

thesocialistpostbag

Do you have something to say?

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Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD,
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We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name,
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Fit to work?

The Con-Dem government has made it plain clear that it plans to get thousands of people off Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and back on to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) by making the 'fitness for work test' more difficult and eligibility harder to prove. Disgracefully, New Labour leader Ed Miliband has not objected to this. Under the Labour government it was so difficult to get through tests that thousands of claimants were found fit for work but many then overturned the decision through appeal. I work in an advice agency and an answer phone message was left for me by a very tearful woman. She asked me to cancel her husband's appeal against a decision that he was able to work because he had died the night before. I contacted her and persuaded her to let the appeal go ahead so she could get the benefits of which he had been robbed.

**A Citizen's Advice worker
Doncaster**

Labour's 'resistance'

Before the May general and local government elections of last year a local Labour candidate for Forest ward in east London, Gerry Lyons, based his campaign on resisting cuts in local government. Last July, I was present at the visitors' gallery of Waltham Forest Town Hall when Gerry Lyons voted for cuts to the tune of £2.6 million. This is the very same councillor who, on 16 October, joined in a demonstration opposing the closure of Leyton Green baby clinic. I sent an email to councillor Lyons, questioning the logic of being involved with such campaigns, if he continues to vote against the interests of his constituents. He managed to respond, ten days later, and I quote: "I promised to obey the Labour whip when I agreed to be a Labour candidate and I will not break my word." I was under the impression that councillors were supposed to be accountable to those who voted them in. Obviously not so, as his position in the Labour Party takes priority over constituents. If such individuals refuse to budge from the official New Labour line within the council, they must be forced out to make way for those prepared to take a stand against the government's diabolical spending cuts!

Alan Brown



Leyton Socialist Party

Jack Straw's race card

Supporters of Oswald Mosley, founder of the British Union of Fascists, spread the idea that certain Jewish rituals required the sacrifice of a Christian baby. This was a conscious attempt to justify violence and hatred against the Jewish community. This was in the 1930s

and bear in mind they were not Labour politicians but fascist gangsters. In 2011 former Home Secretary Jack Straw repeated the trick with the assertion that Pakistani men "target vulnerable young white girls". As former home secretary Straw knows this is bunkum. There are men who groom children for sex and unsurprisingly the overwhelming majority of them are as white as Jack Straw. The Derbyshire police, who cannot be described as soft-hearted liberals, dismissed the claim out of hand. Straw faces a challenge from the BNP and chose to respond by trying to prove to the electorate that New Labour can be as racist as his far-right opponents. The BNP wins votes by telling people that 'Labour has betrayed the white working class'. This is perfectly true. It should be obvious from Straw's disgusting antics that they have equally betrayed the Asian and black working class.

**Derek McMillan
Brighton Socialist Party**



Great train robbery

This New Year's rail fares price rise saw another ceiling breached - the cost of a standard open return ticket from Carlisle to London Euston broke through the £300 barrier and now stands at £301. This is a staggering amount of money and is clearly out of the reach of most ordinary people. It is, I am advised, possible to book advance tickets for this train but, I was also advised, they aren't always available! There can be no justification for this level of fares except blatant profiteering by the private operators of the service, in this case Virgin. Good rail links between Cumbria and our capital city are essential for all sorts of reasons, not least economic development. These costs are prohibitive and will drive people into their cars. Another private rail company increasing its fares was regional operator Northern. They recently did badly in the statistics for performance but it hasn't stopped them putting their fares up. In 2010 the company listed profits of around £30 million and gave shareholder dividends of £27 million. The top director's salary was £218,000. The company recently reduced the number of train fitters at Newcastle working at weekends - this followed the axing of cover for similar jobs at Carlisle some years ago. This often means train repairs don't get carried out in a speedy fashion leading to broken and blocked toilets, freezing coaches and, in some cases, cancellations. Privatisation isn't working. The passengers and the taxpayers are being ripped off.

**Craig Johnston
RMT executive member for
Manchester and the North West**

TV review
Money, music and exploitation

THE BBC Three programme Music, Money and Hip Hop Honneys was about young women who feature in music videos, particularly those in the R'n'B and hip hop genre. The presenter Nel Hedayat claimed to take the viewer behind the scenes of the videos and tackle how women are portrayed in the media.

Becci Heagney

While Hedayat pondered on whether it was 'bad' that women used their "God-given assets" to make money, what was actually being shown was the extent to which some women would go to in order to conform to the body image of the 'hip hop honey'. China Black, 23, had undergone breast surgery and was looking into buttock implants which would have set her back £7,200. Another was rejected at auditions because her skin colour was "not light enough". The US Hip Hop Ambassador, appointed by Bill Clinton when he was president, argued that "stuffy women" can "learn a lot" from these women, something that went unchallenged by Hedayat.

Economic drive

ONE THING that the programme did expose, although it did not question in any real sense, is the economic drive behind the industry. One hip hop artist explained that even a "rubbish" song can gain popularity and generate income if its video features lots of dancing women. Many of the young women wanted to be involved in the videos in order to be 'recognised' and saw it as a route to becoming rich and famous, with one woman claiming that she is really an actress and a trained dancer.

Computer game review
Fable III: Revolution

THE FABLE series of computer games are role playing games set in a fantasy world where you play a hero who has to usurp and defeat a tyrant. In Fable III you play the child of the old benevolent hero king whose now ruling elder brother has started oppressing the people in his kingdom. You seek allies from around the kingdom, including oppressed nations, the armed forces and an urban resistance group, to lead an uprising against the king and replace him with yourself as monarch.

Iain Dalton



The programme claimed it would tackle how women are portrayed in music videos.
Photo L. Worthington

der to be 'recognised' and saw it as a route to becoming rich and famous, with one woman claiming that she is really an actress and a trained dancer.

False promises

THE GLAMOROUS lifestyle pursued is not something that is experienced by all of the women with many of them not being paid at all. The creator of one video, 'Digital Dan', boasts that "money can make girls do anything" whilst also admitting to his 'swindle' of not paying the women featuring in his video despite promising to beforehand! Whilst aiming to attack those be-

hind the scenes for the objectification of women in videos Hedayat actually allows many outrageous comments to be made with no more than a giggle. It is a shame that more emphasis was not put on the economic reasons for the young women, one of whom was a single mother, feeling that appearing unclothed in music videos was the easiest way to pay the bills or "be independent". Nonetheless, it did provide an interesting insight into the world behind the 'glamour' of music artists. **Music, Money and Hip Hop Honneys is available to view at www.bbc.co.uk/1player until Friday 21 January.**

In previous games the story has ended there, but in Fable III you get to play as monarch as you are threatened by a great danger from abroad. You are faced with a choice between breaking your promises to raise funds to pay for an armed force to resist this threat, or keeping your promises to improve the living standards of the populace and have no money to fund your army. **Third option** THE GAME gives you a third option, invest your wealth to plug funding gaps created by your public spending, but it's highly unlikely we will see any of the Con-Dem cabinet

millionaires do that in real life. You can play as male or female, get married and have children, or adopt. Unlike Britain, same-sex marriages are legal and have parity with heterosexual marriages. With the game being set during the equivalent of our industrial revolution, one area shows the horrors of that time, slum housing and child labour. But the workers are almost entirely passive except for when you see a strike agitator getting shot, the urban resistance is more of a terroristic group, launching a raid and assassination attempt on an industrialist, and the liberation of child labour can only come about by making a decree on it as monarch!