

National Consultative Conference Points the Way Forward

Workers' Weekly Vol 28 No.21, July 25- August 1 1998

AN IMPORTANT National Consultative Conference of RCPB (ML) took place on the weekend of July 18-19 in London. Delegates and observers representing the whole Party and its links in the community and among the different sections of the people were present, as well as invited guests from the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist), the New Communist Party of Britain, and others.

The National Consultative Conference over the whole weekend was a summation of and reflected the work of the Party since the Coventry International Seminar of January 1994, which initiated this period of the Party's work. Thus the Party's analysis of the objective national and international situation was elaborated in the conditions of 1998 and one year of Tony Blair in power. Its assessment of the subjective situation and the level of the various movements among the working class and people were presented and discussed. And the role and work of the Party at this present stage of its programme was summed up and defined.

However, this was not the sum total of the content of the National Consultative Conference. If it had merely looked at the present with the perspective of its four and half years of work in the current period, the Party would not have risen to the occasion in the way it did. The National Consultative Conference used the discussion of the work the Party has carried out to point the way forward, and to look to the future in defining its continued line of march and a programme of work to be taken up. This in the final analysis is what made the Consultative Conference so successful. And this success was only achieved by the participation of the whole Party, with the Central Committee at the head.

It became crystal clear at the Conference, if it were not clear enough already, how significant is the cutting edge work of the Party to *Improve the Content, Extend the Readership of Workers' Weekly.*

Papers were presented by the Central Committee to facilitate discussion. These introduced the three main items on the agenda: The Present Situation Nationally and Internationally; The Development of the Various Movements of the Working Class and People; and The Role and Work of the Party at the Present Time. The quality of the participation made a marked contribution to the success of the National Consultative Conference. Its climax came in the final session when resolutions were presented arising out of the discussions and putting forward to the Central Committee a recommendation to begin the necessary work to prepare for the holding of the Party's Third Congress. These resolutions are printed on page 1.

In other words, it can now be said that the cutting edge of the cutting edge work itself is the work to prepare for the Third Congress of the Party, and that the essence of this work is to put the Party in a strong position to enter the 21st century, having consolidated its general line that *There Is A Way Out of the Crisis*, elaborated its Draft Programme for the Working Class with its focus to *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes*, and forged its most important weapon for the working class to provide itself with the necessary consciousness and organisation to lead the way in opening up the path to a new socialist society, namely the Party's newspaper, *Workers' Weekly*.

The Conference concluded with the singing of the Internationale and the shouting of slogans. The atmosphere of enthusiasm, and the spirit of participating in the collective work of the Party, continued for some time through informal discussions and the organising for the work to come.

Opening the Conference, Chris Coleman, on behalf of the Central Committee, warmly welcomed comrades from the different regions. We are very pleased, he said, that we also have a delegation from the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist) led by Comrade Rod Eley. We are very pleased to welcome a delegation from the New Communist Party of Britain, led by the General Secretary Andy Brooks. We are also very pleased that comrades from the African and Caribbean Progressive Study Group are joining us for the Conference, comrades from the Indian Progressive Study Group, and comrades from the Indian Workers' Association (Great Britain). He declared the Conference open, and welcomed the speaker to give the opening remarks. These follow:

Comrades, this National Consultative Conference is in our view taking place at an extremely timely juncture of the Party's work and of the objective situation.

Over one year of Tony Blair in power has amply demonstrated the correctness of the Party's analysis that the bourgeoisie brought New Labour to power to carry forward the offensive of the rich against the people after a period from 1979 characterised by Thatcherism – a period of the crisis of the welfare state, of neo-liberal policies, of privatisation – which aroused the people's fierce opposition. But the bourgeoisie calculated that it could manipulate this opposition, and staged its electoral coup which brought Tony Blair to power. So what is the Party's analysis of the present situation? This is one of the topics which the Conference will address. Within this situation, what are the developments in the movements of the working class and people? Again this is an important topic which the Consultative Conference will deal with. And most crucially, the Party wants to take stock now of its work and how it should advance, after one year of Tony Blair in power, as the 21st century approaches, in order that it can rise to the

occasion and meet the challenges it faces. And this can be said to be the theme of the Conference.

So it is not just a question of reacting to the objective developments. The advances we make are on the basis of our own thinking. And the Party is the most crucial weapon in the hands of the working class to provide it with the consciousness and organisation necessary to bring about social revolution. It sets its aims for itself and works out what is necessary to bring itself on a par with the necessity of the times. In this respect, this present period of the Party's work was initiated at the Coventry International Seminar of January 1994. The aim of this National Consultative Conference is to discuss the stage of the work of RCPB(ML) in the context of its plan and practical programme which it has been developing and implementing since that time.

In this period, the Party has formulated its general line as summed up in its draft document *There Is a Way Out of the Crisis*, and on the basis of this general line it put forward its *Draft Programme for the Working Class*. The Conference is set in particular to discuss in this context the most important programme RCPB(ML) has set for itself, which is the programme to *Improve the Content, Extend the Readership of its newspaper Workers' Weekly*, as well as the programme of the working class that the Party put forward in the context of the May 1997 election summed up in the slogan to *Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investments in Social Programmes!* So the issue for the Conference to focus on is the question of its practical programme – the programme that it sets for itself and the programme that it calls on the working class and people to take up as their own to take society out of its crisis and open up the path to progress and to a new socialist society. Without the formulation of the general line which showed that there is a way out of the crisis, there could be no question of setting the practical programme. The analysis and the discussion on it were the necessary conditions for setting this practical programme. The Party having done this continued on its line of march by organising discussion on the draft document and analysing that it was necessary to address the formulation of a draft programme for the working class, putting forward that if the working class is to play its historic role and lead society out of the crisis, then it must have its own independent programme, around which it can mobilise all the other forces in society to open up the path for progress and for a new society. This planned work of the Party led to the formulation of the *Draft Programme for the Working Class*.

Since that time, the Party has formulated and put forward the slogan of *Improve the Content, Extend the Readership of Workers' Weekly*, and put forward that *Workers' Weekly* should be an instrument in the hands of the working class to provide itself with its necessary consciousness and organisation to bring about social revolution. The Party upholds the Leninist line that its paper is a collective organiser, that it is the scaffolding around which the Party is built. *Workers' Weekly* has played a crucial role at each stage of development of the Party's work since the Coventry International Seminar, as well as

before. In fact, it has been the backbone of the Party's work since 1971. So in this introduction, the point is not to go into the details of this development and to discuss its political, ideological and practical content, because this will take place as the agenda unfolds, but just to emphasise how crucial this fight has been to implement this central programme of the Party and not get diverted from this crucial task.

This National Consultative Conference is the first opportunity that comrades representing the whole Party have had to get together and discuss this work in its entirety since the last National Consultative Conference discussed the first draft of the Draft Programme of the Working Class in November 1994. It is thus a very key occasion. And it is made even more crucial given the objective situation with Tony Blair in power.

We encourage all comrades to seriously participate in this discussion, speaking from their experience and the experience of their units and their struggles. We are confident that out of this Conference will come serious recommendations to the Central Committee reflecting the collective will of the Party, its supporters and sympathisers and the broad masses of the people.

RESOLUTIONS

The following resolution was passed unanimously:

THIS Conference recommends to the Central Committee that it immediately begin the necessary work involving the whole Party to prepare a summation of the current period in the wake of one year of Tony Blair's government, to summarise the line of march of our Party since January 1994, and to work to elaborate the Party's programme for the working class of Stop Paying the Rich – Increase Investment in Social Programmes, as well as to implement the Party's programme, Improve the Content, Extend the Readership, as preparation for the holding of the Party's Third Congress to be held by the time of the 20th anniversary of RCPB(ML), March 16, 1999, with the aim of putting the Party in a strong position for advancing into the 21st century. This Conference recommends that the Central Committee report on the progress of this work at a further consultative conference to be held in November this year.

The following resolution was also put to the Conference:

IN keeping with the need to develop the mass communist party and to lead the movement against the anti-social offensive to victory, laying the basis for a new socialist society:

Conference re-iterates the necessity for the entire Party and supporters to focus on the key task around *Workers' Weekly*, on the basis of modern definitions, whereby the working class and people affirm their rights.