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Trades Union Congress
Congress House, Great Russell Street
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January 30, 2003

The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair, MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA
UK

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20500
USA

Dear Prime Minister Blair and President Bush:

We join in writing this letter in advance of your critical meeting, recognizing the historical relationship between our two nations and the central role now played by them both with regard to the situation in Iraq.

Our peoples, with common heritage and historic alliance, have always supported the principles of democracy and freedom that are the fundamental pillars upon which our governments are founded. We have stood together time and again to defend freedom against tyranny.

Just as our two nations share a common heritage, so do our two union movements. The Trades Union Congress is the oldest organized labor movement in existence today, and was the inspiration for and strong supporter of the American Federation of Labor when it was founded 120 years ago. Working people of both nations, often speaking through their unions, have participated in the great debates of our times, especially debates about war and peace. Never has that public participation been more important than now.

We share with the two of you the very strong concerns that Iraq has not fulfilled its responsibility to the world community to rid itself of weapons of mass destruction and to ensure the world of this. We fully support putting maximum pressure on Iraq to do so, and believe that the actions taken thus far by both our nations working through the UN Security Council to force a renewal of the inspection process and to demand that these inspections resolve this issue has been the right course.

Voices for the U.S.A and Britain at Work

We believe that the inspection process needs to be given adequate time to be able to inform fully the international community in their appreciation of the threat to world peace and security.

Today many citizens of the United States and of the United Kingdom are not convinced that war must be waged now in Iraq. Strong reservations are being voiced by peoples and governments across the world, including those of our closest allies. It is vital that a firm and broad consensus be forged and sustained, particularly between the United States and the countries of the European Union, to ensure the legitimacy required should any future action be considered.

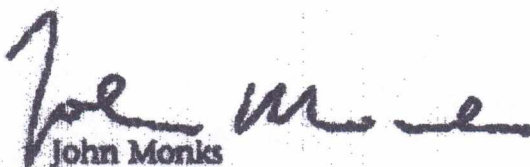
During the coming weeks, you will be called upon to make decisions that will have enormous consequences for the future of our countries. Those who seek to destroy our way of life will use an attack on Iraq, especially if taken without broad international support, to rally opinion against us and win new recruits to their terror. We may resolve the threat that now exists in Iraq, but we may well pay the price of increasing the threats we face from elsewhere. Further, in the new political reality, where terrorism is our gravest foe, such an attack carried out over the very strong opposition of our natural allies may well undermine the broad coalition of democracies that was so evident in the days after September 11.


On behalf of our two labor movements, and on behalf of working people in both our countries, we urge you to continue to lead the global fight against totalitarianism and terror through the United Nations to ensure that this fight is carried out by the broadest possible coalition, with the strongest international legitimacy.

British and American working people stand ready as always to bear the burden needed to defend our freedoms. But the goal of our policy now should be to take every possible step to achieve the legitimate ends of disarming Iraq without recourse to war, and to win the fullest support of our friends and allies before the path of war is chosen as a last resort.

As we write to you today, we do not believe that this first path has come to an end, and urge you to continue to pressure all concerned to find a resolution to this situation that preserves peace and security for our countries and across the world.

Sincerely,


John Monks
General Secretary
Trades Union Congress


John J. Sweeney
President
AFL-CIO