

Proposed Amendments to International Solidarity Perspective Proposals to Steering Committee

Proposed Resolution to December 2004 USLAW Conference

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On Behalf of New York City Labor Against the War (NYCLAW)

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The central and most urgent task before USLAW and all progressive forces in the US is **IMMEDIATELY** ending the occupation of Iraq and bringing the troops home **NOW**. All aspects of USLAW's international solidarity work must flow from this principle. This is true because the war in Iraq dominates all foreign policy objectives for the US and has a profound impact on domestic policy. ~~By linking Iraq to~~ **THROUGH** the "War on Terror," **OF WHICH THE WAR IN IRAQ IS THE LEADING EDGE**, the Bush administration **HAS PURSUED POLICIES OF EMPIRE THAT HAVE INFLICTED WIDESPREAD TERROR ON WORKERS ABROAD AND** is able to drive a broad range of domestic policies, from unlimited military budgets to the denial of civil rights and civil liberties. It is the central aspect of the Bush administration's agenda.

- **IMMEDIATELY ending the occupation and bringing the troops home NOW**. We need to develop a focus(es) for our work in this area, in particular one that labor can implement effectively. This can include a range of actions: concentrated lobbying in Congress to oppose continual funding of the war and propose ending the occupation; mobilizing our members for anti-war demos and actions, including labor led actions; doing extensive educational work among our members in a variety of settings on why the war is bad for them and for all workers in this country, and more. **TO BE CONSISTENT IN OUR OPPOSITION TO WAR AND OCCUPATION, USLAW WILL ALSO SUPPORT** ~~While there are~~ **INEXTRICABLY RELATED**, critical struggles **FOR LABOR RIGHTS, FREEDOM AND SELF-DETERMINATION** going on in other countries such as Venezuela, Columbia, **HAITI**, **AFGHANISTAN** and ~~Israel/Palestine the focus of the debate needs to still center around the question of Iraq. USLAW's limited resources should be concentrated on this effort,~~ **PALESTINE, WHICH CHALLENGE UNJUST POLICIES PURSUED BY THE US GOVERNMENT, OFTEN WITH AFL-CIO COMPLICITY.**

- **Supporting Iraqi Trade Unionists**. The Iraqi labor movement is a central part of the secular progressive forces in Iraq today. Providing material support in various forms is a direct way that USLAW can support the struggle for a democratic Iraq. In addition to material aid USLAW could deepen the commitment of labor to the anti war struggle by sending union members to Iraq and bringing Iraqi trade unionists to the US. Continuing efforts already underway with Iraqi trade unionists which focus on creating a labor law based on ILO conventions are also important. It could be possible for USLAW to call an international meeting of unions from around the world in solidarity with **THOSE IN** the Iraqi labor movement ~~and~~ **WHO STAND** in **GENUINE** opposition to – **NOT FOR COLLABORATION WITH --** the war and occupation. *[SEE ATTACHMENT.]*

- **Inserting the need for a new foreign policy perspective in labor into the current debate on restructuring the Labor Movement**. The war in Iraq has highlighted the failure of the labor movement's foreign policy perspective to address the disastrous war in Iraq. While virtually every labor movement and government on earth has actively debated the meaning of the war, US labor at the highest levels has been largely silent. Meanwhile, our commander in chief used this unjust and costly war to win a second term and increase his attacks on workers' rights and social justice in every form. **MOREOVER, THE AFL-**

CIO AND ITS MEMBER UNIONS MUST HONESTLY CONFRONT AND REVERSE ITS OWN COMPLICITY WITH ANTI-LABOR FOREIGN POLICY, INCLUDING ITS PARTICIPATION IN PLOTS TO OVERTHROW THE DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA, ITS SUPPORT FOR THE WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AGHANISTAN, AND ITS \$5 BILLION INVESTMENT IN ISRAELI APARTHEID.

We now have an unique opportunity to draw lessons from the period leading up to the US presidential elections and to insert a different perspective on foreign policy into the AFL-CIO debate over the coming months. In fact, if USLAW doesn't we can be sure that no one else will. Due to the work of USLAW the war, in Iraq has been broadly debated within official labor circles, including national conventions—this is a tremendous step forward in an area that has historically been the province of national AFL-CIO and affiliate staff and a few national labor leaders.

USLAW will produce a concise document that seeks to draw out these points in a way that can be circulated amongst union leaders and within our own locals and organizations with the goal of helping to shape a new foreign policy in a restructured AFL-CIO.

This document could also be the basis for a range of educational activities ranging from town hall discussions to steward trainings and membership and board meetings. Through this we could seek to both build opposition to the war and to educate leaders and activists about the need for a broad opposition to the entire direction of foreign policy.

Appendix: IFTU Collaboration With U.S. Occupation

Participation in Iraqi Puppet Regime

The IFTU has contact with and recognizes the transitional [US-backed Alawi] Iraqi government.

--Gene Bruskin, *A Report on a USLAW-British Labor Solidarity Visit 'Opposing the War and Supporting Iraqi Unions,'* August 4-7, 2004 London England,
<http://uslaboragainstar.org/downloads/London-USLAW%20report.pdf>

IFTU enjoys the backing of the US/UK governments, as well the recognition and support of Allawi's interim government. Any support or recognition offered to them will be a direct support for the government of Allawi and against the interests of the workers and people of Iraq.

--Houzan Mahmoud, *For those who have an illusion about the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU),* August 20, 2004,
<http://www.uuiraq.org/english/For%20those%20who%20have%20an%20illusion%20%20hozi.htm>

Sabotage of British Labor Party Antiwar Resolution

Stop the War, the broadest anti-war mass movement Britain has ever seen. . . . is refusing to cosy up to an organisation [the IFTU] that masquerades as an anti-occupation council of trade unions in Iraq. . . .

Abdullah Muhsin, the IFTU's international representative, led the campaign to invite Allawi [to the U.K. Labor Party Conference] and pleaded with trade union and Labour delegates not to support the call for an early withdrawal of Britain's forces. Despite his denials, his opposition to the conference resolution calling for an early date for withdrawal was published in the party's daily briefing to delegates and was widely distributed in advance of the debate.

--Sami Ramadani, *Collaboration won't buy Iraq's freedom,* Guardian, October 27, 2004,
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1336687,00.html>

Rejection by Iraqi Workers

I incurred [the IFTU's] displeasure when I organised the itinerary for the US Labour Against the War delegation in October. I had included visits to both IFTU sites and Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI) (At the time called the Preparatory Committee for the Establishment of Workers Councils in Iraq), the Union of the Unemployed, which I had been protesting with in front of the occupation headquarters for weeks, plus un-unionised workers employed by the occupation. The IFTU reps tried to get me to cancel the visits I had planned for the FWCUI, denouncing it as a negligible organisation. I refused. And the USLAW delegation met as many workers as possible, in the oil sector, railway sector, vegetable oil factory, Baghdad Airport Military Base, brick workers, unemployed workers and leather factory employees. . . .

My agenda in Basra was to give as much information about the Occupation Orders passed against workers, ILO conventions and workers rights, and the history and profile of the companies privatising Iraq as possible. I wanted to work with workers as a grassroots level and help them in their struggle to form unions of their own choosing, free from any political party agenda influence. The IFTU leadership wanted me to go through them at every turn. I informed them that I was not in their pay or employment, I was an independent activist. An ICP member, in the offices of the IFTU, told me, coldly, to play ball or "get out of Basra". I didn't leave. They responded by spreading a rumour about me that my "mission was not clear". When someone is "not clear" in Iraq, this is a euphemism for "suspicious" and marks someone as a potential spy. It is well known that such a rumour in paranoid Iraq can get someone killed. . . .

It is no wonder that more and more people, both within and outside Iraq, are viewing the IFTU, as it stands now, as an obstacle to genuine worker empowerment and direct, participatory democracy in Iraq and will oppose it, angrily and uncompromisingly.

--Ewa J., *History Repeating Itself - the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, ICP and Iraqi Workers*, October 31, 2004,
<http://www.infoshop.org/inews/stories.php?story=04/10/31/3091915>

There are also individual unions such as the Basra oil workers union and the South oil workers union, both of which are strong unions that took part in a widely supported strike, stopping oil exports in protest at the US bombardment of Najaf in August. Both these unions don't recognise the IFTU leadership as speaking on their behalf. Workers across Iraq are entitled to ask what did the IFTU leaders do to lift the siege of Najaf and Falluja and to stop the bombardment of the cities? . . .

I and many trade unionists in Britain of Iraqi origin, who opposed Saddam's tyrannical regime for decades, were shocked and dismayed that most of the unions at the recent Labour party conference accepted the message from the ICP, IFTU leaders and other Allawi collaborators and voted against a resolution calling for the withdrawal of the occupation forces. This is tantamount to abandoning the Iraqi people to be crushed by the US tanks and cluster bombs. This is tantamount to abandoning solidarity with the workers and people of Iraq. The Iraqi people's blood is as precious as that of the people of Europe who resisted the fascist forces, even if today the British Government and the US administration refuse to count the Iraqis they have killed and are continuing to kill. And Iraqi collaborators can be as treacherous and deceitful as any of the collaborators in Europe under the Nazi jackboot. For the Iraqi people in their besieged cities today, and for the thousands of tortured people at Abu Ghraib and other prisons, the US tanks, helicopter gunships and heavy bombs are no different from the Hitler's forces in France or Albania.

--Sami Ramadani, *Britain's Trade Unions, the Occupation of Iraq and the IFTU*, October 22, 2004,
<http://www.labournet.net/ukunion/0410/iraqtu1.html>