The general election gives us the opportunity to get rid of the Tories after 13 years of rising unemployment, soaring homelessness, and worsening living standards. They have promised us more of the same if they are re-elected – more privatisation, such as British Rail and Royal Mail; more anti-union laws; more attacks on the most defenceless – such as single parent families, and refugees.

And this is only what they have warned us about! We have to say no to the Tories, and we have to turn out the largest possible vote against them.

But that vote needs to be a Labour vote. Not because Labour has made a good job of leading the opposition to the Tories over the years – it hasn’t; it has backtrack ed at every opportunity – but because Labour is the only party in the election which is supposed to represent the interests of working people against the Tories’ class, the bosses.

The Scottish and Welsh nationalists and the Liberal Democrats all attempt to tie the working class to a common interest with the bosses, however radical some of their policies may seem.

The Tories have spent 13 years showing that Britain is a country fundamentally divided by class. They have acted in the interests of their class, however much they have conned sections of the working class into backing them. We need a government which acts for our class in the same way.

We must fight to help Labour beat the Tories, and we must fight to transform the labour movement. That means voting for the Labour Party – the party set up by our unions to defend our interests. It means voting Labour in every constituency. And it means fighting and organising for the Labour Party to adopt policies reflecting the interests of our class, not watered-down Tory ones.

It means organising in the labour movement to fight back against a Labour government when it attacks the working class.

Sorry! We’ve spent all this year’s budget. Or: we’ve cut back on treating local patients, because out-of-area patients are more profitable. Or: your GP is not a “fund-holding”, and fund-holding gets priority. Or: we’ve stopped doing that treatment altogether - varicose vein surgery, or abortions - because it doesn’t pay. Those are the answers patients are getting from hospitals under the Tories’ new “internal market” for the Health Service.

Labour has rightly promised to abolish the “internal market”. It is still fighting any of any commitment to make good the accumulated under-funding of the NHS since 1979. The Labour Party and the trade unions should insist on the cuts being restored. Otherwise the NHS will continue to erode. Photo: John Bland/Shutter.
The Tories have launched one attack after another on lesbian and gay rights. Yet Labour’s leaders have tried to wriggle out of Party policy commitments to legislate for complete equality. A Labour vote must be coupled with a right to hold them to those commitments. Photo: Peter Walsh/Profile.

Right for jobs

UNEMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN rising since March 1990. It is now 2.5 million on the much-fiddled with index and 3.5 million on the basis of calculations used before the Tories took office in 1979, the total would be 3.6 million.

The consensus of some 23 economic forecasters in universities, think-tanks, and banks, is that unemployment will continue to rise in 1992, averaging 3.7 million (official) or 3.8 million real) over the year.

Manufacturing output fell 4.3% in 1991, fixed investment (buildings, machinery, and so on) fell 11.5 per cent, and the export probability is to be further reduced by the exchange rate.

The human cost was put into figures by research in the mid-1980s. For every 100,000 people who lose their jobs, deaths increase by 5,000, mental hospital admissions by 2,000, and prison intake by 1,900. A separate survey found that workers made redundant and their families had to visit hospital or a doctor 20% more often after they lost their jobs. Do you wonder that there is crime, violence, and despair on the streets of Tory Britain?

Yet those who have jobs in Britain work longer hours than anywhere else in Western Europe. Many of them are desperately overworked; Britain is now the only country in the EC with no law to limit working hours. As Karl Marx put it in Capital, “The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by the overwork of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalists.”

The standard work week should be reduced by law to 35 hours. And, beyond that, millions of jobs urgently need doing.

• New houses need to be built, old houses and flats need repair. Tens of thousands are homeless on the streets, hundreds of thousands are crammed into substandard accommodation. Yet only 35,000 homes are being built for rent by councils and housing associations in 1991-2.

• Only 3 per cent of Britain’s children under three have places in publicly-funded nurseries, compared to 44% in Denmark.

• In the Health Service, the number of nurses has decreased - while the number of managers has risen 100%!. Ancillary jobs have been privatised and cut back. Now the National Childbirth Trust officially advises pregnant women to take cleaning materials to hospital with them so that they can clean the toilets and bathrooms themselves to avoid infection.

The Whittington Hospital in North London plans to stop giving patients an evening meal, providing only soup instead.

• Schools and colleges need repairs for their buildings, the pay for their teachers.

Libraries need more books - some local authorities have stopped buying any new books - and longer opening hours.

• More buses and trains, and more workers, are needed for public transport.

• Despite all the Tories’ claims, their regime has produced no boom in new, high-tech industry. On the contrary, the British share of world exports in information technology dropped from 9% in 1970 to 4% in 1984. Britain now consistently imports more manufactured goods than it exports.

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The jobs that need workers should be done by the workers who need jobs! To put together workers with jobs, just two things are needed:

• A programme of training and re-training at trade union rates of pay.

• Democratic public control of the “commanding heights” of industry and credit, which requires careful planning of major investments in housing, childcare, health, education, transport, new technologies, and so on.

Central to that democratic planning should be a conversion programme for the factories and skilled workers working on military projects which should now be cut back. That military production is a very large part of such skilled, high-tech manufacturing as Britain still has. If the factories are simply scrapped, and the skilled workers sent off to seek jobs in Disneyland, McDonalds, or Chiswick Zoo, then it will send this country spiralling down further towards the status of an offshore European site for minor low-wage production and remier speculation.

The Tories sat the nationalisation and public control of industry and credit are shown to be outdated and inefficient by the economic failure of Eastern Europe. That is rubbish.

The old system in Eastern Europe had “planning” not by democratic debate and decision but by bureaucratic diktat. Because it was a bureaucratic top-down system, it was a system of lies, corruption, inertia, alienation, and petty empire-building. No wonder it was inefficient.

It was also greatly over-centralised. No working-class socialist, whether in Britain or in Eastern Europe, proposes such ultra-centralisation.

At present major strategic investment decisions are made partly by the bosses and whirled of the City’s “casino economy”, and partly by push-and-pull within cabals of top industrialists, bankers, civil servants, and so on. It is a crazy system - and one which is well on track to destroy the Earth’s economy.

We want to replace that crazy system with accountable, democratic, environmentally-conscious planning. Millions of smaller economic decisions would still be made through the market or by local democracy.

The ruling Corporation of the City of London, no socialists they, are now protesting bitterly against any further “de-regulation” or privatisation of London buses, because, they say, it will lead to worse public transport delays. The Thatcher/Reagan craze for deregulation and privatisation has produced not efficiency but chaos.

The selling-off of state enterprises has brought pain to their bosses, who have voted themselves huge pay rises, and to the middle-class people who bought shares cut-price. It has brought no gains to the workers; and the sold-off enterprises have shown smaller improvements in productivity than those industries which remain in public ownership!

The Tories also say that we can’t afford even small improvements in public services, such as official Labour proposes. They will bring tax increases and trigger price inflation.

This is a lie, too.

• Despite all their ruses in public services, the Tories have increased taxes for most people.

• They have reduced income tax - a little for most people, a lot for the rich - but increased taxes, like VAT and poll tax, which hit hardest at the poor.

• A lot of money could be found for public services and for training and education without any tax rise at all, just by cutting other parts of state spending on military, police, and so on. (Money would be saved on unemployment benefit and social security, too, by giving the unemployed decent jobs.) The Trident programme costs about as much as 500 new hospitals. What the Tories spent on the Falklands war and its follow-up was enough to clear up all outstanding repairs and maintenance on all the hospitals in Britain.

• Taxes should be taken from the rich! Today the effective rate for the well-off is often lower than for the poor. The low-paid can lose over 90p of each extra pound in wages, through income tax (25p), National Insurance (9p), loss of housing benefit or Family Credit (up to 40p), and loss of other benefits (well-off lose only 25p or 40p in income tax they are exempt from National Insurance!), and maybe not even that if they have skilled tax accountants.

Labour’s official policy of making the well-off pay National Insurance, and raising the top income tax rate to 30%, should be only a start.

WON’T INCREASED SPENDING and increased employment pull in more imports and worsen Britain’s balance of payments crisis? Wouldn’t a Government policy of vigorous state intervention, favouring the working class, turn a “flight of capital” abroad?

Probably they would. Probably, too, the German and Swedish capitalists who now telling their workers that they are the best-paid, and the best- provided with public services, in Europe, so they must accept austerity or see capital go elsewhere, can put some force behind their threats too. As long as working-class movements limit themselves to national arenas, and capital develops international strategies, the powers-that-be can always make such threats.

Sometimes they are bluffing. If “too much” public services bring economic ruin, why should “too much” mean more than the miserable British level, rather than the better French, German, or Scandinavian level?

And when they are not bluffing, the answer must be for working-class movements to link up internationally, with international demands and campaigns, so that one country’s workers cannot be played off against another’s. A campaign to level up workers’ rights and conditions across Europe, and to win a 35 hour week across the continent, would be a start.

Labour in every constituency • Vote Labour in every constituency • Vote L
Why women should vote Labour

WORKING WOMEN'S CONDITIONS and rights have worsened dramatically under Tory-Tories.
Women still earn only 68% of men's wages; 80% of Britain's total workforce is the vast majority of them women - earn less than the EC 'doffey threshold' of £3.25 per hour.
Basic rights such as holiday and maternity leave and pay are denied to part-timers' nor are these workers considered for training or promotion.
Indeed, the vast majority of women full-time workers are passed over for training or woman.
Since 1979 the Tories have abrogated the universal maternity grant, making it a means-tested benefit.
Compare this with the generous maternity grant in Luxembourg, which awards a £233 maternity grant to all women and their babies.
The child benefit has also tightened the rules governing eligibility for maternity leave - many women now face the fact that if they lose their baby, and rely solely on benefits of £40 a week.
Britain's provision of publicly-funded childcare is the worst in Europe - only 2% of under-threes have a place in publicly-funded nurseries, compared to 44% in Denmark for example. Nor do 3-5 year olds fare much better - in wealthier areas available for only 54% of these children, and only 1% of those can be cared for by any child care during working day.
The Tories have blocked EC directives which would have benefited working women; abortion and family leave; childcare provision.
The record of the last 13 years is one of policies of discrimination and attacks on women's rights.
Labour offers more hope for working women: their pledge of a decent job, and a minimum wage of 50% of male median earnings (£3.40
an hour) is a welcome step to bring more workers, women particularly, out of the poverty trap. But we want that raised as soon as possible - and definitely within the lifetime of one Labour government - to two thirds the average male wage.
The proposals to offer publicly-funded childcare for all 3-5 year olds who need it will again give a boost to women, enabling them to play a more equal role in society. We must hold Labour to this pledge once in government, and fight any attempts to backtrack on this.
Labour also promises to implement EC directives on maternity leave, parental and family leave, and equity for part-time workers. But this should be only the start of a campaign to increase rights and benefits not just for women workers, but for all workers, the minimum from which to build.

Millions of non-payers wrecked the poll tax and forced the Tories to agree to scrap it. But the poll tax is still in force. Non-payers are still being dragged into court, jailed, harassed by bailiffs, and forced to pay deductions from their wages or benefits. The Tories plan to replace it with a "council tax" which covers many of the evil features of the poll tax. A Labour government must be pledged to abolish the poll tax straight away and declare an amnesty for non-payers and poll-tax prisoners. Photo: John Harris

Stump out racism!

THE TORIES are resorting to racism in their attempt to win the general election. By trying to convince workers that black people pose a threat to their jobs and right to housing they hope to stop workers realising that the real culprits for rising unemployment and homelessness are the Tories themselves, and that the solution to big business.
The Tories don't care about the colour of their workforce - it was Enoch Powell who, as a Tory minister, warned for West Indians to come and work in the hospitals and on the buses in the 1950s. But they will use racism to turn workers against each other whenever they can. They hope a working class divided by racism cannot unite against the real enemy - capitalism.
Unemployment, including large-scale unemployment existed long before there were large numbers of black people in this country. It is not black people causing unemployment, or a lack of decent housing, but a system which puts profits before people.
The reality is that black people are more likely to suffer from the recession: while in 1979 4.4% of the black population lost their job - 4.5% million population, unemployment in the black community is 14% compared to 9% for whites, with the worst area - 25% among Pakistanis or Bangladeshis, and 16% among West Indians. Among young people (aged 16 to 24) the unemployment rate is nearly twice as high among blacks and ethnic minorities - at 21% as against whites - 12%.
Black people are also discriminated against in the way that it comes to housing: they are more likely to spend longer periods in bed, suffer more from mental health, and huge numbers of the most-run-down estates. Of the young homeless sleeping rough, 71% of them are black.
Police harassment is endemic in the black community: one in five black youths were stopped by police last year, and, by the age of 30, 10% have been in prison. Since 1980, 61 black people have died in police custody or due to police actions and no-one has ever been charged.
The latest dose of racism is the Asylum Bill, under which all immigrants fleeing persecution and seeking asylum will be fingerprinted; appeals against refusal of asylum have to be lodged within 48 hours; in some circumstances there will be no appeal rights: in other words, the Asylum Bill will cut off asylum seekers and Lab the state more power.
In this election we can expect more comments along the lines of Mrs Thatcher's infamous 1978 speech when she warned of Britain being "swamped by alien numbers" if immigration was not halted.
Labour should confront such racist head on and confront it - not capitulate as Roy Hattersley did over the Asylum Bill, promising Labour's Labour's support.
Labour's own record on immigration was terrible. In 1968 the Labour government introduced the Commonwealth Immigration Act specifically to deny entry to Kenyan Asians (who were working there) and they were fleeing persecution. The Labour government, however, voted to repeal the 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts and thus end civil rights. We must hold the Labour leaders to this, and demand they repeal all immigration laws when in office. Black people are not "the problem" - policies which put basic welfare services and services to all people - black and white.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

O Labour must govern alone - no in coalitions or pacts with our class enemies; if Labour is the largest party in a con in the UK, Labour should put forward its programme and go to elect a Labour government.
O Decent jobs for all, cut the working week to no less it of pay; provide training and retraining at union rates of pay; provide restraint; a national minimum wage.
O Free trade unions; a 'workers' charter' guaranteeing the right to organise, rights to strike, and to take solidarity action; repeal of all the anti-trade union laws.
O Decent public services: return private companies that are public utilities to the public sector; restoration of all cuts in the NHS, Education, Housing, Social Services and Welfare Benefits; publicly-funded crusades for every parent.
O Immediate scrapping of the Poll Tax; restoration of local democracy and the financial base of local government; an amnesty for Poll Tax non-payers and Poll Tax prisoners.
O For democracy throughout society; abolition of the House of Lords and the monstrosity: freedom of information; public control of the police; and censorship.
O Recognition of the right to self-determination of Scotland and Wales.
O For women's right to choose whether to have children or not; equal pay for equal work of equal value; full-time rights for part-time workers.
O Complete equality for lesbians and gay men and the abolition of crimes without victim; repeal of Section 28; for the right of homosexuals to adopt children; for the right of lesbians to have access to AIDS; equalise the age of consent.
O Respect all immigration controls; support the right of black self- organisation.
O Repel of the Prevention of Terrorism Act; an end to rule by repression; support moves to British citizenship and a political settlement in Ireland based on self-determination.
O Immediate withdrawal of all Western armed forces from the Middle East; self-determination for all peoples of the Middle East, including the Kurds and Palestinians; aid from the Western bloc of nations to the areas devastated by the Gulf War.
O For unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from NATO; implemented workers' plans for a new socialist industrial economy in the United States.

Mobilise against the fascists!

THE THREAT of fascism is growing across Europe. France's Front National, led by Jean Marie Le Pen, claims support from one in five voters. Le Pen has described the Holocaust as a "benefit" of the Second World War.
It is estimated that there are 70,000 fascists in Germany; the neo-fascist Austrian Freedom Party has trashed its vote in 30% in recent local elections. In Sweden, the recently formed New Democracy Party took 7% of the vote in a programme of anti-immigrant policies.
The ex-Stalinists are proving a breeding ground for fascism, as people disillusioned with so-called "socialism" look to fascism to provide answers for rising prices and joblessness that the capitalists are bringing in their wake.
In Britain, too, the far-right are growing, encouraged not only by the rise in European fascism, but by the Tories' racism.
The British National Party and the National Front at present focus their campaigns against black people and Jews - perpetrating their biases, attacking them in the street and desecrating cemeteries.
But they will, when they think the time is right, turn their attacks against the labour movement - as in Germany in the 1930s.
If the labour movement don't defend black and Jewish people now, it will be all the weaker when it comes defending itself. The trade unions and Labour Party need to mobilise against fascism wherever and whenever it raises its head.

Socialists for Labour is sponsored by over 200 labour movement organisations and activists. If you or your organisation wish to sponsor SFL or order more copies of this booklet (£1.00 for b/w, £2.00 for full colour) write to SFL, c/o 1 Copperfield House, Conventry Road, London NW4. SFL is supported by Labour Party Socialists and by the Socialist Movement.

Vote Labour in every constituency • Vote Labour in every constituency

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Free our unions!

ARE YOU GETTING a little bit fed up with hearing about the anti-
union laws? After all, it's nearly twelve years since the Tenes-
se's legislation offensive began. John Sargeant isn't fed up, if he is,
the coming general election will be his and another Employment Act. This
would be the seventh since 1980. Amongst other things, it will
make collective bargaining specifically legally enforceable, introduce
statutory periods of notice before strikes, overhaul the
Briffington Agreement, and make it difficult for unions to
maintain the check of wages by which action dues are
deducted at source.

If some in our movement are
giving up on the laws, the
Tenes's certainly aren't. If you
are tired listening about the
legislation, just remember what
it means, and how appalling it is
in reality.

Since 1980:
• Rights to union recreation have been completely
  abolished.
• All forms of 100% tax union deductions for fighting
  legislation have been legally ousted.
• All forms of industrial action have been determined by
  the rights given to employers to sack all or any of those
  taking such action.
• All forms of secondary action and solidarity action, even
  those working for customers and suppliers of firms,
  have been declared unlawful.
• All unofficial strikes have been had and it is now
  unlawful to organise any kind of
  industrial action in support of
  those sacked for participating in
  such action.
• The detailed requirements for ballots before industrial
  action have been tightened and tightened so that
  have been able to rule strike after
  strike unlawful because of
defective wording on the ballot
  paper, and in cases such as that
  involving the steelworkers in 1988,
  stop NUIN from even
  holding a ballot!
• Unions have been forced to
  hold ballots before they can
  spend a penny on political
  purposes.

Meanwhile,

companies have continued to

continue to be unlawful.

• Unlimited fines will still be imposed on the
  judges if they refuse to accept
  injunctions. If the fines were
  ignored totally, and the strick
  of a union's assets could take
  place.
• The Taff Vale decision, making unions financially
  responsible for the actions of
  officials, consigned to the
  dustbin of history in 1906
  and reintroduced by Tebbitt in 1982,
  the object of class hatred for
  six generations, would continue in
  being.
• Detailed requirements for
  ballots compromising the
  right of union members to
  make their own rules, would
  continue.
• Individuals would have
  a right not to belong to a
trade union, to undermine
to görmek, the welfare
  grants from the
  endowments of their
  brothers and sisters.
• Restrictions on picketing
  would continue.
• Labour's programme is
  simply not good enough. There
  is room for fudging if we
  want a clear legal platform
  on which to base a new powerful
  socialist trade union
  movement. We do not need
  Tony Blair's blinkers: we need
  a campaign from the rank and
  file for a better policy, which
  should include such
  fundamental rights as:
  (a) The right to belong to a
  trade union for all employees
  including those employed at
  GCHQ, the police, and the
  armed services.
  (b) Legally enforceable
  rights for unions to gain
  access to worker workplaces,
  for workers to join unions, and
  for unions to gain recognition.
  (c) A legally unionized
  right to strike; to picket
  effectively and in whatever
  number is chosen, and to take
  other forms of
  industrial action.
  (d) The right to strike for
  all trade unionists, including
  secondary or solidarity action,
  without fear of dismissal, fines
  or sequestration of union

assets

(2) The right for unions to
determine their own constitutions and rule books in
accordance with their own democratic
treatment for trade union, free from any interference by
the state.
(3) The right of trade unions

to take political action and

collect a political levy.
(4) The right to job security.
(5) The right to stop work

whenever health and safety are
threatened.
(6) The right to employment

discrimination on

grounds of gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation,
disability or political

persuasion.
(7) The rights of workers and
their unions to be fully

consulted and informed by

employers on all decisions
relating to working conditions,
jobs prospects, strategic
investments, mergers and

takeovers, and to have the right
to veto such decisions.
(8) Full time rights for

part-time workers; rights for

short-
term contract workers.
(9) Rights for homeowners

in employment protection

laws, and financial sanctions

on those who illegally

exploit them.

Any such positive rights for
trade unions must go hand in
hand with reform of those who
would 'interpret' it - the
judges.

J ustices and magistrates

should be chosen by
democratic processes.

Positive discrimination

should provide for more
women and the ethnic

minorities. Only if we change
the administration of the law,
as well as the form and content,
will we secure a lasting and just

settlement for trade union

and, more importantly, for their

members.

We should be confident and
articulate in our demands.
Doing so confirms our faith in
our movement, its history and,