

MAPAMBANO

●STRUGGLE, SOLIDARITY AND A WORKER'S PARTY IN KENYA●

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Sir Edward Clay's anti-corruption outbursts in Kenya and the situation in Britain

In 2004, Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, made Paul Drayson, a businessman, a Lord. Six weeks later, the Electoral Commission accounts in Britain revealed that the new Lord Drayson had given the Labour Party £505,000 as a donation. Two years ago, Lord Drayson donated £100,000 to Labour after which his company, Powder Ject, reaped £20 million while acting as the Government's only supplier of small pox vaccine. Drayson's new Lordship, the huge amount of cash he donates to labour and the monopoly of his company in the business of supplying Small pox vaccines to the British government drew questions both in the British media and government circles.

For two years, John Reid, the Health secretary, refused to comply with requests by the Parliamentary Ombudsman that Reid's department give information (under the freedom of information act) about the award of £32 million contracts to Lord Drayson's Powder Ject without normal competitive tendering (The Guardian May 25, 2004).

In his autobiography, Robin Cook, former British Foreign Secretary who resigned in a huff just before the Iraq war, wrote that Sir Richard Edwards, retired Chairman of arms-manufacturing company British Aerospace Systems (BAE), "appeared to have the key to the garden door to No. 10". The implication is that Sir Richard, a businessman, was too close to No. 10 Downing street that he basically had easy access to Tony Blair and the institution of No. 10 Downing street. In September 2003, details of an investigation conducted by The Guardian revealed that BAE systems had set up a fund of £20 million to bribe Saudi officials in exchange for contracts of arms deals including those involving the massive Al Yamamah arms scandal.

To date, allegations that BAE systems paid £7 million in commissions into a Jersey trust for Qatar's Foreign Minister has not been investigated by the British government despite the availability of piles of evidence.

Since Blair came to power in 1997, it is known that he has intervened on behalf of BAE Systems in controversial arms sales to Zimbabwe and Tanzania while the Prime Minister has also lobbied the Presidents of South Korea and South Africa on behalf of BAE Systems, a company whose record of corruption has repeatedly been in the International domain.

Sir Edward Clay's revelation about 20 corruption scandals in the decaying Kibaki regime is just one part of the coin if Britain becomes the other part. The reality is that corruption is a problem of capitalism across the world because of loop-holes in the system which promote corruption. Out of 70 companies that have been barred from taking up World Bank contracts because of corruption, 34 are from Britain.

Clay's intervention needs to be seen within the context of an imperialist power whose companies have been kept away from exploiting economic possibilities in Kenya by a new breed of dirty boys who have just taken over power but who do not yet know their real master

As a matter of procedure, British contracts abroad are underpinned by the Export Credit Guarantee Department (ECGD). In December last year, it emerged in a BBC report that a Nigerian gas project which was awarded £127 million from the ECGD had a "slush fund" out of which money was used to pay local officials and Executives of companies which were involved in the suspicious deal.

In another deal which was also exposed by the BBC's "File On 4", MW Kellogg, a British based firm currently a subsidiary of American corporation, Halliburton, and which had ECGD backing, won a \$10 billion contract to build a new gas plant at Bonny Island in Nigeria. While the contract

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Cabinet reshuffles: Ruling class tactic in times of crisis

Throughout the world, one of the most exhausted tactics of the capitalist ruling class especially during times of crisis is the tactic of "reshuffling the cabinet". During the 24 years of Moi's dictatorship, the monotony of Cabinet reshuffles rendered these activities meaningless in the eyes of the public.

When Sir Edward Clay attacked the government on the question of corruption, the back-up the British envoy received from several imperialist powers sent the Kibaki administration into instant crisis. In response to calls by foreign powers that Kibaki sack corrupt Ministers, the President moved quickly to show that something was being done to contain corruption by simply reshuffling his Cabinet. Dr. Chris Murungaru, one of the President's right hand men also implicated in several corruption scandals, was quickly moved from the Office of the President to

the Ministry of Transport and communication*.

Together with other Ministers who were shifted to new positions, it appeared as though something big had been done by the beleaguered President about corruption. But in reality, it is attention from the political and economic crisis that the President tried to divert and the strategy did no wash as evidenced by reports in the Capitalist media. Even British and other imperialist powers refused to accept the ploy and demanded that Kibaki should "do more" by sacking corrupt Ministers.

Cabinet reshuffles, formation of probe Committees and launching of Task forces whenever a scandal explodes are part of the arsenal of weapons at the hands of the ruling class and it is in this context that Kibaki's Cabinet reshuffle needs to be seen.

Ndungu Munene

Theft of public funds in Kenya: Corruption is part of Capitalism

On 31st December 2002 (the day Narc won elections in Kenya), an article entitled "Bourgeoisie opposition takes over power in Kenya" appeared at the web site of the Kenya Socialist Democratic Alliance (KSDA) saying: "The rhetoric about eliminating corruption in high office will soon evaporate because corruption is part of the capitalist system of government which Kibaki has inherited".

This statement was not a prediction based on prophecy or a supernatural message imparted through magic. It was a political perspective based on a scientific analysis of the capitalist character of the government that had seized power in Kenya.

Today, there are all sorts of pressure on President Kibaki to eradicate corruption by implementing certain prescriptions. True to tradition, the capitalist press, which has been selling papers by exposing a host of corruption scandals in the Kibaki administration, is promoting the view that Kibaki could eliminate corruption in Kenya if he tackles a coterie of sycophants or sacks a carnival of clowns that are giving his government a bad name.

After British companies started losing contracts in Kenya to new companies ready to dole more bribes to bandits in the Kibaki Cabinet, Sir Edward Clay, the British High Commissioner to Kenya, has suddenly seen the chicanery in the fight against corruption, prompting him to go on the attack.

In fact, the whole country is being mesmerised by songs from politicians, the Clergy, the media, foreign diplomats, civil society and other "opinion leaders" that President Kibaki tackle the issue of corruption much more strongly. But, behind all these calls, there is nothing Kibaki

can do to eliminate corruption in Kenya because corruption is part and parcel of the capitalist system of government that Kibaki and thieves around him took over from Moi's crew.

The system is built on privilege for the ruling class and an insatiable appetite to process wealth as a means of wielding power. The capitalist ruling class has a very strong materialistic concept of existence and the urge to loot public wealth is driven by both the ease with which this looting is possible and the inability of the ruling class to amass wealth quickly through the normal methods of capitalist exploitation called "doing business".

In the 70s, it was President Jomo Kenyatta stealing land and other public resources using the system. Throughout the 80s and 90s, it was President Daniel arap Moi. Today it is President Kibaki and tomorrow it will be the turn of another group of capitalist gangsters to loot and plunder the wealth of the nation so long as the system of government remains the same.

To end corruption in Kenya, the system will also have to go while the rich wealth-grabbing ruling class will have to be defeated. Unfortunately, there is no short to cutting this process apart from revolution.

What should replace the rotten system once it is overthrown and how will the whole process of revolution occur? Who will lead this revolution and what are the conditions for this revolution? How will the revolution be organized and what kind of politics will prepare Kenyans for this revolution? What is revolution and why is it the ultimate solution? The answers to these questions forms the basic framework of the tasks of *Mapambano Newsletter*.

Kenyan MPs in a new plan to loot the country's economy

For Kenyan MPs, there is no end to greed while there is also no shame when it comes to hatching new plans on how the Kenyan economy can be looted or how the tax payer can be robbed. Although this is a reality which will be difficult for Kenyans to accept, the population will have to live with it for now because Kenyan voters elected a band of thieves and robbers to represent them in Parliament.

Last month, the MPs mooted a proposal that they be paid a "gratuity" of Ksh 1.5 million as a "winding off allowance" or a "golden handshake" at the end of their term in 2007. After voting to increase their salaries from Ksh 150,000 to Ksh 700,000 less that two weeks after they entered Parliament, one would have expected that the MPs could go-slow on the question of proposing further fake perks at the expense of the tax payer. Apart from the huge salaries, Kenyans are still trying to come to grips with a vote that gave the MPs full control of an annual Ksh 20 million "Constituency allowance" that was passed without any opposition. The proposed "gratuity" would cost the tax payer Ksh 333

million.

The matter could have ended there for Kenyans to await for the year 2007 when the voter can have the opportunity to sack the MPs. But then, the MPs also proposed that they need offices in their Constituencies at the tune of Ksh 1 million each. This is in a country where government figures indicate that 10 million Kenyans are facing starvation unless something drastic happens. To spice it all, the offices are supposed to be equipped with computers and telephones while, according to the proposal, the tax payer would also have to foot the bill for a minimum of five workers in every one of the 210 Constituency offices.

A new proposal that has already been passed is that the MPs are going to lease two floors at Harambee Plaza to house a proposed "Budget Office and the Department of Research, Library and Legal Services", all at a tune of Ksh 160 million per year. The MPs are supposed to sit in Parliament for three days a week where they earn Ksh 5,000 per sitting. Last year, the MPs awarded themselves more mileage allowances and according to the new mathematics, MPs

from Nairobi and those within a radius of 100 Km from Nairobi will be drawing an allowance of Ksh 90,000 a month or more than Ksh 1 million annually. MPs residing beyond the 100 Km mark will get even more.

In 2003, the MPs requested a Fund of Ksh 1 million per Constituency for the control of Aids on top of duty free cars, entertainment allowance and other perks.

If this is not looting the economy, then the term "looting" needs a new definition. There will be no change and the next breed of MPs may even be worse as long as they continue to operate under a system that leaves them with several loop-holes to loot the economy and to defraud the tax payer. *Mapambano* believes that privileges for MPs should be abolished and that the average wage of an MP should be equal to that of a skilled worker in Kenya. The extent of the looting calls for a serious consideration of an alternative system of government that can stop this madness because the Kenyan Tax payer should not be continue to foot bogus bills which, in reality, go towards fattening the so called "People's representatives".

Continued from page 1: Clay's anti-corruption crusade

Third successive capitalist regime in Kenya is more rotten, unresponsive and most corrupt

appeared normal, documents acquired by the BBC suggested that MW Kellogg Executives talked the consortium into buying bogus "consultancy" services from a Gibraltar based company called Tri-star. The thrust of the scandal is that Tri-Star was to be paid approximately £100 million through bank accounts in Switzerland and Monaco.

When the scandal broke out, large amounts of money ended up being frozen in a Swiss bank account. Mr. Telsar, a man linked to Tri-Star, admitted to a French Judge who was investigating a company involved in the gas plant project that he received "enormous amounts of money" in the deal. In their investigations, the French Judge told BBC that they were very frustrated by the UK officials. *"Myself and other judges in Paris, Switzerland and Luxembourg have a lot of difficulties with cooperation from the UK and for several years we didn't know how to progress."*, he said. In capitalist countries whether in Britain or Kenya, officials rarely give information about corruption because it normally touches on the big sharks.

Another case in point is that of the Lesotho water project where three ECGD backed companies namely; Balfour Beatty, Keir International and Sterling International, were taken to court in Lesotho after allegedly paying bribes to officials. ECGD's support for the project amounted to £66 million. In this scandal, which was reported widely in the Lesothoan press, Balfour Beatty paid £585,000 through an intermediary into a Swiss bank account controlled by an official of the Lesothoan government. A month after the deposit, a building contract worth £135 million was signed.

By the time Clay attacked Kibaki's regime, De La Rue, a British company which has enjoyed monopoly status in the printing of Kenyan currency notes since the end of the colonial revolution in 1963, was struggling to retain its monopoly status after Kibaki's boys had their palms greased to open up the business in the name of "competitive International bidding"

According to the charge sheet, the company landed another contract to build a dam worth £41 million after allegedly paying another £200,000 to the official's account. The companies involved in the Lesotho scandal are said to have paid a total of £2 million to win contracts in Lesotho.

A key point is that these companies have a record of corruption which were simply by passed by ECGD, a government agency which was not only involved in the projects but whose responsibility is to guide against corruption on behalf of the British tax payer. Transferred to the situation in Kenya, it is like the Kibaki government handing over a contract to a company that had already been linked to the Ksh 7 billion Anglo-Leasing scandal.

The partners of Balfour Beatty in the Lesotho Highland Project included Spie Batignoles, a company which was deeply involved in the Turkwell Dam Project in Kenya currently celebrated as one of the greatest white elephants in the country and in which, it later emerged, that huge amount of bribes were paid to former President Daniel arap Moi and his former henchman, Nicholas Biwott. Sir Alexander Gibb and companies which was supported by ECGD and which later changed it's name to Gibb Limited is also facing charges of corruption. In fact, the list is endless and so, Clay cannot assume the moral high ground of "corruption buster" in Kenya.

Clay's intervention needs to be seen within the context of an imperialist power whose companies have been kept away from exploiting economic possibilities in Kenya by a new breed of dirty boys who have just taken over power but who do not yet know their real master. In the past two years when Narc has been in power, five British companies have lost defence contracts worth billions of Kenyan shillings. The major reason is that other powers like Russia, France, Japan, Spain and China are targeting Kenya and other Third world countries with aggressive campaigns aimed at winning lucrative contracts. This war of influence to dislodge British imperialism from their Kenyan and other playgrounds is ruthless and involves the use of dirty tricks in the game including corruption.

The end of the cold war is simply an advantage because the situation enables countries like Kenya to deal with both "communist" China and Russia without fear of stigmatization. China has already benefited from the cold war fallout, having "won a contract" of Ksh 150 million to supply the Kenyan military with uniforms and combat kits after Kenya's Department

of Defence terminated the long-term contract of the London-based company - JS Franklin - which had scooped more than Ksh 5 billion from the Kenyan government by the time they were dumped by Kibaki's new boys. With the involvement of International Mafia cartels and Kibaki's errand boys at State House (who do not understand imperialist power games) there is no end of "business possibilities" and this is bad news for Britain.

The bitter pill, which Britain has refused to swallow is that instead of Kibaki intervening on behalf of British imperialist economic interests, the emerging Dictator is protecting his own buddies who are short-changing the British and in the process, "vomiting" on the shoes of donors (to quote Clay).

In retrospect, Clay's outbursts are a direct response to loss of defence contracts by British companies like Philips Radio Communications Systems Limited, Brook Marine Corporation, JS Franklin, Land Rover and Vosper Thornycroft which have traditionally provided military hardware to the Kenyan government. Brook Marine and Vosper have been the sole supplier of Navy ships to the Kenyan military but now, they are facing stiff competition from companies based in China, Russia and Spain.

By the time Clay attacked Kibaki's regime, De La Rue, a British company which has enjoyed monopoly status in the printing of Kenyan currency notes since the end of the colonial revolution in 1963, was struggling to retain its monopoly status after Kibaki's boys had their palms greased to open up the business in the name of "competitive International bidding". Merconi corporation, another British company, had already lost a contract to provide radio communication equipment to the Kenyan police.

The crisis that arose as a result of the possible dumping of Merconi was so deep that a shortage of currency notes in Kenya was only averted after the Kibaki government decided to circulate archived notes bearing the portrait of Kenya's first head of State, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, which were abandoned soon after Moi replaced them after he seized power in 1978. As an extra strategy of dealing with the crisis, Kibaki printed notes with his own portrait and released them into circulation in total violation of an election promise that his portrait would never appear on Kenyan currency notes. Millions of Kenyans were outraged.

Since 1963, the Kenyan military has been entirely dependent on Leyland and Land Rovers (two British companies) for troop transport. By the time Sir Edward Clay delivered his broadside, Kenya's *Daily Nation* reported that the thinking within the Department of Defence appeared to favour Japanese models of vehicles.

The German government was one of the Western powers which withdraw strategic aid to the Kenya government soon after Clay alleged that contracts worth Ksh 40 billion had been awarded irregularly since Narc came to power. But it is a German company that has been supplying Mercedes Benzes to the Kenyan military for troop transport, another model of vehicle that is on it's way to being dumped by the Kibaki government which has new ideas on where to get new supplies that fits into the system of new kick-bucks when it comes to government contracts.

Corruption is not just a problem in Kenya. It is a problem wherever a tiny Capitalist ruling class is in power. To put an end to corruption, the political system that promotes it will have to be tackled. The inability of Kibaki to sack corrupt Cabinet Ministers like Chris Murungaru (formerly Minister of Internal security), David Mwiraria (Finance Minister) and Mirugi Kariuki, Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, is an indication that Kibaki could himself be deeply involved in the scandals. Instead of heeding local and imperialist calls that these Ministers be shown the door, Kibaki has chosen the softer option of a little Cabinet reshuffle which has failed to placate even the most naive political observers in Kenya.

Now that the third successive capitalist government in Kenya since the colonial revolution in 1963 has turned out to be even more rotten, unresponsive and most corrupt, is it not time for Kenyans to consider the Socialist option by looking at the ideas from a non partisan, non sectarian, sober and revolutionary perspective? Capitalism is the problem and there is need for alternative politics in Kenya.

After the KANU and Narc failures, Who will liberate Kenya from capitalist gangsters?

After more than 4 decades of Kenya's fake "independence", Kenyan workers, peasants, students and millions of unemployed youth are once again back to the same question as to who will liberate them from poverty, starvation, disease, unemployment, exploitation, retrenchments, homelessness and dehumanizing living conditions that millions of Kenyans have known since birth.

For 38 years, the Kenya National Union (KANU) plundered the country's resources under two dictators namely Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and Mzee Daniel Toroitich arap Moi. These former loyalists of Western Imperialism are gone but their copy cats remain. The looting during the Kibaki administration is said to be worse than the days of Kenyatta and Moi. According to Sir Edward Clay, British High Commissioner to Kenya, corruption in the Kibaki government is worse than earlier estimated. According to the British envoy, 20 irregular contracts totalling Ksh 40 billion were handled by the regime during the first 26 months of Narc government.

Moi took over from Kenyatta in 1978. But when Moi's KANU was eventually defeated by the National Rainbow Coalition (Narc) after 24 years of brutal dictatorship, the razzmatazz that greeted the new government in January 2002 reflected both hopes and aspirations that millions of Kenyans had towards the new regime.

Patriotic songs were spontaneously composed and released by artists as Narc, led by President Kibaki, responded with promises about ending corruption, human rights violations, looting of the economy, tribalism, nepotism and other known vices of capitalism that had drawn the country backwards during almost four decades of KANU misrule.

Today, all these hopes and aspirations have evaporated and Kenyans appear to be readying themselves to get back into struggle. The opportunist liberal politicians are busy positioning themselves strategically to link up with any "Alliance or Force" that could emerge to become a major factor in the run up to the next elections.

The Constitution is a piece of paper

In all the political Mary-go-round that plays itself through the capitalist media, Workers and the youth, peasants and the unemployed are standing on the sidelines, awaiting for corrupt or opportunistic politicians to "do something" and remove the debilitated Kibaki from power. A vote of no confidence in the government has been proposed while some Kibaki critics have also proposed an "impeachment" of the President. These proposals by politicians who view themselves as the real alternative to Kibaki's regime reflect the deep crisis of leadership in Kenya.

It is this attitude of "wait and see" by Kenyans that, Mapambano believes, should be broken. This is because there is no example of a Neo-colonial regime in Africa that has seized power on the basis of a deformed capitalist system and transformed the lives of the majority to the better. Kenya is no exception and as long as the masses have illusions on capitalist gangsters hiding around Alliances and Forces, they will continue to witness variations of yesterday's liberators systematically transforming themselves into today's oppressors after seizing power.

Britain, Kenya's former colonial master, does not have a Constitution and so those saying that a new Constitution will solve the crisis in Kenya are failing to recognise the fact that a constitution is a piece of paper which will not put food on the table, create jobs or build houses for the homeless. Through out history, the ruling class has always violated the Constitution as long as its interests have become threatened and Kenyan ruling class is no exception.

Even during the 26 months of Kibaki dictatorship, journalists have been arbitrarily arrested, Newspapers have been confiscated from the streets, political rallies have been banned, the State has refused to register political parties like Chama cha Mwananchi, police have been sent to tear gas protesting citizens in the streets, workers have been brutalized by riot police during strike actions while Cabinet Ministers openly robbing the economy through corruption have not been brought to book, all in total violation of the Constitution which Kibaki himself swore to protect.

In the same token, top land grabbers who dine with Kibaki have not been touched because, for the Kibaki dictatorship, taking action in accordance with the Constitution is not in the interest of the ruling class. Under capitalism, the Constitution exists to protect the interests of the rich and (as a matter of principle) the Constitution under capitalism is to be implemented against the interest of the weak and the poor who must remain in that position if they are to be kept under permanent subjugation.

New Forces, Fronts and Alliances

The problem in Kenya today is not linked to shortage of political parties or lack of political will to forge new Alliances, Fronts or Forces. We have more than 45 political parties while the country has more than enough politicians well crafted in setting up new Alliances and Forces for another round of circus as nothing changes when it comes to the suffering of millions of people around the country. There is no shortage when it comes to combination of Alliances that political parties can form in Kenya. The new question that needs to be asked by Kenyans who are tired of being cheated is what these Alliances and Forces stand for - whether they are ethnic, pro-capitalist, pro-rich man's means to power or whether they are anticapitalist, pro-poor man's Alliances seeking to abolish a system that is responsible for the political and economic crisis in Kenya.

At the moment, Raila Odinga, LDP Kingpin, Charity Ngilu, rebel Cabinet Minister once Kibaki's darling, Kalonzo Musyoka, Cabinet Minister and ally of Odinga and Musikari Komba, Chairman of Ford-Kenya who views himself as the leader of the Luhya ethnic group, are working closely to set up a new Alliance after they were "betrayed" by Kibaki. With the explosions about corruption by top chiefs in the Cabinet, the general mood in the country is that if President Kibaki cannot sack corrupt Ministers who have been openly associated with graft, then there is nothing left to defend in the new government.

In the last two months, Kenyans witnessed opportunists within Narc who have already read the anti-Kibaki mood in the country calling for either the sacking of corrupt Ministers or a vote of no confidence in the President as part of their anti-government propaganda. Matters have been made worse by the fact that British, American, German and other imperialist powers whose companies have been denied contracts by the "Mount Kenya Mafia" running the show have taken sides on the question of corruption.

These powers have stopped or withdrawn limited aid to Kibaki's administration as a way of sending a clear signal to the President that all is not well within the context of imperialist interest in Kenya. A quick and mini Cabinet reshuffle has not answered any major questions on corruption while the prosecution of selected staff in the Ministries most affected by corruption has also failed to wash. For the so called donors, the fundamental issue appears not to try and topple Kibaki but to send warning signals that all is not well. There has been no major move by imperialism to try and align

Why Workers should form their own Party

itself with a major opposition force to undermine Kibaki.

As the masses continue to grind their teeth, Koigi wa Wamwere, Prof Kivutha Kibwana, Danson Mungatana (all MPs) are also trying to constitute the "Third Force" but only after they were left out of the power equation. There are also other new but low profile political outfits like *Chama cha Mwananchi* and *Front for Popular Change* which have also emerged on the scene to try their lack at being part of the power structure in Kenya. But the low level of organization and lack of political activity have seen these formations overtaken by the Civil society which is temporarily playing the role of the opposition. The layers which are not represented in the "Race to State House" but which have the maximum revolutionary potential are the Workers, Peasants and millions of youth across the country.

This state of affairs is not an accident of nature or a simple mistake of politicians. One major factor is the delay in Workers, peasants and the youth taking a second look at the political system responsible for allowing politicians to repeatedly cheat them and lack of alternative political ideas on the market place that can accord these layers an opportunity to have their own Party which can effectively challenge the ruling class and even attempt to seize power.

Workers, who are the producers of wealth being looted by the ruling class, do not have their Party, not because such a Party cannot exist but because serious initiatives to create such a party have not been taken. There is a strong case for Workers to form their own Party due to failure of mainstream bandwagons to take up working class issues like retrenchments which, *Mapambano* believes, should be banned in Kenya.

On paper, the "Labour Party of Kenya" and the "Kenya Socialist Party" have been registered. But in reality, these are dead parties whose Programs have never been seen in public and whose political standing in Kenya remains obscure. They are parties which were formed by Moi's security apparatus during the 90s to prevent genuine Leftists from registering new Parties to challenge capitalism and to question the country's dependency on imperialism.

Workers are living on starvation wages but instead of politicians taking up this issue in Parliament with a view to changing the situation, it has been side-lined to give room for MPs to convert themselves into millionaires through illegal and huge perks.

The issues are not complicated. If workers are well represented in Parliament, then and only then will they have an opportunity of changing their situation through a political program for change and this is an issue which any worker should be able to understand without being taken through a long winding lecture.

Instead of passing legislation in Parliament to allow for a secret declaration of wealth by MPs and top civil servants, it is the banning of the laws that makes Workers' strikes illegal that should be given priority. We have a system where no MP is in a position to

raise the issue of workers allowances or remunerations because such topics are regarded as "sensitive" so why can't workers form their own Party to raise these same issues that are taboo to the ruling class.

For example, if teachers were represented in Parliament, the award of teachers salaries could have been made a hot topic in Parliament by now or even a major national issue which could have led to the actual implementation of recommendations which were made way back in the 90s. Why can't teachers back one of their own instead of depending on thieves looting the state to raise issues that touch on their wellbeing? Unfortunately, there is no short cut and a certain level of both political education and bold actions by Kenyans who have already understood the issues will have to take place if Kenya is to be liberated from their opportunist leaders, capitalism, Neo-colonialism and imperialist domination that are all responsible for the crisis in Kenya. In other words, a fighting Workers' Party will have to be built while the idea of revolution to overturn the system will have to reach a broader layer of Kenyans to arouse them into revolutionary action.

New MPs have emerged as wealth grabbers

At the moment, the proposal of a Workers Party may sound far-fetched especially in a situation where the political consciousness of workers is not sufficient enough to enable them to organize to challenge the thieving ruling class. But if the very idea of a Workers Party is raised seriously at the National level with convincing political arguments based on working class demands being put forward as an alternative to the politics of opportunism, chances are that the six million or so workers in Kenya will begin to pay attention.

What will remain is whether there are conscious forces which are ready to take up the challenge and show what needs to be done for such a Party to begin to link up with other democratic forces already on the ground to give workers an opportunity to begin playing a role, not just in the politics of Kenya but also in the running of the Kenyan society. The situation now is that over 6 million workers are depending on ethnic leaders to "represent them" in Parliament and this arrangement is not working because these leaders are not attached to workers in any way. They are attached to themselves. The MPs have emerged more as wealth grabbers, not forces of positive transformation. In Kenya today, six million votes are enough to install a new government and this is the logic behind an instigation for a Workers Party.

A Workers Party will not have to struggle in isolation. It will do so alongside other forces interested in changing the Kenyan society or seizing State power. The monopoly of politics by ethnic leaders who have sold out after each and every election needs to be broken. Socialist ideas needs to be introduced in the struggle so that Kenyan voters can decide whether they want to continue suffering under rotten Capitalism or whether they are interested in revolution to overthrow the system.

Okoth Osewe

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hawkers pull down structures

There was chaos as hawkers in Nairobi pulled down structures at Ngara market where they had been relocated after some hawkers missed space at the new site. Police had to fire in the air to scare away the hawkers, majority of whom have no other means of livelihood. Attempts to move the hawkers was based on plans to "clean up the city", a plan also backed by Minister of Local government Mr. Musikari Kombo.

Del monte workers down tools

At least 200 workers of Del Monte went on strike to protest against poor remuneration and racist remarks directed at them by the Management. The workers were also protesting plans by the Management to give them a 3 months notice terminating their employment. No Union or political party has so far intervened in favour of the workers. This is a common trend in Kenya likely to continue due to lack of a Workers Party.

Nurses oppose 1 year contracts

Nurses in Kenya have opposed attempts by the government to put them on a one year employment contract. The Kenya Progressive Nurses Association (KPNA) warned the government that such a move would meet with strong opposition from the Association. KPNA said that the real plan with the contracts was to "retrench Nurses through the back door". The plan is expected to come into effect in July this year.

Why free primary education is collapsing

After Narc seized power, the provision of free primary education was touted as a major “election promise fulfilled” in the midst of a mountain of promises that have already been abandoned by the Kibaki government. Twenty seven months later, the collapse of the free primary education has become apparent because of three major reason - poor planning, lack of money and, most importantly, implementation of the program within the frame work of a deformed political system that is not designed to support free education.

The implementation of free primary education needed planning to determine how the 7 million primary pupils in the country's 18,000 schools could be catered for. After taking the decision, the Narc government estimated that the free education would cost Ksh 2 billion annually. Then as the implementation began, the cost shot to Ksh 11 billion. In January, a report on the free primary education program compiled by Own Associates found that Ksh 44 billion is needed annually to maintain the program, cash that the government does not have.

Although the program was announced during the excitement of the Narc take-over, the government did not know that a minimum of 60,000 extra teachers would have to be employed to cater for the millions of new students who would enrol to take advantage of the program. The infrastructure that was needed to support the new policy was never put into consideration. Due to lack of planning, there was no room for a “transition period” that could have provided a perfect opportunity for a smooth transition from paid to free primary education.

In the end, students ended up learning under trees while classrooms which were designed for 40 students ended up cramming in as many as 300 students with virtually no space to stretch a leg. The program has been running on a government expense of Ksh 6 billion with another Ksh 4 billion being handed out by imperialist powers especially from Western Europe. In other words, if imperialism did not chip in, the program could not even have taken off the ground. Today, imperialist powers continue to hold the government to ransom by threatening to with-hold aid if certain conditions are not met.

There is no money to enable the government to implement the program because the government's major sources of income have been taken over by International companies that control profits from major industries in Kenya. This is why the government has to permanently beg from imperialism to survive.

Capitalism in Kenya (even in it's deformed nature), is a system of government designed in a way that under the Neo-colonial setup, foreign powers have to take control of the running of both the politics and economy of Kenya. Through the IMF and World Bank, Western powers control the “development” of the country by deciding the projects which will and which will not be funded through loans and other grants paid back with huge interests.

For this reason, the Kenyan government does not have money that can run free primary education in Kenya and this also explains why the free primary education is collapsing. Politically, it was expedient for Kibaki to announce the free primary education program but in reality, the truth is that the program will not survive because the system cannot support it.

Joel Okello

Fight “performance based contracts” for civil servants in Kenya, oppose retrenchments

Every time the government is put under pressure by Western donors to retrench workers, it comes up with an excuse that, on the surface, looks palatable. This is the case with the so called “Performance based contracts” which involves signing one year contracts with Civil servants, contracts which have to be renewed depending on how a worker has “performed” during the previous year. If the government believes that a worker has failed to perform, the contract of such a worker may not be renewed causing such a worker to be sacked quietly through the back door.

Within the Civil service where many workers carry their duties as a team, it is virtually impossible to quantify the performance of a single worker. While announcing that the plan is expected to begin on June 20th this year, Mr. Willian Ole Ntimama, a Minister in charge of Public Services, said that the intention of the government was to “re-emphasize meritocracy and excellence as criteria for recruitment and retention of public officers in the service”.

What this statement means is that once the plan enters into implementation stage, the government will have the prerogative of deciding which workers are retained within the service and which ones are shown the door without any possibility of the Unions intervening on behalf of any affected worker.

Already, 21,000 civil servants are officially facing retrenchment in Kenya. This is on top of thousands of Civil servants who are currently leading miserable lives after being retrenched under the fraudulent “golden hand-shake” program that was introduced during the Moi dictatorship and which involved awarding workers small crumbs in exchange for retrench-

ments.

The new scheme that Ntimama is talking about is aimed at pleasing IMF and World Bank which have demanded that the government reduce the wage bill as a condition for future aid.

The position of *Mapambano* is that this new conspiracy to sack workers through the back door should be opposed by everybody who claims to have the interest of workers in Kenya at heart. These are the kind of retrogressive programs that should ignite Trade Unions and other workers' organizations to unite in opposing them. There should be no illusions that any political party will come up to oppose this new proposal because there is no single political party in Kenya today that orientates itself towards workers' struggles in Kenya.

However, Civil servants know the major implication of this program and it is the responsibility of the Civil Servant's Union to lead the struggle in opposition to the program. The Union should be ready to mobilize Civil servants in demonstrations and strikes aimed at stopping the implementation of the program while at the same time looking for solidarity from workers in other sectors. Without protests, the government will, most likely, implement the program with serious consequences to workers.

The program threatens job security of Civil servants while it also threatens pensionable workers who may have served for many years. Any worker who is dismissed because of the so called “poor performance” risks losing his/her pension and the new scheme must be seen as a risky project that is not in the interest of Civil servants. We say: “oppose the performance based contracts for Civil servants”.

Okoth Osewe

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

New UK immigration rules targeting Africans

As the U.K labour government steps up its efforts to control immigration ahead of the elections later this year, it has emerged that there are plans to introduce compulsory HIV screening for all immigrants entering the United Kingdom.

The new requirement is being mooted by the government in the wake of the so called HIV health tourism. It is being said that many Africans who are HIV positive are heading to the west and Britain in particular where free medical help is available as the cost of treatment continues to rise in the third world.

But the proposal has been met with stiff opposition. The UK Parliamentary Health committee was recently told that compulsory HIV testing would not benefit the war against the scourge as it would only drive the disease underground. The African HIV policy Network Chief Executive Dr Max Sesay told the committee that such a policy would be detrimental. "Already those infected by the virus are stigmatised and this will only heighten the stigma around the disease". He also added that the disease disproportionately affects the African community and this is likely to sideline further the African community who are already socially excluded. Some human rights groups say the policy is racist as it would obviously target Africans.

However the HIV health tourism phenomenon has been dismissed as a myth.. A recent survey by Terence Higgins Trust in the UK involving 60 immigrants showed that 75% of them were not diagnosed until 9 months after their arrival into the UK, which

suggests that they are more likely to have contracted the disease while in Britain.

And contrary to reports of access to free medical treatment in the UK for HIV/AIDS sufferers, many are being asked to settle their bills as there isn't a clear-cut policy on which immigrants are eligible for free treatment on the National Health Service (NHS). This has consequently led to many losing out any professional help they could access as they disappear after initial diagnosis for fear of being billed hefty amounts of money on the expensive HIV treatment. It is feared that this might contribute to an increase in the spread of the disease in a country where there is already a worrying increase in sexually transmitted infections.

Immigration experts have not been left behind in the debate on the policy whose initial proposition last year prompted strong protests. They say that with the new policy we are likely to see an increase in illegal immigration as individuals who fear that they could be carrying the virus seek alternative ways to gain entry into the United Kingdom.

Immigration has already taken centre stage in the run-up to the elections but such a move is unlikely to streamline the immigration system and asylum policy or offer a solution to the problem of controlling immigrants entering the UK.

**Willis Angira,
Coventry, UK**

International women's day: Message from Iranian communists

March 8, the international women's day is approaching. For the humanity, for all the free-minded women and men of the world, March 8 is the day of proclaiming the equality of women and men, the day of liberation from discrimination, degradation and lack of rights. On this day, across the world, the conscious humanity stands up to suppression of women and misogyny - this relic of dark ages. March 8 is day of sweeping aside the stains of backwardness, discrimination and inequality from the civilised humanity. This day is the day that civilised people come to the forth to challenge and push aside the oppression of women.

Gender based discrimination across the world, from the Middle East and Asia to Africa, Europe and America, and institutional and official subjugation and sub-ordination of women in Islam stricken countries like Iran, is the hallmark of the today's inhumane and discriminatory world; the world that thrives on the inequality of sexes and the exploitation of women. Today's world is governed by regimes that profit from exploiting people on the basis of the colour of skin, gender, race and nationality. Systems that profit from forcing 8 year old girls into prostitution and imprisoning young girls in the confines of veil and segregating women and men in the public places and in their social activities.

Today's capitalism is the cause and perpetrator of women's suppression all over the world. This is the general rule. But the capitalism armed with political Islam has added a new dimension to misogyny. Stoning women to death, administering Islamic retribution and other Islamic forms of punishments and imposing veil have inflicted the most devastating blows against the civilised humanity of our time. Millions of people from Iran to Pakistan, Algeria, Afghanistan, Somali and Iraq have fallen victim to the cruelty of gangs of Islamic thugs armed with political Islam.

Against this background a new development is emerging. In Iran, a massive women's rights movement is challenging the foundation of political Islam with all its vigilantes and thugs and the rule of herds of Hezbollah. A massive anti-Islam movement that has targeted the entire anti-women

apparatus of the Islamic regime is taking shape. Millions of women have, for over two decades, been engaged in a constant daily battle against discrimination and inequality. This movement could act as an agent of women's liberation not only in Iran but also across the world. Such a movement can, in pursuit of abolishing the women's suppression, wipe out the very regime that most benefits from this misogyny. The entire existence of capitalism is at stake over the issue of women's liberation. Women's liberation could trigger the beginning of human emancipation from the yoke of capitalism and wage slavery.

The communists have always been at the forefront of women's struggle for emancipation and liberation. Today, in the Islamic communities, where women have been pushed back a couple of thousand of years, the task of safeguarding human civilisation has fallen onto the communists. In today's world where the right wing politics has acquired the upper hand and is bent on taking back the hard won limited rights of women, the communists are duty bound to resist this onslaught and put an end to it. At the time when churches, mosques and synagogues with their priests, mullahs and rabbis have been mobilised against women, and at the time when the world is at the mercy of the two poles of terrorism i.e. US and Political Islam, the communists in their attempt to liberate the humanity need to work towards the emancipation of women.

March 8 should be a day to reaffirm our commitment to abolishing any signs of inequality based on gender and a day to call for the abolition of this relic of the dark ages. This day should be a rallying day for all the combatants of the women's rights to close their ranks around the banner of communism for liberation of women and against the sexual apartheid, against compulsory veil and for freedom and equality.

**Long Live Freedom and Equality, Long Live 8th March,
Worker-communist Party of Iran-Hekmatist,
22 February 2005**

Beyond wealth declarations by Koigi, Kibwana and Mungatana

According to revelations by three Kenyan MPs who recently went on a propaganda declaration of wealth, the poorest MP in Kenya could be worth Ksh 15 million and that could be Koigi wa Wamwere. Just before Koigi left cold exile to contest for a Parliamentary seat over two years ago, he was living on a “disability allowance” as a refugee in Norway. The Norwegian government has since went public with Koigi’s case and demanded that the Subukia MP refund cash he obtained fraudulently after he became an MP. In his response, Koigi said that the Norwegians were racists who were trying to victimize him because of his black skin. But that is beside the point.

Apart from Koigi, it can be assumed that Assistant Ministers, Danson Mungatana and Prof Kivutha Kibwana are some of the poorest MPs, going by their “modest declarations”. Mungatana’s total assets are valued at Ksh 23 million, Koigi ksh 15 million and Prof Kibwana 15.5 million. While these three MPs should be hailed for having taken the courage to declare their millions, the main issue is the worth of other high calibre MPs who are still in hiding with stolen money.

We believe that the declaration of wealth by other MPs (especially the top Kibaki contacts) will never happen because of the political implications. These are people who have looted vast sums of money and to expect them to declare their loot is like to expect water out of stone.

Technically speaking, all MPs have already declared their wealth, including Kibaki. But, according to the law, these declarations are not to be made public. So what Koigi and company are doing is to go beyond the ban on public exposure of wealth declarations, a move that obviously puts them ahead of other MPs who are still tied to confidential declarations because of fear.

Although public declarations of wealth appears to be a radical move, the big issue is how these wealth was acquired and the time span in which they were acquired. If Koigi, an MP who can be rated as one of the poorest MP is worth Ksh 15 million, what does MPs like Chris Murungaru, David Mwiraria or Mirugi Kariuki own? At this point, it may be safe not to talk about what the President actually owns because then, there would be a new crisis in the fragile government.

For Koigi, Kibwana and Mungatana, the main point they wanted to make is that they haven’t grabbed the amount of money that can make them shy away from declaring their wealth. However, it must also be noted that Koigi was the first to support the looting and plunder of tax payer’s money through “million salaries for MPs” when the proposal came up. Both Kibwana and Mungatana are not on record as having opposed the MP salary hike either, a package that came with hefty allowances that beats the imagination.

A bold move would be for the three MPs to go beyond public wealth declarations by instituting a campaign for the reduction of MPs salaries on grounds that Kenya is begging from imperialism and as such the Treasury cannot afford the huge packs and allowances dished out to MPs. As it stands today, the millions for MPs constitutes legal looting of the economy through Parliament. If an ordinary Kenyan workers with a family is living on Ksh 5,000, why should an MP live on a monthly salary of Ksh 700,000 excluding allowances? As Bob Marley said, “You can fool some people some times but you cannot full all the people all the time”.

Aggrey Macharia
Germany

Billy Boy attacks Kenyan Embassy

Billy Boy, a Kenya rap artist who was sent to prison by a Swedish court on trumped up charges of assault, has attacked the Kenyan Embassy in Stockholm. Speaking from prison, the rapper said that the Embassy had totally failed in its duty to guard against his interests as a Kenyan facing charges in a foreign country. He singled out Mr. Daniel Tanui, the First secretary, whom he accused of arrogance, lack of sensitivity and undeplomatic etiquette. Billy, who has been in contact with the Embassy through the phone, said that Mr. Tanui had sabotaged his efforts to obtain a Kenyan lawyer who could represent him more effectively. He said that Mr. Tanui is serving the interest of the defeated KANU regime which appointed him and should be recalled by the Narc government if President Kibaki is serious in serving Kenyans through the Embassy.

Okoth Osewe

Mapambano is a Kenyan political Newsletter published in Sweden. **Editor in Chief:** Okoth Osewe. **Contacts:** Tel: +46736533068. **Email:** mapambano@gawab.com **Country/area Representatives:** Okoth Osewe – Stockholm, Sweden, Onyango Oloo – Montreal, Canada, Orina Nyamwami – Nairobi, Kenya, Ronald Elly Wanda – London, Britain, Alex Owiti – Brazil including Latin America, Stephen Obaje – Kisumu, Kenya, Peter Nelson Juma - Siaya, Kenya, Dickens Kwama – At large

Top Kenyan athlete faces new rape allegations

One of Kenya’s most celebrated athletes, former 800m world champion Billy Konchellah has been acquitted of raping a university student by a crown court in England but was sensationally rearrested immediately after his release awaiting extradition to Finland.

Konchellah, 42 who had pleaded guilty to another charge of indecent assault on another student will however not serve the sentence for the assault because of time spent in remand. A jury sitting at Coventry Crown Court in the West Midlands region of England took just over five hours to clear the athlete of the alleged offence after a retrial following the failure of a previous jury to reach a verdict last year. He had been in remand since his arrest in November 2003.

The runner dubbed “The African Sebastian Coe” met the complainants while studying at Coventry University and was living in student accommodation at the time of the incident on November 14th 2003. The court was told how Konchellah made several advances to the alleged rape victim and even gave her two massages prior to the rape. He however insisted that the sexual encounter was consensual even though the victim said she woke up to find him on her between her legs.

His arrest pending deportation immediately after his retrial in England followed an international arrest warrant issued in Finland where he is wanted on suspicion of carrying out two rapes. As the former world champion awaited extradition to Finland it has also emerged that the two more women had alleged that he raped them in Scotland five years ago. Konchellah was looking forward to go back to Finland where his Finnish wife and two year old son live after completing his degree course at Coventry University.

Except for the initial period following his arrest, Kenyan embassy officials in London have been in the background throughout the trial due to Konchellah having acquired Finnish citizenship.

Willis Angira,
Coventry, UK

STOP PRESS: *At the time of going to Press, Konchella had been extradited from England and jailed in Finland’s Oululu prison for two and a half years. The former gold medalist also faces the possibility of life in prison upon his release for another rape charge allegedly committed in Scotland.*

NEW MAPAMBANO EMAIL:
mapambano@gawab.com