

**Letter from British Director Ken Loach
to the DC Labor FilmFest and Rochester (NY) Labor Film Series
October 8, 2007**

Dear Friends

I am very sorry not to be with you this week. I spent last Monday on a trolley at Frankfurt airport clinic and the doctor tells me that that might happen again were I to travel this week, so it's probably better to stay put.

I am particularly sorry because I was looking forward to hearing about the present state of trades unions and the labour movement in the US. We hear very little of that here. I guess we have the same problem; the press and broadcasters give us the news in a way that reflects their pro-business perspective.

Our situation is a reflection of yours. The critical event since 1945 for us was the arrival of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. She attempted to restore profitability to British capital by reducing the power of the organised working class. She did this in three ways; by allowing many industries to be shut down which produced mass unemployment, by laws against trades unions and by provoking major strikes which the government had prepared to win. This last factor was compounded by the weak leadership of most of the unions which had neither the political will nor the organisational determination to confront Thatcher's attack on the working class.

As you know, the British Labour party, as apposed to the labour movement, is now fully committed to the neo-con programme. Everything is to be privatised, trades unions are held in contempt and, in every sphere, corporate interests prevail, even to the extent of supporting your Government in illegal wars, breaking the United Nations constitution and the Geneva Convention and generally becoming the terrorists and torturers of the modern world.

I still have the rather unfashionable view that the most progressive force in society is the organised working class. Clearly we must make links across national boundaries and plan and act on an international scale. We may sing the Internationale but the real internationalists, to our shame, have been the big corporations.

So it was to share these thoughts with you – and, more importantly, to hear your ideas on how we should go forward.

I'm really sorry not to be in Washington and Rochester. Thank you for showing our films and good luck in all your projects.

Yours in solidarity,

Ken Loach