

The fight for workers' power

*a revolutionary socialist
programme for the 1990s*



a workers power pamphlet price 50p



A revolution in Britain?

BRITAIN NEEDS a revolution. The economy is in decline. The parliamentary system is rocked by scandals exposing corruption at the highest levels of government. The country's institutions - from the monarchy to the courts and police - are deeply discredited.

Misery and poverty co-exist with shameless displays of wealth. The world of work is a world of lousy training, low wages, poor conditions, ruthless management. There is permanent mass unemployment.

Local services are dilapidated, the NHS is starved of funds, the education system veers from crisis to crisis as the Tories experiment with the future of the young. Violent crime plagues the inner cities. Young people are forced to beg in the streets. Black people are attacked and murdered because of the colour of their skin.

None of this is caused just by bad government, no matter how bad the Tory government may be.

Capitalism

Capitalism is at the root of Britain's decline. It is an economic system based on producing profits for the few, rather than the pressing needs of millions. The demands of the system stand in irreconcilable opposition to the needs of the great majority of people: to be guaranteed a job, a decent livelihood, a life free from fear of racism, bigotry and violence, an old age to be looked forward to rather than feared.

Capitalism is defended and sanctified by "our great institutions" - parliament, the police, the judges, the army, the unelected civil servants, the secret services, the monarchy, the church. Its rottenness as a system is reflected by the rot that has set into each and every one of these institutions. Its crisis feeds theirs.

Capitalism cannot be cured, only abolished. Only revolution can abolish it, because so much is at stake for the few - the ruling class - who stand to lose from its abolition. They will fight every inch of the way to preserve their system. They will use every weapon at their disposal, every instrument of their state machine, to defend themselves, their wealth and their power.

They will use the most brutal violence. If getting rid of a trade union at one printing plant in Wapping caused them to break the heads of pickets, imagine what they would do if their entire system were threatened. That is why it will take a revolution. That is why every single person who despises the injustice of this system must turn to revolution as the answer.

The great majority - the working class - have a direct interest in abolishing this system. It is this majority that suffers the real consequences of capitalism's rule. And only the working class has the social power to overthrow capital-

ism. Millions, collectively organised, can use that power in the workplaces to bring the wheels of capitalism to a halt. These millions, as countless working class struggles show, have the creativity and resourcefulness to organise an alternative to capitalism. It is an alternative based on solidarity, on co-operation, on fulfilling human needs - a socialist alternative.

But why has the working class not yet destroyed capitalism? The labour movement has a record over the last decade and a half of glorious defeats. The "glory" was due to the solidarity, ingenuity and fighting spirit of rank and file workers. That they ended up being defeats was directly the fault of the Labour and trade union leaders.

These leaders are loyal to the capitalist system. Their most radical thoughts stop at reforms. When working class struggles erupt, and threaten to destabilise the cosy world of parliamentary debates or negotiations with the boss, these leaders invariably side with their masters - the bosses. When we picket, they praise the police who batter us. When we refuse to pay the poll tax, their councils prosecute and imprison us. When we fight back against racial attacks or the neo-Nazi gangs they brand us as thugs and criminals.

But the treachery of these reformist leaders only half explains why capitalism has been allowed to survive so long. Why are these leaders able, time and again, to betray struggles as magnificent and militant as the twelve month strike of the miners in 1984-85? The answer lies in the political weakness of the working class, the lack of a clear political alternative to capitalism and a party to fight for it.

Political

In the mid-nineteenth century the British labour movement created the first mass political "party" in working class history - the Chartists. But after its defeat and destruction, trade unions dominated the labour movement, as a near self-sufficient form of organisation. Even the Labour Party was created as an extension of these unions into the parliamentary sphere to protect the unions and to achieve social reforms. It was never designed to change the whole basis of society.

Socialist political organisations existed, but they organised hundreds or thousands, not millions. These political militants, members of the Social Democratic Federation, the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party, acted as a vital revolutionary focus, innovating and initiating at every stage in the development of the unions, pressing for the adoption of militant tactics. They trained and educated hundreds of thousands of militants in a basic intransigent class outlook. But they failed to create a powerful political alternative to the parliamentary and union leaders.

At the onset of class battles these socialists had enor-

mous influence. They were able to inspire the rank and file to push forward. But when these struggles reached a climax, when they had to become consciously political, when they had to break through the artificial barriers set up between trade union or electoral battles and an all out struggle for power, the climax would pass, the leaders would re-assert their control. The struggle would be sold out for relatively minor concessions or go down to a crushing defeat.

Tradition

The reason for this is the chronic *political* weakness of the British labour movement. The revolutionary socialist minority remained a pressure group, promoting and aiding struggles led by others. Workers have paid dearly and repeatedly for this particular "national tradition".

Like the other national traditions and institutions this one will not last. The union leaders and the Labour Party are themselves in a deep crisis. Demoralised after so many defeats they are abandoning even the mildest reformism and the most restricted militant action. And as they cower, those who look to them for a way out grow more impatient, more frustrated and more open to revolutionary ideas. There will be nothing automatic about the triumph of revolutionary socialist ideas as a result of this. Impatience combined with

desperation can open workers up to desperate remedies - racism, nationalism, even fascism - as well as to revolutionary ones.

In the struggles that lie ahead of us we can win.

To ensure that the capitalists are overthrown for good, we need a political alternative.

The acute crisis of leadership within the working class, within its unions and every other fighting organisation it has built up, has to be resolved.

No trade union, no single issue campaign, however militant, can lead the working class in an all out battle against the entire class of bosses and their state. For that we need a revolutionary party.

To build such a party in the struggles of the decade ahead - that is the task facing us today. A party really rooted in the working class can turn conservative Britain upside down. But it must be built on the solid foundations of a clear understanding of the situation. It needs a programme of action, a strategy for the conquest of working class power that gives purpose and direction to every partial or defensive struggle today.

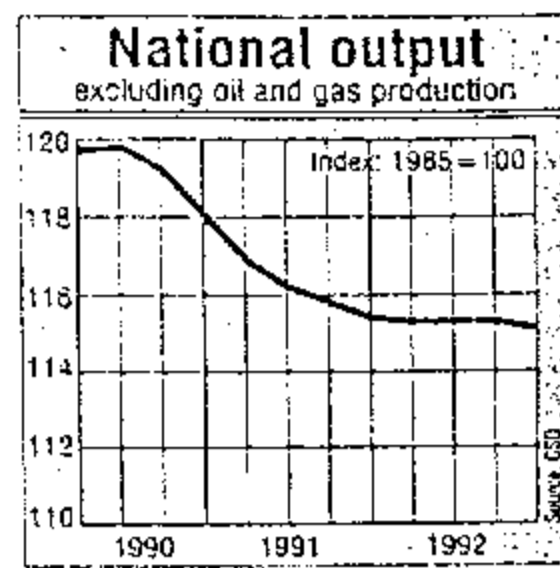
Out of these struggles we aim to organise a new generation of revolutionary socialist militants who will fight for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in Britain and across the globe. ■

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Capitalism in crisis

THE TORIES' victory celebrations after the April 1992 election soon turned into a hangover. The run on the pound and its forced withdrawal from the ERM, the mass opposition to the pit closure plan, parents and teachers in revolt over chaotic school tests, the scandals around millionaire backers of the Tories, a series of cabinet resignations, deep splits over Maastricht threatening to bring down Major: rarely has a government been so crisis-ridden within months of an election victory.

Autumn 1992 starkly revealed the mass of unresolved problems for the Tory party and the bosses who back them.

These problems have not been overcome. Despite the failure of the labour movement to prevent the pit closure

programme and Major's narrow victory on Maastricht, we face a weak and divided government and one which needs to launch dramatic attacks against the working class and its living standards.

Its domestic economic problems are compounded by enormous changes in the world imperialist system which is forcing the British ruling class into abandoning its decades old alliance with the USA. The question of Europe has split the Tories down the middle.

It is this political crisis which opens the opportunity for the workers' movement not only to recover the ground it has lost during the Thatcher years, but to go on the offensive against a government in disarray.

Why the Tories are divided

MARGARET THATCHER came to power in 1979 determined to reverse the decline in the British economy's competitiveness relative to her main overseas rivals. She needed to make British businesses more profitable.

Industry was to be restructured, with unprofitable enterprises going to the wall. Permanent mass unemployment replaced the post-war norm of permanent full employment. Those in work were to be more thoroughly exploited than previously, through speed ups, working longer hours and greater "flexibility".

Taxation was to be cut, especially for the rich. This was to be done by cutting expenditure on the welfare state, health, social benefits, the public services, in fact all the gains achieved since 1945.

One force stood in the way of her plans: the organised working class movement. That is why the chief ideologue of Thatcherism, Sir Keith Joseph, declared that "solving the union problem is the key to Britain's recovery". Thatcher set out to "solve" that problem. In a series of well-planned assaults she took on and defeated some of the best organised battalions of the trade union movement.

By the mid-1980s Britain was in the midst of an economic boom. The Tories were convinced they had "solved" Britain's problems. Strike figures fell to record lows. Productivity - the amount of goods produced per worker - rose one and a half times faster than the average for the major seven capitalist countries.

When the recession came in 1990 the Tories and businessmen were mystified. They predicted it would only be a "blip" on an upward curve. Instead it lasted more than thirty months: the longest recession since the war. And it hit the Tories' heartland of support: the south east and the new

"service industries". It mowed down small businesses and bankrupted thousands of the self-employed who Thatcherism had proudly created.

Major companies - like the property giant British & Commonwealth, conglomerates like Polly Peck and Maxwell Communications - collapsed in a welter of debt, high interest rates and money-grabbing fraud.

Thatcher's dream of building a "home owning democracy" turned into a nightmare. As house prices plummeted millions of families now owed the banks and building societies more than their homes were worth. Tens of thousands defaulted on their mortgages and had their houses repossessed.

With the forced withdrawal from the ERM and the 20% devaluation of sterling Britain was exposed as a second rate economy even within Europe. The disillusion with the Tories amongst their own supporters was reflected when thousands of them openly joined the trade union movement in a mass protest movement against pit closures and unemployment in October 1992. The government was deeply shaken, not just because of mass protests but because its economic strategy lay in ruins.

Thatcherism had not stemmed Britain's economic decline. It had achieved a productivity "miracle" but only by making fewer workers work harder. In the process Thatcher had destroyed one fifth of Britain's manufacturing industry. So the British economy slid permanently into a balance of payments deficit: its industry, agriculture and financial services no longer produced enough to offset imports.

In every previous recession, imports fell below exports as people did without "luxury" foreign goods and firms cut back on investments of capital goods from abroad. Now Britain's

economy could not even produce many of the bare necessities: for the first time ever it suffered a balance of payments deficit in a recession.

As the recession dragged on, another big headache for the Tories was public spending. Today it is becoming a £50 billion migraine. Thatcher came to power promising to drastically reduce public spending. Successive rounds of cuts in local services and the privatisation of "loss making" industries reduced the amount spent by the state on meeting workers' needs. But continuing commitments to a free health service and universal benefits - both of which have massive popular support - meant continued high spending. The recession deepened the problem, boosting the numbers on benefit and cutting the revenue received from taxation.

The 1990s have seen public spending return to the levels of the late 1970s. In the next two years government borrowing threatens to exceed the total borrowed by the Tories since 1979. This presents the Tories with an economic and political contradiction for which there is no easy answer.

The solution to the crisis of the balance of payments and the solution to the crisis of public finances push in opposite

directions.

The first demands that any economic recovery is restricted in order to prevent a tide of imports and a surge in inflation; the second demands that the recovery is as strong as possible to increase tax revenue, decrease benefits and ease the pressure on government borrowing.

Major's government is frightened. Their economic policies are discredited. They are haunted by the Poll Tax rebellion and fearful of another upsurge of opposition. The Tory party is disunited. One wing advocates tax increases because they are afraid of mass resistance to another onslaught on the welfare state. The other wing threatens revolt if this symbol of Thatcherism is violated.

Burden

But the Tories have little room for manoeuvre. Whatever method they choose it is the working class who will shoulder the burden of the bosses' crisis. Taxes have already been driven up through VAT on fuel. Now they are gearing up for a further attack on public spending, targeting basic pillars of the welfare state. That is what they mean when they urge the public to "think the unthinkable".

Britain in the "New World Order"

THE TORIES' problems do not just arise from the state of the British economy. They are rooted in the growing contradictions of Britain's world position. The world order established through the dominance of the USA after World War Two is rapidly disintegrating.

The last decades of the twentieth century have seen the capitalist world economy fragmenting into three mighty regional economic blocs led by the USA, Japan and Germany. No longer can the USA impose its own "order" on Europe and South East Asia.

Relations

No longer can it dictate world economic relations through an unchallenged dominance over the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank. No longer can it count on subservient European and Asian allies to declare the interests and policies of Washington, from Korea to Vietnam, to be those of the whole "free world". The result is growing tension and uncertainty in relations between the world powers.

The major economic powers in the world are *imperialist* nations: they have amassed their wealth and power through the systematic exploitation of weaker and more backward countries across the globe.

For over seventy years the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe - where capitalism had been overthrown - represented a partial obstacle to the imperialists' plans. But the conquest of power in the USSR by a reactionary caste of bureaucrats - the Stalinists - led slowly but surely to the exhaustion and fragmentation of the non-capitalist states. They could not advance towards socialism because they excluded the mass of workers from any say in the running of society. Now they are turning back to capitalism and the market to solve their economic stagnation.

Imperialism won the Cold War. But this has not led to a new era of world peace. The imperialists' celebrations at the fall of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, their premature declarations of a "New World Order", were quickly cut short. The collapse of Stalinism opened up not an orderly period of imperialist exploitation in the East but a new period of economic crisis, of national

tensions and civil wars.

Far from uniting the imperialists this new period of world instability has sharpened the tensions between them. Each of the regional blocs is trying to expand its sphere of influence at the expense of the others. The ongoing conflict between the USA and the European Community (EC) over Yugoslavia is one symptom of this. Washington's threats against Japan's "closed" economy and the recurring spectre of a trade war with the EC are further examples of this rivalry.

In a world of imperialist super powers the EC is at a distinct disadvantage when compared to the USA and Japan, not only because of its patchwork quilt of national borders, but also due to the existence of four big rival capitalist economies within its borders.

Germany and France, the two major national economies in Europe, have for some years recognised the need to unite the continent economically and, in the long term, politically. If not, Europe would be unable to compete with Japan and the USA in a world arena, or even defend its internal market against them.

Trade

As a result the mid-1980s saw a renewed drive for economic integration by the EC. The 1986 Single European Act, which aimed at sweeping away barriers to internal trade within the EC, was one aspect of this. The development of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), to harmonise currency rates and pave the way for a single currency agreed in the Maastricht Treaty, was another. Further commitments under the treaty, such as the "Social Chapter", attempted to harmonise social legislation on working conditions, hours worked, common minimum wage etc trying to equalise the "social costs" employers have to pay across the Community and preclude competition between member countries on this basis.

For the British ruling class these moves posed a unique dilemma.

Britain's legacy as the first big world imperialist power has left its bosses with huge non-European investments, far greater than any other EC nation. Much of this trade and

investment has been dependent since 1945, on a partnership with the USA. Since World War Two the USA has been essential to supporting and if necessary defending, Britain's world-wide interests be they in the Middle East, Asia or Latin America. Britain's position in the post-1945 world order in many ways depended on America *preventing* the emergence of rival imperialist trading blocs; thus the importance of the so-called transatlantic alliance.

But over the last two decades Britain's national economy has become more and more dependent on Europe. Over half Britain's trade is now with the EC. Key sections of manufacturing and finance can only survive through merging with European rivals, or at the very least collaborating with them, to compete with US and Japanese multinationals.

So there there has developed a real conflict of interest within the ruling class based on these contradictory interests of different sections of British capital. This conflict is reflected in the increasing factionalism within the Tory Party, preventing the formation of a coherent policy on Europe.

Thatcher increasingly became the major spokeswoman within the Tory Party for maintenance of the trans-Atlantic alliance and against all attempts of the other European powers to move towards greater political and economic unity.

Under Thatcher Britain sold itself as the place where international capital, especially from Japan and the USA, could gain access to European markets, free from strikes and from the "social" restrictions which the Tories saw as existing in the rest of Europe. But this strategy demanded that Britain had to be inside, not outside, the EC.

Federalism

Thus, even under Thatcher, Britain had to be at the "heart of Europe", in order to fight against federalism, a unified currency, and the Social Chapter. Her uncompromising hostility to this project became increasingly untenable as it became clear that the Franco-German alliance would push ahead even if it meant leaving Britain behind. In the end leading ministers saw the impossibility and dangers of this approach.

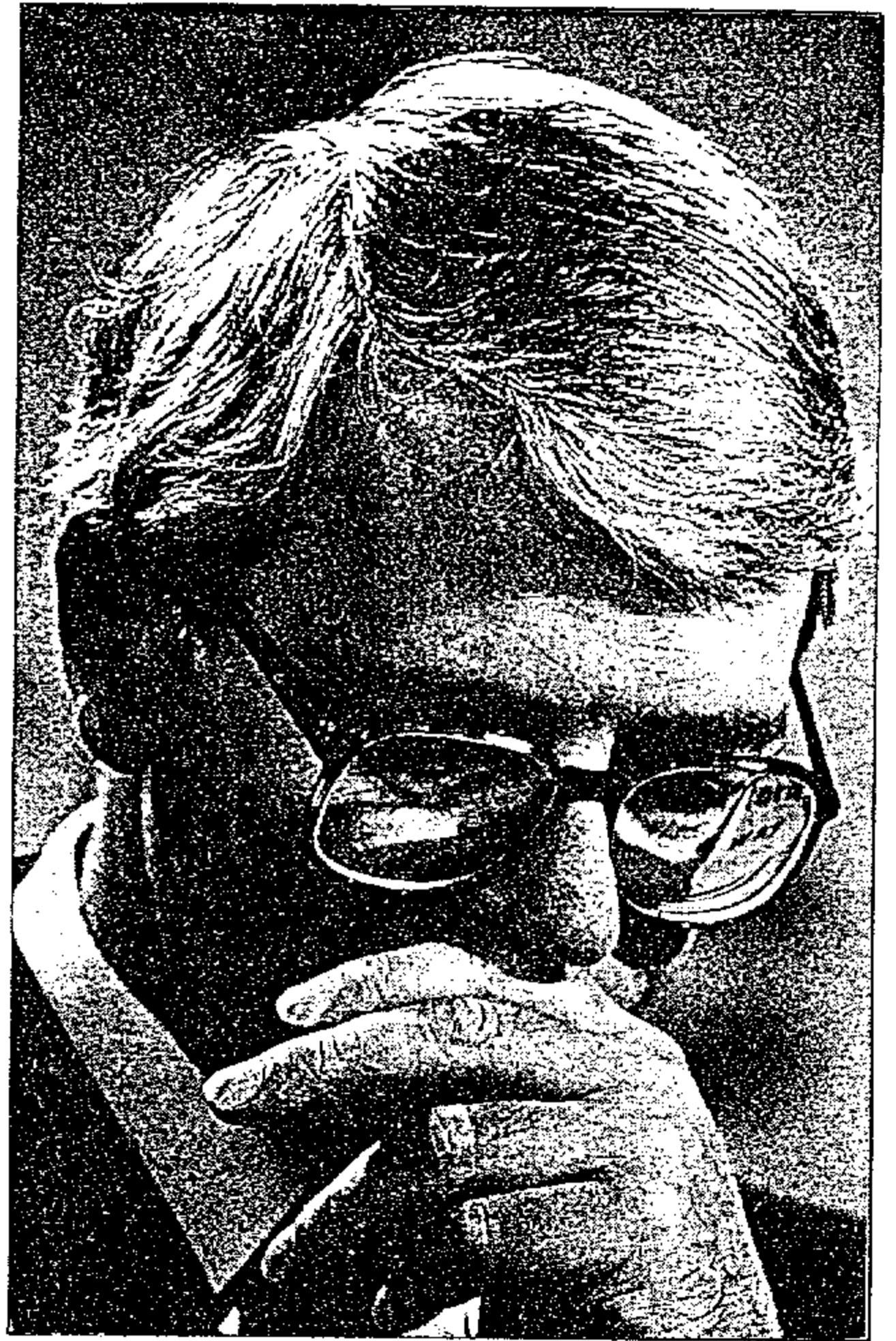
A series of resignations over Europe by Heseltine, Lawson and Howe weakened Thatcher and her faction and paved the way to her downfall. But even the removal of Thatcher failed to produce a coherent policy on Europe.

Major and Hurd tried to compromise, promising to fight against European political integration but from within the institutions created by the Maastricht Treaty. They proudly displayed Britain's "opt-out clause" from the Social Chapter as an example of what this policy could achieve. This failed miserably to unite the party as the continued factional infighting and wafer thin majority for Maastricht showed.

The Major-Hurd policy fails to resolve the strategic question facing the British capitalist class - for or against an integrated imperialist bloc in Europe? The stakes are high. The fragmentation of the world economy into competing blocks is an irreversible trend of late twentieth century imperialism. If British capitalism is to avoid marginalisation and ever more rapid decline it will ultimately have to find a place in Europe - not as a "spoiler" for US and Japanese capitalism, but as a strong subordinate to Germany at the heart of the integration process.

The problem of Europe can only be resolved under capitalism if the British ruling class is able to defeat its pro-Washington anti-European wing decisively and find a political leadership which can place Britain firmly within the European integration process. Until the ruling class finds a stable parliamentary majority for this strategy, the question of Europe will be a source of political instability and splits within the major British political parties.

The working class has no interest in helping either the pro-



Major in a quandary over Europe

European or the pro-American wing of the capitalist class. Inside or outside Europe, British workers will continue to face attacks from their employers. That is why it is wrong to join the "anti-European" camp, as so many Labour lefts and even the Socialist Workers Party urge.

This is the camp of petty nationalism, of jingoism, of Tebbit and Thatcher. Likewise, we do not urge support for the capitalist EC, which has co-ordinated attacks on steel workers, miners and others across Europe, Britain included.

If a referendum is called on Maastricht workers should abstain. Against both the EC and the "little Englandism" of the Labour left revolutionaries fight for a Socialist United States of Europe.

British capitalism's spiral of economic decline and dilemma over Europe are at the root of John Major's weakness and the Tories' divisions. None of this makes the Tory government less vicious. Quite the reverse. In its desperation to recapture the initiative its judgement becomes more short term and its attacks become more sweeping.

Unlike the Labour and trade union leaders, working class people cannot afford to wait for the government to bring itself down, to trip itself up. We have to fight now.

Weakness

The political crisis and weakness of the Tory government have already provided opportunities for the working class to strike back and drive them from office, as in the Autumn of 1992. Those opportunities will be repeated in the months and years to come.

Seizing those opportunities means more than simply understanding the crisis of leadership in the ranks of the enemy. It means we must urgently understand and resolve the crisis of leadership in the ranks of the working class. ■



Labourism in decline

IN EARLY 1992 the Tories were in a mess. They were presiding over the longest recession in the British economy since the 1930s. Millions of people, even sections of the bosses, blamed the Tories for the economic crisis. The party was deeply divided over Europe. It had gone through the fall of Thatcher and the rise of the weak Major leadership. The Tories had been forced into their biggest ever policy climb-down when they abandoned the hated poll tax.

Yet when the election came in April 1992 Labour still lost. The Tory vote held up at 41.9% of the total vote. Despite an increase in the Labour share of the vote, John Major emerged as Prime Minister with a 21 seat majority.

This fourth consecutive defeat was a bitter blow to millions who were dying to see the back of the Tories. Labour should have romped home. And this time the leadership had no excuses. They could not blame the unions, as they had done in 1979. They could not blame the Labour left, as they had done in 1983. Nor could they claim they were still recovering lost ground, as they had done in 1987.

Under Kinnock the right wing had completely recaptured the party. The left had been smashed by purges, and militant trade unionism had been tamed by Thatcher. In place of the radical policies adopted in the years of the Labour left's advance (1979-82), the Policy Review had reshaped party policy along the lines of responsible, social Thatcherism. The gains that Thatcher won for the bosses - such as privatisation and the anti-union laws - were all to be maintained. Her promise to "destroy socialism" in Britain had been accepted as an accomplished fact by Labour in 1992. The very word "socialism", which had been in every manifesto of the party since the 1930s, disappeared altogether.

Under the new leadership of John Smith, Labour is a pale pink imitation of John Major's Tory party. If it wins an election it will be by default, as a result of Tory disarray rather than through the mobilisation of working class support and enthusiasm for a programme of radical reform.

The real causes for this profound crisis in Labour's ranks do not lie in the crooked alibis served up by the right wing. They lie in the long term decline of Labourism itself within the British working class. Successive Labour governments betrayed the hopes of the workers who had voted them into office. With each betrayal the regeneration of Labourism in the class became weaker. Whole sections of workers defected, either to the Tories, or to apathy. Labour's atrocious record in opposition during the Thatcher years - its attacks on the miners, the printers, those who rebelled against the poll tax, its failure to fight for or mobilise the unemployed - intensified this decline. The party refused to put itself at the head of mass resistance to the Tories.

By 1987 only 42% of all trade unionists and only 51% of the unemployed voted Labour. Almost half of the victims of

Thatcher's reign of mass unemployment refused to vote for a party that was traditionally identified with policies of full employment. In local government Labour councils chopped away at jobs and services, doing the Tories' dirty work and alienating tens of thousands of Labour voters.

Labour's response to this steady electoral decline has been the abandonment, by stages, of "Labourism", of the traditional ideas of reformist socialism associated with full employment, nationalisation and municipal services. This process was speeded up in the 1980s when attacks on the working class led to a significant restructuring of the workforce, a decline in traditional industry (and of industrial workers who identified with Labour) and a shift in the working population to areas in the south east where there was little or no labour movement tradition.

The party decided that such workers were natural "Tories" and the way to win them was to embrace key aspects of Toryism. But Labour has not been able to make any serious encroachments into this new working class constituency. Nor will it by further abandoning Labourism. If the workers of the new towns and industries want a soft version of Toryism they will vote for Major or Ashdown. They have to be convinced of a different answer. The problem for Labour is this: its old, Labourite politics cannot provide that answer and its leaders can think of nothing new to replace it.

The Clinton option?

Labour is a party wracked by a major contradiction. The party was set up by the trade union leaders to represent their interests in parliament. It is linked to the trade unions financially and organisationally at every level. Through the Labour Party the British working class found for the first time a national political party through which it could voice its concerns in parliament. In this sense Labour was and is a workers' party.

But the ideas of the Labour Party were always fundamentally pro-capitalist. Talk of "socialism" was never more than talk. The old ideas of Labourism held out the illusion that capitalism could be reformed into a system that can meet the needs of the working class. The "national interest" - a mythical set of interests which the workers and bosses supposedly have in common - was and is held out as an argument for workers to make sacrifices whenever the going gets tough for British capitalism.

In office, Labour has persistently attacked the working class, using troops against strikers, carrying out massive public spending cuts, and supporting the British bosses' vicious foreign wars, from Vietnam through to the Gulf.

Labour is therefore a workers' party with a programme and a leadership that are pro-capitalist: it is what Marxist call a *bourgeois workers party*. In times of crisis it can be used by



What happened to the Labour left?

A REVIVAL IN the fortunes of the left of the party is highly unlikely. The left's challenge in the 1980s, personified by Tony Benn, would not have transformed the Labour Party into an instrument for socialism even if it had succeeded. It would merely have resulted in the triumph of a left wing version of reformist Labourism.

The likelihood of such a victory was always remote. The Bennite movement was able to make advances because of the power vacuum that resulted from the split between the union bureaucracy and the right wing parliamentary leaders. This gave a chance to the activists in the constituency parties to embark on a project to "transform the Labour Party". This transformation was strictly limited to giving the party's established structures greater control over the Labour leadership. And it was confined for a long time to a purely constitutional struggle, while the really significant battles against

Thatcher were taking place in the streets and factories, the hospitals and the offices.

Moreover, the left reformists were loyal to the idea of Labour as a broad church - a permanent coalition with the right. They were so fearful of breaking this coalition that they were prepared, at key moments, to surrender to the right.

This fact, above all else, meant that the "transform the Labour Party" project was doomed from the outset. At the decisive moments (in 1982, after the Social Democrats split, 1984 when the miners were on strike, and 1986 to 1991 during Kinnock's witch hunt) the left gave in to the right and pledged its loyalty to the established leadership.

With each retreat the right gained confidence. Helped by the refurbished alliance with the new realist union leaders, the right marched on to victory after victory and the left became ever more marginalised.★

the capitalists to demobilise workers' struggles, as happened under the last Labour government of 1974-79. But at the same time the bosses remain suspicious of any government that is dependent, in however limited a way, on the strength of organised labour.

The Labour leaders have tried to resolve this contradiction by steering the party ever further away from its mass trade union base. Kinnock tried to make Labour more like the social democratic parties of Europe: mass membership parties not reliant on union money, and therefore not controlled by the union bureaucracies. This, he believed, would remove the bosses' main cause for hostility to Labour - that it would forever remain prone to pressure from the unions.

Kinnock aimed to replace the power of the unions with the power of a passive mass membership. The target was one million members. The result was a fiasco: a fall in membership to around 250,000, with an active membership considerably smaller than that - some sources say that only 90,000 are actually paid up members.

Now Smith is concentrating on reducing the influence of the unions. He wants to scrap the union leaders' block vote in the selection of parliamentary candidates and the election of the leader and deputy leader. His aim is not to break the trade union link altogether, because as yet there is no alternative source of funding and support. He wants to relegate its importance, so that when the opportunity arises Labour can secure state funding for political parties and end its dependence on the unions.

This has provoked opposition from most of the union bureaucrats. It has also exposed the depth of Labour's own crisis, at a time when it should have been enjoying a surge in popularity at Major's expense.

Labour is a party marked down for destruction. In the event of a further election defeat the whole question of breaking the union link could be put on the agenda again. If the link is broken then Labour's transition into an open party of the bosses on the model of the US Democratic Party could begin. The destruction of Labour as the only political instrument of the organised workers' movement would mark a reversal of certain gains in class consciousness by the British working class made over the last century.

That is why we will fight the right's attempt to push the party away from its working class connections. We fight for the continued affiliation of trade unions to the Labour Party. And we fight to democratise the trade union block vote, to remove the power of the unaccountable bureaucrats and enable the real voice of millions of organised workers to be heard in policy formulation and the selection of their representatives.

The fate of Labour will be decided in the next decade. We must ensure that what replaces it is a revolutionary working class alternative, rather than yet another corrupt capitalist party.

A pact with the Liberals?

Labour's crisis of electoral credibility has led to renewed demands from some right wingers in the party for a pact with the Liberal Democrats.

The Liberal Democrats have scored a number of victories since 1992, in by-elections like Newbury and Christchurch and in local elections. The sight of tens of thousands of true-blue Tory voters defecting to the Liberals has increased the attractiveness of the idea of pacts to wide layers of Labour's supporters. Even the "left" paper *Tribune* supported the first

stage of a pact in the Newbury by-election. It argued that local deals with the Liberals should be decided by local parties. If a general election comes and Labour still looks unable to win an outright majority, the trend towards supporting some form of pact with the Liberals will grow.

Workers should oppose this trend completely. The Liberal Democrats, despite the radical rhetoric of some of the middle class bearded-weirdies in their ranks, are a thorough-going bosses' party. During the Lib-Lab pact of the late 1970s the Liberals vetoed allowed Labour to ditch promises of pro-working class reforms in order to preserve the deal. Today the Liberals stand for the extension of the anti-union laws, they support an economic policy based on pay restraint, they are for the maintenance of capitalism at the expense of every working class interest. In local government when they get majority control, they are a party of racism (notoriously in Tower Hamlets in London, for example), of cuts, of driving up rents, of sacking and victimising council workers.

We should fight for the return of a majority Labour government. The way to win back support from working class voters and even the votes of some of the harder-pressed sections of middle class, is not to make an alliance with the Liberals but for Labour to give a fighting lead to all struggles against the Tories and advance radical anti-capitalist policies. A pact with the Liberals would only underline the idea of Labour's weakness and boost the credibility of the Liberal Democrats from being a no-hope third party to being a potential partner in government.

Socialists stand for a majority Labour government not because we have faith in the rotten programme and leaders

of the Labour Party, but because we want to put the illusions that millions of working people have in Labour to the test of office. Whilst revolutionary socialists themselves may be devoid of illusions in Labour, millions of workers are not, despite the experiences of past Labour governments. If Labour were in power, the working class movement could at last demand that they act in the interests of their supporters. Revolutionaries would be able to explain the inadequacies of Labour and reformism not just through literary exposures and patient historical arguments but also in the light of ongoing practical experience.

By demanding that Labour act in the interests of their working class voters and putting forward a programme of action that expresses those interests more clearly and directly than reformism ever can, socialists could expose, in practice, the unwillingness of Labour to promote the interests of the working class, and rally workers to the project of building a new revolutionary party, politically and organisationally separate from Labour.

That job would be set back by any Labour-Liberal pacts. In a pact Labour can claim - as they did during the Lib-Lab pact of the 1970s - that they have to abandon reforms, have to attack workers as the price of keeping Liberal support. In other words a pact gives them an excuse - we would not attack you if we had the choice, but the Liberals are making us do it, and if we don't agree to go along with them, the big bad Tories will get back in.

That is the rotten logic of pacts. It gives Labour excuses for attacks on the working class, and it gives credence to those excuses in the minds of Labour's working class supporters. ■



Mutual admiration at Labour Party Conference



The working class

IN EVERY period of retreat or decline in working class struggle, theorists appear to "prove" that the working class no longer exists, or is no longer a force for change or revolution.

During the economic boom of the 1950s and 60s, it was fashionable to argue that everybody had become "middle class", because of changing lifestyles and rising living standards. The intellectuals who peddled this idea were astonished when, during the 1970s, the working class proved its existence by taking mass strike action to smash Ted Heath's anti-union laws and drive him from office.

Today these intellectuals have a new theory to explain the supposed demise of the working class. At the top end of the scale workers are becoming small bosses, like the self employed, or buying shares as well as living off their wages. At the bottom the inner city working class, unemployed, poorly educated, criminalised, is becoming an "underclass" with interests and struggles different from factory and office workers.

Such theories are rubbish. Marxists define as working class anybody who has to sell their ability to work, because they don't own enough shares, property or capital to live any other way. The vast majority of the population is working class - even if many belong to sections which fifty years ago would have been thought of as "middle class" or "professional".

Unions in local and central government, teaching, health, banking and insurance continued to grow in the 1980s and 90s even while the blue collar unions were in sharp decline. This happened because of the growing "proletarianisation" of these sectors.

As the Tories attacked the public sector, white collar workers found their traditional conditions undermined through competitive tendering, attacks on sickness provisions, introduction of new contracts, promotion and pay linked to performance. The bosses have launched an offensive against these workers, which has led to growing struggles and identification with blue collar workers in struggle. These newly organised workers will undoubtedly play an important part in the struggles ahead, especially in the struggles against public spending cuts.

But real obstacles to militancy have to be overcome in the white collar unions. These problems include the lack of a tradition of identification with the labour movement, divisive career structures, the presence in and often domination of the union structures by management grades, for example in the NUT and Naigo (now part of Unison), and identification with the demands of the service in caring jobs such as the NHS, teaching and social work.

The process of proletarianisation will continue, and the exit of higher grade managers and members who place "professionalism" and "career development" before collec-

tive struggle will strengthen rather than weaken these unions.

But there is another weakness of this sector, one which is recognised by these workers themselves. They do not have the ability to hit profits directly, to make a strike hurt their employers rather than just disrupt a service. Their bargaining power is weaker.

Revolutionaries need to recognise these problems and fight to overcome them rather than pretend they do not exist. But at the same time the manual core of the working class, in the manufacturing, extractive, transport, service and distributive sectors of the economy, is still powerful. Despite the restructuring of British industry in the 1980s, these workers constitute 52% of the working class. They remain the decisive force within society.

No revolutionary leadership can be built without rooting itself in this sector of workers.

The impact of Thatcherism

The working class is the overwhelming majority in society. But its organisations are shrinking. The Labour Party's individual membership is at its lowest since 1929 - and those members are mainly white collar ex-graduates. There is no mass socialist youth or women's organisation worth the name.

The result of the defeats of the 1980s has been a decline in union strength. Union membership fell from its 1979 high point of over 12 million to 7.3 million by 1993. The proportion of the workforce in unions fell from 54% in 1979 to 33% today. Between 1984 and 1990, the years of economic growth, the proportion of pay rises negotiated by collective bargaining fell from 71% of all deals to 54%.

This is a trend which, if it continued, could take the unionised workforce down to levels of around 15 - 17%. Given the pivotal importance of the unions in the history of the British labour movement, such a decline would fundamentally alter the conditions of the class struggle. It is not an immediate perspective, but it is no longer unthinkable if mass unemployment continues as a norm and if public sector trade unionism is broken by the Tories.

Faced with the decline of the organised labour movement, most of the left responds in one of two ways.

There are, as always, those who have been prepared to write off working class organisations at the first whiff of defeat. The right wing of the old Communist Party led the way in the late 1970s with the "Forward march of Labour halted" theory. It wasn't that the workers had ceased to exist, they argued. But they couldn't win any more because objective changes in capitalism - high rise flats, new towns, new industries and new forms of entertainment - inevitably undermined class consciousness and solidarity.

At the other extreme are those who bury their heads in the sand and pretend nothing has happened. Labour can "coast home" at the next election, says John Smith. The trade unions are "intact", "sleeping giants" the Socialist Workers Party tells us.

The truth is more complex. The trade union and labour movement has survived, but only at the cost of declining size and influence and a continuing charge to the right which, for the first time in decades, places on the agenda the qualitative weakening of the unions and the transformation of Labour into an open, Liberal-style bosses party.

The doom-mongers were wrong to say that the changes in capitalism *inevitably* weaken workers' organisations. But if there is no fightback, or if our struggles are sold out, that is exactly what happens. The starkest case is the NUM. In Scotland it was the backbone of the workers' movement. Now it hardly exists north of the border. South of the border it is a shadow of its former self. That didn't happen because of the demise of the flat cap. It happened because of the defeat of the miners' strike.

With each defeat the trade union bureaucracy grew more desperate to preserve the material basis of its own privileges and wealth, the union structures themselves. It embraced the strategy of "new realism".

There is nothing new about "new realism". It is really a very old form of class collaboration, which involves avoiding action altogether if possible, but ensuring that it is controlled and limited if it becomes inevitable. It involves adapting to Tory values by down-playing the role of unions as fighting organisations and stressing the need to service individual members (hence the growth of union credit cards, mortgage schemes etc). This means selling-out working conditions (and in some cases even the right to strike) in return for recognition from the bosses and the exclusive right to recruitment in particular firms. Above all "new realism" involves accepting the Tories' anti-union laws as a permanent fixture and insisting that they must be obeyed at all costs. To reverse this process and build a movement able to win victories instead of retreating in the face of every new attack, we urgently need a programme for the transformation of the unions from top to bottom.

The unions are not dead. They are not in terminal decline. But neither are they intact or unscathed. They have been severely weakened by the Tory onslaught. The urgent task of every active union member is to fight to transform the unions into organisations that can fight and win.

Today the central task in the unions is to build a rank and file movement. Such a movement would fight with the officials where possible, but would be ready to fight against them whenever necessary. Its main task would be to break the stranglehold of the entire bureaucratic caste, winning full democracy for the union membership and committing the unions to militant policies of class struggle.

As a series of first steps, militant workers should fight for:

- rank and file strike committees
- militant caucuses at branch, regional and national level in the unions
- caucuses of militants from different industries on a city-wide basis
- the rebuilding of genuine shop stewards' committees, and inter-factory combines
- rank and file control, through mass meetings and strike committee representatives over all negotiations, and mass meetings to have a veto over all proposed settlements
- using collections of union dues (increasingly important given the attacks on the check off system) to re-assert the role of shop stewards through contact with workers, discussions of grievances etc
- taking trade union education out of the hands of the new realists and the bureaucracy by building broad forums in which militants and new layers of fighters can discuss how to strengthen the working class movement
- for the building of workplace based branches and for branch meetings to be held during work time, with the specific aim of increasing the participation of women members within the unions
- for a massive unionisation drive, under rank and file control, to organise the two thirds of the working class outside the trade unions.

But this is only the beginning. We have to set ourselves the goal of a national rank and file organisation.

ARE THE union leaders ignorant? Are they just corrupt buffoons? Do they continually betray their members because they are wicked people?

Doubtless many of them are all of these things, but the real answer goes deeper. It is the limitations of trade union politics which ultimately lead to betrayal and defeat.

Trade unionism, pure and simple, is about bargaining with the bosses to get better pay and conditions or to preserve jobs. In other words pure trade unionism accepts the boundaries set by the capitalist system. And by accepting the capitalist system rather than openly challenging it, pure trade unionism cannot consistently defend the interests of the working class. Those interests contradict the needs of the capitalist system at every turn. But trade union organisations are contradictory. The contradiction arising from the different needs and interests of the rank and file and the bureaucracy.

Rank and file workers within the unions are driven to defend themselves against the capitalists, and are driven into conflict with them.

But the leaders of the unions - the bureaucracy - are driven to compromise with the bosses and betray the interests of their members. Of course rank and file workers are not always straining at the leash for action, or held back only by treacherous leaders. But whenever serious attacks are launched on them it is in their material interest to fight back.

The problem of the bureaucracy is not simply one of controlling shaky negotiators. The bureaucracy is not merely a collection of "middle men". It is a caste with

its own distinct interests. These are rooted in the material benefits it gains through controlling the trade union apparatus.

Alan Jkinson, the leader of Nalgo (now part of Unison) earns more than £50,000 per year. Yet 10% of his members earn below the official European poverty line.

When striking members of his union from Newham burst into his office they found a suite that would rival some of London's poshest hotels—a jacuzzi, televisions and videos, drinks cabinet and so on. And this was just where he worked. Imagine what his house is like!

Jkinson is no exception. The unions, on the basis of members' contributions, have built up substantial bank accounts that pay for expensive cars, trips abroad, country retreats with saunas, tennis courts etc.

In total there are approximately 4,000 full-time union officers as compared to 7.5 million union members.

Yet the amount of money spent on the salaries and administration of union offices comprises 40% of union income.

The 1988 statistics on union finance revealed that spending on members' benefits across all unions was £59,817,000, whereas spending on salaries and administration was £407,693,000.

The staggering discrepancy shows just where the bureaucracy's priorities lie - with itself.

For the bureaucrats the unions are a means of maintaining "a continuing relationship" with the bosses, as the old TUC leader Lord Citrine put it.

For the workers they must become organisations for a continuing war with the employers. ★

Organise the rank and file!

TO MOUNT a real challenge to the hold of the union bureaucracy, a national rank and file movement is needed. It must openly fight the leaders and replace them with truly accountable class fighters at all levels of the unions. A national rank and file movement in Britain today should commence the fight for the transformation of the unions by campaigning on the following platform:

Democratise the unions

Make the unions democratic through the regular election of all officials, at least annually. Elections should be preceded by workplace and mass meetings where the relevant issues are debated in front of the members. Union leaders should be subject to recall if they betray their pledges or act against the interests of the rank and file.

Union papers must become open, democratic and campaigning organs of the membership, not photo albums for the bureaucracy. Conferences must be made up of rank and file delegates, elected directly from branches and workplaces. All officials and NECs must be bound by conference policy. National conferences, TUC and Labour Party delegations, to be opened up to delegates elected from workplaces.

End bureaucratic privileges

All officials should be paid the average wage of the workers they represent. All officials to donate their wages to strike funds during disputes and to draw only strike pay and expenses necessary for the prosecution of the dispute.

All the unions should print monthly accounts of their financial income and outgoings. The rank and file should control expenditure and elect delegates to check the accounts.

The assets of the union must be put at the service of the members through fighting funds to finance strikes, support campaigns and help with organising drives.

No perks, only necessary expenses, should be granted to officials for union business. A rank and file watchdog committee must be established in every union to scrutinise accounts. This cannot stop at the level of full-timers. The perks some unions give to lay branch officers and stewards transmit a bureaucratic mentality down to branches and workplaces. They can amount to a tidy bonus. These must be scrapped. Bureaucratic privilege has to be rooted out at every level of the unions.

For direct action

We need action that can win. We need all-out indefinite strikes against every job loss announcement, linked to occupations of threatened workplaces which can hold the employers' property and equipment to ransom until the closure threats are withdrawn. These methods, not just protest action and selective strikes, should be used against each attack by the government and employers on pay, jobs, conditions and services. Return to the basic principles of trade union solidarity: not crossing picket lines, not handling scab products or delivering to scab plants. We must defend the public sector even if this means an all out struggle against Labour councils who are carrying through the Tories' cuts.

Fight the anti-union laws

The anti-union laws should be actively defied as a step towards smashing them. For the immediate recognition by the unions of all "unofficial" strikes. Establish rank and file "underground" apparatuses to make defiance of the laws possible, through dispersal of funds amongst trusted mem-

bers, organised defence of pickets, units to locate and deal with scabs, secret strike committees to prevent militants being singled out by the courts (except for trusted representatives playing a negotiating role with the management). The unions should reverse their acceptance that a future Labour government will retain many of the anti union laws; any Labour government must scrap every single piece of Tory legislation on employment and the unions.

Build workplace organisation

All stewards should be accountable to section meetings. All action to be subject to or ratified by votes at democratic mass meetings. Strike committees to be elected from and accountable to mass meetings. Strike committees should have chosen representatives at all negotiations, or, where there is no strike, delegates elected by mass meetings should be involved, so as to break the monopoly of regional and national officials on information and negotiations.

For industrial unionism

We must build joint stewards committees or other forms of cross union rank and file organisation in workplaces where there is more than one union. Fight all single union "sweet-heart deals" and no strike deals agreed by the bureaucrats. For the building of autonomous industrial wings in the general unions.

No to class collaboration

Non co-operation with all workplace class collaboration schemes (quality circles, the use of stewards as agents of workplace discipline, team building exercises). Break union involvement in every single tripartite institution, every single joint committee with the bosses, other than those that enable us to negotiate from an independent position.

The workers' struggle is political

Unions should take action in solidarity not just with trade union struggles but with all the struggles of working people, and victims of the bosses' oppression in Britain and abroad.

Build a rank and file movement!

A rank and file movement built on such a basis could unite militants, whether they were Labour supporters, members of left wing organisations or not politically aligned, in the fight to take back the unions from the bureaucrats.

But revolutionary socialists do not see this struggle as an end in itself. Important as fighting, democratic unions are they will face an endless guerrilla war with the bosses unless they take their place in the fight to destroy capitalism altogether. For this to happen we need not only to build a rank and file movement, but a revolutionary socialist leadership of that movement, of the unions themselves, and of the whole working class.

We need a political party, with its own cells and fractions in the unions, which would take its place in the rank and file movement and stand in the front ranks of every struggle, no matter how minor, that the workers undertake. ★



A workers' answer to the crisis

THE IMPORTANCE of the unions in Britain should not blind us to the many battle fronts on which the class struggle is fought. We have to combat every aspect of capitalist exploitation and oppression.

Workers Power's action programme is an attempt to provide answers to every aspect of the bosses' offensive, to every political and economic question placed before the working class. It starts by answering the immediate questions facing the working class and explains a way to link the day to day struggles to the struggle for working class power. It is not a substitute for action. It distils the experience of decades of working class struggle into a guide to action today.

Jobs For All!

Mass unemployment exists alongside chronic want. By producing only for private profit, and not for human need, the capitalist system forces millions to suffer the indignity and hardship of joblessness while there is masses of work to be done.

But there is an alternative to this madness. It is an alternative that puts human beings before profits. It means defending every job, and fighting for a system that can replace the irrationality of capitalism with a rational plan of production for need. It means fighting for full employment.

In manufacturing British workers still do an average of over 43 hours a week, the highest in the EC, on top of widespread overtime working. The unions should act on the rhetoric of their leaders and fight for a maximum working week of **35 hours**, without loss of pay, intensification of work or overtime. In this way a **sliding scale of hours** could make new technology lessen the heavy workload, instead of just being used to throw people onto the dole.

Britain's infrastructure is crumbling; it needs repair and modernisation. Public transport could be greatly extended, improving the lives of millions. Houses need to be built for the homeless. The estates of our inner cities need to be improved and repaired. A massive programme of **state spending** on industry, services and infrastructure could bring the unemployed back into the workforce. In the meantime all available work should be divided up between all the available workers, cutting the average working hours without loss of pay.

The Tories' scheme to make the unemployed work for their dole and their consignment of unemployed workers to slave labour "training schemes" must be resisted by the

entire working class movement. If the capitalists cannot put workers to work, that is their fault, not ours. In place of the existing system of poverty line benefits we demand:

- **work or full pay**
- **training on full pay at union rates.**

The failure of the leaders of the labour movement to address, let alone organise, a generation of jobless youth leaves a significant section of workers completely cut off from the traditions, aims and solidarity of the labour movement. There is a real risk of fascist or far right groups mobilising these desperate youth and turning them against black people and the labour movement itself.

That is why there is an urgent need for a **National Unemployed Workers' Movement**. Such a movement should be open to all unemployed workers. Through militant methods of struggle such as demonstrations and occupations, it could provide a real way forward for those wishing to fight. The existing trade unions must provide subsidies to assist it, give jobless workers full rights of participation within the unions on reduced subs, and fight for the right for the unemployed movement to be admitted to the TUC. In this way the employed and unemployed can build genuine unity in the fight against mass unemployment.

Tax the Rich!

"Where is the money going to come from for these schemes? Who is going to pay the millions of newly employed workers?" This is the bosses' familiar cry. The answer is simple: the bosses must be made to pay, not just out of their substantial personal fortunes but by being deprived of the billions of pounds of capital they control.

Despite the rotten conditions that millions of working class people have to live in, Britain is one of the richest countries in the world. But the richest 1% of the population, a mere 438,000 individuals, own 17% of all the country's private wealth. The richest 10% own half of it.

Taxes should be aimed at the super-rich. There should be a swingeing **tax on unearned wealth**. Those who try to run away and become tax exiles must forfeit every penny they've got.

We oppose so-called "indirect" taxes, which affect everyone no matter how much they earn, like VAT on fuel. Under the Council Tax the biggest and most expensive properties are taxed only three times more than the smallest homes which are worth only a tenth of their value. Instead of this

daylight robbery workers should demand a **steeply progressive income tax**, on a local and a national level, that hits the richest people hardest.

Fight for Workers' Control

Workers make everything - yet the bosses control our lives. Every machine is made by workers, but capitalism turns workers into the servants of machines and computer terminals.

We can't change any of this unless we take control of our own conditions at work. We must fight for the imposition of **workers' control of production**. This does not mean getting workers' representatives on management boards to decide where best to make spending cuts or axe jobs. In the first place it means fighting for the unions' right to veto management decisions where they run counter to the interests of the workers.

Whenever workers oppose job losses or pay cuts, whenever the demand for higher taxes on the rich is raised, the employers plead poverty. They claim that there will be no incentive to invest. At the same time they keep the true extent of their wealth concealed. They hide behind doctored accounts and secret balance sheets to declare whole enterprises bankrupt and shut workplaces.

They use insolvency to shift the site of their operations or to wring concessions from their workers. They live in a world of private bodyguards, exclusive clubs, mansions protected by video cameras and razor wire - we see only what they want us to see.

That is why workers must fight for an end to business secrecy: **open the books, accounts and investment structures to independent workers' inspection**. That way we will see for ourselves what the bosses can and can't afford.

But some firms do go bust. If any capitalist firm cannot afford to keep going without redundancies, we demand its **nationalisation** without delay. That way the state can pay for production, drawing its resources from taxing the holdings of the super rich.

Nationalisation - With No Compensation!

Nationalisation is a dirty word, even amongst many workers. The reason for this is the legacy of reformist nationalisation carried out by Labour. The old state industries were not and are not run in the interests of the workers. The former employers such as the coal-owners still receive vast pay-offs in the form of compensation, and that is on top of the £165 million they got at the time of nationalisation!

Managing boards were stuffed with exactly the same sort of executives and managers who run private industry. Workers in the mines and on the rail were sacked just as brutally as they were under the reign of the private owners. For workers and for users, the state run industries and services were as alienating as any private concern.

For socialists nationalisation means something radically different. We completely **reject compensation for the previous owners**, who have already lived well enough at the workers' expense.

Nationalisation has to be linked with the most thoroughgoing workers' control. This is quite different from the worker participation that Labour used to demobilise workers' struggles in the 1970s. The Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty envisages something similar - drawing a minority of workers onto the boards of industries which are still run by the bosses for profit.

Instead of this we are for all industries to be run by **elected committees of delegates from the workforce**, who should be able to recall and replace their delegates at any time. That is the way to overcome the feeling of alienation that millions of workers have toward state run industries.

The huge centres of private capital - the banks, insurance

companies and building societies - should also be nationalised and merged into a **single state bank**, to provide funding for useful jobs rather than billions for the corrupt speculators.

Against the selling off of industries and services to the profiteers, socialists fight for:

- **Strikes and occupations** against all privatisations
- **Re-nationalisation of the privatised industries under workers' control**. No compensation to institutional owners; compensation to individual shareholders on the basis of proven need; workers who received shares as a sweetener from their employers to be paid the value of the shares by the former private owners.

Stop Plundering Our Futures!

In recent years the question of **pension rights** has come to the fore. These funds contain billions of pounds of workers' money. Yet they remain under the control of the bosses. That is why some of the best known scandals, such as Robert Maxwell's looting of the Mirror Group's pension fund, could ever have happened in the first place.

Pensions are in reality just deferred payments of wages. The bosses should have no rights over them at all. **Pension funds should be under the control of the trade unions**. To prevent ordinary working people suffering abuse at the hands of the fraudsters and the blue-chip thieves, they should be guaranteed by the state, and merged into a **single state pension fund** at full rates of pay.

Defend Public Services!

Workers in the health service, education, local authorities, libraries, and other facilities need to resist the Tories' vicious attacks. They should **strike against every job loss or closure** announcement, and should turn to local users of their services for support. **Occupations** of threatened facilities could draw in mass involvement from the community. **Mass meetings** should be held in the affected areas to elect **committees of delegates** from the unions, workplaces and estates to co-ordinate the struggle.

They should demand access to the books of the local, health or education authorities, and should prepare an **inventory** of available resources and funding, including money wasted by the councils on paying extortionate interest charges to the banks and the funding stolen by central government. These interest charges should be cancelled immediately without compensation. In this way, the local working class can begin to draw up a plan for their services, based on what they need, not what the Tories and the bosses say they can afford. Extra resources could be found by a local income tax that penalises the rich, and by demanding the **nationalisation without compensation** of all private education and health organisations, and of the private monopolies and sub-contracting companies.

In the health service all prescription charges and all private practice should be abolished. The drug companies should be nationalised, with their business secrets brought into the light of day so that co-operation can replace competition in medical research, speeding up the development of cures and relief from life-threatening diseases.

In education, in place of the Tories' lies about "parent power" and "choice", committees of parents, teachers and school students could plan their curriculum and the best methods of assessing progress.

In this way the fight to defend what is left of our services must become a battle to take control of services out of the hands of the authoritarian and paternalistic boards, committees, local authorities and government. In their place we should fight for a **workers' plan** for social services, health and education.

In housing, committees of workers, tenants and residents

should plan the rehabilitation of estates and the development of new housing schemes. The sale of council houses must be stopped immediately. They must set a fair rent or reasonable mortgage payments based on what workers can afford not what the market demands.

All empty houses or properties belonging to private landlords should be nationalised and their owners compensated on the basis of need.

For A Living Wage, Protected Against Inflation!

The bosses and their government are launching an attack on our wage levels. In the public sector they have imposed a pay limit. The Tories are urging private sector employers to fall in line with this policy.

When employers, whether in the private or public sectors, try to cut our pay by indirect means like speed up or productivity drives (making us do more work for the same pay), workers must fight for a **workplace veto** to control methods and speed of work, preventing cuts in safety and exhausting work practices.

The appalling reality of low pay, with millions of workers and their families below even the official poverty line, demand a legally guaranteed national **minimum wage of £8 an hour**.

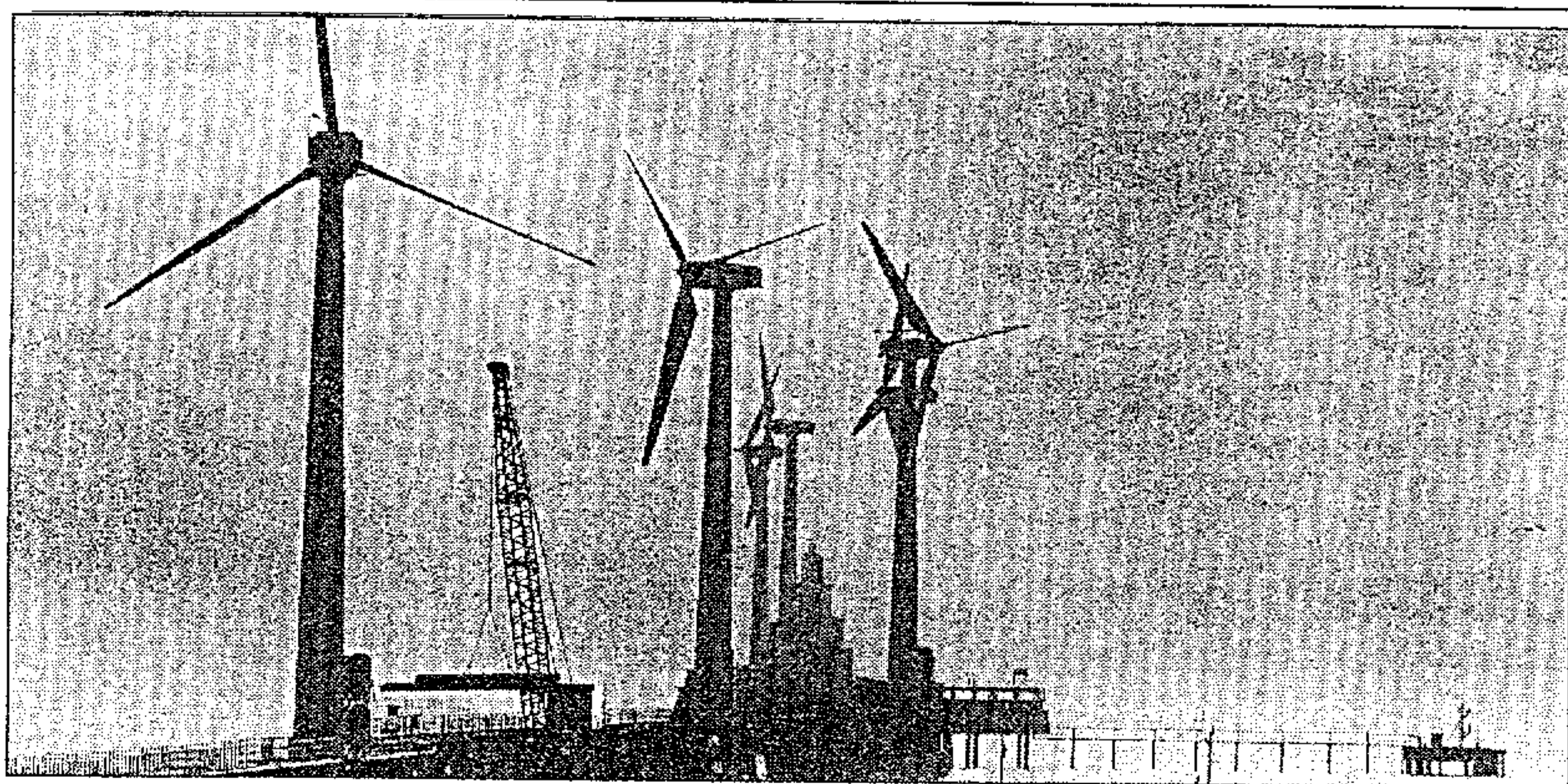
The official figures never show the full effect of inflation on the working class. We need to set up **price watch committees** of workers and local communities, to monitor the real effects of price rises on our living standards, and draw up a **workers' cost of living index**.

When price rises threaten to reduce the real value of our wages, the unions and labour movement should demand a 1% rise for every 1% increase in real inflation.

The bosses invest millions in government bonds protected against inflation. Capitalist governments do their best to ensure that inflation will not whittle away the income of the rich. Workers must demand the same rights as the "gilt-edged" investors.

So long as the capitalists retain political power, they will constantly be attacking our living standards.

That is why the fight for workers' control will never be finally over, and our rights and livelihoods finally secured, until the capitalists and their system have been overthrown. ■



Defend the environment

CAPITALISM POLLUTES the atmosphere, poisons rivers and seas, creates deserts out of fertile land, subjects whole countries to famine.

The profit motive drives it towards this destruction. It is a blind motive that excludes rational planning. Resources cannot be allocated or production organised in a sustainable way to preserve the environment if those who own and control society are concerned only with making a fast buck.

Freed from the limitations of profit, the massive advances in science and technique that have taken place under capitalism could be democratically applied and developed to render currently dangerous practices ever safer.

The key to preserving the environment is therefore to take production out of the hands of the few and into the hands of the majority. The Greens argue that we need zero economic growth and the reduction or even abolition of large scale industry. This is nonsense. Socialists want the full fruits of modern society for the workers, not

to plunge the world back into the darkness and poverty of the past. That is why we fight for:

- **Workers' control over health and safety**, imposing a veto on all unsafe working practices.
- **For workers' and community inquiries** into unsafe factories, nuclear power plants, industries guilty of pollution and projects that threaten the environment
- **Close down plants that are proven to be unsafe** but re-employ all of the workers at full rates of pay in other jobs and industries
- **Demand full compensation** for all whose health has been damaged by capitalist pollution or unsafe working practices
- **For a workers' inquiry into the nuclear industry.** Where plants are proved unsafe workers should fight to shut them down or prevent them being built. Against the call to end all nuclear power generation, the working class should fight for the necessary technological and safety measures to make the tremendous potential of nuclear electricity generation as safe as possible. ★



Fight oppression!

Youth are the future!

THE TORIES have made everyday life a misery for a whole generation of working class youth. Hundreds of thousands of young people live in dire poverty while struggling to get training, education and basic skills for work. Tens of thousands are homeless.

The Tories have removed income support, housing benefit and housing allocation entitlements from 16-18 year olds, slashed the value of student grants, forced students into debt through loans, and created useless training schemes as a substitute for real apprenticeships and job opportunities. Despair breeds desperation, leading to riots, self-destructive vandalism, drug abuse and criminalisation. The youth are the future. They must be given a stake in that future.

- **For full legal and voting rights to all at 16!**

- **Youth need an independent income**, equivalent to the national minimum wage, **for all over 16**. This should take the form of either a full grant for students, a minimum wage for those in work, or benefits at the same level for those on the dole.

- **Full benefits for all over 16!** There should be no economic penalties for young people who choose to leave home. Student loans must be abolished and all debts cancelled immediately. All youth must have access to housing whenever they choose to leave the family home.

Sex education is restricted and inadequate. Youth sexuality is subject to all kinds of stupid restrictions.

The age of consent laws oppress youth but do not really protect them from sexual and physical abuse. Section 28 denies youth the right to learn about lesbian and gay sexuality, confirming society's reactionary prejudices.

Tear down the walls of hypocrisy:

- **Abolish the age of consent laws!** For uncensored and secular sex education available to all! Free contraception and abortion regardless of age. Smash Section 28 - no restrictions on discussions of sexuality.

Capitalism can't offer youth a future, but the workers' movement can and must.

- **Open the unions to young workers and the unemployed.** For full membership at minimal rates, and the creation of active youth sections of the unions that organise youth on training schemes and in part time and low paid sectors such as retail and catering.

- **For a mass, national students' union that fights.** Tory plans to cut subsidies to students' unions should be defied, along with the NUS leaders' plans for "charitable status". Instead we need a students' union where FE and secondary students have full rights and representation, and a union that fights.

- **For the right of all to a free, equal, secular education.** Nationalise all private schools and colleges and place all schools and colleges under the control of workers, students

and parents. For workers' and students' control of the curriculum.

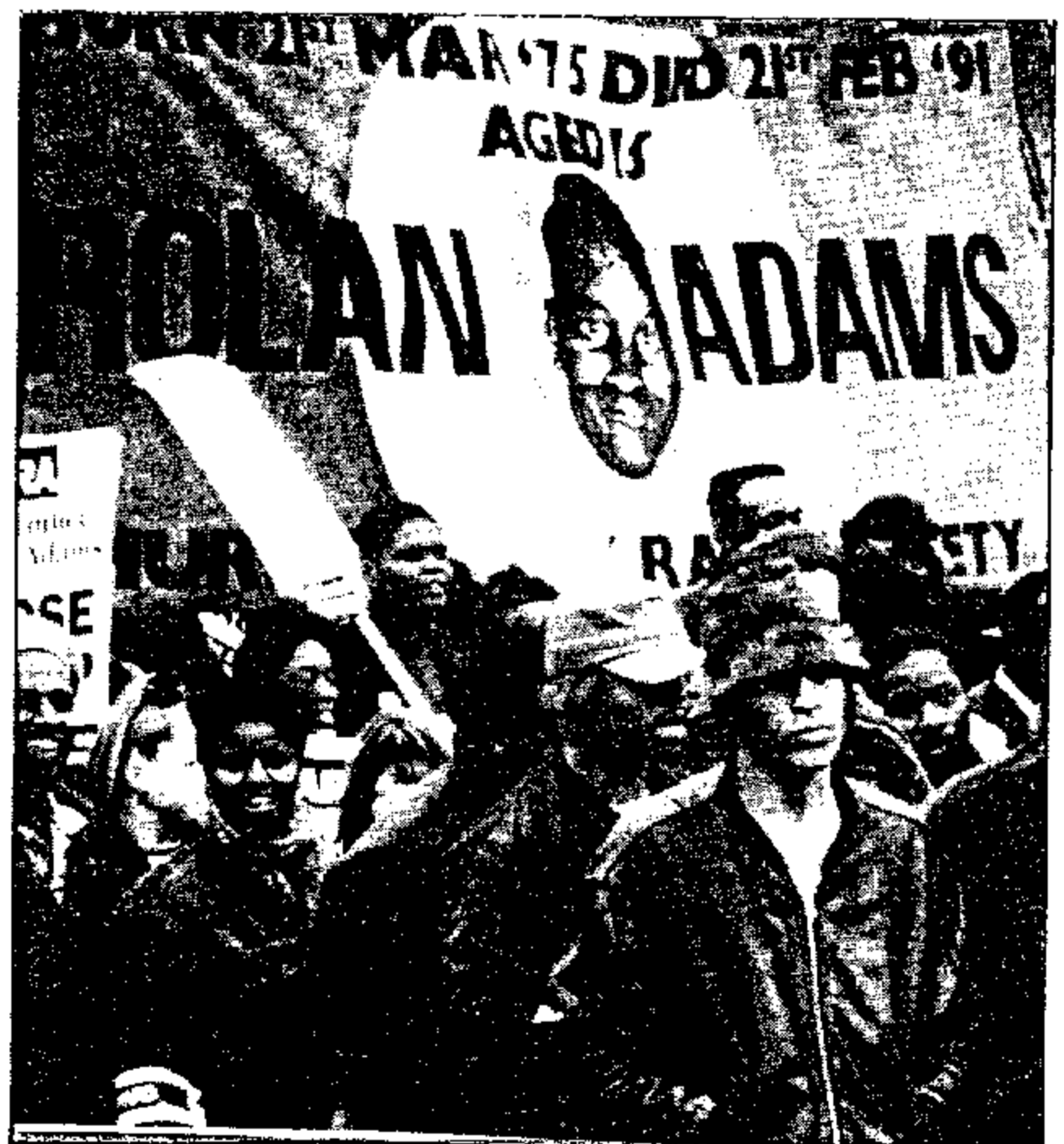
Hard drugs, like heavy drinking can ruin people's lives. But criminalising drug use is no answer. Youth who want drugs can then get them no matter if they are "hard" or "soft". The cycle of excessive drug taking, dependence and criminality will only be broken when youth can make informed choices about drugs use.

- **All drugs should be legalised and made available under a state monopoly.** We demand the provision of health education and high quality services for dependants and users.

- **A state monopoly over the sale and distribution of drugs** could replace the current gangsters' monopoly. By removing their source of wealth and power the hold of drug gangs over working class estates can be broken.

To fight for such demands the youth need to become an organised force.

The heroism and militancy of youth is revealed by spontaneous riots and willingness to take on the police. This needs to be channelled into organised resistance with a clear objective: the destruction of the profit system. Young workers have the most to gain and the least to lose in the battle to overthrow capitalism. In all past revolutions they have been at the forefront. **Build a mass revolutionary youth movement! ★**





No Socialism without Women's Liberation! No Women's Liberation without Socialism!

WOMEN NOW make up almost half of the workforce. The majority of married and unmarried women work outside the home, and in some parts of the country there are more women than men working.

Does this mean that the decade of rule by a woman prime minister was a period of advancement for her sisters? No—just the opposite!

Thatcher's government shifted more and more responsibilities onto women, while at the same time providing less and less support for women workers in terms of benefits, nurseries, housing and other essentials. Millions of women who work have to combine holding down a job with bringing up children. Many women survive by working part-time, suffering low pay and lack of employment protection as a result.

Tory policies like community care mean that millions of women have to give up work or combine part time work with care for an elderly or disabled relative. There are currently an estimated 3.9 million women acting as "carers" in the home.

The benefits women get from working are constantly undermined by the pressure of responsibilities in the home. Wages - low enough to start with at only 68% the level of men's - are eroded by childcare and other costs. Entitlement to maternity leave, sickness benefits and other employment protection are severely restricted for women. Women often work part time or have breaks in employment, which abolish most of their rights to protection at work. Women suffer job discrimination simply for becoming pregnant.

In the past twenty years there has been a massive increase in the number of children born outside marriage, and the number of households headed by a single mother (90% of all families with one "absent" parent are headed by women). The Tories introduced the Child Support Act which is being used to harass single mums into naming the father of their child or risk losing benefit. The state then hounds the father for money, regardless of the effects this may have on mothers and children who may have had very good reasons for breaking links with the father.

To back this up they have launched a disgusting propaganda campaign to depict single mothers as promiscuous and irresponsible scroungers.

● **Free 24 hour child-care** must be provided by the state, with the quality controlled by parents and child-care workers. Full social provision of care for the elderly and disabled, under the control of the users and workers.

● **Women must have equal pay for work of equal value.** There should be a guaranteed minimum wage for male and female workers. Full employment protection, including maternity and paternity rights, for all workers, regardless of hours of work or length of service, must be guaranteed. Maternity leave on full pay for all women for up to 12 months,

with no loss of rights, position or pay on returning to work.

Women's oppression is based on their role in the family—doing housework and childcare, unpaid, while at the same time acting as a cheap source of labour in the factories and offices. This oppression is reinforced by sexism, by the daily taunts and jibes women face, by their portrayal in the media as sex objects, and in the worst cases by domestic violence and rape.

Women are denied control of their fertility. Access to abortion remains restricted to women who can find two doctors willing to agree, and then made more traumatic by waiting lists for NHS abortions or the need to raise money for a private operation.

● **For free abortion on demand!** Women must have complete access to abortion when they want it, with no time limit, and with adequate state funded facilities. **Contraception should be freely available to all women, regardless of age.**

A massive number of women are in trade unions. But they are still only 33% of the membership of TUC affiliated unions whilst making up 48.7% of the workforce. But the unions have done little to defend the interests of women workers.

The answer to this situation is not to retreat, as the feminist movement of the 1970s did, into building an all-class women's movement to do battle against all men, or "male power", as the enemy.

Working class women have little in common with middle class and rich women who can buy their way out of the problems their oppression creates and who have a massive stake in capitalist society. Working class women have far more in common with working class men than they do with their "sisters" in the camp of the class enemy.

The fundamental struggle is between workers and bosses. The oppression of women is one element of that struggle which requires women to organise themselves within the workers' movement.

Women need to organise within the workplace and unions, through **caucuses, women's action committees and sections in the unions.** This is not so that women's issues get marginalised, as within the union bureaucracy's women's structures, but to bring women's struggles into the whole labour movement. Women's self-organisation is a route to unity of the working class, not an obstacle to it. We are opposed to separatism, such as women-only campaigning organisations or unions, but defend the right for women to organise together in order to press the wider movement into taking up their demands.

The miners' wives who organised in groups supporting the miners' strike of 1984-5 did a massive amount to unify those working class communities. Women in work, on estates and in communities need to organise as part of a **mass working class women's movement** which can unite

the struggles of women in work with those in the home and community. Such a movement would strengthen the labour movement and force it to become a champion of the needs of all oppressed groups.

And a working class women's movement would be a way for women to build up confidence and support to tackle the more violent expressions of sexism, namely domestic violence and rape, crimes against women that the state has done little to combat.

A working class women's movement would allow women to share their experiences and organise together to demand safe housing and refuges and the economic independence needed to escape violent relationships, adequate street lighting and transport facilities to combat the threat of rape.

Even if equal rights could be won under capitalism, this would not liberate women.

The fundamental problem, that of the family with its private, unpaid work, cannot disappear until society can provide in a collective way what the family provides today. Childcare, eating, cleaning, all the jobs now done in the home—there is no reason why these should not be carried out in a collective way using better technology and paid workers.

No reason, except that capitalism can't make a profit out of it. Socialism would revolutionise production so that these basic needs of people are met first, and that would create the real conditions for women's liberation! ★



For Lesbian and Gay liberation!

WHEN a man and woman have sex the last thing they expect is for their intimate moment to be interrupted by a police squad, to be hauled before the courts and found guilty of a crime in which there is no victim, to be thrown out of their job, discriminated against by employers and housing services, and subjected to physical attack by bigots, to have their kids taken away and placed in care.

Yet when two men or two women choose to do the same thing, they can be subjected to every one of the punishments outlined above. Lesbians and gay men are persecuted because of their personal sexual preferences. Britain has one of the worst records in Europe of legally persecuting lesbians and gay men.

The oppression of lesbians and gay men is a product of capitalist society. It is rooted in the family unit that capitalism requires for its continued existence. That family unit is directly threatened by sexual freedom in general and by homosexuality in particular. The requirements of the economy dictate that people have to conform to the norm of heterosexual monogamy, even though that "norm" is a myth for millions of people.

With the onset of the AIDS epidemic gay men have been stigmatised as having "got their just desserts", or "God's punishment" for their lifestyle. This is sheer rubbish from a scientific point of view. An epidemic is being blamed on one section of its victims, and the battle against the disease is subordinated to the needs of hypocritical capitalist morality - with devastating results.

The fight against all of this oppression is a class fight. That is why strategies that duck the fight against capitalism are just as wrong for lesbians and gay men as the "all class" strategy of feminism is for women.

In recent years militant lesbian and gay activists have adopted the label "queer" to "reconquer" this term, to shock prejudiced people, and to identify themselves as the militant, no-compromise wing of the movement. But this is not the road to liberation.

Despite their radical rhetoric, leaders of groups like OutRage offer a very moderate and legalistic strategy - better police liaison and liberalisation of the law through parliament.

In place of that revolutionary socialist fight for:

- **an end to all laws that discriminate against lesbians and gay men** - abolish Section 28, abolish the age of consent, legalise homosexuality in the army, navy etc, the gross indecency laws and obscenity laws which are used against lesbians and gay men

- **fight police harassment of lesbians and gay men** - all cases involving police entrapment to be dismissed automatically; abolish all laws that persecute people for consensual sexual acts (including heterosexual buggery and S&M sex); for the right of lesbians and gay men to organise their own physical defence against the police and against "queerbashers"; for labour movement support for such organised defence;

- **end discrimination** in housing, child custody, jobs etc; lesbians and gay men must have the right to be open about their sexuality without fear of discrimination;

- **fight the disease, not the victims** - for a massive cash programme to provide hospitals and community health organisations for people with AIDS and a research programme aimed at finding a cure

- **for the right of lesbians and gays to caucus in the unions** - for union sponsored education courses to equip all union activists with the means of carrying out education and propaganda programmes to eliminate homophobia.★





Black Liberation through socialist revolution

RACISM IS everywhere, and it is growing. Between 1979 and 1993 racial attacks increased, year on year. Today there are 70,000 racist incidents every year, while even police figures reveal a racist attack every 28 minutes in Britain. In 1992 nine people were killed simply because they were black.

Black communities are routinely harassed by the police. They are more likely to be given prison sentences when dragged before the courts, or thrown into mental institutions when diagnosed mentally ill.

This is only the tip of the iceberg of oppression that black people suffer. In 1991 the national unemployment figure was 9%, but amongst Afro-Caribbeans it was 16%. Amongst Pakistanis and Bangladeshis it was 25%. When black people get jobs they are twice as likely to stay in manual and unskilled jobs as white workers. This means that they suffer an inbuilt pay discrimination as well. One survey of Asian workers in Leicester found that they were on a fifth of the money of their white colleagues. This pattern of discrimination is repeated in every field of life - education, housing, and services.

Above all, immigration laws institutionalise racism, identifying black people as outsiders, as a problem, as the source of racism. Nationality laws make many black people second class citizens, and discriminate against black people whose relatives wish to move to or visit Britain. These laws subject black people to routine abuse and harassment at ports and airports, and to regular police immigration checks at work. The latest piece of racist legislation, the Asylum Act, will make this situation even worse, and threatens thousands of refugees.

The case of Joy Gardner, murdered by police during an attempt to forcibly deport her to Jamaica, shows most starkly how the whole system is racist. It is not enough to complain of excessive force or broken guidelines. As long as there are immigration laws based on keeping the exploited black people of the former colonies out of Britain there will be deportations by racist police, and the danger of legalised racist murders.

Black people are fighting back. Organisations within black communities have played an important role by mobilising people at a grass roots level against racist violence and posing the urgency of black self-defence. But the record of the labour movement in supporting the struggles of black people is appalling.

The widespread growth of religious and "cultural specific" groups reflects black people's determination to fight for equality and self-worth in the light of persistent and specific oppression. However, these groups in the final instance act as a roadblock to the development of a collective response to the attacks, such as immigration raids, deaths in custody, racial violence and the growth of organised fascism, that confront the community.

That is why, without denying the rights of any national or religious culture, socialists are **revolutionary integrationists**. We stand for the integration of all the racially oppressed into the working class and its movement on equal terms. Revolutionary socialists reject the idea of a separate black party, representing the interests of "all black people". There are black bosses, black police as well as black workers and small shopkeepers.

To understand how to put a stop to racism for good we have to understand its roots. Racism is not just an attitude that can be educated out of people. It is a deep rooted structure in society that is intrinsically linked to capitalism and imperialism. Racism served capitalism in justifying slavery. It served it by tying workers in the imperialist heartlands to defending the colonial enslavement of Africa. It serves it today by dividing workers against each other because of the different colours of their skin. Racism today says that the bosses of the imperialist world have a right to plunder any country, set up factories mines and luxury mansions anywhere, but that the victims of this plunder, refugees from war, famine and poverty, have no right to move. Racism today stigmatises black people as the cause of racism - "the fewer immigrants, the better race relations" runs the racist argument common to Labour, Liberal and Tory politicians. Its inexorable logic leads to calls for deportation, repatriation, the creation of ghettos and constant racist attack.

Inside the workers' movement black people should have the right to caucus and to special conferences, representation and sections. In the communities, wherever black people organise to defend themselves and resist police attempts to criminalise them the labour movement must support them.

Together black and white workers should fight for the following demands:

- **Abolish discrimination in housing, education, and jobs through workers' control and monitoring.** Capitalist "equal opportunities" legislation has little effect. Only positive workers' action linked to a massive boost in state spending can end discrimination against black people

- **For organised self-defence against police, racist and fascist attack.** Police off the streets; release all prisoners detained during youth uprisings. Build joint, black and white workers' defence organisations.

- **Abolish all immigration controls. Stop all deportations.** Abolish the Nationality Act and Asylum Act. For the free movement of workers across the borders in Britain, Europe and the world. Full citizenship rights for all immigrant workers in Britain. Stop all deportations.

These demands would only begin to eradicate the worst excesses of racism. Overthrowing the world system of imperialism is the only way to finally end racism, to root it out from people's minds and lives. ■



Smash Fascism!

FASCISM IS capitalism's last resort. When capitalism is in deep crisis, when all other ways of suppressing the working class have been tried and failed, the capitalists turn to the fascist thugs.

Fascism differs from other forms of far-right nationalism and dictatorial rule because it mobilises the enraged middle classes who have lost their savings or been driven out of business, the criminalised and despairing, sections of the working class, and forges them into a weapon to smash the organised working class movement and obliterate every vestige of democracy.

The ultimate consequences of fascism were revealed by Hitler's Holocaust. The working class must ensure that such a nightmare never again becomes reality.

In Britain today fascist parties like the British National Party are still small, though they are capable of making leaps forward in certain areas as in Millwall in 1993. As yet they are getting no serious help or funding from the bosses. They do not currently see the need for the battering ram of a mass fascist movement to smash the labour movement. Nevertheless due to the prolonged recession and economic stagnation the fascists are growing at a rate not seen since the late 1970s. They have begun to mount murderous attacks on black people and also on the left.

The fascists find a hearing amongst unemployed, or poorly paid and unorganised, white youth. In addition Tory cuts in funds for housing, and Labour councils' failure to fight, have created bitterness about social conditions which in the absence of a real alternative the fascists can batten on.

Another factor is the significant growth of fascist and far right parties in Germany, France and Eastern Europe. The example of these parties has inspired the British fascists with confidence, proving to doubters that they can become more than just a marginal force.

Unless the workers' movement can offer a future for unemployed white youth, unless they can be won to a socialist answer to poverty and unemployment, then the fascists will find a wider audience among young people crying out for radical answers.

That is why anti-fascism on its own is not enough. There must be a militant class alternative to the real social evils of capitalism. There must be a fighting labour movement in which black people play an integral part at every level.

It is self-defeating to argue that first we have to defeat fascism by mobilising all "democratic forces" before we can pose an anti-capitalist alternative.

It would be equally false to argue that fighting the fascists is a diversion from the fight against capitalism. The fight against fascism is inseparable from the fight against the capitalism which breeds it. Only a workers' answer to poverty and deprivation can restore hope to inner city communities which, in their despair, have turned to racism and fascism.

The best time to stop the fascists in Britain is now, before they can stage 30,000 strong demos like in France, or organise pogroms of migrant workers with impunity as in Germany. Today if the left organisations and the militant sections of the unions combined their forces we could destroy the fascists whilst they are still in the embryo stage.

Defence squads and the left

MUCH OF the left accepts the right to fight back against the physical violence of the fascists. But they do not draw the necessary conclusions. The call for the building of defence squads has met with sustained opposition.

The Socialist Workers Party argues that such squads would leave the most determined elements isolated from the mass of the working class and the black community. Squads, they claim, are necessarily small and secretive, and tend to substitute their own direct action for the action of masses of people. This is not true. A real party of thousands should be able to integrate defence squads into mass mobilisations. The SWP by arguing that this is impossible testify to their own political weakness.

Of course it is senseless to argue for the building of such squads as an alternative to a mass united front against the fascists. But there is no reason why organ-

ised self defence groups should be cut off from the mass struggle against the fascists, or from any other struggle for that matter. If they are built within and between the existing organisations, closely linked to and under the control of the mass movement, they will secure the safety and effectiveness of mass demonstrations, pickets and lobbies, and could answer the fascists in the only language they understand: the language of force.

At root, opposition to defence squads is a concession to the long traditions of pacifism on the left. But fascism cannot be beaten by peaceful means.

If you turn the other cheek when a fascist attacks you, he is likely to rip it off. Trained and disciplined defence squads can turn the tables, go onto the offensive and drive the Nazis back into the sewers where they belong.★

But as their ability to get over 1,400 votes in Millwall shows this advantage may be short lived.

The way to stop the fascists is simple. Because they are dedicated to abolishing all democratic rights and working class organisations, because fascism's programme is genocide and war, because they mobilise street gangs to terrorise their opponents, they must be denied the very right to organise.

We cannot rely on the capitalist state to deal with the fascist threat. Experience shows that every token action taken against the fascists will always be accompanied by the repression of anti-fascist resistance, in the name of even-handedness. The police, the courts, the prisons system and the army are riddled with racists and even fascist sympathisers. That is why we do not call for the state to ban the fascists and do not rely on the police to protect us.

Wherever and whenever they try to conduct election campaigns, marches, rallies, or sell their poisonous literature, the fascists need to be met by the most determined physical opposition. To achieve this we need to build a workers' united front to smash the fascist organisations.

Political divisions, real and important as they are, must not obstruct unity in action.

We call on the entire labour movement including the trade unions and the Labour Party along with the existing mass

organisations of the black and immigrant community, to build a workers' united front to smash fascism.

A particular responsibility falls on organisations like the Socialist Workers Party and Militant Labour who claim to be revolutionary socialists. Instead of concentrating on winning the support of celebrities from the media, the churches, and the Liberals, as the Anti-Nazi League has done, they should give a lead to the labour movement by launching a united front to smash the fascists.

The ANL strategy of uniting all democratic forces, regardless of class, behind slogans which concede to pacifists and liberals who defend democratic rights for the fascists can never succeed. It is the disastrous "popular front" strategy which handed victories to the fascists in the 1930s.

We fight for a workers' united front committed to:

- **No platform for fascists** - confront and physically prevent all marches, electioneering, meetings and literature sales
- **Organise defence squads to smash the fascists.** The self defence of the black and immigrant community must be supported by the left and the unions
- **Drive the fascists out of the unions and workplaces** Known fascists and active racists must be driven out of the unions and out of the workplaces. White workers must be won to a militant anti-racist stand.■



Fascists celebrate their Millwall election victory



Nationalism and Internationalism

Scotland and Wales

THE SCOTTISH National Party (SNP) calls for complete independence for Scotland and a separate Scottish parliament. Should socialists support either of these demands? No.

The problem facing Scottish workers is not that they are oppressed by England. Scottish and English workers face the same enemy and almost exactly the same attacks. The enemy is the British capitalist class, which is made up of manufacturers and financiers from England, Wales . . . and Scotland.

Independence would not give Scottish workers more control over their own lives or higher living standards. While billions of pounds from North Sea Oil has been sucked away, it has gone to the owners of the oil industry, which includes English and Scottish capitalists. In an independent Scotland under the SNP or Labour it would still be held in private hands. Independence would be of no benefit whatsoever to the Scottish workers.

We want to build the strongest possible working class movement to fight the British capitalists. It must be as united a movement as possible, drawing together black and white, male and female, workers of all nationalities through close bonds of solidarity and struggle, not nationalist divisions.

That is why we oppose separation. It is also why we oppose a separate Scottish Assembly, with decision-making

powers over Scottish affairs. It would either be another talking shop, unable to do anything concrete in the interests of the working class, or it would start to assert its right to govern and control Scottish affairs, which would propel it and its supporters down the road of separation.

Exactly the same approach applies to Wales.

Without giving any support to separation, however, revolutionary socialists make plain their support for the *right* of the Scottish and Welsh people to separate should they so decide.

If there was such a decision to separate, then it would be criminal if the English bosses tried to retain whole nations within Great Britain against their will. English workers can only help Scottish and Welsh socialists in the task of removing nationalist illusions from the minds of the workers by supporting the *right* to separate, while actively campaigning against separation itself.

- For the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination, up to and including separation
- Reject nationalism: fight for workers' unity
- No to the separation of Scotland and Wales
- No to Scottish and Welsh Assemblies
- No to separate Scottish and Welsh socialist parties
- For full rights to use the Welsh language without discrimination. Defend state provision of Welsh language broadcasting and publishing ■

Fight for workers' internationalism!

WHENEVER THE bosses take on a section of workers they always pose as the defenders of the "national interest". Government ministers and millionaire industrialists stigmatise every strike, every defence of working class interests, as damaging to the national interest, undermining British industry, aiding "our" foreign competitors and so on.

Yet these fine patriots shunt their capital around the stock markets of the world, they speculate against the pound, they keep their money in "offshore" bank accounts where it can't be taxed, they close factories and shift production to countries where they can best exploit the workforce. Before the 1992 elections the Tory Party sent government ministers with a begging bowl on a tour of the monarchs of the Arabian peninsula. The party of patriotism hires itself out to shady millionaires from Cyprus to Hong Kong. They spend tens of thousands to persuade expatriate white South Africans to vote Tory.

Every aspect of capitalist foreign policy is designed to serve the interests of the ruling class, not those of the "whole nation". What benefits do most workers get from Britain's direct colonial rule over Hong Kong, Belize, the Falklands or Northern Ireland? What benefits do they get from "British investments" around the globe or from the "foreign policy" whose entire purpose is to defend those investments and extend them.

When Thatcher went to war with Argentina in 1982, or when Major went to war with Iraq in 1991, some workers who hated Thatcher and Major, suddenly started supporting their war efforts, cheering their victories and waving the Union Jack. Why? Did the sinking of the Belgrano stop Thatcher from cutting health workers' pay and preparing to take on the miners? Did Major's role in the slaughter of Iraqi civilians stop the pit closure programme or the public sector pay limit?

No! They made our rulers stronger and more confident. Thatcher's words during the miners' strike tell it all. She called the miners "the enemy within", equating them with Argentina, "the enemy without."

For herself, for her class, she was dead right. Workers who fight for their own interests are *the enemy* as far as capitalism is concerned. And that means that we shouldn't help our class enemy when they seek to defend their wealth and power abroad, any more than we would help them defend it at home.

The main enemy is at home!

Breaking national unity with the class enemy frees us to forge class unity with our real allies - workers abroad. It is the cornerstone of internationalism. And this internationalism will make us a thousand times stronger in the fight against capitalism in Britain and abroad. Just as workers around the world rallied to support the British miners, helping them sustain a national strike for twelve months, so we must take solidarity action with all those workers and peasants fighting imperialism or its agents.

That is why we support the Palestinians fighting to get their homeland back, the Somalis fighting the imperialist invasion of their country or the Bosnians fighting an imperialist backed carve-up of their country. The imperialist powers control the United Nations through their absolute dominance of the security council. UN interventions are always imperialist interventions. That is why we are always opposed to them. They hypocritically claim that they are making or keeping peace. It is a lie. They are imposing order for the multinationals, the World Bank and the IMF.

In any conflict between an imperialist country and a third world country fighting to break out the role assigned to it by the imperialist world order, **we stand for the defeat of the imperialist country and the victory of the semi-colonial country.**

Thus we stood for the defeat of Britain by Argentina and of the Gulf War Allies by Iraq, despite the fact that the rulers of these countries were vicious anti-working class world dictators. We say it is the job of the workers and peasants of Argentina or Iraq, helped by the workers of other countries, to overthrow dictators like Galtieri and Saddam Hussein, not the job of the armies of the USA, Britain or France.

The same goes for any future or threatened war between Britain and a Stalinist country. Should Britain go to war with any disintegrating Stalinist state its purpose will be to impose the conditions for the reintroduction of capitalism. There the working class must, as with Iraq and Argentina, stand four square in favour of those resisting imperialist

intervention - under whatever leadership. That is why we call for the defence of the degenerate workers' states, like Cuba, against imperialist attack or blockade.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR, heralds the end of over forty years of near unity of the imperialist powers. The rivalry between the emerging three blocks; the EC, the USA and a Japanese dominated South East Asia can lead in the decades ahead to serious clashes, at first economic and then military. Such wars are fought only to decide which imperialist power will benefit most from the exploitation of the world. If Britain should find itself at war with rival imperialist powers, as it has twice this century, socialists take the position of **revolutionary defeatism**. Workers have no interest in the victory of either side. They should refuse to take sides and should carry on the class struggle against their own bosses. They should say: better that our country is defeated because we carried on the class struggle than a military victory won at the price of a class truce. The main enemy is at home!

Despite the destructiveness and waste of war, revolutionary socialists are not pacifists. The pacifism of the middle class and the Labour politicians is always skin deep. At the first whiff of any danger to "our country" most of them become, like Michael Foot in 1982, raving warmongers.

Not a penny for defence!

Working class people spontaneously hate war. It is workers who have to do the killing and get killed in any war. But because we can't hide from war we have to have a way of fighting against it and putting a stop to it.

Revolutionary socialists would defend from state repression any individual who refused to fight because of conscientious objection. But this kind of protest, individual or mass, is ultimately useless in preventing war.

We say to the Labour Party and the trade unions: not a penny or a person for the defence of this system. Fight against conscription. Vote against all defence spending. Withdraw Britain's troops from all their colonial outposts and take Britain out of imperialist alliances like NATO and the Gulf Coalition.

But if tens of thousands of young workers ever find themselves conscripted to be cannon fodder for imperialist war, we say: take the class war into the army, fight for democratic rights and decent conditions for conscripts, with the aim of turning imperialist war into civil war against the bosses.

In the army we would fight to destabilise it as an instrument of class rule, by demanding the right of soldiers to discuss politics, organise their own committees and elect their own officers. ■



Little England anti-Maastricht demo - the dead end of nationalism



Troops Out of Ireland Now!

THE ACID test of working class internationalism in Britain is Ireland. Ireland is British imperialism's oldest colony. Systematically starved and subjugated from the time of Cromwell the Irish people fought back in a succession of national movements. In 1918 they voted overwhelmingly for Home Rule and the majority of Irish MPs elected to Westminster set up a parliament in Dublin instead. In response Britain unleashed the hired thugs of the Black-and-Tans to stop the independence movement.

Partition

That was the last time Britain allowed the real majority of the Irish people to be heard. In 1921, after the war of independence had reached a stalemate, Britain undertook the partition of Ireland. It created an artificial statelet from six of the nine counties of Ulster with one purpose - to ensure a pro-British Protestant majority in Northern Ireland. Inside the sectarian statelet Catholic workers were the subject of systematic discrimination: rigged electoral boundaries, and unequal rights to housing and employment. The Orange lodges, based in the middle class but organising many Protestant workers, celebrated the creation of the Northern Ireland statelet with a virtual pogrom against Catholic workers. Many were driven from skilled or better paid jobs in heavy industry, never to return.

The guaranteed political supremacy of the loyalists existed to guard their social supremacy. While working class and lower middle class Protestants live in miserable and depressed conditions, they retain important privileges over the mainly Catholic nationalists.

Republican

This combination of real social and economic discrimination and the denial of the just national and democratic rights of the minority exploded into a mass struggle in the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1960s. It met with the batons and boots of the B-Specials: an armed police force virtually synonymous with the Orange lodges. The failure of the left to give a revolutionary lead to the resurgent national struggle left the movement wide open for the near dormant Republican Movement to step into leadership.

The troops were sent in and remain there today. They did not and do not protect Catholics. Nor do they "keep the peace". Since the troops went in Ireland has become one of the bloodiest corners of Europe.

The British Army earned the undying hatred of the nationalist community, who were immediately presented with the reality of British "even-handedness". Thousands of Catholic families had their doors kicked in, their fathers and sons interned without trial, their peaceful demonstrations battered by Protestant police and shot at by British paratroops.

We demand the immediate withdrawal of all British troops. They are not there to prevent a bloodbath. They are the main cause of the bloodbath.

For over twenty years, the anti-unionist population of

Northern Ireland have conducted a struggle against the odds to free themselves from the systematic discrimination and national oppression Britain's presence brings. The Provisional IRA came into being in response to this repression. It began its war against the British state when that state poured in troops to terrorise the nationalist community. It has fought to get the troops out ever since.

That is why revolutionary socialists and all British workers should side with the IRA in their war. We do not insist that the IRA's methods of prosecuting their struggle should first conform to our programme before we give that support. Our support is unconditional.

But the IRA's strategy to resolve Ireland's British problem cannot work. It refuses to base itself in workers' struggles. The IRA concentrates on guerrilla war on the one hand and - through Sinn Fein - reformist community politics on the other.

The military campaign against economic targets, whether in Ireland or Britain, has not advanced the struggle for national liberation one inch. They will not seriously damage the British economy and force a withdrawal.

Withdrawal

Equally absurd is the notion that bombings in Britain will so sicken the British people that their mood will turn in favour of withdrawal.

The IRA refuses to advance a socialist answer that could demonstrate to Protestant workers that they have nothing to fear from national unity. But the prospect of a capitalist united Ireland will never break the large Protestant working class from their Orange masters.

Despite this workers in Britain share with the IRA, Sinn Fein and their working class supporters the goal of securing the withdrawal of Britain from Ireland. British workers share a common enemy with the anti-unionist population of Northern Ireland: the British capitalist state.

Northern Ireland has been used as a training ground for everything the bosses have thrown at the workers in the last 15 years, from riot squads to spy helicopters, from plastic bullets to CS gas.

Self Determination

We need the widest possible movement within the working class in Britain committed to action to force the immediate withdrawal of all troops and the granting of the right of self-determination to the whole Irish people.

- End strip searching
- Political status for anti-imperialist prisoners
- For the right of prisoners to be returned to Ireland
- End Diplock courts
- Ban plastic bullets
- End the harassment of the Irish in Britain and those who support the IRA
- Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act
- Troops Out Now!



Whose democracy?

IN "DEMOCRATIC" Britain democracy itself is severely limited. Take parliamentary elections. Every five years workers have the opportunity to vote on candidates to parliament. Naturally this is preferable to an unelected dictatorship. It allows the workers to put up their own candidates, to express discontent, to organise. But it is still fixed in favour of the bosses.

An unelected boundary commission decides on the size and shape of constituencies: they do not even have equal numbers of electors in each, so some voters, particularly in the rural Tory areas, have votes that count for more than the votes of workers in the inner cities.

MP's, as everyone knows, can make all sorts of promises at election time. They can then break them. There is no way of recalling them, holding them to account, replacing them right away with people who better represent the will of their electorate. Small parties, including revolutionary socialists, are discriminated against by the first past the post system.

Even then, parliamentary elections do not give rise to a government that has full power, even on paper. Ministers do not have to be elected: the last four Tory governments included unelected Lords and Ladies. Then there is the Privy Council system - a semi-secret council appointed by the Queen which "suspect" politicians are excluded from, no matter how high an office they hold. There is the House of Lords, which can delay and amend legislation but is not elected.

Finally there is the Monarchy itself. Millions are losing their respect for the Monarchy because of the constant scandals that reveal the self-seeking and petty characters who make up the Royal Family. But it is not just a waste of money.

The Monarchy is a powerful component of the capitalist state. The Queen has the right to refuse to let parliament's

laws take effect, the right to suspend parliament, even the right to sack prime ministers. Faced with a challenge to capitalist rule the Queen - who after all is Britain's richest capitalist - would use her powers under the guise of restoring order or "saving the nation".

Today there is a small but growing middle class movement for constitutional reform which demands a Bill of Rights. But a Bill of Rights, as a method of securing civil liberties from the state, is not the answer. Such a Bill would strengthen the power of the judges over parliament and the state without giving the working class movement any more power to defend and extend democratic rights. Unelected judges would have to power to veto laws made by parliament according to whether they were "constitutional".

We fight to force the capitalists to go further down the democratic road than they are willing to go. That is why we demand:

- Abolish the Monarchy
- The immediate introduction of proportional representation on a system of party lists of candidates.
- Abolish the House of Lords
- For annual elections
- Votes for all over the age of 16

Even if the capitalists were forced to concede the most democratic of parliaments, the plain truth is that in a class society real power does not rest in parliament. Unelected judges, the secret services, the army and police chiefs all represent the "power behind the speakers' chair". They defend capitalism by anti-working class court rulings, by spying on workers' organisations, by smashing picket lines and breaking strikes. This is why we demand:

- Election of all judges and free state provision of legal advice and representation
- Scrap the Association of Chief Police Officers



Where they rule you and fool you



1984: Miners see the true face of capitalist "democracy"

- Abolish the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Official Secrets Act and all repressive measures
- Disband MI5, MI6, the Special Branch and all secret intelligence agencies
- Disarm the police: no plastic bullets, CS gas, riot gear or firearms. Disband all special police squads.

The capitalists like to tell us that under their democratic system there is free speech for all. Certainly in the capitalist democracies there is more freedom of expression than in many dictatorships. But these rights are not only curtailed, they are under attack.

The right to speak on television has been denied to Sinn Fein. The Tories want to abolish the right of defendants to remain silent in court.

Socialists have to defend freedom of expression from all these attacks. But in reality this freedom exists mainly for those who can afford it: the handful of multi-millionaire newspaper barons and the owners of the TV stations. Their lies and misrepresentations go unanswered because working people have no real access to the mass media. In Brazil the steelworkers have their own radio station, but in Britain

no political or workers' organisation would be allowed a licence to broadcast.

- For a right to reply to TV and newspaper slanders: with equal space given to the reply. Lift the gag on Sinn Fein.
- Print, TV and media workers: don't let the bosses slander the workers' movement and the oppressed: pull the plugs to stop the lies.
- Open the airwaves to the organisations of the labour movement. For a democratically run labour movement daily newspaper to counter the propaganda machines of the millionaires.

SOCIALISTS STAND at the head of the fight to defend and extend democratic rights. But democratic rights *within* the capitalist system are not enough. Even the most democratic capitalist constitution would leave the real source of power and wealth, the real cause of economic crises and poverty - private property and the profit system - intact. And the peaceful use of the democratic system by the working class will never be enough to transform society while the real core of state power - armed force - remains in the hands of the capitalists. ■



The road to working class power

EVERY MAJOR battle between the workers and the bosses is a *political* struggle. The Tories always seize on this fact. They taunt the leaders of the trade unions and rank and file militants with being "politically motivated". The trade union and Labour leaders always rush to reassure the Tories. For them, a strike should remain a dispute between one section of workers and their employers. Politics, they tell us, is what 600-odd people get up to in parliament.

Rule

The capitalists rule over us through their political representatives. They attack us by introducing laws, through pay limits, through dragging us into wars and through cutting spending on our social needs. Individual employers do not wait for political approval before slashing jobs, pay and conditions. That is the reality of politics. It is why workers need to be *political* to fight back.

The 1990s will see major struggles. Whether it is over the next round of mass job losses, or what the Tories are doing to hospitals and schools, mass class resistance will emerge again and again. These struggles will pose the question of government, the question of who rules Britain. The working class movement must fight to drive this rotten Tory government from office.

What should we replace them with? Millions will say a Labour government. But Labour is committed to maintaining the capitalist system. In government, now as before, it would act on behalf of the bosses against the interests of the workers.

Monopolies

Even a government made up of old-style leftwingers like Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner (and there is not much chance of that) would face immediate problems if they tried to implement even a fraction of the programme workers need. Higher spending on the health service or on benefits, a national minimum wage or a shorter working week, the confiscation of the profits of the major monopolies: all of these policies would hit the capitalists where it hurts most, in their pockets. They wouldn't take it lying down.

Real power in this society does not rest in the debating chambers of parliament. It rests with the unelected boards of the major monopolies who decide what is produced and by whom. It rests with the international capitalists who were

able to force the British government out of the ERM when it suited them, despite repeated statements of government policy to the contrary. It lies with the unelected judges who make up the law as they go along, with the unelected army and police chiefs. It lies with the faceless senior civil servants who remain in place no matter who is elected, who make the real decisions and who tell the ministers what they can and can't do.

That is the reality of the capitalist state. Any government that tried to take away the capitalists' wealth would soon find itself face to face with that state. The capitalists are not about to give up their privileges, their wealth and their power just because somebody asks them politely. The full force of the state would be unleashed against any such government.

But there is another source of power in society. It is composed of millions of people rather than the few thousands of exploiters. Without it nothing would function, from the factories to the supermarkets, from the railways to the schools. It has deep-going traditions of organisation, of collective work, of solidarity and human decency. It is a force that is capable of running the whole of society, because it is already central to making that society run.

Battle

That force is the working class. To rule it must be organised as a class, to recognise its own true interests, and to set about getting them.

In every major battle the question of building and organising solidarity across all existing divisions is posed. The existing, sectionally divided unions are insufficient. New organisations drawing in representatives of all those fighting need to be built - democratic **councils of action** in every town and locality.

These organisations have a precedent in the history of the working class movement. They arise spontaneously wherever the working class enters the struggle for power. In Russia in 1917 the workers' councils or soviets, took power and began to rule society. In Britain in the 1920s they arose in opposition to the deployment of British troops against the Russian Revolution, and they emerged in towns and cities up and down the country during the nine days of the General Strike in 1926. The absence of such councils, in the miners' strike of 1984-85 and in the 1989-91 poll tax rebellion contributed to the failure to generalise and spread these struggles.

Councils of action begin as a means of co-ordinating our

fight across the existing divisions of section and union. But they can rapidly develop into an alternative source of organised power in society, a challenge to the capitalists' own organisations of political rule. Composed of delegates elected directly from every workplace and estate, and with each delegate subject to immediate recall by the people who elected them, they are the most militant and the most democratic form of organisation that history has yet produced.

Alongside such organisations the working class would need to build a means of protecting them. From the defence of picket lines in the miners' and printers' strikes, through to defence of the communities against bailiffs, of demonstrations from the police or of black communities from racist attacks, the need for organised self-defence is posed. From workers' defence squads can grow the armed power the working class needs to counter the armed power of the capitalist state and impose its own rule on society - the **workers' militia**.

It is organisations of this type, workers' councils and a workers' militia, that we fight to make an alternative centre of power in society. Based on such organisations, a **workers' government** could be established, under complete democratic control by working people.

The possibility of establishing a workers' government could only arise under conditions in which the class struggle had reached fever pitch. Councils of action and workers' defence squads would exist alongside the capitalists' government, its army and police force. The capitalists would immediately recognise the threat that such a situation of dual power represented to their rule. The situation could not

last for long: one or the other power would have to triumph.

That is why workers who genuinely stand for socialism must take the revolutionary road. Even if a workers' government arose out of an election in a turbulent period of class struggle it would have to base itself on the mass organisation and armed power of the working class to survive the bosses' counter-attack.

Such a workers' government would have to move to disarm the capitalist class. This means winning the rank and file soldiers to the workers' side, helping them to organise rank and file soldiers' committees, to secure the democratic election of their officers, getting arms from them for the workers. It would mean being ready to defeat the crack army regiments, the SAS, the police and the secret services in open battle, smashing the capitalists' army. In short it would mean **insurrection** and smashing the capitalist state, the armed and repressive machine that defends the bosses' property.

No government that leaves the bosses' armed power intact could govern in the interests of the workers. The exploiters' state would have to be broken up, and the resistance of the millionaire minority to the rule of the majority would have to be suppressed by force. A genuine workers' government would rely on arming the mass of the working class. It would dissolve the British armed forces, the secret service, the police, the civil service mandarins, and the capitalists' parliament, and would pass power over directly to a national congress of workers' councils.

Only then, with the working class establishing its complete control and political rule, could the fight to establish socialism begin in earnest. ■

Democracy and Dictatorship

EVERY STATE in human history has been the rule of one class over another. Revolutionary socialists want to end all that and abolish class rule altogether. But on the road to a classless society we need the class rule of the working class over the remnants of the capitalists and the other classes who support them.

That is what Marxists mean when we speak of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Unlike the capitalists, the working class has no need to conceal its aims. The workers' dictatorship means denying the capitalists their most cherished rights: the right to treat vital resources as their private property, the right to turn loose the police and the armed forces against the population, the right to control the dissemination of information, the right to live in luxury while others do all the work. It means being prepared to use the sternest of measures to prevent the armed resistance of the capitalists and any attempt on their part to regain their property and their rule.

To many the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" has a sinister ring to it. They think of the use to which this phrase was put by Stalin and the rulers of the USSR. The massacre of students in Tiananmen Square by the Chinese Stalinists was carried out in the name of protecting the "dictatorship of the proletariat".

But Stalinism was a monstrous perversion of socialism. It arose not as a natural extension of the Russian Revolution, but from its bureaucratisation and isolation. The Stalinist bureaucracy secured its power by eliminating every aspect of the workers' own political power and control in society, setting up a dictatorship over the proletariat. Although the Stalinists based themselves on the new collective property established after the overthrow of capitalism, they secured wealth and privileges by crushing all those in the Bolshevik Party who stood for workers' democracy and control. In

particular they led a bloody campaign of extermination against those who fought for real Bolshevism, the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky. The final collapse and discrediting of Stalinism occurred because it was impossible to run a genuinely planned economy without the workers themselves controlling the plan.

Today it is vital for socialists to reassert what the dictatorship of the proletariat really means. It is not the bloody rule of a reactionary caste led by an all powerful cult figure. It is not a totalitarian one-party state in which any expression of dissent is met with a visit from the secret police. For the overwhelming majority - working people - it means the maximum of rights and democracy through democratic and accountable workers' councils. It means a system a thousand times more democratic than even the most liberal capitalist democracy. And unlike the dictatorial rule of the capitalists, it means the suppression of a tiny minority by the majority, not of the majority by the minority.

For this task, no permanent standing army or unelected bureaucracy is needed. Workers' power would be defended by the armed population, ruled by democratic workers' councils, and administered by recallable officials earning no more than the wage of the average worker and rotating their tasks so that no permanent bureaucracy could arise. And even this state, integrated with the organised working class, will begin to dissolve into society at large as all exploitation ceases on an international scale.

That is the real meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat - workers power. It is the transitional period to socialism and human freedom. That idea must be rescued from the terrible distortions of Stalinism and the hypocritical propaganda of the capitalists. It must become the aim of the working class movement. ★



We need a revolutionary party

TO SPEARHEAD the fight for revolution, indeed to begin to win victories against the bosses in the here and now, the working class urgently needs a political party that really represents its class interests. The working class in Britain today has no such party. It is faced with a crisis of leadership.

Resolving this crisis means building a new leadership for the working class movement. It must challenge the hold of the Labourites and the trade union bureaucrats over the working class. There is only one way that this can be done: by building a new revolutionary party. This is not just one worthy cause among many that socialist espouse. It is *the most important task* facing us in the 1990s.

In Britain today the seeds are there for the growth of revolutionary ideas amongst a minority of workers prepared to fight:

- The decline of the Labour left has discredited the notion that Labour can be transformed into the instrument of working class liberation
- The Communist Party, for decades a significant force in industry and a powerful opposition to revolutionary politics, has collapsed
- The Militant Tendency, for many years the strongest section of the Labour left, has now turned away from its project of transforming the Labour Party, and has established a new party called Militant Labour, which stands against Labour in local and national elections
- The largest left-wing alternative to Labour, the Socialist Workers Party, has benefited from the decline of the Labour left and has recruited thousands of new members.

These developments demonstrate the potential that exists for the building of a revolutionary alternative to Labour. But the politics of the main left organisations prevents them from realising this potential.

Despite their break with the Labour Party, Militant Labour have retained the same basic programme that they have been putting forward for years. It is not a revolutionary programme: it is reformist.

Militant Labour argues that socialism could be introduced by a left wing Labour majority in parliament. Far from recognising the fact that the capitalist state will have to be broken up through a violent revolution, Militant Labour's General Secretary Peter Taaffe writes that Militant has "proclaimed hundreds, if not thousands of times that armed with a clear programme and perspective the labour movement in Britain could effect a peaceful socialist transforma-

tion".

In its recent policy statement Militant Labour continues to hold out this reformist illusion. It calls for "Labour to power on a socialist programme", the crowning point of which is the nationalisation of the top 150 monopolies under workers' control, and a "democratic, socialist planned economy to end the chaos of the profit system".

There is no mention of how this can be achieved, no mention of the fact that only a mass workers' revolution, not the votes of MPs in parliament, can make the transition to socialism possible.

Militant Labour fights only for reforms today, and speaks of socialism in the dim and distant future, but builds no bridge between the two. This is what revolutionaries call a minimum/maximum programme.

The SWP, on the other hand, states:

"The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown."

It argues openly that it will take a revolution to change the system and introduce socialism.

But in the SWP's day to day practice the revolutionary content is absent. While they make propaganda for the idea of socialism, the SWP makes no attempt to build a bridge between the fight for workers' immediate needs and the tasks of revolutionary struggle.

In the crisis that followed the Tories' pit closure announcement in October 1992, the SWP's sole point of departure was the mood of the masses rather than what was necessary to take the struggle forward.

They correctly responded to the anger by calling for a general strike, but nowhere did they tackle the main problem of the day: how to win such action in the face of opposition from the trade union leaders. The answer would have meant going well beyond the ideas and methods of struggle that occurred to trade unionists spontaneously. It would have meant fighting for action councils across the unions and workplaces, organisations which could have challenged the hold of the trade union bureaucrats and have built up the means to co-ordinate action from below when the TUC refused to act. But the SWP derided that as utopian, too far ahead of what workers were thinking at the time.

The SWP grows by attracting people to the ideals of socialism, but it fails to take the struggles in which it participates on to a higher plane. In this way, like Militant Labour, it sticks to a minimum/maximum approach to politics. Socialism in the future; routine campaigning today,

and only for what the SWP leaders deem "possible" at the time.

Revolutionaries have to go beyond fighting for reforms which are disconnected from the goal of socialism.

We can and must build a bridge between the two through a system of *transitional demands*, policies which provide the answers to winning the struggles of today, and at the same time develop the forms of organisation which can mount a challenge to the capitalists' state and their economic system.

Programme

The action councils which could co-ordinate solidarity strikes and defence of services, the defence squads that can see off BNP terror gangs and attacks on our picket lines today, these are the embryonic types of organisation that can become the councils of action and workers' defence squads to overthrow and replace the capitalist state tomorrow. That is the method of a *transitional programme*. It is the essence of the revolutionary approach.

The failure of the Socialist Workers Party to develop such a programme is crucial to their entire politics and practice. It means that they undergo countless zig-zags and inexplicable changes in their political practice and line.

The SWP's leader Tony Cliff ridicules the idea of a revolutionary programme. In its place he argues for practical action, pure and simple. "Which is better", he asks, "a beautiful blueprint of a gun . . . or a bloody gun?"

It's the wrong question. To build a gun, you need a blueprint. Without one you could end up building something that jams every time you try to fire it, or worse, blows up in your face.

The real question is whether we go into battle with the class enemy with or without a plan of action. Revolutionary socialists don't counterpose the battle plan to the battle itself. But like all sensible workers, we would rather start a job with a clear plan even if it has to be altered and improved in the process.

Centrist

The two main organisations on the British left are not consistently revolutionary in their politics, no matter how keenly their members want to see capitalism overthrown.

They are *centrist* organisations: revolutionary in words, but not in their programme or practice. Neither are they really "parties" in the true sense of the word. A party organises decisive sectors of the working class vanguard and has a real influence on events. Lacking both the size and the programme to provide a real alternative leadership in the daily struggles of the working class, they are in reality still at the stage of building propaganda groups - putting forward their general ideas without the ability, in the main, to win masses of workers to putting them into practice. With their current politics and their inadequate programmes, they will be unable to develop into genuine parties, unable to challenge the reformists for leadership in practical struggles. They will encounter serious crises on the way.

Given the disunity and the variety of organisations on the left, is it possible that a new revolutionary leadership could be built through uniting all socialists who recognise the need for an alternative?

Revolutionaries stand for the maximum unity of the working class in struggle. But without overcoming the deep-seated political confusion and differences on the left, any "united party" would collapse at its first major test in the class struggle.

Workers Power recognises the genuine desire for socialism among the militants of the main centrist groups. If they

were to issue a real call for unity then we would be the first to respond. But unity would be on one condition: that a genuine discussion and debate takes place on the political and programmatic basis for the revolutionary party. Without such a discussion, without a continual testing and reviewing of the politics of the organisation, no real progress could be made.

So what type of party do we need?

It has to be made up of workers. It can't fight for a revolution unless it bases itself on the daily struggles of the working class.

It has to be a combat party, not an electoral machine or a talking shop. A revolutionary party would take the opportunity of standing candidates in elections, but without spreading the illusion that socialism can come through parliament. The aim would be to use elections to spread the ideas of revolutionary socialism. Revolutionary MPs would use their position in parliament as a platform from which to denounce capitalism and the sham democracy of parliament itself.

Mobilise

In the Britain of the 1990s, the party's central task would be to root itself in and transform the unions. Alongside this it would aim to mobilise the most exploited and oppressed - the youth, the unemployed, unorganised workers on the estates and in the communities, black people, women, and lesbians and gays, in militant, working class oriented struggles.

It would be a fighting party, committed to revolution. It would have to have a centralised leadership and know that in battle all its members were fighting for the same goal. Its leaders would not be permitted to follow whatever mood happened to take them or to speak out against party policy: they would be under the control of the party as a whole. Party officials would be the servants of the workers, not the other way round.

At the same time, once a democratic decision on policy or tactics was taken, the revolutionary party would have to implement it with maximum unity in action.

This centralism is something many middle class people, and workers influenced by middle class ideas, can't stand. It smacks of authoritarianism, dictatorship, while socialism's ultimate aim is the freedom of the individual.

But the workers' own experience tells them that they need common discipline for every serious task - at work or in the class struggle. Solidarity does not just mean back-slapping camaraderie in the working class. It means knowing you can trust your workmates, knowing they will pull their weight.

The principle of democratic centralism is only a political expression of that need for solidarity. In a war you need leaders, a battle plan and combat discipline. The revolutionary party is an instrument for fighting a class war.

Democratic Centralism

But the class struggle also has to be conducted with full workers' democracy. Full internal discussion within the ranks of the revolutionary party would be the norm. Without this there would be no development of the party's politics, no real education and training of its militants, no possibility of correcting any errors the party might make.

That is the meaning of *democratic centralism*, a phrase that the experience of Stalinism - and the lack of genuine democracy in Militant Labour and the SWP - has led many workers to associate with the bureaucratic command of a clique.

But that is the opposite of genuine democratic centralism. In reality it is the most democratic and the most effective means of organisation yet developed by the working class.



...and a revolutionary international!

THE REVOLUTIONARY party has to be an *internationalist* party. Just as the bosses organise across international borders, so too must the working class. Socialism is international or it is nothing: it cannot be built in one country alone.

A revolutionary party in Britain would have to be part of an international revolutionary party. The same discipline, the same democracy and centralism that exists within the party in Britain would have to exist across the international party. The decisions and democracy of the international party would have to bind national sections in the same way that the decisions of the British party would bind each of its branches.

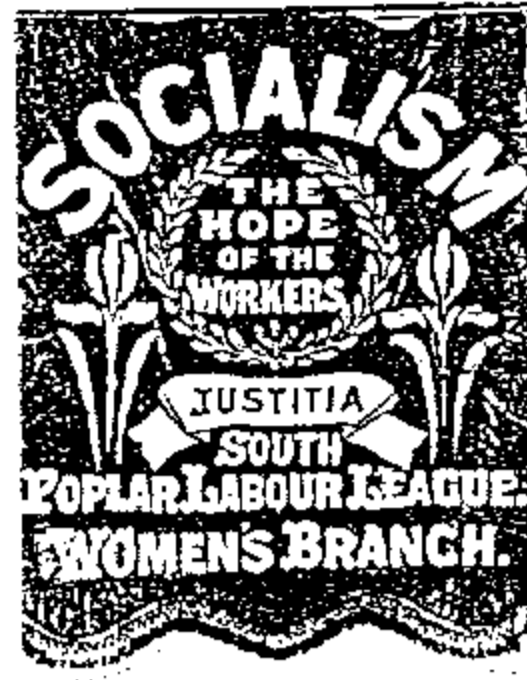
Without international democracy there is no way of learning from and fully assimilating the lessons of the working class struggle in other countries. Without international discipline there is no way of preventing national parties from

adapting to the prevailing views and prejudices common on their own national terrain. Without a democratic centralist international party and an international programme, the very idea of internationalism loses its meaning.

Workers Power exists to build a revolutionary party. We are the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. We already have sections in eight countries. Wherever we have members or supporters we fight in every struggle of the working class, conducting agitation for the forms of action we need to avoid sell-out and defeats, and seeking to win new members in the fight for socialist revolution. We aim to rally the forces of the left around a genuinely revolutionary programme, so that from the discrediting of Labourism and Stalinism and the inadequacies of centrism, a strong, united and revolutionary party can be built, a party which can stand at the head of the working class in its fight for freedom. ■



Some publications of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International



Towards socialism

FOR MANY people the goals of working class revolution and socialism seem unrealistic. Yet the practical possibility of socialism, the urgent need for it, stare at us through the windows of decaying capitalism itself.

Millions have no work whilst all around us there is need. The full resources of society could be applied to give everyone a job and to meet all our basic needs and more. The jobless millions could be put back to work building the houses, schools, leisure centres, roads and railways we need.

How could this be achieved? Through **planning** the economy.

Planning has become a dirty word. The collapse of Stalinism in Russia and Eastern Europe and the failure of the old nationalised industries in Britain show us why. To millions it conjures up the image of inefficiency, wastefulness, of drab, poor quality goods and a faceless, uncaring bureaucracy.

But socialist planning in a revolutionary Britain could be made to work. It would work because it would be carried out not by a handful of bureaucrats in a British version of the Kremlin or on old-style paternalistic governing boards, but by the workers and consumers themselves.

There are those who reject the idea of planning, who say that the world today is too complex and populations too large for us to meet our needs in a planned way. They are wrong.

For all its defects, the present system points the way to the future. Even under capitalism there is a strong element of planning: it can be found no further away than your local supermarket. They deliver foods from all over the world, fresh, to millions of people. They have to do it at exactly the right time to minimise both waste and shortages. Using modern technology like bar codes on every item they can plan the needs of different local shoppers on a day by day basis.

The capitalists plan, but they do it only to make a private profit. Under capitalism planning is driven by market forces. Tesco or McAlpine plan to beat their competition. But the same market forces mean that millions of ordinary people can't afford more than the bare essentials at the supermarket, and have to live in damp and bug-infested homes. The same market forces sooner or later leave the shiny offices empty, the builders bankrupt and thousands of skilled bricklayers, electricians and steel erectors idle.

Real socialist planning could apply all of the advantages of modern planning techniques, but it could do so in the interests of human need, not profit. Unlike the state industries in post-war Britain a planned economy would not be hampered by the dictates of the profiteers and constant government cutbacks. Unlike the economy in the former USSR it would not be inefficient and lacking in quality, because the planning would be done not by self-seeking

bureaucrats but by the workers themselves organised through democratic workers' councils.

Workers' control in each industry would cut down waste, not increase it. Most workers will never knowingly waste time or materials if they know they are working for themselves, not for some exploiter. Workers know better than any boss how the job they are doing should be done, and how it could be done quicker, better and cheaper.

Across industry all the separate elements of workers' planning could be integrated in a central democratic plan. The tremendous advances made in computing and information technology would enable workers in individual workplaces, and on elected regional and national planning committees, to have at their fingertips all the information they needed to know what to produce and how to do it efficiently. Achievement and progress could be checked literally hour by hour to see what changes should be made. Problems and failures would not be hushed up by careerist officials or company directors afraid of bad sales figures, but would be out in the open, in order that they could be quickly corrected.

Abolishing business secrets would get rid of the insane situation where scientists are forbidden to share their knowledge for fear of helping their firms' business rivals, and could therefore provide a tremendous boost to scientific development. The working day could be slashed further with the introduction of every new labour saving device, giving workers more and more of the free time necessary to study, train, and plan, co-ordinate and run society themselves.

But a Britain in revolution, in which the power of the capitalists had been overthrown, would be surrounded by bitter enemies. The capitalists of the world would rightly recognise a Workers' Britain as the greatest threat to their survival. The hatred, contempt and fear with which they regard our class today would be magnified a thousand times once we take state power into our hands.

When the Russian workers took power in October 1917, the major capitalist nations assembled a coalition which waged a bloody war of intervention against the world's first workers' state. A Workers' Britain would meet with a similar response from the "peace-loving democracies" of the USA, Western Europe and Japan. They would seek to impose an economic and military blockade around Britain, or even to wage war to re-introduce capitalism.

The arming of the entire working class would be essential to defend the revolution from its external and internal enemies. But Britain would also be surrounded by many millions of allies and potential allies: the working class and poor peasantry of the world, who are themselves forced to endure the horrors of capitalism, many on a scale that British workers find difficult to imagine.

A workers' revolution in Britain would be a beacon to the

oppressed and exploited of the world. Our victory would signal to them that working class power is a tangible possibility. And like the Russian Revolution, it would unleash a wave of sympathy and revolutionary struggle around the world. It would be a revolutionary detonator in Europe. The EC would be thrown into chaos by the overthrow of capitalism in one of its key economies and the removal of one of its two major military powers. And a revolutionary situation in Britain is unlikely to occur without political and economic crisis sweeping the entire European continent.

Intervention

A vibrant revolutionary workers' democracy in Britain would demonstrate to millions throughout Russia, China, Cuba and Eastern Europe that there is an alternative both to the squalid prison house of Stalinism and to the poverty and chaos of capitalism. To the masses of the Third World languishing under the control of the multinationals and imperialist monopolies, a workers' government would address the most direct of appeals: "Take over the British banks, companies and investments that have robbed you and exploited you for so long!" To the vast working classes of the other advanced countries, the message would be clear: if it can be done in Britain, with its long traditions of capitalist "democracy", it can be done in France, Germany and the USA. To the workers of the entire world the call would go out to mobilise the greatest possible opposition to imperialist intervention, to defend the fledgling workers' state.

Drawing on the vast resources of the entire nation and freed from the dictates and fetters of the profit system, a revolutionary Britain would send aid to workers around the world fighting against imperialism and the rule of the capitalists. It would offer defence to semi-colonial countries facing imperialist aggression, just as it would to the degenerate workers' states where a caste of anti-working class bureaucrats has stolen power. But it would also give full support to the workers and peasants of those countries, seeking to guide them along the path of workers' revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy based on the rule of workers' councils.

The spreading of the revolution internationally would be a life or death task for the survival of working class power. Without it the economy could be isolated, the gains of the revolution undermined. The history of the degeneration and

final collapse of the Russian revolution demonstrates this danger only too well.

The capitalist economy is international. Production takes place across national boundaries, and without an international division of labour further progress is ruled out. But on the basis of the spreading of the revolution, especially to other advanced countries, an international federation of workers' states could be established, setting in motion an international workers' plan of production, and finally putting the vast resources of the planet to a rationally determined and sustainable use.

The victory of revolution in one country, taken up and extended by the workers of the world, could thus herald the final eclipse of capitalism. Over years and decades of planning, the spectres of starvation, ignorance and disease could at last be overcome. Mechanisation and computerisation, freed from the abuses of capitalism, could reduce the working week, gradually dissolving the distinction between work and leisure.

Humanity, freed from the toil of an unending struggle for survival, released from the terrible moral and psychological alienation of the individual in class society, could at last set its tremendous advances in science and technology to work on itself, inaugurating a revolution in health care, education, art and culture.

Barbarism

For the new generation of workers approaching the 21st Century, the choice is not between socialism or capitalism as it is now. It is a choice between the fight for socialism or the encroachment of barbarism. The alternative to the socialist future also stares at us, on our TV screens every night. Somalia and Bosnia - famine and war, a world of declining literacy, growing crime, the return of once-conquered diseases, the rise of fascism and religious fundamentalism.

It is not just the dream of socialism but the terrible nightmare of barbaric capitalist collapse which poses the question to every worker: get organised and take control of humanity's destiny, or wait for war, poverty and disease to destroy your life.

The dawn of communism, a truly classless society, would bring the darkness of human pre-history to a close. That is a goal worth fighting for. It is the goal Workers Power is fighting for. Join us! ■





Britain needs a revolution. The economy is in decline. The parliamentary system is rocked by scandals exposing corruption at the highest levels of

government. The country's institutions - from the monarchy to the courts and police - are deeply discredited. Misery and poverty co-exist with shameless displays of wealth.

The world of work is a world of lousy training, low wages, poor conditions, ruthless management.

There is permanent mass unemployment. Black people are attacked and murdered because of the colour of their skin.

Local services are dilapidated, the NHS is starved of funds, the education system veers from crisis to crisis as the Tories experiment with the future of the young. Violent crime plagues the inner cities. Young people are forced to beg in the streets.

Capitalism is at the root of Britain's decline. It is an economic system based on providing profits for the few, rather than the pressing needs of millions.

The demands of the system stand in irreconcilable opposition to the needs of the great majority of people: to be guaranteed a job, a decent livelihood, a life free from fear of racism, bigotry and violence, an old age to be looked forward to rather than feared.

Capitalism is defended and sanctified by "our great institutions" - parliament, the police, the judges, the army, the unelected civil servants, the unaccountable secret services, the monarchy, the church.

Its rottenness as a system is reflected by the rot that has set into each and every one of these institutions. Its crisis feeds theirs.

THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER outlines a revolutionary socialist answer to the crisis. It provides an explanation of the tasks facing the workers' movement in the 1990s and a guide to action for the struggles ahead.★