rights. Blair persists in stridently defending the invasion of Iraq despite the absence of weapons of mass destruction and the disastrous consequences of the war in Iraq today.

George Bush has made it crystal clear that he regards his re-election as a mandate for further wars, more attacks on civil liberties and more of the neo-conservatives’ oil-drenched agenda. He is now beating the war drums against Iran and Syria in a way reminiscent of the build-up to war against Iraq. Tony Blair, we can be very sure, will stand ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with him again, once Bush makes the call.

This grim reality makes the existence of a genuinely left, anti-war alternative absolutely crucial in this election and beyond. Respect sprang directly from the great anti-war movement that brought millions onto the streets. Respect continues steadfastly to oppose the war and the occupation of Iraq. None of the other parties has made such a stand. The Tories supported the war throughout. The Liberal Democrats supported the war once it started and, oppose the call for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops. Until their party conference in March 2005, the Green Party took the same position as the Liberals, refusing to call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops from Iraq. As a result of the mass opposition that has developed the Greens have now changed their position. We welcome their decision to now call for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

Although Respect grew out of the mass opposition to the war on Iraq, it is not just an anti-war party. Respect represents a comprehensive political alternative to New Labour and the other establishment parties. A vote for Respect is a vote to reverse the rightward march in British politics and to help create a clear, radical, working-class voice—a voice that will represent the millions who, through the betrayals of New Labour, have lost their political voice.

New Labour’s repeated attacks on migrants and asylum seekers has fuelled racism and bolstered the far right. Instead of challenging the Tory race card they have played a race card of their own. The result is an ugly competition between New Labour and the Tories as to who can be tougher on foreigners—who can pander to prejudice most effectively.

New Labour has fully embraced the neo-liberal agenda of privatisation and deregulation. It has pushed privatisation into areas where even the Tories feared to tread. It has privatised air traffic control and extended privatisation into all our core public services. Pensions are under attack, students have the millstones of loans and tuition fees deterring them from higher education, trade union rights remain severely restricted and the gap between rich and poor is



Respect candidates in East London. From left to right: Oliur Rahman, George Galloway MP, Lindsey German and Abdul Khaliq

increasing. Yet there is no lack of wealth or resources. Britain is the fourth richest country in the world.

At the root of New Labour’s policies is a belief that only the uncontrolled market can allocate resources and that big business should be allowed to get on with making a profit, no matter what the consequences are for the majority of people in society. So public services are privatised and placed in the hands of corporations only interested in making a profit and not at all about providing a decent service.

Respect rejects this approach. We believe that public services should be publicly owned and democratically controlled by those who use them and those who work in them. We stand for the extension of public ownership into the key sectors of the economy including bringing the public utilities such as the railways, water, gas and electricity services back into public ownership. We stand for a big increase in the taxation of the big corporations and the wealthy to fund public services.

Respect stands with the millions across the world who suffer daily from the pro-big business policies of privatisation and deregulation; those who face Structural Adjustment Programmes and austerity measures, at the hands of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. We stand ‘shoulder to shoulder’ as well, but ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with the worldwide resistance to capitalist globalisation and war.

Building on a great start

Respect has established itself remarkably quickly since it was set up in January 2004. It scored some breakthrough votes in the June 2004 European and Greater London Assembly elections, particularly in deprived inner-city constituencies with big working-class and immigrant communities. These were previously New Labour strongholds and we are proud to have won these votes and the support of these communities.

Respect won 20 per cent of the votes (for the European Parliament) in the City and East constituency in London, making it the first party. It was the third party in an area covering Walthamstow, Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets. We won between 8 per cent and 39 per cent of the vote in the inner city wards in Birmingham. Respect won 10 per cent in Leicester and 6 per cent in Luton and Slough. In Preston, Respect averaged 30 per cent across five local council wards. In the following Parliamentary by-elections in Leicester South and Birmingham Hodge Hill, Respect won 12.4 per cent and 6.4 per cent respectively in first-past-the-post contests. This was followed by an outright win in the local council by-election in the St



Respect supporters on the campaign trail

Dunstons and Stepney Green ward in London's Tower Hamlets.

We believe that there is an alternative to imperialist war, unfettered global capitalism, and the rule of the market. We aim for a society where wealth is used to meet the needs of the people, not the profits of the corporations. We aim to organise opposition to all forms of inequality and injustice. We actively oppose the destruction of the environment, inherent in the profit system, which threatens the future of the planet. Our aim is to create a socially just and ecologically sustainable society.

As we have seen over the war on Iraq, there is a huge democratic deficit in Britain. Millions marched against the invasion and millions more opposed it. Yet their wishes were ignored, while those of George Bush were dutifully carried out. At the last two elections, millions voted for Labour candidates, expecting them to improve their lives. Not many would have expected tuition fees, privatisation, wars, attacks on the disabled and asylum seekers, and massive hand-outs to big business.

The first past the post election system works against new, smaller parties getting established and gives a monopoly to the established three. Respect believes that proportional representation is a far fairer system.

We believe that the policies contained in this manifesto would make a fundamental change in the lives of millions of people, not only in Britain but across the world. Even the implementation of some of our policies would bring about a drastic improvement in the lives of ordinary people. We call on you to help us bring about that change by joining Respect and helping to create a world in which social justice is defined as incorporating:

- The organisation of society in the most open, democratic, participative, and accountable way practicable based on common ownership and democratic control
- The fight against, and ultimate abolition of, racism, sexism, and all forms of discrimination. Defend a woman's right to choose
- An end to all forms of economic exploitation and social oppression
- For proportional representation in all elections
- The promotion of peace and a system of global and national justice that provides protection from tyranny, prejudice and the abuse of power

1.

RESPECT FOR PEACE: AGAINST WAR AND THE ASSAULT ON CIVIL LIBERTIES

TONY BLAIR wants us to forget that he took us to war on a pack of lies—a war that has been declared illegal by the UN Secretary General. The weapons of mass destruction did not exist. It is time for Blair to pay the price for his lies and deception, his support for George Bush and his role in the war drive.

Two years after the invasion, Iraq is in ruins. 60 per cent of Iraqis are unemployed. Even more have no clean drinking water. Most of the sewage system has been destroyed. Electricity is restricted to a few hours a day. Hospitals are on the point of breakdown. The Iraqi economy is being ruthlessly privatised for the benefit of multinational (mainly US) corporations and corruption in the coalition administration is rife. In Britain support for the war has slumped to 38 per cent of the population; with the majority remaining opposed to it. 70 per cent of people want a date to be set to bring the troops home.

The occupation has met growing resistance. The bulk of the population of Iraq are against the occupation, which has cost a massive £250 billion to date. Over 100,000 civilians have been killed (as revealed in research by the Lancet). Fallujah was flattened by US marines and its 350,000 inhabitants dispersed into squalid refugee camps. Other major cities have been attacked. The horrors of the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib shocked the world—now British troops are revealed to have been doing the same.

Respect calls for the immediate end of the occupation of Iraq. The elections held in January will change nothing unless they result in an end to the occupation. The issue is not, as we are constantly told, one of democracy against dictatorship it is one of democracy versus occupation. Nothing will change, therefore, as long as the occupation continues. The resistance will continue so long as foreign troops are on Iraqi soil. The bulk of those voting were not voting to support the occupation but were looking for a way to end it. The only force which can reorganise Iraq and end the conflict are the Iraqi people themselves—and the precondition for that is the exit of coalition forces. Only then can the Iraqi people begin to rebuild their country and their lives. The resources of Iraq that have been privatised must be restored so that they can be used for the benefit of the Iraqi people.

Bush's 'war on terror' has spawned repeated attacks on civil liberties and human rights across the globe. In Britain special powers were established, allowing for detention without trial, which has been declared illegal, by the Law Lords. One Law Lord even declared that such attacks on human rights are more dangerous than terrorism itself. These powers are now to be replaced with powers allowing for the detention of both foreign nationals and British citizens under conditions of house arrest, or other restrictions on the say so of the Home Secretary—again without trial or even charge. Muslims, in particular, will feel the sharp end of these measures. They are demonised by 'guilt by association'. Government minister Hazel Blears MP has said that it is inevitable that disproportionately



Stop the War Coalition's Bring the Troops Home demonstration in London calling for an end to the occupation of Iraq

more Muslims will be stopped and searched by the police under anti-terrorism legislation.

Respect says

- Self-determination for the people of Iraq
- End the occupation of Iraq; bring the troops home now
- End the attacks on civil and human rights
- No detention without trial or charge in Guantanamo Bay or elsewhere
- Defend the right to trial by jury
- Oppose Islamophobia and the demonisation of Muslim communities
- Repeal New Labour and Tory restrictions on assembly and association and all the anti-terrorism legislation

2.

RESPECT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

THE EFFECTS of global warming and climate change are spiralling out of control. It is one of the most serious challenges facing our planet today. The 1990s were the warmest decade ever recorded. A disastrous rise in sea levels is under way as the polar ice caps melt, posing catastrophic threats to low-lying countries such as Bangladesh, as well as coastal communities and island dwellers.

Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe as evaporation rates increase. The threat to agricultural production and biodiversity increases as growing conditions and disease distribution patterns change. This unprecedented situation is created predominantly by human activity, in particular by a reliance on fossil fuels, resulting in the release of huge amounts of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. Deforestation compounds this process.

Unfortunately both governmental and corporate response to this challenge has been woefully inadequate. Even the modest provisions of the Kyoto Protocol (which would not by themselves resolve the problem) are flouted, most notably by the oil-dominated Bush administration. Only a serious challenge to corporate interests and government inaction can tackle this problem.

New Labour's 'green' policies have been largely cosmetic. It levies massive taxes on petrol, but like the Tories, has not invested in public transport in order to create a viable alternative to car use. The oil companies make vast profits. We believe that North Sea Oil should be brought back into public ownership. New Labour's embrace of the big corporations—including agribusiness—along with capitalist globalisation has compounded the environmental crisis.

Respect proposes the following action

- Emergency steps to reduce the use of fossil fuels, alongside massively increased investment in sustainable energy—including solar, biological and wind and wave power
- A cheap and integrated transport system to provide an alternative to car use, making the current road-building programme unnecessary
- Tough action against corporate polluters
- Public accountability of the oil companies
- End the £9 billion tax-break to the airlines
- No return to nuclear energy, close all nuclear plants
- Stop the import and export of nuclear waste and the dumping of it on third world countries
- The introduction of clean-burn technologies into fossil fuelled power stations
- Increased public investment to make homes energy efficient
- Bring the water industry back into public ownership under democratic control; invest in a clean-up of rivers lakes and sea
- High quality recycling facilities to maximise recycling, no new incinerators
- Stop the commercial use of GM foods; a moratorium on trials pending further research

3.

RESPECT AT WORK

AFTER EIGHT years of New Labour government Britain has the most repressive union laws in the western world. These laws can no longer be termed 'Tory' anti-union laws, they have now been fully adopted and utilised by New Labour. Blair not only intends to keep them in place but boasts that they have made Britain one of the best places in the world to do business. That is, it has lower pay, longer hours, less regulation and more obstacles in the way of workers fighting back than in many other countries.

Short-term contracts, the outsourcing of work, and the use of agency workers sit alongside the increasing harassment and victimisation of trade union representatives. These measures undermine trade union organisation, degrade working conditions and generate low pay and precarious employment. Blair has done everything possible to export this notorious 'British model' to the rest of Europe though the structures of the European Union. At home, New Labour has forged a new relationship with the employers whilst turning its face decisively against the trade unions and their members, as shown by the firefighters' dispute and the plans to get rid of over 100,000 civil service jobs.

Behind New Labour's deregulation, free-market, anti-union stance is one of the most despicable developments in the British labour market for many years. This is the existence of tens of thousands of migrant workers who face super-exploitation in agriculture, food processing and the building industry. Their exploitation is fuelled by racist immigration policies. They work endless hours for a pittance—often in dangerous conditions. Many are trapped by conditions of illegality imposed upon them by immigration and asylum regulations and are prey to ruthless criminal gangs who exploit their situation.

Women workers face particular exploitation. Over 70 per cent of women are now in work, the highest number ever. Women now make up 50 per cent of the British workforce but despite the 1974 Equal Pay Act women in full-time work still only earn 82 per cent of the male wage. Women working part-time earn about 76 per cent of the male wage. The highest percentage of part-time women workers (48 per cent) is those with dependent children. The high cost of nursery provision means that part-time work, with poverty wages, is often the only option.

Yet Britain's record on childcare is also appalling. In 2000, 68 per cent of Swedish three-year olds were in pre-school education, 70 per cent in Norway and 80 per cent in New Zealand. In Britain it was only 53 per cent. The gap is even bigger in respect of provision for those under three. The changes promised by New Labour in its Ten Year Strategy for Childcare are a mixture of private and state provision with means-tested benefits. A provision aimed only at three and four-year olds is inadequate for mothers who return to work after the six months maternity leave.

Women workers face widespread discrimination and victimisation over pregnancy and maternity rights. A survey by the Equal Opportunity Commission revealed that every year 30,000 women



Cleaners at Canary Wharf campaign for a living wage

are sacked or forced out of their jobs by employers seeking to avoid paying for maternity leave.

The result of New Labour's rejection of the unions and its embracing of the employers' agenda has been a deepening crisis of working-class representation. More and more trade unionists are determined not to support New Labour any more. A debate about the unions' relationship with New Labour has opened up within the unions. In many cases this has focused on whether the unions should continue to bankroll New Labour, through the unions' political funds, when New Labour no longer represents trade unionists' interests but organises against them and attacks their working conditions and wages.

The Rail Maritime and Transport union (RMT)—the union that took the initiative to form the Labour Party 100 years ago—has been expelled from the party for supporting the Scottish Socialist Party candidates in Scotland rather than New Labour candidates. The RMT has changed its rules to allow it to support candidates from parties other than those from New Labour. The Fire Brigades Union conference voted to disaffiliate from New Labour in protest at the government's disgusting behaviour during their dispute.

Respect stands together with the unions and workers against the attacks on jobs, conditions, pensions and employment rights. We oppose the proposed jobs massacre of over 100,000 Civil Service jobs and support the unions in opposing them. We deplore the disgraceful game of redundancy leapfrog being played by the three establishment parties, with each trying to trump the other by announcing ever-increasing Civil Service cuts. The closure of Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) offices and the cuts elsewhere will impact upon the most needy in society—pensioners and the poor. New Labour is behaving like the worst of bullying employers and only industrial action has forced management to negotiate. Respect will support any action taken by the trade unions in defence of these jobs and services.

Respect calls for

- The repeal of the anti-union laws
- Migrant workers and asylum seekers to have the right to work, with the full protection of employment laws and regulations
- Full employment rights for all workers from day one
- The minimum wage to be raised to £7.40 per hour, which is the European Union decency threshold
- The automatic right to union recognition
- The right to hold trade union meetings during working hours
- Employment tribunals to have the powers to enforce reinstatement and protect trade union representatives
- End work-place discrimination on the basis of age, ethnicity, gender or life style choices

- End the discrimination against women at work during pregnancy. Extend parental leave entitlements to all employees regardless of size of workforce
- Full enforcement of equal pay legislation. Fine employers who flout this legislation
- Universal childcare in publicly-funded nurseries for the full working day, as well as after-school clubs for all children up to 11 years old

Health and safety at work

There has been little progress on health and safety issues since New Labour came to power. In fact there are escalating problems as working conditions are worsened through privatisation, the greater use of agencies and the undermining of the Health and Safety Executive. New Labour's actions in removing the Railway Inspectorate from HSE and placing it under the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) seriously undermines its independence and compromises safety on the railways. The death of the Morecambe Bay cockle pickers, the largest single workplace loss of life since the Piper Alpha disaster in the North Sea, highlights the increased risks faced by migrant and agency workers. All workers, including asylum seekers, should have the right to work with full employment and health and safety protection.

All employers should be subject to the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA). It is a scandal that New Labour is pushing hard the New Services Directive from the European Union, which exempts foreign companies from the requirements of the HSWA.

There is an urgent need to double the number of Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors as a first step in rebuilding an effective HSE following the cuts imposed on it.

Respect calls for

- Current cuts to the HSE to be reversed and new resources put into it
- The Rail Inspectorate to be returned to the HSE
- A renewed emphasis on inspection and enforcement
- Full protection for health and safety representatives to do their job; full protection for whistle-blowers on health and safety issues
- Statutory powers for health and safety representatives to shut down dangerous workplaces and to take out private prosecutions of employers over safety issues
- Labour's 1997 manifesto commitment to legislate on corporate killing should be implemented
- Legal obligations on named directors and a massive increase in penalties for breaches of health and safety legislation, including imprisonment of directors
- Support for the TUC call for the right of trade unions to appoint roving safety representatives with powers to inspect non-unionised workplaces

RESPECT FOR THE NHS

IN 1997 Blair warned we had, “ten days to save the NHS”. Yet the NHS faces a new round of cuts in beds, jobs and patient care as his ‘modernisation’ package takes effect. It is increasingly clear that the aim is to create not just an internal market but a free market in health care in which the NHS is only one among many providers of elective (non-urgent, waiting list) treatment.

New Labour wants the NHS to be little more than a centralised fund that commissions and pays for patient care while NHS hospitals compete with the private sector for a share of the budget and the staff they need. However, NHS hospitals remain the only providers of accident and emergency services and of services for patients with complex and chronic conditions, which the private sector sees as unprofitable. As they lose increasing numbers of waiting list patients to the private sector many local hospitals will struggle to survive financially. John Reid has admitted that he is prepared to see NHS hospitals closed as a consequence of New Labour’s determination to expand the private sector and deliver ‘patient choice’.

New Labour argues that the NHS budget, at £67 billion, is now double the 1996–97 figure. Billions of this, however, are funnelled into contracts with private health providers, making profits for the private companies, whilst NHS hospitals are still facing massive deficits and forced to close beds and cut jobs. Ministers want at least 10 per cent of elective operations to be carried out by the private sector next year, rising to 15 per cent by 2008. By the end of 2005 Primary Care Trusts will be obliged to offer almost all patients a ‘choice’ of providers—including at least one private hospital—from the time they are first referred. We are seeing the creeping privatisation of the NHS.

The government has just invited private sector tenders for a further 250,000 operations a year, worth an estimated £500 million annually: in addition another £400m worth of X-rays, scans, blood tests and pathology tests will be hived-off to the private sector. This will almost double the number of private sector operations that will have to be purchased by the NHS, pushing the government’s total spend in the ‘independent sector’ up towards £1.5 billion.

The introduction of Foundation Trusts was a ‘reform’ virtually nobody wanted. Already it has started to go wrong. Last autumn a firm of business trouble-shooters was brought in to sort out the growing financial crisis in the first failing Foundation Trust in Bradford. Bradford’s problems today will be those of many more Foundation Trusts, and other trusts, in the months and years ahead. New Labour is committed to pressing all trusts to become Foundation Trusts.

Health minister John Reid has issued a statement refusing to answer parliamentary questions on any Foundation Trust, declaring that: “ministers are no longer in a position to comment on, or provide information about, the detail of operational management within such trusts.”

Foundation Trusts have been the first to test out a new ‘payment



Nurses in Newcastle

by results’ system designed to increase competition and maximise numbers of NHS patients treated by private hospitals. From April 2005 hospitals will begin to receive a fixed-price payment per item of treatment delivered, a system which ministers admit could force the closure of ‘failing’ NHS Trusts. It is so disruptive it has been slowed down in the run-up to the election but will be phased in over the next four years.

Ironically the payment by results system will cause the biggest problems for new hospitals funded under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI)—which are saddled with high, fixed overhead costs, while lacking spare beds and capacity to take on additional patients. More PFI hospital projects, worth £4 billion, were given the go-ahead by John Reid during the summer of 2004, many of them reflecting the massive cost inflation of PFI schemes since the first wave was rubber-stamped back in 1998.

Long-term care for the elderly has already been largely privatised, with the closure of NHS geriatric beds and an increasing reliance upon privately run nursing homes and services. Home care has met a similar fate with more than 70 per cent of services now delivered by private companies.

Respect believes that there is no place in the NHS for the private sector, where decisions are based on profit and not the needs of the patient.

Respect calls for

- A fully-funded, publicly-owned NHS, delivering care free at the point of use
- Opposition to PFI schemes; all privatised services to be brought back into the NHS
- No further closure of local hospitals or specialist units
- Bring all agencies administering care services into public ownership under NHS or local government control
- The abolition of charges for prescriptions, foot care, dentistry, eye and hearing services
- The expansion of psychiatric health services
- An expansion of training opportunities for doctors, nursing and related services

5.

RESPECT FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

NEW LABOUR has failed to act decisively to solve the growing transport crisis. Safety, reliability, affordability and the environmental impact have been sacrificed on the altar of private profit. Roads have become even more congested whilst real investment in public transport has failed to materialise. The privateers running our bus and rail services have made super-profits at public expense, with higher fares and higher and higher public subsidies. Air travel is given privileged status and massive tax breaks, despite it being the fastest growing source of greenhouse gasses. Labour's pre-1997 commitment to re-nationalise the railways remains abandoned, with the safety of passengers jeopardised.

Respect calls for a comprehensive alternative to our current transport system. All public transport should be publicly owned and run as a service, not for profit. We need a fully integrated public transport system—including rail, tube, bus and urban light rail services—that can provide a good reliable service without risking our safety or destroying the environment in the process. Public transport must be a cheaper option to car use if it is to provide a real alternative. We want to see freight taken off the roads and returned to rail where it would be safer and cleaner. This requires a major increase in investment in rail freight facilities, which would allow current trunk road building plans to be cut. All public transport should be designed and adapted for disabled access. We must ensure that rural areas are well served by public transport.

We need a pollution-free alternative to car transport, yet walking and cycling routes remain marginal to transport policy. Urban planning should be based on the needs of people not just on traffic considerations. Remarkably, 80 per cent of all car journeys are less than three miles. We need to see school transport provision extended to cut the use of cars on the school run, with safe walking and cycling routes to school. Congestion charging has a role to play providing it reflects the ability to pay and is linked to viable public transport alternatives.

Respect says

- Bring the railways back into public ownership, under democratic control, and integrate the railways, bus services and urban light rail
- Invest in a cheap and integrated transport system to reduce the need to use cars, making the current road-building programme unnecessary
- New road building only with the agreement of the communities affected
- More frequent passenger journeys and better staffing of stations, trains and buses (guards and conductors) to encourage people back onto public transport
- A full programme of cycle routes in our towns and cities
- Hefty taxes on company cars and on company parking spaces
- Bring air traffic control back into public ownership

6.

RESPECT FOR EDUCATION

RESPECT BELIEVES that education is a basic right that should be available to all, irrespective of social background or financial means. Yet New Labour has continued the attack on comprehensive education that was started by the Tories under Thatcher. It is a route towards a two-tier education system that benefits the well-off but condemns countless others to the low-wage economy. New Labour remains determined to introduce a wide range of privatisation measures, which will alter both the nature of education and worsen the conditions of employment of teachers. The vision of equality through a fully-funded comprehensive education system from nursery education through primary and secondary school has never been realised. It is children from working-class backgrounds who are most disadvantaged.

Schools are dominated by a regime of testing, league tables and privatised inspections which distorts education, enforces competition, stresses and selects children and young people and misleads parents. Respect calls for the abolition of league tables and the current testing and inspection systems and the assessment of pupils, and school, by teachers' self-evaluation overseen and supported by Local Authority inspectors and advisers answerable to parents and communities.

New Labour is opening up the whole education system to profit-hungry private companies. They are outsourcing services and schools are being tied to business agendas through sponsorship of specialist schools and academies.

Education is a public service, not a market or a business. Education services should be publicly provided and managed. We oppose the use of PFI to fund school capital programmes. We want to see an end to business sponsorship of specialist schools. We will bring City Academies into the public sector. They are lavishly funded at the expense of neighbouring schools. They are private schools in disguise, paid for by public money but run mostly by business entrepreneurs. We believe that the profit motive should have no place in education. It should be run according to the needs of the pupils and students, not on the basis of how much profit can be made.

Respect aims to break the cycle of inequality in the education system. We want to see an education system that will enable everyone to develop the knowledge, skills and personal qualities to understand the world, live in it, and help to change it.

Today's education system is a barrier to this. Instead of challenging an unequal society it reproduces it, benefiting most those pupils and students from well-off families while failing to meet the needs of the majority, especially those from poorer working-class backgrounds and minority ethnic groups. Instead of providing a broad curriculum, which opens up the world of knowledge and culture for all, it selects and stratifies children and young people to fit into the hierarchy of the labour market. Instead of developing critical minds and collective action to challenge injustice, it encourages conformity and competitive individualism. Instead of being open to popular



School students join Birmingham Stop the War demonstration against attacks on Iraq

democratic decision-making, it is tied to the demands of employers interested only in exploiting a compliant workforce for profit.

Respect calls for

- A fully comprehensive school system providing a common core curriculum for all until 18. End selection. Scrap SATs and other unnecessary tests
- Education free at point of use, from pre-school to FE, to university and adult learning
- A radical reduction in class size
- A qualified teacher for every class
- Better pay for teachers and other education workers.
- An end to specialist school status, schools can come together in order to share facilities and expertise where feasible
- Free after-school clubs and play centres for all that need them
- Full and part-time nursery and day-care places as a right, for all who want them
- An end to charitable status and tax breaks for private schools
- Abolish tuition fees and student loans. Free education and a living grant for all further and higher education students.
- Free and life-long access for all to high quality vocational education and adult education

7.

RESPECT FOR DISABILITY

THERE ARE ten million disabled people in Britain. Respect recognises that disabled people face discrimination, prejudice and social exclusion. We understand that it is often not the person's impairment that 'disables' them, but the lack of facilities, access and support, that is responsible for exclusion. We are for a comprehensive programme of equal opportunities at work, the outlawing of all employment discrimination, and for a greatly enhanced Access to Work scheme that ensures that impairment is not a barrier to employment. We are totally committed to equal pay for disabled workers.

We are against ghettoising disabled school students, and believe that schools should receive all funding needs to ensure that disabled school students may enjoy educational facilities to the full. Far too few disabled school leavers enjoy the benefits of higher education, and are totally under-represented at universities. We will ensure that all facilities are made available to allow access to higher education.

Respect is against the stigmatising of those on disability or incapacity benefits, we recognise that the government's current campaign is aimed at frightening people off benefits rather than investing in real employment opportunities. We are against any cuts in benefit, any new time limits, and any penalisation of those on them.

We are for a complete overhaul of the Disability Living Allowance and other benefits, simplifying the application procedure and ensuring that all those entitled to such benefits may gain easy access to them. We are for strict implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act, ensuring that all business, services and public bodies make them selves accessible to all regardless of impairment. We are for a fully accessible public transport system, and commit to investing the necessary resources to ensure that tubes, buses trains and taxis are all available to all who wish to use them.

We are in favour of easy parking access for disabled badge holders in all parts of our major cities. We will ensure that badge holders are not subject to the tyranny of parking penalties, and will undertake an overhaul of the present scheme to be replaced by one that uses 21st century technology to ensure tickets are not issued. We will implement heavy fines for use of disabled parking bays by non-badge holders

We recognise that for a significant section of disabled people social services care packages are all that stands between them and institutionalisation, squalor and social isolation. We recognise therefore that to be fully independent there needs to be a care environment which is controlled by the service user, with well qualified and well paid staff. We will reverse all cuts, and develop a programme of investment that puts social care to the forefront of public spending.

Respect calls for

- Equal opportunities for all at work
- Equal access to education
- Fully accessible public transport
- An overhaul of Disability Living Allowance and other benefits
- Reverse all cuts and higher investment in care services

RESPECT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

TIME AND again we hear politicians and commentators call young people apathetic and uninterested in the world around them. But the last few years have shown how wrong they are. Young people were to the fore of the anti-war movement. School students walked out of classes all over the country to oppose the invasion of Iraq. Young people on every continent have been involved in the massive anti-capitalist protests over the last six years and have been demonstrating their enthusiasm and determination to build a better world. But they have little time for the established political parties and politicians in whom they can easily see the shallowness and cynicism that they hold towards those who argue for change.

Young people are constantly ignored by those in power; whether it's about vital issues of world peace or the protection of the environment or on those issues that directly impinge on their lives, such as work, education and leisure. Respect believes that all young people have a part to play in forging a future for all of us. We believe that everybody should be able to vote from the age of 16. But involvement in decision-making goes much further than simply voting. We want to see young people have their say at school, work and in the community. At the moment, young people are largely ignored and then criticised when they appear alienated or disgruntled by the way they are treated. At work and in education, special provision should be made to give young people their say in what goes on.

More and more young people are forced to live at home, even when they go to university, because of the exorbitant cost of housing in Britain. It is almost impossible for young people to become first-time buyers because of the spiralling house-price boom. Young people are generally saddled with debt, debt and more debt as they enter work and are perhaps thinking of starting a family.

We need decent jobs for all those who leave education at decent rates of pay. There should be no lower minimum wage for young people. They should be paid the same as anyone else doing the same job. There must be far more apprenticeships, giving skills to young people. And every young person who wants to stay in education should be able to, not put off by tuition fees, student loans or inadequate grants.

There is a growing tension on housing estates and in public areas where young people are forced to congregate and socialise on the streets. However, we believe that this is due to over-crowded homes and the increasing privatisation of our public areas and facilities. Over recent years, across the country we have seen the number of council and voluntary-run centres privatised or closed. Private centres now focus on adult fitness facilities to maximise income, dramatically reducing the opportunities for individual and team sports for young people.

In every city, town and village facilities for young people have been closed down—youth clubs, affordable sports centres, cheap cinemas—yet when young people dare to socialise with their friends in public they are criticised and condemned for anti-social behaviour.

Respect believes that the constant denigration of young people must stop. We oppose the growing use of Anti-social Behaviour



A boy from Lower Broughton in Salford. Young people feel they are stopped unfairly by the police when they wear hoods

Orders and 'good behaviour agreements' by the police and local councils—generally against young people from working-class estates. These are an attack on civil liberties and often a fast track to criminalisation. They pose no solution to the problems young people and the rest of society faces. Respect calls for a fully-funded youth service and massive investment in community and youth facilities. Respect believes that the focus should be on investing in young people and their abilities rather than focusing on them as a crime issue.

Respect calls for

- Votes at 16
- The provision of a fully-funded youth service
- The scrapping of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
- Increased investment into community facilities that fulfil the needs of young people. End the privatisation of such services
- Decent, secure jobs at adult rates of pay. Investment in apprenticeships, with jobs on completion

RESPECT FOR DECENT HOUSING

RESPECT CONDEMNS the failure of this government to invest adequately in council housing. Homelessness has doubled since New Labour came to power, with thousands more suffering overcrowding, and spiralling housing costs. Six million people living in council housing have been told by the government that there can be no investment in their homes unless they agree to some form of privatisation. It is becoming almost impossible for first-time buyers to afford a house. The erosion of council housing, with hardly any new council flats and houses being built has fuelled the house price boom.

Decent, affordable, council housing should be available for everyone who needs it. But this involves building new council homes and improving existing stock. The money is there for this. The government raises one and half billion pounds from council rents and another half billion from right-to-buy receipts each year. It writes off hundreds of millions of pounds of council debts each year in support of stock-transfer schemes. Audit Commission reports have shown that council housing is the most cost-effective. The private rented sector has excessively high rents, not all of which are covered by housing benefit. Housing association rents are often so high that they can create a poverty trap for tenants. The government is paying millions on extra housing benefit due to such high rents.

The government knows that there is a growing shortage of affordable housing but has few solutions. Reliance on owner occupation and market forces to provide affordable homes has failed for people on average or low incomes. Safe, secure, affordable housing is a fundamental right for everyone, and council housing best provides it.

The Council Tax is a growing burden that unfairly hits the poor and pensioners. We stand for its replacement with a progressive local income tax, to fund local services, where people pay according to their ability to do so. To make that work fairly also means an equalisation of local taxes, so that the poorest councils are subsidised by the richest.

Respect says

- No privatisation of council housing
- End the right to buy scheme
- Publicly-owned land should be used to build council housing, not sold off to property speculators to build houses local people can't afford
- Provide the financial means for local authorities to invest directly in council housing
- Give council tenants, who have been forced to privatise to gain investment in their homes, the right to return to local authority ownership
- Give local authorities powers to enforce repairs and improvements on private sector landlords and ensure they are more effectively regulated
- Legislate to prevent landlords from setting excessive rents
- Abolish the Council Tax and replace it with a progressive local income tax. Review the business rate system



Top: A father with his child on the Crossways Estate which is due for demolition, Tower Hamlets, East London

Bottom: an ex-docker celebrates his sixty-second birthday in a pub in Poplar, East London

10.

RESPECT FOR PENSIONERS

PENSIONERS IN this country are among the poorest in the EU, where pensions have also been under attack for several years. Like the Tories before them New Labour has perpetuated this shameful situation by refusing to raise the basic state pension in line with inflation and to restore the link with earnings. In fact New Labour is continuing to attack pensions and is now proposing to increase the retirement age to seventy.

Alongside this are increasing attacks on occupational pension schemes as well. In 1997 six million workers were covered by final salary schemes. Today that figure has been halved as employers replace final salary schemes by average salary schemes. Big business has been allowed to raid pension funds, take contribution holidays, and refuse to compensate pensioners and current employees in the event of bankruptcy.

New Labour is actively attacking occupational schemes in the public sector where it is itself the employer. It plans to increase the retirement age for all public sector employees initially to sixty-five. 1.5 million local authority workers are facing later retirement and increases in contributions to compensate for employers' pension holidays and civil servants are also facing later retirement and attacks on their final salary scheme.

Respect rejects the argument that the ageing population means that decent pension provisions are no longer affordable. Big corporations in Britain and elsewhere are seeking to boost their profits at the expense of pensioners by grabbing the deferred wages that pensions represent. Respect will give full support to those trade unions that are planning action to defend pension rights.

Respect calls for

- An immediate rise in the basic state pension to £110 per week for all pensioners
- Restoration of the link between the state pension and average earnings
- Annual increases in the state pension in line with wages or prices—whichever is the greater
- Reduction of the age for receipt of the state pension to sixty for men and women
- Free long term care for all pensioners
- A national free travel scheme for all pensioners
- End attacks on occupational pension scheme; final salary schemes for all employees
- Statutory occupational pension schemes covering all employees in both the public and private sector with compulsory contributions by employers plus full liability by employers in the event of bankruptcy
- An end to age discrimination in the provision of all goods and services

11.

RESPECT FOR A MULTIRACIAL BRITAIN

RESPECT IS proud of our multiracial, multicultural society. The tremendous mixing of people over centuries and especially in recent decades has enriched the lives of everyone in Britain. Yet at each stage, and again today, there have been politicians and sections of the press that have sought to scapegoat newcomers and those who have already settled here.

A century and a half ago racism was directed at Irish immigrants. Then Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe were targeted. After the Second World War governments encouraged black and Asian people to come to Britain to meet the demand for labour. But they, too, faced racism and were then blamed whenever governments cut social services or employers slashed jobs.

Every group of immigrants has been greeted with dire predictions from sections of the establishment that they would not try to fit in, that people would never accept them and that society would collapse. Yet they have fitted in and ordinary people have come together again and again to reject the racists' scaremongering. Our society is stronger and more vibrant as a result.

Imagine what our lives would be like in terms of music, sport, the NHS, our schools, the food we eat, the films we watch, our social services and every other area of life, without the contribution and mixing of black, white and Asian people

That diversity, however, is under threat by those who would rather ordinary people turn against one another than come together to confront the real culprits—big business and the mainstream politicians who do its bidding. New Labour and the Tories are vying with each other over who is the most anti-refugee and anti-immigrant.

This breeds not only hostility to newcomers but reinforces racism against those who were born here. Black people are highly integrated into British society, but they continue to face racism and discrimination in every area of life. They earn less than their white counterparts. They are more likely to be excluded from school or be stopped and searched by the police or die in police custody. Young Asian men, too, are now increasingly stopped and searched by the police.

The government has passed laws calling on employers and public bodies to form policies to tackle racism but in most cases these are merely token exercises. New Labour has watered down the recommendations of the Macpherson report into the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence 12 years ago. The Metropolitan police even wants to abandon that report's target for increasing the proportion of black and ethnic minority officers. The revelations of racism inside the police in the BBC documentary 'The Secret Policeman' revealed that not only does virulent racism continue within the police force but the infiltration of the police by the fascist BNP.

We believe that everyone benefits from a multicultural society based on mutual respect. Defending that requires an uncompromising struggle against racism and discrimination. Respect will do everything possible to organise with all sections of society who suffer racism and organise with them against discrimination and hostility.



Demonstration supporting refugees and asylum seekers on International Refugee Day in London

- Purge racists from the police and prison services
- Make the police accountable to the community
- Justice for all those who have been killed in custody
- A complete overhaul of the criminal justice system to end discrimination
- An end to police harassment and racist stop and search
- Urgent action to address the underachievement of black children and others in schools
- Full involvement of teachers, parents and pupils in tackling inequality in education
- Tougher penalties for employers who discriminate

12.

RESPECT FOR ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION

MILLIONS OF people from around the world are forced to flee their own countries as a result of wars and conflict, human rights abuses and political repression as well as poverty and starvation. Some seek political asylum, others economic and physical survival. The Tories have already played the race card in this election and New Labour has responded with ever more draconian measures. We now have a dangerous competition between New Labour and the Tories as to who can be the more brutal on immigration and asylum and who can pander to prejudice in the most effective way.

Respect rejects the notion that migrants and asylum seekers are a burden on society, or that Britain is full up and cannot take any more people. The rich countries of the world, including Britain, are best placed to protect what are some of the world's most oppressed and vulnerable people. Europe already takes a lower proportion of the world's refugees than either Africa or Asia. Yet such people can make a major contribution to the economies of their host countries providing they are allowed to work and are free from discrimination.

Unfortunately the reverse is the case in Britain today. The scapegoating of asylum seekers and refugees by New Labour has been remorseless. It is the cutting edge of racism in Britain today. It directly fuels the growth of far-right parties, especially the BNP, but also other right-wing anti-immigration parties such as UKIP.

New Labour has continued the worst aspects of previous Tory policy. These include measures such as the removal of the right-to-work; the policy of dispersal; the use of detention centres plus greatly increased deportations. It also included legislation which denies any support whatsoever to so-called 'late' applicants and failed asylum seekers (including families with children) and the criminalisation of asylum seekers, including children as young as 10, arriving without documentation.

In addition the EU is putting in place new proposals for a 'white list' of countries deemed safe so that no asylum applications will be accepted from these countries. It is also taking up the previously rejected proposal for 'holding centres' in North Africa where asylum applications will be processed.

Respect says

- Defend the rights of refugees to political asylum; oppose any new legislation designed to further undermine it
- Oppose the EU's 'Fortress Europe' policy
- Reinstatement of the right of asylum seekers to seek employment; an amnesty for all 'illegal workers'
- End the policy of dispersal
- End the use of detention centres for asylum seekers
- End the White List of 'safe' countries and end deportations
- Give asylum seekers and refugees the right to food and shelter, plus access to education, health and social services

13.

RESPECT AND CRIME

NEW LABOUR talks the language of responsibility all right; but where are the rights which must accompany them like the right to a house which is not overcrowded, access to well funded public provision for sport, leisure, culture—paid for by general taxation for the greater public good.

A remarkable proportion of our prison population can't read or write, is often mentally ill and overwhelmingly re-offends. Prison isn't working and just threatening to impose ASBOs on the already marginalised won't work either.

Drug addiction is the main reason for most street crime. Addicts should be treated not punished. If a fraction of what we spend on war was spent on the detection of dangerous drugs, educating young people that embracing drug culture is a road to despair, and then breaking up the criminal gangs who feast on the misery of the drug-stricken, that would really be a 'war worth fighting.'

New Labour has never taken its pledge to be 'tough on the causes of crime' seriously. It uses fear of crime electorally in the most irresponsible manner without providing an adequate social infrastructure to bring stability and security to all communities.

Respect says

- A serious attack on the causes of crime
- Build supportive communities and tackle social exclusion
- More resources for drug treatment and rehabilitation

14.

RESPECT FOR RURAL BRITAIN

OUR RURAL communities face a crisis. Small farmers, small businesses and other rural workers are squeezed by the big agricultural businesses and the increasing power of the supermarkets. EU agricultural subsidies benefit the big agricultural producers and the big landowners the most. The closure of the various marketing boards deregulated the industry and took away some guaranteed income from the small producers.

The monopoly position of the big supermarkets allows them to dictate production and prices, driving small producers out of business while boosting the profits of the big producers. Often this leads to sweated labour, with minimal rates of pay. We stand for decent rates of pay for all farm labourers and other rural workers.

Respect believes that the countryside is a precious resource that belongs to us all. We want a policy that ensures a diverse, sustainable and accessible rural landscape, which can in turn support vibrant rural communities. Respect calls for decent public services in the countryside including adequate public transport. We oppose the closure of rural post offices. The Countryside Alliance, which is led and financed by the rich, has nothing to offer small farmers, farm workers and other low paid rural workers, or the rural unemployed. Respect is committed to a new approach to the countryside and those who live and work in it.

Respect says

- Investment in the infrastructure of rural communities; healthcare, education, leisure facilities and environmental development
- Regulation of the large supermarket chains to ensure that food production and food prices are in the interests of all, not the large farmers and businesses
- Secure rights of tenure for small farmers and small businesses at affordable rents
- Provision of finance at low interest rates for small businesses and small farmers
- Grants for small farmers to switch to organic farming
- Incentives for small farmers to form co-operatives to reduce costs
- Re-establish the marketing boards
- Grants and incentives for rural communities to undertake environmental protection
- Greatly improved rural public bus and rail transport at affordable fares
- Abolish council tax relief on second homes, and ensure that people can afford to live in their local area
- Reintroduce council house building to rural communities and stop council house sales
- Improve health and education facilities for rural communities
- A review of coastal erosion with the costs for beach and other coastal improvements to be met from direct government funding

Animal welfare

Respect believes that we have an obligation to protect both wild and domesticated animals against cruel treatment and unnecessary exploitation. We are in favour of the development of a safe, sustainable and humane relationship with other species. We support agricultural practices that take account of the preservation of habitats and ecosystems. We are against agriculture practices such as factory farming and intensive methods that are cruel to animals, or fishing methods, which threaten the extinction of species or endanger sea mammals.

We call for

- Implementation of the ban on hunting with dogs
- An end to factory or intensive farming
- An end to animal experimentation for cosmetic or other unnecessary purposes
- For non-animal research methods to be properly funded
- The proper enforcement of animal protection
- Control sea fishing to allow stocks to recover
- End sea-fishing methods, such as long-line fishing, which kill sea mammals and birds
- Strict regulation of the pet trade

15.

RESPECT FOR CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION

GOVERNMENT UNDERFUNDING and corporate power have undermined our cultural freedom and creativity. Almost all aspects of our cultural life have long been run by big business in its own interests. We believe that public institutions of culture should remain free at the point of use. Theatres and arts centres should be subsidised, as they once were, so that they are open and accessible to all, not just a privileged few.

What we read, see and hear in the media, how we receive it, and who owns and controls it are major issues of democracy. The grip of the big media corporations has a dramatic impact on the range, choice and quality of the media we receive. Respect defends the concept of public service broadcasting, which has been eroded by commercial pressure. We want to see effective controls to limit the spread of cross media ownership by big companies.

In the cinema Respect would encourage a policy of diversity of choice available in all major towns and cities. The present near monopoly by mainstream American films severely reduces such choice.

Respect believes that live theatre is an essential part of our cultural life and should be available to all, at both national and regional level. Artistic communities need greater democratic control over their own creative activity. The Arts Council and other funding organisations should be replaced with democratic and accountable bodies.

Sport, particularly football, is a glaring example of how big business has taken over an important aspect of many people's lives. This stranglehold is tightening, with satellite TV companies paying hundreds of millions of pounds for the rights to show top sporting events. Very little of the money is finding its way to the lower levels of each sport. It is clear that in sport the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer.

This process undermines sports provision at all levels. The sale of school playing fields has continued unabated since New Labour came to office, reducing opportunities for school students and local communities to get involved in sport and recreation. The government uses the rhetoric of choice, yet denies thousands of young people the chance to engage in the sport or recreation of their choice.

Respect believes that sport is a public service. We aim to provide all children and all adults with real access and choice of sporting participation.

We call for

- A major increase in the funding of the arts
- Free admission to all government-funded cultural and artistic events
- A review of government support for the film industry
- An end to the privatisation of local authority leisure services
- Stop the sale of playing fields
- Substantially increased spending on school sporting facilities
- Equal access to sporting resources and facilities irrespective of gender or ethnicity. Full access for disabled people
- Opposition to all forms of racism and discrimination in sport

16.

GLOBALISATION

RESPECT REJECTS the way in which globalisation of the world economy is taking place at the expense of jobs, conditions, the privatisation of public services and the destruction of the environment. It hands immense powers to the multinational corporations and the World Trade Organisation (WTO)—whose job is to enforce their agenda onto its member states. Production is moved around the globe to the most profitable locations. Slave labour, child labour and low pay becomes the norm for many areas, as the multinationals drive down living conditions in their unquenchable search for profit. Deregulation and privatisation is forced through and local markets and services are opened up to the multinational corporations. Third world economies, already crippled by debt repayments, are saddled with structural adjustment programmes that strip them of their financial autonomy and enforce austerity measures on their populations.

We are told that this process is inevitable, that corporate power is unstoppable, and that environmental protection is too expensive. Respect rejects this view of the world. Our allies are not the powerful governments of the G8, or the World Bank, or the WTO. Our allies are the working people of the world, whose struggles are reflected in the great global justice movement, which started in Seattle in 1999 and continues today as an alternative to the domination of multinational capital.

Respect therefore says

- Cancel the third world debt, with no strings or conditions
- End the 'structural adjustment' conditions, which impoverish third world peoples
- For a major increase in aid spending in the impoverished countries on health education and welfare
- Introduce a tax on currency speculation
- Take action to curb the power of the multinationals
- Restrict the relocation of jobs without protection for the local workforce

17.

RESPECT AND THE EU

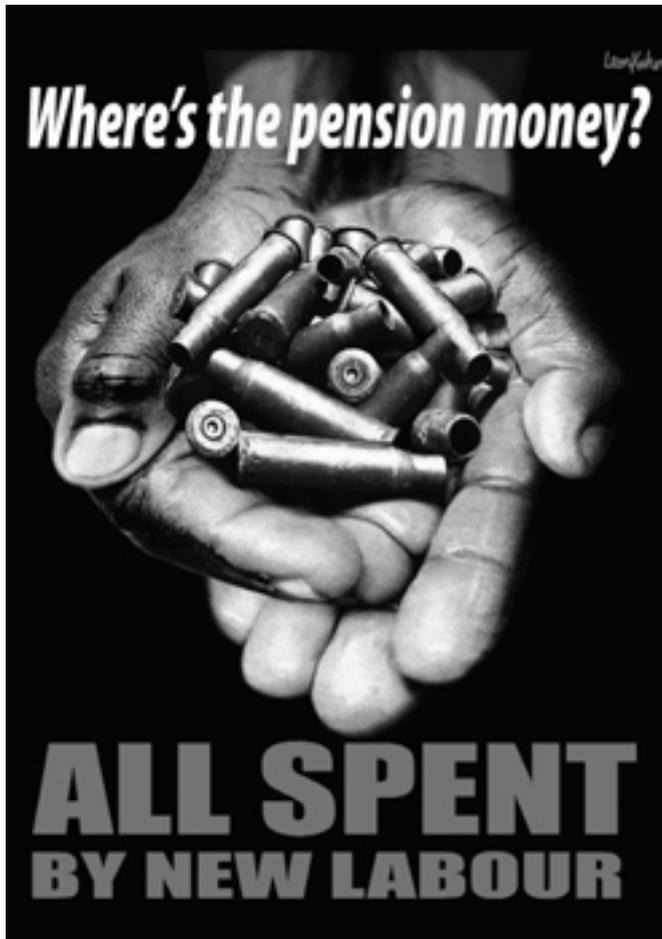
RESPECT is an internationalist party and strongly in favour of links with the rest of Europe. We reject, however, a Europe dominated by big business interests, which the EU represents today. The EU lacks basic democracy in its structures. It is regulated by the infamous Growth and Stability Pact—designed to restrict government borrowing and thereby its ability to spend on public provision. The result is repeated attacks on social services and welfare, within the member states as governments struggle to keep within the criteria. Today in the EU pensions are under attack and social security systems dismantled. Health and education are faced with privatisation and deregulation. Trade unions are threatened and new labour markets deregulated; jobs are made part-time and insecure.

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy continues to be a mechanism that destroys agricultural production in third world countries through the subsidies it pays to EU producers. Its Fortress Europe policy, based on the 'white list' principle, is designed to reinforce its external borders against those victims of war and oppression who seek entry for political asylum or economic survival.

We also reject the EU constitution currently being recommended by the leaders of the EU. It would set in stone the anti-working class character of the European economy. It would institutionalise a Europe in which the decisions of elected parliaments (with all their limitations) are handed over to an unelected bureaucracy. It would institutionalise the EU's democratic deficit through increasing the voting power of the biggest and most powerful member states. It would marginalise the smaller countries and make the countries that have recently joined the EU into second-class citizens, existing as a pool of cheap labour. We will vote 'no' in such a referendum but at the same time we will strongly oppose the anti-European xenophobia which will be whipped up by the Tories and others on the right. Our stance will be in defence of the interests of working people not of those of big business, whether British or not.

The British government has promised a referendum if they propose entry into the Euro zone. Again we will call for a 'no' vote in such a referendum, since the winners from a 'yes' vote would not be the working people of Britain but big business. The agenda of privatisation and deregulation would be strengthened and public services and welfare rights would come under even greater attack.

We call for a different Europe; a Europe based on need not profit. A Europe, which is a clear alternative to global capital, which opposes militarism and war, is open to the needs of the countries of the third world, which defends human rights and human dignity. We want a Europe free from the policies of the WTO and the IMF, free from NATO, free from foreign military bases, free from weapons of mass destruction.



A Respect campaign poster by Leon Kuhn

18.

WHERE WILL THE MONEY COME FROM?

GORDON BROWN tells us that we must 'live within our means'. Yet Britain is a country of huge wealth. That wealth, however, remains largely in the hands of a tiny elite. The richest 20 per cent of the population receive more than 45 per cent of all post-tax income. Corporation tax is the lowest in Europe, yet millions live on incomes that are below the official poverty level. The profits of the oil companies and the banks are at record levels. There is no longer any significant difference between the major parties on these issues. They all subscribe to the same basic economic model, of privatisation and the freedom of the market. Respect rejects this. We stand for a transformation of society that will ensure that the wealth of the society is used for the benefit of the vast majority of the people, not just to make a profit for a tiny few.

To fund the proposals we are making in this manifesto, Respect proposes the following

- A massive cut in military spending. Disband Britain's weapons of mass destruction, scrap nuclear weapons, decommission Trident
- Transfer resources from military to useful production, nationalise the arms industry
- Abolish VAT, as an indirect tax, and replace it with increased direct taxation
- Raise the top rate of income tax
- Raise the tax threshold to ensure that no one on the minimum wage pays income tax
- A big increase in corporation tax, with an additional tax on the super-profits profits of the oil companies and the banks
- A turnover tax on multinationals doing businesses in Britain
- Raise the top rate of inheritance tax whilst putting higher duties on other transfers of wealth and financial transaction
- Increased stamp duty on stocks and shares
- A crack down on tax evasion by big companies and action against offshore tax havens
- Abolish the ceiling on National Insurance contributions

These measures would provide major new funding for public services and allow us to take important steps towards the elimination of poverty.

Our priorities for the election

- End the occupation of Iraq
- End privatisation—bring public services back into public ownership
- End the attacks on civil liberties; no identity cards
- Comprehensive education; an equal chance to every child and young person
- A publicly owned, democratically controlled, and fully funded, NHS
- Link pensions to average earnings
- Scrap student tuition fees
- Raise the minimum wage to the European Decency Threshold of £7.40
- Oppose all forms of discrimination, defend refugees and asylum seekers
- Repeal the anti-union laws
- Tough action to control climate change
- Tax big business and the wealthy to fund public expenditure

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