

A letter and reply on Britain's "New Labour" Party

19 May 2006

The following is an exchange of letters concerning the article "Britain's Compass group: Former Blair acolytes seek to rescue New Labour," by Chris Marsden and Julie Hyland, posted May 17, 2006 on the WSWS.

If your analysis is correct, and I think it is, there is no hope for the near future to contend with British capitalism. The picture of those who want to dress up Labour but keep it subservient to the financial oligarchs reminds me of what my younger daughter said to me years ago concerning her goal of making [it] in the present economic system in the US, to wit: "Dad, capitalism is the only game in town."

RB

Thank you for your supportive comments. However, the absence of any progressive political alternative to the pro-business agenda of Prime Minister Tony Blair within the Labour Party does not mean that such an alternative does not exist. It demonstrates that the essential task confronting working people is the building of a new and genuinely socialist party.

The discrediting of the Labour Party and its political apologists is the precondition for such a development. The Labour Party has always defended the profit system. Indeed, Social Democracy has provided the essential pillar of bourgeois rule in Britain for over a century. But its ability to do so rested on the possibility of securing social reforms and improved living standards for the millions of workers who lent it political support.

Today, the message of New Labour is not only that "capitalism is the only game in town," but that workers must reconcile themselves to the constant erosion of their past social gains and democratic rights in order that Britain can remain globally competitive.

For the vast majority, therefore, it is becoming increasingly difficult to "make it" in the present

economic set-up. And the same is true in the United States.

The erosion of workers' illusions in reformism may have initially reinforced a belief amongst young people that there is no alternative to capitalism. But our article sought to explain how this situation is beginning to change. The efforts of Compass to breathe life into the New Labour project are necessitated by popular opposition to its war-mongering and attacks on essential social provisions.

This is creating the conditions for a shift in the political climate. Whether or not this or that person believes that they can succeed by reconciling themselves with capitalism is not the issue. Socialism is a necessity because it articulates the material interests of the working class—the vast majority of the population who must sell their labour power in order to live. And there are growing indications that the social consciousness of millions is beginning to shift in line with this objective reality.

The highest expression of this development is the growing audience for the analysis provided by the *World Socialist Web Site*. It is on this basis that an international socialist party will be built in opposition to New Labour.

Chris Marsden, for the WSWS editorial board



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