

# US government turns the screws on WikiLeaks

**T**HE CONTINUING publication of leaked US diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks highlights the role US imperialism plays in every corner of the world.

John Sharpe

The cover-ups of appalling atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan and other countries; the cynical and blatant bribery and corruption; propping up reactionary regimes; interfering with and subverting the democratic process.

All this to further the interests of US capitalism. The rights of workers and poor are not even given a second thought.

As bad as the revelations are, socialists already knew about many of the lengths US imperialism would go to, to further its grip on the world.

The leaks have also lifted a corner on the sickening sycophancy of many government leaders keen to impress their ally. The US diplomats' candid views on them has caused much embarrassment and left the likes of Gordon Brown and "lightweight" David Cameron, to name but two, squirming.

All the leaks so far have been 'grade B' leaks and future leaks will likely be of the same order. The 'grade A' secrets, the secret treaties, the plans to overthrow governments, etc, are guarded far more closely.

Following the October 1917 Russian revolution led by the Bolsheviks, Leon Trotsky publicised the secret treaties made between the Tsarist regime and its western allies. These agreements confirmed that World War One was a capital-



WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange.

ist adventure and that millions were being slaughtered to further the interests of the ruling classes.

## Reaction

THE CURRENT leaks have nonetheless provoked a wave of rage and fury in the US government and among right-wing politicians; much of it aimed at the founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange.

For some of them, such as Republican Mike Huckabee, nothing short of his execution will do!

Assange, at the time of writing, is in jail in Britain fighting a European

arrest warrant to answer allegations of rape in Sweden, even though no charges have been made as yet. His arrest in Britain (after handing himself in) and the refusal to grant bail (despite offers of bail surety), has led many of his supporters to suggest his current situation is linked to his website.

His supporters also believe that his arrest has CIA (the US spy agency) boot prints all over it.

Any charges must be properly heard and Assange should have the right to defend himself.

Internet companies have decided that now is the time to make their

contribution to the campaign for freedom of speech and information. First the WikiLeaks domain name was withdrawn and PayPal have closed the account that was used to make donations. You can of course still use PayPal to make donations to the Ku Klux Klan, an extreme right-wing white supremacist outfit!

At the time of writing the website is still up and prominent newspapers are still publishing the cables. There have also been attacks made on the websites of companies like Amazon and others that have taken measures to undermine WikiLeaks.

# Tommy Sheridan trial Cameron's spin doctor let off the hook

**A**S THE perjury trial of former socialist MSP Tommy Sheridan and his partner Gail neared its conclusion, the former editor of the News of the World (NoW) tabloid, Andy Coulson, gave evidence in court.

Coulson, who is now David Cameron's Downing Street spin doctor, was editor of NoW during the original defamation trial in 2006 when Tommy Sheridan successfully sued the Murdoch-owned tabloid. Coulson's editorship also covered the period when a NoW journalist, Clive Goodman, was jailed for illegal phone-hacking activities.

Coulson has denied any knowledge of illegal phone-hacking of public figures and that such practices were sanctioned by the newspaper - a claim contradicted by former NoW journalists, including Sean Hoare who repeated the allegation in the New York Times this



Andy Coulson - Murdoch's man in Downing Street?

year. Interviewed on BBC Radio 4, Hoare called Coulson's statement to a parliamentary committee denying

that he knew about the phone hacking in his newsroom "a lie."

In the light of this allegation the Crown Prosecution Service initiated a criminal investigation, only to drop it during the current trial when Coulson was being cross-examined by Tommy Sheridan in the witness box.

Tommy had questioned Coulson over the relationship between the NoW and Andy Hayman - the police officer leading the investigation into phone-hacking practices by the paper.

Coulson revealed that when the NoW offices were raided by police in 2006, incredibly, his desk wasn't searched. Subsequently, after leaving the police, Hayman became a columnist for The Times - another paper owned by Murdoch's News International group. "Do you not agree it stinks of corruption that a senior Metropolitan police officer

leaves and gets a job at News International?" Tommy asked.

Coulson also denied Tommy's accusation that the NoW held personal information on Hayman which prevented him from carrying out a full investigation of the phone hacking.

To many labour movement activists, Tommy's trial reeks of double standards from the police and state prosecution. They have spent millions of pounds from public funds and sanctioned thousands of hours of police time to persecute a well-known socialist fighter.

Meanwhile, they appear to ignore the mounting evidence from ex-NoW employees. The police should pursue a serious criminal investigation against spin-doctor Coulson and his former paymasters. The trial continues.

**An article on the trial outcome will be posted on [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)**

## Raking in the cash

**A**T A time when millions of Londoners face massive attacks on their public services and 30,000 council workers face the sack, London councillors have their noses in a £32 million expenses trough.

Chris Newby

Their basic allowances in the last year have risen in 19 out of the 32 boroughs in the city. While many council workers are paid just 37p an hour above the national minimum wage of £5.93 and are suffering a pay freeze (ie a pay cut), most senior councillors receive over £50,000 in allowances.

In three of the poorest boroughs, the directly elected Labour mayors of Newham, Lewisham and Hackney took home, £78,844, £78,835 and £75,846 respectively.

Newham is the sixth-most deprived borough in England, Hackney is the most deprived borough and has one of the highest rates of child poverty in London, whilst Lewisham has the third-worst rate of unemployment in the country.

In all of these boroughs, like many areas in Britain, councillors are pushing big cuts through. Earlier this year Lewisham's mayor, Steve Bullock, following a lobby of anti-cuts protesters told them to "get real". It's Steve Bullock who should get real. If he thinks that working and middle class people in Lewisham will readily accept £60 million cuts to services and attacks on their jobs, then the £78,000 a year mayor is in for a shock.

Councillors from across the political spectrum are cashing in on these expenses. Axe man to the London fire service, Brian Coleman rakes in over £100,000 as a Tory London assembly member, chair of the London fire and emergency planning authority and Barnet councillor.

In contrast, when Socialist Party members Ian Page and Chris Flood were councillors in Lewisham, they consistently voted against increasing councillors expenses while leading the struggle against cuts in the borough.

Councillors who argue they will lose their position if they vote against cuts are likely to be motivated in part by the financial benefits of being in office. Instead we need councillors like Ian and Chris who are prepared to lead a fight against the cuts and only accept necessary expenses. We fully support those anti-cuts campaigners looking to stand anti-cuts candidates at the first opportunity.

● Councils in England face a massive 27% cut in spending over the next four years as a result of cuts in central government funding, with 'front loaded' cuts of up to 10.2% in the poorest areas in the first year. 140,000 jobs are expected to be axed due to these cutbacks.

## Garment workers demand a living wage

**O**NCE AGAIN thousands of textile workers in Bangladesh were forced to take to the streets last week to demand that all employers pay the new monthly minimum wage which was meant to be implemented by 1 December following protests last July.

Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at protesters in the capital Dhaka and in the port city of Chittagong. According to press reports three people were killed and 250 injured.

These workers are some of the lowest paid in the world, producing garments for highly profitable western companies such as Tesco, Walmart, Marks & Spencer, etc.

The new minimum wage - up from \$23 a month to \$43 a month (and deemed inadequate by workers who demanded \$75) - is the maximum wage that factory owners are prepared to pay. Trade unions say that the cost of living has soared by 200% since the last increase in the minimum wage in 2006 (which

in turn had been unchanged since 1994) affecting 2.5 million, mainly women, workers.

Bangladesh's garment exports have increased to around \$12 billion a year (80% of Bangladesh's export earnings) from just \$5 billion in 2002, fuelled by low labour costs that have attracted top western brands.

**Interview with organiser of protests against multinational energy companies in Bangladesh see [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)**