

Britain: demonstrators speak out against war vs. Iraq

Our correspondent
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Thousands of people protested the Blair government's support for a US-led war against Iraq at the weekend, in a series of demonstrations and vigils aimed at building up momentum for the co-ordinated worldwide protest against the war on February 15.

Anti-war marches were held in Liverpool, Cardiff and Bradford and candlelit vigils in London, Birmingham and Nottingham on January 18 to coincide with the massive Stop the War rally in Washington DC.

Several thousand participated on the demonstrations in Liverpool and Cardiff, and hundreds gathered outside the headquarters of Britain's armed forces at Northwood military base, London.

In Ireland, more than 1,000 demonstrated outside Shannon airport to protest its possible use as a refuelling point for US military planes involved in attacking Iraq.

A demonstration organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Bradford attracted 3,000 participants, including a large contingent from the city's Asian population. The *World Socialist Web Site* intervened in the demonstration, and interviewed several of its participants.

Alexander, a Belgian student studying in the Peace Studies Department at Bradford University, told the WSWs why he had joined the march.

"I have come here because I believe the current crisis is a sign of the lack of any genuine political accountability, to the people that is. The governments are refusing to listen to the people who want a more peaceful stable world. We do not believe in the rhetoric of war against terrorism. We want empowerment and justice across the world.

"The Labour government has been like most recent British governments, the lackey of the White House. If the British government were really the government of

the people represented here, they would not be taking the decisions they are."

WSWS asked Alexander how he thought the war could be stopped.

"The only way to stop the war would be to make the international community properly accountable. To introduce a proper constitution here in Britain, to raise awareness across the west, not just the people here but the entire population as a whole, of what governments are doing behind the façade of their rhetoric."

Alexander was critical of the role of the United Nations. "The United Nations unfortunately has always been an instrument of its security council and even though it has the potential to be the biggest moral authority on the planet, it is also the most elite agenda driven agency."

The WSWs also spoke to Rob, a youth who had joined the march.

"I firmly believe we should not go to war with Iraq; there is not one good motive behind it. There is no serious case for it whatsoever. It [the war] is about economics; the motives are oil and arms. They have got to keep free trade going, perpetuating that. I would say that is the strongest motive behind it all."

Rob was unclear as to the role of the United Nations. "I don't know much about the United Nations but I think in this day and age there needs to be a world body that can prove itself to be strong and have more power than any nation state. I don't think the UN should be answerable to America, I think it should be the other way round."

WSWS asked Rob how he thought war could be stopped. "A good question. I wish I knew the answer. There must be a diplomatic solution I suppose. If Saddam Hussein really needs to be disarmed then I am sure there is a way to do it without going to war. Other

than that, long-term I think it's more about reforming the world economically, redistributing wealth a bit more.

“I think people need to be motivated to speak their minds. Far too many people are apathetic and don't say anything, remain without an opinion. It's important to spread the word.”

WSWS asked Rob his opinion of the fact that it is a Labour government leading the drive to war. “I don't think you can call it Labour in the traditional sense. The difference between Labour and Conservatives is so slim these days, that it is really hard to interpret it that way.”



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