

Glasgow: 100,000 protest against Blair and Iraq war

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Some 100,000 people marched through the streets of Glasgow, Scotland on Saturday against war in Iraq. ScotRail reported that even though they had doubled the number of trains, it had not been possible to cope with the huge numbers, particularly those who wanted to travel from Edinburgh to join the march.

The crowds took hours to set off from Glasgow Green. In addition to tens of thousands of students from schools and colleges, there were large numbers of trade union banners and many other layers of workers in evidence. Sections of the crowd carried Palestinian flags; others carried paper doves, and a few carried religious banners and symbols.

The final rally took place at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC), at which the Labour Party Spring Conference is taking place. It was meant to coincide with a speech by Prime Minister Tony Blair, in which he reiterated his support for war. But Blair moved his address forward to avoid an embarrassing confrontation.

Speakers at the rally included John Swinney, the leader of the Scottish Nationalist Party, Bill Spears, the leader of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Tommy Sheridan, Scottish Socialist Party Member of the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Liberal Democrat Robert Brown and Glasgow Lord Provost Alex Mosson. There was also a Palestinian speaker, a speaker from the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Green Party, the Educational Institute of Scotland, and the Muslim Association of Britain.

John Swinney called for the UN inspectors to be given more time. Scottish TUC General Secretary Bill Spears said, "It's so good that we have got unity here today—political, cross-party, non-party unity." Almost all the speakers portrayed the demonstration as a Scottish event, failing to mention the similar

demonstrations taking place around the world. They said the intention of the march was to show the opposition of Scottish people to the war, and to influence Scottish politicians.

Tommy Sheridan advised those present to "vote tactically ... against the warmongers" at the May elections to the Scottish Parliament. This implied voting for Labour Party members who had opposed the war, as well as for members of the Scottish Socialist Party. Several speakers made favourable references to France and Germany, saying they should be supported for their opposition to the US.

WSWS reporters interviewed some of the marchers. Zeshan, a school student, said, "The governments are determined to push ahead with the war to get the oil. They could use it against the other superpowers, so they can do what they want, without anybody saying anything. I think the US is pushing the United Nations around. Bush isn't going to listen to what they say."

"The US has already bombed Vietnam, using chemical weapons, and it used nuclear weapons to bomb Hiroshima. During the Iran-Iraq war, America was supplying Iraq with weapons as well. Now that Saddam has turned against them and is no longer their puppet, America is having a fit about it. America gets away with everything it does, but if anybody else wants to protect themselves against America, they can't. America just uses propaganda—they should disarm themselves, and set an example."

"I think the people in Middle East should put their foot down, and say 'Let us get on with our lives ourselves. We don't want America or Europe ruling us.' They have got enough power if they join forces together. The problem is that they are not working together."

"Workers will be the worst hit by a war. Blair is

wasting so many millions of pounds on weapons, but he says he can't afford the firefighters' pay rise; he can't afford healthcare and education. He's more willing to destroy other countries and kill other people, just because he wants the oil, and he depends on America.

"The demonstrations are making a statement, that the public doesn't want the governments going to war, but at the end it comes down to Blair and Bush's decision, and they are for war, so they are not going to listen to us. They claim this is a democracy, and we can protest and shout as much as we want, but at the end it's still like a dictatorship. They are going to do just what they want. They are just as bad as Saddam is."

Zed from Iran was one of the many workers, students and young families from different countries taking part in the demonstration. He told us that he was already familiar with the *World Socialist Web Site*.

He said, "America wants to colonise the whole world. The oil is just another weapon. If they can maintain their economy with cheap oil they can dominate the world. The working class has to realise that they have to unite internationally against the multinational corporations. The countries around the Caspian Sea are going to be in the forefront. All the countries surrounding Iran have already got US bases. If they start the ground war, they are going to go into Iran."



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