

**workers power**

# VOTE LABOUR



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**BUT ORGANISE  
TO FIGHT!**

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**Vote Nellist/Fields in Coventry/Liverpool**

# Why we say: Vote Labour

THE TORIES have been in office thirteen years too long. In their election manifesto John Major informs us:

"Only the Conservatives can truly claim to be the party of opportunity; choice; ownership and responsibility. Socialists like to keep people under the government's thumb. Conservatives want to give them independence."

It's certainly true that under the Conservatives millions had the opportunity to be unemployed for the first time. Thousands could choose which hospital they wanted to be on a waiting list for. Home and share ownership grew—bringing along such joys as record house repossessions and bankruptcies.

And as for living under the government's thumb we thought it was the Tories that treated us to a militarised police force, to anti-union laws that made effective trade union action illegal and to jail sentences and fines for going on strike or campaigning against the Poll Tax.

The Tories have wrecked thousands of workers' lives, they have robbed workers of countless rights, they have savagely attacked workers every time they have tried to resist the government's attacks. They are the party of the rich, for the rich.

## Butchered

Their manifesto pledges more of the same. The coal industry, already being butchered, is to be sold off to the private sector once its profit margins have been boosted at the expense of thousands of miners' jobs. Education and the NHS are to suffer another round of creeping commercialisation, laying the basis for privatisation. British Rail, already in chaos, is to be slimmed down making it a future candidate for privatisation.

The unions, still reeling from the legal onslaught of the 1980s, will face yet tougher restrictions. Individual users of a public service will have the right to take workers who have democratically decided to strike to court. Scabs will have the right to scab and not be disciplined by their union. Strikes will only be legal if the bosses are given seven days' notice.

The list of planned attacks goes on and on. And that is why the Tories must be got rid of. It is why every worker should vote Labour on 9 April.

Many people are apathetic about this election. They have seen Neil Kinnock unashamedly abandon his so called principles just to get into Number 10. They are seeing politics reduced to a publicity exercise, real promises reduced to marginal disagreements with the Tories about how to spend the same minuscule amount of cash.

Labour's 1992 manifesto is a monument to Neil Kinnock's transformation of the Labour Party into a pale pink version of the Tories. When John Major refers to Labour as the "Socialists" Kinnock could justifiably sue him for libel. The word socialism doesn't get a mention in the 1992 manifesto. The entire set of policies outlined have nothing whatsoever to do with socialism.

Labour's economic recovery plan is directed at the bosses. Labour will be "a government which business can do business with". Not one penny is promised to cut the obscene unemployment figures, but the bosses are promised—in the very first point of the plan for "national recovery"—"enhanced capital allowances" and "an investment tax incentive". Reading this you could be forgiven for forgetting that these are the bosses that have increased the dole queues for the last thirteen years.

The furthest Labour is prepared to go is to offer £600 million for education and £1 billion for the NHS. All very well, but these figures have already been budgeted for by

the Tories and neither get near the amount of money necessary to restore and extend these services so that they will benefit workers.

The reality is that, in this sick system where profit always comes before the needs of ordinary people, to repair the damage caused by Tory rule the bosses and the super rich would have to be attacked with the same ruthlessness that the Tories have attacked the working class. That is something Labour is determined to avoid.

Nevertheless we say: Vote Labour. The alternative offered by the Liberal Democrats, which may tempt some people into the mistake of voting for them "tactically" should be rejected by every worker. The Liberal Democrats, as their manifesto makes clear yet again, are a thoroughgoing and open

bosses' party. Their aim is to create a "climate of enterprise and competition" by breaking national pay bargaining, imposing "flexibility in working patterns" and continuing with the anti-union laws. They are pledged to retain Local Management of Schools and prevent teachers from having the right to negotiate their own pay. On every issue they are committed to backing Britain's bosses.

Of course, in policy terms Labour may not differ much with the Tories, Liberals or SNP but it remains a working class-based party. Nearly ever penny it is spending in the election campaign comes from the pockets of ordinary workers through the trade unions. The trade unions still have a decisive say over Labour Party policy—even though Kinnock has won the right to ignore that policy when he chooses to. The vast majority of those who vote for Labour and run the local parties are workers.

And despite the witch-hunts under Kinnock it is still possible to fight in the unions and the party to hold these MPs to their promises. The organised influence of working people in the Labour Party is something the bosses fear so much that their papers and television chan-

nels spent the best part of the last decade trying to destroy it.

And what is the alternative? In every election millions do not vote because, they say, it changes nothing. In a way they are right—all the main parties are committed to maintaining this rotten system. But refusing to vote is not an act of protest, it is an act of despair. It leaves millions of working class people sitting in front of the TV whilst a few rich and powerful people make all the important decisions.

Workers Power is a revolutionary socialist organisation and we stand for the building of a new revolutionary workers' party. We don't believe Labour can ever become the kind of party that can really fight for working class interests. And real socialism can never come peacefully through parliament, because the unelected generals and judges would quickly step in to stop any Labour government that really acted in the interests of the working class. But as long as millions of workers place their hope in a Labour government we say: Vote Labour, but organise to fight!

Labour says it is committed to the NHS, to education, to housing, to building up industry. But because it is tied to the purse strings of the capitalist banks it will not promise any more money than the Tories for these vital needs. Labour is committed to a minimum wage, but at a pathetically low level. Labour says it is against unemployment but it will not dare to think about promising a job and decent training for everyone who wants it.

That's why we have to organise now, during the election campaign itself, to demand Labour acts to protect the rights and living standards of working class people. By getting organised we can begin to fight now for the things we will have to force Labour to give us.

## Organised

By getting organised to fight—whichever party wins—we will be doing something far more powerful than putting a cross against the name of some careerist politician. We will be sowing the seeds of a fightback; reversing thirteen years of defeat, disorganisation and retreat; building up real workers' democracy in the factories offices and estates.

The active participation of angry and well organised workers in Kinnock's campaign will make his middle class public relations experts run a mile. But it is the only way to make sure we get rid of the Tories without saddling ourselves with another five years of paying through the nose while the rich get richer. ■

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LEICESTER PUBLIC MEETING  
**Revolutionaries and the elections**  
7.30pm  
Tuesday 31 March  
The Rainbow and Dove  
Charles Street

# Abolish Poll Tax now!

THE POLL Tax is a corpse that won't stay buried. Having officially killed it last year, the Tories are still faced with its consequences.

The Poll Tax was one of the most hated laws the Tories ever passed. It provoked a scale of generalised resistance that dwarfed every other struggle against the 1987-92 Tory administration.

Tommy Sheridan, the Scottish anti-Poll Tax campaigner, has just been jailed for his part in the struggle. Hundreds of others have been imprisoned or had their belongings stolen by bailiffs. And show trials, like the one against the Colchester 16 victimised for demonstrating against the Poll Tax in 1990, are still going on.

Councils, many of them Labour,

are still sending in bailiffs or staging warrant sales, to try and force the thousands of defiant non-payers into submission. And this year's Poll Tax bills are growing at triple the inflation rate.

The Tories will be blamed for introducing the hated tax. But Labour will be remembered for refusing to fight it; for condemning and expelling from its ranks those who did fight it; for authorising its councils to punish the poor by taking thousands of non-payers to court; for imposing the highest Poll Tax bills on its own supporters.

Labour is promising to replace the Poll Tax with "fair rates". In the first place it is the workers themselves who should decide what is fair. And the only fair way of paying for local government services is by taxing

the rich!

Throughout the campaign we should keep the issue of the Poll Tax and local government services alive by demanding of Labour:

- immediately abolish the Poll Tax and replace it with a steeply progressive local income tax
- a full amnesty to all non-payers
- compensate all those jailed or fined for non-payment
- abolish privatisation and tendering out of all local services
- stop the sale of council housing
- restore all elements of local democracy destroyed by Tory legislation and provide a massive cash injection to local councils from central funds
- cancel all debts to the City and finance houses owed by local councils!

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# No coalitions! No pacts!

EVEN BEFORE the current election campaign got off the ground people were all talking about a hung parliament. And while everyone, apart from the Liberal Democrats, refuses to even use the word "coalition" in public, privately it is on everybody's lips.

Whatever the outcome of the election every worker should deliver a firm message to Neil Kinnock—no coalitions, no pacts!

It's hardly surprising that after thirteen years of Tory government many voters, including workers, think that a new Lib-Lab pact or actual coalition would be a better bet than letting John Major back into Number 10.

What's more, as one left wing MP (who refused to be named) pointed out, there's little difference this time round between the two parties' policies. Swap the rhetoric of Kinnock for the style of Action Man Ashdown and there's little to choose between them.

Of course, in office Labour has consistently revealed itself as a party which rules on behalf of the bosses. Last time round, at the behest of big bankers and the International Monetary Fund, the Callaghan government started to slash public spending. The Social Contract helped to hold down wages and Labour attacked the low paid public sector workers when they fought back and took strike action.

In this sense, it is quite true that Labour and the Liberal Democrats are both the same—they are both parties committed to running capitalism.

But there is one crucial difference between Labour and the Liberal Democrats, a difference which makes it vital to oppose all talk of a coalition or of a voting pact. Labour's support is based in the working class. The majority of British trade unions are affiliated to the Labour Party. The working class, through the Labour Party constituencies and through the trade unions, exerts pressure on Labour. The Kinnock witch-hunt has been aimed at cutting out dissent, prevent-

ing that pressure being felt. But the link is still there.

Every Labour leadership, once in office, has to deal with that working class base. It seeks to use the union leaders to discipline rank and file workers when they demand that Labour fulfils its promises. But at the same time, workers can organise for their own interests.

Although Labour leaderships have mostly won their contests with the working class, the struggle itself opens up the possibility of another outcome: The working class learns in practice that both Labour and trade union leaders cannot be trusted. Labour will not deliver even its minimal promised reforms. Worker militants begin to organise independently, at rank and file level, against the betrayers. By putting Labour to the test of office, on its own and without any excuses, workers can be broken from reformism.

But what if Labour is tied to a coalition or a version of the Lib-Lab pact? Consider what happened the last time round. Callaghan, desperate to stay in power, formed an "understanding" with the Liberals. The Liberals demanded concessions. And every time Labour supporters protested at another attack, the Labour leadership could point the finger at the Liberals, put the blame on them, but say that breaking the pact would bring down the Labour government.

So, Callaghan hung on to the bitter end at the mercy of first the Liberals and then the Scottish nationalists and Ulster Unionists. And the entire Labour left backed him against the working class in order to preserve the Labour government.

The Liberal Democrats have no ties to the working class, they are an out-and-out bosses' party despite their "human face". Today, while workers organise to prevent Labour bringing in its own anti-union laws, the Liberals would be insisting on them as the price for parliamentary support.

Ask workers in Tower Hamlets in London's East

End what the Liberals' caring rhetoric is worth and you will get a sharp answer—appalling houses, racism, slashed services and the sack for workers who strike to resist their attacks.

What a wonderful excuse a pact with these characters at a national level would hand to Kinnock for immediately embarking on his programme of betrayal!

We want to see a Labour government taking full responsibility for its own actions, not hiding behind the excuse of having to modify policies to suit Ashdown. We want to see a Labour government answerable to its working class supporters, not the members of the Reform Club. We want its actions open to the full light of day, not hidden in the Westminster corridors.

We revolutionaries have not one iota of faith in Labour's promises to deliver a fairer Britain. But we want their betrayals fully exposed.

If Labour is the largest party it should form a government. It should not make one concession to the Liberal Democrats or any of the other bosses' parties (Scottish and Welsh nationalists, Ulster Unionists). It should not make a pact or coalition with any of them.

If Labour cannot govern without the support of the other parties, if they vote down Labour's measures, then it must force another election. Already there are signs that Kinnock is preparing the ground for a rotten bloc. The labour movement must be ready to immediately respond to any such proposals in the event of a hung parliament.

- No coalitions, no pacts!
- For a Labour government that can be put to the test!

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## where we stand

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can

defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary Communist International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

## Why we support PR

THIS ELECTION, like all other British general elections, is held under a grossly unfair voting system.

The two major parties, likely to get around 75% of the vote between them, will get around 90% of the seats. And the likelihood is that their percentage of votes would be lower if it were not for the fact that many voters feel their vote would be "wasted" on a minority party.

This results from the "first past the post" electoral system where the candidate with the largest vote in any one constituency gets elected. Other voters' wishes are entirely disregarded. So a party can have sizeable minority support across a number of constituencies but never get an MP.

### Undemocratic

Up until now the two big parties have defended this undemocratic system because it suits their own interests. Now the Kinnock leadership, under pressure from the Liberal Democrats and smaller nationalist parties but also from some sections of the bosses and their press, is shifting its position towards support for proportional representation (PR)

This line up makes many socialists and trade unionists think that PR should be opposed. Traditionally, Labour supporters have argued that to get a clear choice between Labour and the Tories, the existing system is much the best. Opponents of PR argue that it leads to constant horse-trading between the parties, unprincipled coalitions and a lack of

clear choice. Both left and right wing Labour leaders have argued that it would prevent the elections of strong governments.

These arguments are wrong. For a start it is not in the interests of the working class to have "strong" governments, be they Labour, Tory or Liberal. The reason is that these are all strong capitalist governments, which will use their "strength" to attack workers.

Nor is it a PR voting system that leads to unprincipled coalitions. When they make coalitions it the party leaders who decide. Socialists do not object in principle to coalitions between parties of the working class—as, for instance, between the Socialist and Communist Parties in France. This does not mean politically endorsing the governments that result, and there are times when socialists would try to force a break in the coalition. But in these cases each party can be put under direct pressure from its own working class supporters, its organic base in the class.

What socialists do object to, as we explain above, is parties with working class support forming alliances with parties that are out and out bourgeois parties, with no connection with the class. But it is not PR that makes this happen—indeed, an unprincipled coalition is now a real possibility within the existing system.

And on two occasions this century Labour politicians have formed a government with the Tories against the interests of workers. First

Ramsey MacDonald led a section Labour politicians into the National Government of the 1930s which carried out vicious anti-working class measures in the Depression. Then in the Second World War, Labour formed an official coalition with Churchill, to carry through his policy of protecting British imperialism through the sacrifices of millions workers and their families.

We want to see a system of immediately—not as the price of a Lib-Lab pact but because it is democratic measure for workers. Time and again socialists are not to stand against Labour, not rock the boat, not to threaten splitting the vote and letting the Tories in. A PR system would stop this pulling this one.

### Exposed

Along with other democratic measures, like abolishing the payment deposits before you can stand, would give revolutionary socialist chance to stand, to put forward the programme and get elected. I don't believe that socialism can come through parliament, even if elected by the most democratic system of PR imaginable. But we are interested in using parliaments rally and organise the working class and expose the crimes of capitalism and the betrayals of Labour leaders.

Socialists have nothing to fear from PR and plenty to gain. The basic democratic reform should be supported by every worker and socialist.

WHEN THE grocer's daughter marched into Downing Street in 1979 she set about the task of fundamentally changing the balance of power between capital and labour in the bosses' favour. Vicious petit bourgeois prejudice and the desire for revenge against forces such as the miners and Fleet Street printworkers, who had so humiliated Ted Heath's 1970-74 Tory government, were evident in Thatcher's approach to the class struggle. But her motives ran far deeper than her emotional loathing of the trade unions.

In the words of Sir John Hoskyns, later a personal aide to Thatcher, "... the reform of trade union law was one of the necessary strategic objects" for the Tories to pursue. Only by dramatically weakening the power of workers to organise through their unions could the Tories ensure that the bosses would be able to ram through the redundancies, sackings of militants, and productivity drives, all of which were necessary to restore the profit rates of British capitalism.

### Provoked

The Thatcherites quickly provoked a dispute at British Steel in early 1980, a bitter three month struggle during which the government pushed through legislation cutting off virtually all state benefits to strikers and their families. By August of that year they introduced the first of six major legal attacks on trade union rights.

The 1980 Act restricted solidarity (secondary) action and was swiftly followed by "codes of practice" on picketing and the closed shop. Under the guise of "returning unions to their members" the Tories also sought to rewrite union rule books and conferred new powers on judges to meddle in internal union affairs. State funded postal ballots for a whole range of union activities also came into effect with this first Act.

This, though, was only the beginning of the attempt to shackle the unions. The 1982 legislation revived the notorious Taff Vale court ruling, scrapped in 1906. The courts could once more order the seizure of union assets for "illegal" acts by union officials, shop stewards and even ordinary members. The Act took further steps towards the outlawing of solidarity action.

Such measures not only undermined the basis for effective struggle but also strengthened the dead hand of union bureaucrats who, with the threat of sequestration of union assets, had a new excuse for avoiding action and a means of keeping their members in line.

The trade union leaders' cowardice in the face of the Tories attacks on trade union rights, coupled with rank and file workers' failure to turn the militancy of the 1970s into a movement that could transform their unions into real class fighting organisations, enabled the Tories to gain the upper hand.

### Demoralised

The victory over the NUM, a long-time vanguard of the labour movement, was one of Thatcher's crowning achievements. Though gained at a cost of £6 billion, the defeat of the miners inflicted a hammer blow against the unions. Since 1985 the NUM's membership has fallen by more than 65% and it has still not regained real bargaining rights from British Coal's bosses.

The implications stretched far beyond the coalfields, with the defeat leaving many militants demoralised and strengthening those in the trade union movement who preached open collaboration with the bosses and the Tories. The defeat opened the era of the "new realist" union bosses and paved the way for Kinnoch's march to the right in the Labour Party.

Another victory for the Tories was aided and abetted by Eric Hammond's EETPU. As militants knew at the time, and as his recently published autobiography officially confirms, Hammond was directly in-

## SHACKLING THE UNIONS

involved in organising a scabbing operation with Rupert Murdoch. The plan was to get Murdoch's Wapping plant up and running, minus the presence of unionised printworkers.

The EETPU orchestrated scabbing (which has since failed to get EETPU recognition in the plant!) together with the use of various anti-union laws, led to a serious defeat for the strong printers' unions in Fleet Street and severely damaged union organisation in all national newspapers in 1986 and 1987.

Sensing that they had the unions on the run the Tories pushed their legal offensive ever further. When workers formed unofficial committees to co-ordinate strike action, as on the London Underground in 1989, the Tories responded with yet another legislative attack.

The 1990 Act not only removed all remaining immunities for secondary action but increased union liabilities for unofficial strikes. Those taking part would lose virtually all legal protection against summary sacking.

In recent years all the bosses have shown a growing willingness to use the weapons the Tories have handed them. A 1990 survey by *Labour Research* suggested that one in three employers in unionised firms had threatened to invoke one or another clause of the anti-union legislation, while in as many as one in five workplaces unions abandoned industrial action in the face of such threats.

### Handiwork

When the Tories survey their handiwork in relation to the trade unions over the last 13 years they can well be pleased. Union membership is still in decline. While some public sector unions such as NALGO have grown, overall trade union membership has fallen dramatically, from 12 million when Thatcher came to power to around eight million today.

The defeats the workers have suffered, the threat of growing unemployment combined with the growing barrage of laws surrounding union action have led to fewer and fewer strikes. In 1991 only 800,000 days were lost in strike action—the lowest annual total since statistics were first compiled in 1891.

The Tories however have not yet finished with the unions. If they get back in they have threatened to virtually ban workplace and branch ballots, replacing them by postal ballots. They will add more obstructions to calling a strike, with employers having to be given considerable notice of a ballot and then given at least seven days notice of strike action if the ballot is successful.

If any of the myriad of new and old rules surrounding the taking of action are not followed to the letter the Tories are planning to allow any single individual to take the union before the bosses' courts to declare the strike unlawful!

### Tragedy

The real tragedy of the defeats suffered by the working class in the 1980s is that they need never have happened. Every struggle could have been won. Every one of the Tories' laws could have been rendered inoperable. All that was needed was a leadership that was prepared to spread the fight.

Rank and file workers, from the steel strike, through the miners' strike and print strike, up to the dockers' strike in 1989, showed they were more than willing to fight. And on each occasion there was a sentiment of solidarity that could have been built on to spread these struggles into a general strike to smash every one of the Tories' anti-union

laws.

But not only was this type of leadership, a revolutionary leadership, lacking. The rank and file faced, time and again, an existing leadership that sabotaged their struggles, held back solidarity and embarked on a course of obeying the laws instead of defying them.

Solidarity strikes with steelworkers were called off in Wales and Yorkshire. The TUC deliberately blocked the solidarity action that thousands of workers were prepared to deliver to win the miners a famous victory. The union leaders actively prevented launching an all-out print strike that could have scuppered Murdoch's plans and saved thousands of jobs. The TGWU leadership caved in to the laws and left militant dockers isolated.

### Treachery

And all along the way Labour, hoping to refurbish its image and woo the bosses, collaborated in every act of treachery. Now, capitalising on the defeats that the union and Labour leaders helped bring about, a Labour government is promising to keep many of the Tories' anti-union laws.

We need to counter this by fighting hard to force Labour to promise it will repeal every anti-union law in its entirety. But, in order to regain the untrammelled right to strike and organise trade unions freely, without the interference of the state, workers must learn the lessons of the Tory years. Without a renewed and fighting leadership in the trade unions, based on democratic accountability to the rank and file, the working class will continue to fight with one hand tied behind its back.

Without strong organisation we will not be able to defend our jobs or our living standards. And this is the task before us under the Tories or Labour. ■

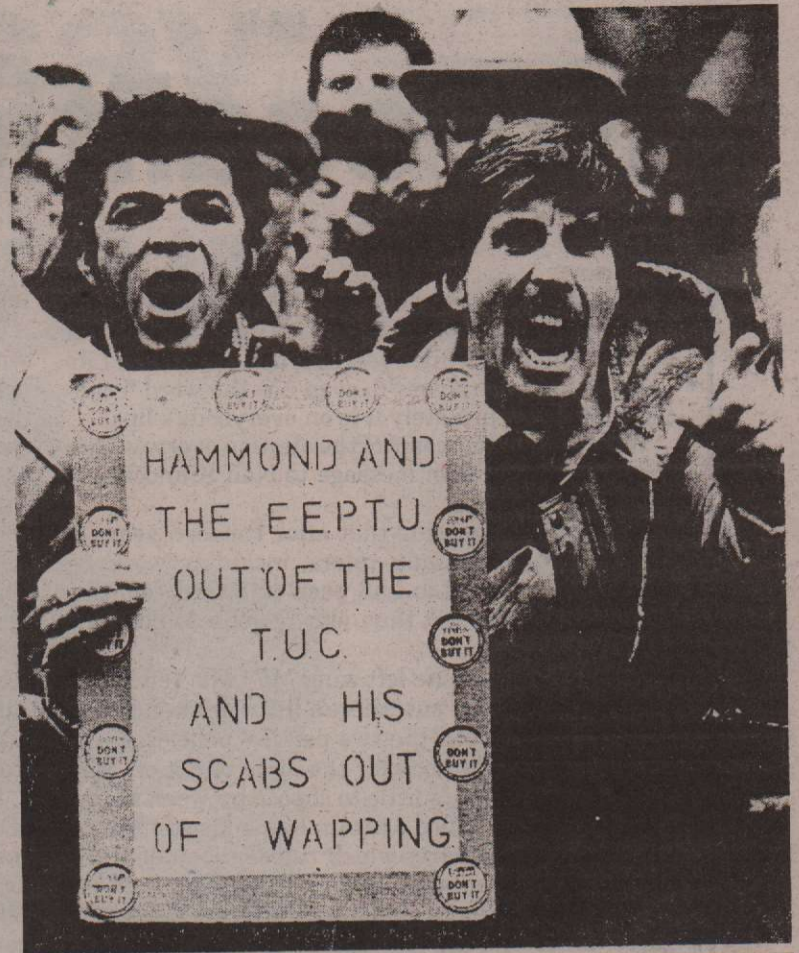
ONE OF the Tory promises on coming to power was to "roll back the frontiers of the state". This meant privatising the nationalised industries. It was a key element of the Tories' overall strategy for destroying all the working class' post-war gains.

This sell-off was supposed to reduce bureaucracy and open up whole areas of the economy to the fresh winds of private enterprise and efficiency. This in turn would benefit the consumer through competition and lower prices. This was always a lie. The record proves it.

Privatisation turned into one of the biggest giveaways of the century. British Telecom, Gas, Water, one after another the public utilities were sold at bargain prices to the Tories' big business backers, with "sweeteners"—bribes in plain English—to tempt the bosses where necessary. State industries where profits returned to the government were now replaced by massive private monopolies which could raise prices and profits virtually at will.

A small part of the benefits of this wholesale looting of state assets went to the "general public" as a straightforward bribe to take part in Thatcher's "shareholding democracy". But "popular capitalism" was a fiction. The real costs of the privatisations are now becoming clear. The power and coal industries, the next candidates for privatisation, are good examples.

The coal industry stands as a monument to Tory privatisation policy and vindictiveness. In 1980 there were 232,500 workers in the



# Thirteen years on the rampage

## PRIVATE VICES

mining industry. Today there are a mere 46,000 left.

Determined to wreak revenge on the section of workers that had done most to drive them from office in the mid-1970s, the Tories set about taking on and breaking the traditionally militant National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

The defeat of the Great Strike in 1985 and the resulting split in the NUM allowed the Tories and the Coal Board bosses to push ahead with endless pit closures and productivity drives to prepare the industry for privatisation. Today the national press is littered with full page adverts from British Coal extolling the miners as "Britain's most successful businessmen". It is a strange "success" that has sent over 180,000 of them down the road!

But the success British Coal is referring to is the 100% productivity increase extracted from the miners in the last five years. Has this doubling of productivity by the miners guaranteed their jobs? Of course not. Latest predictions suggest that the present 48 pits will be reduced to 12, with the workforce down to a mere 26,000. And after the butchery will come the privatisation swindle.

Pressure on the coal industry is

coming from the newly privatised power industry firms, National Power and PowerGen. They want to use cheaper gas-fired power stations and cheaper imported coal. These shining examples of "free enterprise capitalism" have even led the all-party House of Commons Select Committee on Energy to denounce their monopoly control and pricing policies.

Between April 1985 and 1991 electricity prices rose by 40%, when the average inflation during the same period was 35%. But at the same time the price of coal, the major cost to the generators, fell in real terms by 30%! Not surprisingly, this year the 12 distribution companies alone are expected to make £2 billion in profits.

Meanwhile the "pressures of the market" are remarkably absent from the government subsidised nuclear power programme where electricity production costs are two to three times as much.

Why the difference? Because the Tories built up this side of the power industry as a strike-free alternative to the coal industry and is willing to make the public pay through the nose to keep it that way.

The story is the same for every single one of the Tories' privatisations. Service to the consumers remains bad but profits are swollen. Prices are spiralling upwards. Shares have been concentrated in the hands of a tiny group of capitalists. Remember Sid during the sell off of British Gas? Word is he's on the dole and has had his gas cut off. That's popular capitalism for you. ■

**D**URING THE last general election campaign in 1987 the Labour Party spent £4.2 million on its national publicity. The Tories spent more than twice this amount, over £9 million.

The bulk of this cash came from the Tories' main backers, the big capitalist firms, while Labour's election was paid for primarily by the trade unions. The Tories are the party of big business.

Forty-two of the top 100 companies in the UK are major donors to Tory Party funds. A recent survey by *Labour Research* showed that since 1980, 85 industrialists who were "honoured" by the Tories with peerages, knighthoods and other medieval titles, were connected to 66 companies which had donated over £13.5 million to the Tory Party or its front organisations.

### Rewarded

But of course it was not just in the field of "honours" that the capitalists were rewarded by their parliamentary representatives. Sir Graham Day, knighted by Thatcher in 1989, is now head of British Aerospace where he earns well in excess of £300,000 a year. And he rakes in more than £300,000 on top of this

from his numerous part-time jobs on other company boards.

Like a host of other leading capitalists, Day did not have any complaints about the Tories' tax "reforms". Before 1979 Day and his ilk would have been paying a top rate of tax of 83%. In her first year of office Thatcher reduced this to 60%. By 1988 the Tories had reduced it to 40%, the lowest tax rate for the rich in Europe.

Of course the firms owned by these big shots did equally well out of the Tories. Profits soared and dividends to shareholders shot up as trade unions were hammered and productivity was increased. In the first week of the election campaign the *Economist* gloated about the Tories' achievements:

"In the 1980s the British rose from sixth in the big seven's productivity-growth league to second. The credit for that improvement should go to Mrs Thatcher's economic radicalism. Managers started to manage, which included closing plants. Workers became more flexible and more motivated.

Strikes, once an instinctive British reaction to industrial change, turned rarer than they are in Scandinavia."

How did the workers do under the "low tax" Tory "economic radicals"? Very badly. While the Tories make a great deal of having reduced the standard rate of taxation from 33% in 1979 to 25% in 1988, allowing, as they say, "the individual to decide how best to spend their income", what they gave with one hand they grabbed back with the other.

Progressive taxes, based on the principle of the more you earn the larger proportion you pay, were replaced by regressive ones, with millionaires paying the same tax as those on poverty incomes. VAT was systematically raised, and now stands at 17.5%. If you are on the dole you have to pay the same VAT as Graham Day!

### Poll Tax

The rates, which were loosely based on the size and value of property, were replaced by the hated Poll Tax. Everyone "paid the same" whatever their income.

Worse, to help pay for the tax handouts to the rich state benefits were cut back as well. Almost immediately on coming to power the Tories broke the link between benefits and wages. Pensions and child benefits, for example, were indexed to parallel wage increases. Under the Tories they were allowed to fall behind. In relation to average earnings, compared to 1979, pensioners are now 30% worse off, while child benefits have fallen by 20%.

Thirteen years of Tory rule have resulted in a significant shift in income and wealth from the poor to the rich. Even the Tories' persistent attempts to rid the Government's statistical office of any semblance of objectivity has not been able to hide this fact. According to

## HANDOUTS TO THE RICH

as the rich. Most important of all there is no attempt to tackle the question of the massive inequalities in wealth between the super rich and the poor which have grown steadily under the Tories.

Labour have limited themselves to minor adjustments of the tax band and promises to raise pensions and child benefits. They have made no promise to lift the millions on income support or unemployment benefit out of the poverty trap they are in.

### Pathetic

In the face of the Tory record of handouts to the rich this is pathetic. If Labour were serious about their pledges to help the poorest sections they would go into this election proudly declaring that they will hit the rich hard with a steeply progressive tax on wealth and raise benefits across the board to the level of the average industrial wage. This is what we should demand. And it is what we should organise to fight for. ■

*The Tories are the open and favoured party of the bosses. However much Neil Kinnock's Labour Party would like to win a place in the hearts and minds of the capitalists as the "party of industry" they have little chance. The Tories have been far too good for the employers over the last 13 years. Whether it be tax handouts to the rich, attacks on trade union rights, cutting state expenditure on housing or handing over the state owned industries at knock down prices to their capitalist pals, they have performed their task only too well. John Mckee, G R McColl and Bill Clinton look at the Tory record.*

## BOOSTING HOMELESSNESS

**W**HEN THE Tories came to power they were determined to rid the country of that well known curse—affordable public housing provided by local authorities. Since then they have made great strides in fulfilling their goal. In 1979 local councils started building 56,000 homes. By 1990 the number of "starts" had fallen to a mere 7,500.

The Tories have pursued a two pronged attack. On the one hand, they have introduced a series of measures against council housing aimed at running it down and making it expensive, and on the other, they have been encouraging or forcing council tenants to buy or find other landlords.

The "right to buy" was introduced in the 1980 Housing Act. Big discounts were introduced to bribe council tenants to purchase. In England 20% of the council housing stock has been sold off in this way. At the same time the councils were not allowed to spend this income on building new houses. At most they were only allowed to spend 25% of it on new "starts".

Further measures, in particular the 1988 Housing Act, allowed the "voluntary" transfer of whole estates to private landlords or housing associations. This act also gave the government the power to set up Housing Action Trusts (HATS) which could provide millions for renovation, denied to the councils, on condition that the

estates voted to go private or to a housing association.

At the same time the Tories introduced the "free market" into the council housing sector. Council housing budgets were "ring-fenced" which meant this sector could not be subsidised from other council income. Tenants now had to pay the full burden of the interest payments to the banks. In Manchester for example this amounts to 60p for every pound in rent collected!

Repairs for run down and neglected housing stock now also had to be found from rents. The result was that rents soared. In the last two years alone council rents in England have increased by over 30%. Just to round off these measures the Tories abolished the "assured tenancies" for new tenants, giving more rights to the landlords and making evictions easier.

The results of all these measures has been an unprecedented crisis in housing—growing rent arrears, increasing homelessness, run down and dilapidated housing stock. Council housing has virtually stopped being an option in many areas for working class families.

Forced into buying their own homes at exorbitant prices and interest rates, many have fallen victim to mortgage repossessions up from 15,000 in 1989 to over 75,000 last year. Repossessions should be countered by the nationalisation of the building societies and the provision of low

cost mortgages at fixed interest rates. Labour should be forced to meet this basic demand immediately.

In 1990 168,000 households were accepted as homeless. Tens of thousands live in squalid bed and breakfast, tens of thousands live out on the streets of London alone. A quarter of a million tenants are now more than six months behind with their rents and threatened with eviction.

Only a massive input of resources into housing can solve this problem. The Labour Party's proposals to allow councils to spend all the money received from council house sales is feeble when measured against what is needed. There should be a massive expansion of council house building. This should be paid for by taxing the rich and cancelling all the debts of the councils to the banks which leech tens of millions in profits from the councils each year.

There should be a crash programme to house the homeless. At least a quarter of a million construction workers are on the dole. They should be put to work immediately. The estimated 100,000 homes in the private sector lying empty should be immediately expropriated, repaired and renovated, with compensation to the owners only in cases of proven need.

Only such a programme of public works can come near to solving the massive housing crisis inflicted on the working class by the Tories over the last 13 years. ■



Tory house building programme!

# Make Labour fight

**T**HE WORKING class movement in Britain urgently needs to rearm itself and recover its fighting strength for the battles that lie ahead. The defeats inflicted by Thatcher in the 1980s, thanks to the treachery of the reformist union and Labour leaders, have weakened both rank and file organisation in the workplace and official trade unionism.

The right wing policies of the labour movement leaders, and their ability to impose them on the unions and on the Labour Party, are testimony to this weakness. But these policies offer succour only to the bosses. They will not relieve the burdens that ordinary workers endure as a result of the crisis of capitalism and thirteen years of Tory rule.

To defeat the capitalist offensive, whether it is waged by Tories, Labour or a coalition after 9 April, the working class must rely on its own strength. It must organise to fight to defend itself, its jobs, its living standards and its rights. The building of rank and file organisations within every workplace and across every industry is vital. The unions must be transformed from top to bottom into democratic, class struggle organisations.

But trade union militancy alone is insufficient for this task. The rank and file must embrace revolutionary socialist solutions to the problems of unemployment, low pay, racism, local government and every other question facing us. We must equip ourselves with reno-

vated organisations, and policies that defend our interests against capitalism. To fight consistently for such policies we need a revolutionary party, comprising the most dedicated and far-sighted class fighters and committed to an uncompromising struggle for the destruction of the capitalist system and its state.

In the current election we are a long way from building such a party. Revolutionaries are a tiny minority. Most workers look expectantly towards a Labour government, even though their expectations have been lowered by Kinnock's drive to the right. In such a situation we cannot simply shout abuse at the Labour Party, however thoroughly the Judases who lead it deserve such abuse. Every effort should be made to transform workers' illusions in Labour into an active fight to put the traitors on the spot. We need to organise workers to fight to force the party that so many of them regard as "theirs" to meet their needs.

Every commentator and politician, of the right and the left, agrees that the economy is the central issue in the current election. The capitalist media and the politicians portray "the economy" as an issue far too important and complicated for ordinary workers to worry about. But the economy means your job, your home, your services and standard of living. That is why we need a workers' solution to the economic mess left by thirteen years of Tory rule.

## Defeat unemployment: work or full pay!

Unemployment is blighting the lives of millions. The government's rigged figures put the jobless total at 2.6 million. But thousands of women, youth, and people not claiming because of the government's punitive benefit system, are not included. The real figure for unemployment is around 3.7 million. And the start of the election has seen BT announcing 25,000 sackings, the BBC 10,000 sackings, Ford Motor Company 1,200 sackings. The grim list goes on and on.

A working class party would put at the centre of its programme the slashing of these figures and the removal of the unemployed from the poverty line benefits that they are forced to live on (just over £39 for a single claimant). Instead Labour's Employment spokesman promised merely to halt the growth of unemployment, but refused point blank to make a promise to cut existing unemployment. Against this do-nothing approach we demand that a Labour government should:

- immediately implement a 35 hour week and introduce a sliding scale of working hours, to divide all

the work among the entire workforce with no loss of pay

- nationalise all firms declaring redundancies or closures without compensation and under workers' control

- restore all cuts in benefit since 1979; unemployment benefit to be fixed at the level of the average industrial wage; abolish means test-

ing; benefits should make up the wages of part-time workers to full-time levels

- immediately abolish employment training schemes and introduce a programme of effective training and re-training, under trade union control, available to all workers

- introduce benefits or living

Labour is firmly under the control of the right wing. The working class are meagre. Mark Harrison explains how and what workers should organise to fight for in the



## Kinnock's command

union leaders' desperation to keep the politics of class struggle out of the election campaign.

With the left in disarray and the unions in tow Kinnock made the Labour Party the party of sending in bailiffs to collect the poll tax. He made it the party that refused to make a single promise about cutting unemployment. He made it the party that ditched every commitment to re-nationalisation of the privatised industries, to unilateral nuclear disarmament, to taxing the rich. He made it a pale pink version of the Tory Party.

So as we go into the general election the Labour Party's promises on the economy amount to a series of pledges to help capitalism. As John Smith put it, modern democratic socialism has little to do with pro-

viding decent jobs and services to workers, but sets as its "economic goals":

"... stable and balanced economic growth, a reasonable equilibrium in the balance of payments, the control of inflation, and the highest possible level of skilled and rewarding employment."

It is vital that workers don't simply put a cross on a ballot paper for Labour on 9 April. The left, with their talk of a Labour government being our only hope, are wrong. The record of Kinnock's Labour Party in opposition points to a Labour government that will attack the working class.

Labour is pledged to spending no more than capitalism can afford. With British capitalism in one of its longest recessions that means no money to restore the damage that

## THE LEFT IN DISARRAY

**T**RIBUNE, ONCE a megaphone for the left's opposition to the Labour leadership, has meekly announced:

"Labour might well be fighting this election on policies somewhat different from those that *Tribune* would have preferred. But that as it may [sic]. Along with party members of all persuasions, *Tribune* knows that a Labour government is the only hope for getting Britain back on to its feet again economically, the only hope for a fairer and more humane society, the only hope for modernising our creaking constitution."

Tony Benn echoes this mood of desperation in the latest *Socialist Campaign Group News*:

"All socialists must see the general election as marking the climax of all the industrial and political campaigns that we have waged over the last 13 years."

These utterances reflect the enormous strength of the right wing in the Labour Party, personified by Neil Kinnock and embodied in the least "socialist" manifesto that Labour has ever placed before the electorate. They also reflect the inability of the left to do anything at all to break the hold of the right wing. All that it can do, now that the election is called, is dutifully fall into line behind Kinnock. Worse, it calls on the working class to do the same.

But while the right and the left in the Labour Party are united behind the slogan "Vote Labour, no matter what", *Workers Power* is campaigning in this election on the slogan "Vote Labour, but organise to fight!"

There is a world of difference between the two. It is the difference between reformism and revolutionary socialism.

Since 1983 when he was elected leader Neil Kinnock has bent every effort towards making the Labour Party acceptable to Britain's bosses. He systematically tamed the left, neutering every one of the constitutional advances they had made in the early 1980s—re-selection of MPs, electoral college to elect the leader etc—and revising every one of the left wing policies that they had got Labour conferences to adopt.

Time and again the left retreated in the face of this onslaught. That is the doomed logic of unity with the right wing to get a Labour government elected.

When Kinnock launched a witch-hunt of Militant the left refused to organise a campaign against him. When he attacked the left councils, suspending members and whole local parties, the left fell silent. When MPs who did not fit the party's new image of middle class respectability were de-selected or had their selections quashed by the Walworth Road bureaucracy, the left called on everyone to fall in behind Kinnock's candidates.

Ignoring the centrality of the class struggle in the workplaces the left allowed Kinnock to cement a new alliance with the union leaders on the basis of the defeats suffered by workers in the 1980s. The union leaders bowed to the philosophy of new realism. For them class struggle is outdated, the unions should

be primarily servicing bureaux for their members, partnership deals with the bosses should be the norm. Mesmerised by this philosophy Kinnock had little trouble in winning the key union leaders to his project of making Labour palatable to the bosses.

Already the right wing union leaders have agreed to reduce the unions' constitutional role in the Labour Party. They have accepted Labour's proposals to retain the bulk of the Tories' anti-union laws. And, in the current election, despite the fact that they are providing £6.3 million of Labour's £7 million election expenses, they have agreed to stay invisible in the campaign.

The most trusted new realists, John Edmonds of the GMB and Bill Morris of the TGWU, have been accepted onto a shadowy "leader's committee" with Kinnock. But as for the unions being part of the campaign, mobilising their members, fighting for their interests, the leaders have made plain their intention to keep out.

Worse, they have agreed to sabotage any hint of class struggle against the Tories during the election period. A planned two hour strike against the Tories' opt-out scheme at the Middlesex Hospital, a strike that had been duly agreed by a ballot of COHSE members, a strike that could have highlighted the damage that the Tories have done to the NHS, was vetoed by an unelected COHSE official on the grounds that it was "political".

This is just one example of the

# for workers' needs

- grants for all 16 to 18 year olds
- legislate for independent access to benefits—no restrictions because of cohabitation
- immediately end the use of volunteers in such areas as social services, education and youth work etc, and replace them with trained and properly paid workers
- legislate for the right to work:

- for a massive programme of public works to soak up unemployment, directed to socially useful goals determined by committees of workers and consumers
- re-nationalise, under workers' control, all firms and industries privatised by the Tories, with compensation claims decided by committees of workers from the industries themselves
- immediately introduce massive investment programmes in existing nationalised industries and for the placing of such industries under workers' control
- reinstate and grant massive compensation to all workers victimised during the Tory years (miners, dockers, printers etc)

- well off, run down, understaffed public hospitals for the poor. Instead of saying that there will be no spending beyond what the bosses can afford Labour must:
- restore all cuts in state health care since 1979
- abolish prescription charges
- nationalise all private hospitals, clinics and hospices
- recruit nursing and ancillary staff, re-open all shut wards and hospitals, to abolish waiting lists
- scrap the opt-out scheme and bring all hospitals that have become trusts back into the NHS
- strictly impose all health and safety legislation with heavy fines and prison sentences for employers who put profit before safety
- nationalise the drug manufacturing and supply industries without compensation and under workers' control; abolish business secrecy and patent defence in drug and medical research; pooled resources not competition to speed up AIDS research
- ensure there is no compulsory HIV testing; for the prohibition of discrimination against those taking tests
- introduce regular free voluntary health screening for all women, with facilities provided at all workplaces

- all sectors of education
- provide properly funded teacher training
- provide comprehensive nursery education

and diving all the way. John Smith's Shadow Budget was an attempt to signal to the rich that their bank accounts would be safe with Labour.

Even the left are coy on the issue of hitting the rich. When asked where the money will come from to finance their spending plans Benn, Livingstone and Corbyn all reply as one: "by cutting defence spending". Labour should commit itself to not spend even a penny for the defence of the capitalist system. But that alone won't finance a programme to meet working class needs.

Labour should be told to stop ducking the issue and make clear it intends to hit the rich, and hit them hard. Labour must:

- introduce a steep tax on the profits, wealth and incomes of the super-rich industrialists, financiers and landowners
- nationalise the banks, merchant banks, insurance companies: for a single state bank and insurance fund under democratic workers' control
- clamp down hard on the City parasites; jail and expropriate the defrauders and the blue-chip thieves
- open the bosses' books, ledgers and accounts to inspection by democratically constituted and accountable workers' commissions

## Pay

Workers' wages remain a headache for the bosses. Despite the low increases that have gone through during the latest round of pay bargaining Britain's bosses still have their eyes on boosting profits through cutting our pay. They are worried about Labour's plans for a national minimum wage, even though the promised minimum is low. Labour will try to reassure them.

Traditionally Labour, the party of the working class, has been adept in cutting our pay. Under the last Labour government real wages were cut by 7% during the Social Contract. Labour's promise of a National Economic Assessment, where it will sit down with union leaders and bosses to discuss the issue of pay, points to them trying to impose pay restraint by another name if they win this election. We must organise now to stop them by demanding:

- Labour immediately declares that there will be no wage restraint, compulsory or "voluntary"
- immediately introduce a national minimum wage of £8 an hour; all wages to be linked to inflation on a sliding scale determined by committees of workers and housewives
- scrap cheap labour schemes: for real jobs at trade union rates
- equal pay for work of equal value
- nationalise all companies that cannot or will not abide by these demands without compensation and under workers' control
- re-establish national pay bargaining throughout the public sector

## Where would the money come from? The rich!

Labour got itself into a mess in January because its tax proposals were incoherent. The Tories will be making this a big issue in the election and Labour will be ducking

## Education

Jack Straw, Labour's education spokesperson announced in *The Teacher*:

"We obviously can't reverse every reform made by this government, nor would we wish to."

There is nothing obvious about this at all. The Tory "reforms" have caused chaos in Britain's schools. Teachers, students and education workers have all suffered. Labour wants to keep intact reforms like Local Management of Schools (LMS), appraisal schemes, Standard Assessment Tests, no real pay negotiating rights for teachers. If these remain intact education will continue to suffer. Worse, as with health spending, Labour are not promising any definite amount of money to get the education system out of its current mess. To deal with the crisis in education Labour must:

- ensure access to free secular education for all; end all privilege in education
- establish fully integrated schools, but with the right for education to be provided in students' mother tongue
- provide an immediate massive increase in funding; fund according to need; cut class sizes to twenty
- abolish all private schools; guarantee access to free state education for all, at any age
- make funding of adult education mandatory
- provide comprehensive tertiary education
- give living grants for all students not loans; restore students' rights to state benefits
- recognise democratic working class control of schools, colleges and all educational institutions
- abolish LMS and replace it with democratically elected governing bodies made up of representatives of workers, students, parents and local labour movement bodies
- defend and restore national bargaining on pay and conditions for

## Defend and extend the NHS!

Labour has long claimed to be the party of the welfare state. The Tories are making a complete disaster of the NHS. Their opt-out schemes have led to obscenities: sick old people in Reading are thrown out of hospitals; Carly Reavell, a sick child in Welwyn Garden City died because there was no hospital bed for her; heart patients with serious diseases are being turned away from hospitals; thousands of beds and jobs have gone thanks to the opt-outs.

Labour has promised to abolish the Tories' disastrous "reforms". Good, but this goes no way to repairing the damage done to the health service by the Tory government. The Tory objective remains the creation of a US style two-tier health system—private care for the

got away with their attacks for too long. We need to fight them now, even during the election. We can do this by organising in the workplaces to win support for policies that meet our interests.

We need to use the unions to force our demands on a future Labour government, holding the MPs that claim to represent workers to account. Every Labour government has cut our wages, broken our strikes or attacked our services. Kinnock in Number 10 will do the same. It will be his only option given his commitment to managing capitalism.

But by organising to fight to commit Labour to meet our needs the Labour Party will be put to the test in front of the millions of workers who believe what Tony Benn and Tribune tell them. We will also lay the basis for a fight with the Labour government every time it turns its guns on the working class.

We will be organising to fight an anti-working class Labour government. That is something that we openly say will be necessary. It is something that the reformist left refuse to say because they put the interests of getting and preserving a Labour government above the interests of the working class.

And that is not just a difference between revolutionary socialism and reformism. It is the difference between jobs and unemployment, a living wage and poverty pay, decent services and destroyed services. Our programme is the only way to stop a Labour victory turning into another workers' defeat. ■

...s election promises to the  
...w this situation came about  
...current election campaign



# ...k in ...and

the Tories have done to the NHS, to education, to local government services.

Labour is pledged to a "partnership" with manufacturing industry to encourage investment. That means a partnership to cut wages, to enforce the anti-union laws, to boost productivity at our expense.

Labour is pledged to leaving the privatised industries in the hands of the profiteers. That means a Labour government will continue to oversee mass sackings of workers and enormous profits for the handful of big shareowners who run these industries.

All of this explains why we say, "Vote Labour, but organise to fight!" We have to organise workers in the unions and the Labour Party to fight the right wing leaders. They have

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**T**O INTRODUCE even a few of these demands, let alone the other measures needed to defend working class interests, Labour would have to face down vehement resistance from the capitalist ruling class. Even a parliament crammed full of Dennis Skinnners or Dave Nellists would be unable to carry through such a programme.

Real power does not rest in Parliament. It lies in the boardrooms of the big capitalists whose decisions shift millions of pounds in an instant and affect millions of lives. It lies with the unelected bureaucracy, the army and police chiefs, the security services, the judges that make up the backbone of the capitalist state. The militarised police force breaks up our pickets, the judges seize our union funds and the army, as the ambulance dispute showed in 1989/90, will be used to break our strikes.

Any left wing Labour government, to act in the interests of the working class, would need to break with the bosses and establish a real workers' government, based not on the current state, but on the power of the working class organised in democratic and accountable councils of action and armed to defeat military plotters and coup attempts. It would have to smash the existing state, to abolish every element of the apparatus of repression hiding behind the parliamentary façade, and build a new kind of state based on workers' councils.

A Labour government installed after 9 April would not be a workers' government, but a bosses' government. But in the course of fighting to put Labour to the test, in the course of organising to fight the in-coming government, in the course of organising to defend our own interests regardless of capitalism's needs, we can lay the basis for winning millions of workers from reformism to revolution, from the illusory parliamentary road to socialism, to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a real socialist society. ■

# No to Scottish Assembly!

**T**HE ELECTION is being billed in Scotland as the "independence election". Recent opinion polls give anything from 37% to over 50% in favour of Scotland's separation from the United Kingdom. Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), has proclaimed the election to be a referendum for an independent Scotland.

The vast majority of Scottish workers feel aggrieved at Tory rule from Westminster. The Tories hold just nine of the 72 parliamentary seats. And, during the thirteen years of Tory government, Scottish industry has been laid waste. It seems as if decisions in London are wrecking Scotland. Steel, coal, shipbuilding are all in ruins. Even the newer industries like cars and computer manufacture are in recession.

The government has at times seemed to be waging a vendetta against the Scots. Knowing they had only ten seats left in Scotland in 1987, the Tories chose to implement the hated Poll Tax there before the rest of Britain. Electorally they had almost nothing to lose.

## Resentment

The massive Poll Tax rebellion followed, along with ever increasing resentment against Westminster. The Labour Party in Scotland betrayed the struggle, with its leadership doing its utmost to prevent the non-payment campaign. This was the turning point for the Scottish Nationalists.

The SNP seized their opportunity in the Govan by-election, when they scored a massive victory over the incumbent Labour Party by claiming to be the only real anti-Poll Tax party. Scotland, they claimed, was being oppressed by the English. Billions of pounds in revenue from the North Sea was being sucked out of the Scottish economy. In return, the English government delivered cuts and the



Alex Salmond: despite left rhetoric the SNP remain "tartan Tories"

Poll Tax. An independent Scotland, the SNP argues, will be a fairer Scotland.

How much truth is there in these nationalist arguments? There can be no doubt that Scottish workers have suffered under the Tories. Nearly one in ten Scottish workers is out of a job. But they have not suffered more than workers in other parts of Britain. Scotland was not "singled out" any more than the north of England, South Wales or Merseyside.

While it had high unemployment rates, the north of England had consistently higher ones. While personal income growth per head increased for the Scots by 21% between 1975 and 1985, in Wales it rose by only 14% and in the north west of England by 17%.

And exactly who benefited from the missing billions? Not the English workers but British and international capitalists who have made big profits from the oil industry—including Scottish capitalists and financiers.

What of the SNP's claim that they could develop Scotland in the

interests of all the Scottish people. This is an outrageous con-trick. Despite all their radical talk about nationalising Scottish steel, they remain a bosses' party wedded to the bosses' international profit system.

The SNP claims to be against Trident and the nuclear bases. But at the same time it is silent about the presence of British troops in Northern Ireland. It complains about the loss of oil revenues but has no plans to nationalise the oil industry and use its revenue for the benefit of the workers. It plans to be part of the capitalist clubs of the EC and the UN.

## Compete

Scottish big business would have to compete with English bosses and those of other capitalist countries. To do so successfully, the bosses will have to cut costs, and they will choose to cut wages, jobs and welfare rather than profits. Otherwise much needed capital will flow out of Scotland seeking more profitable climes. The SNP's nationalist

fervour will then be used to urge Scottish workers to "tighten their belts for the sake of the nation".

And the SNP leaders were happy to welcome the support of the viciously chauvinist, anti-working class *Sun* newspaper when it urged its Scottish readers to "rise and be a nation once again".

No worker should give any support to this bosses' party. Neither should Scottish workers support any of the proposals for independence or a Scottish Assembly, from whatever quarter.

Scotland should have the right to decide on independence, a right to self-determination. There should be an immediate referendum on this question. But in such a referendum revolutionaries and internationalists would argue against separation. Independence is a dead end for the working class. In a capitalist Scotland, workers would continue to face attacks from the bosses. But their capacity to fight back would be damaged alongside that of their counterparts in the south.

Scottish workers have funda-

mentally identical interests to other British workers, and their best weapon is solidarity with them. A British-wide steel strike for example could not only be the starting point for saving Ravenscraig from closure, but also put workers' control of a nationalised steel industry on the agenda. Scottish workers, like their counterparts in the south, need the right to work, to a minimum wage, to better health care. They have to fight for the immediate scrapping of the Poll Tax and an amnesty for all non-payers.

## Diversion

The struggle for independence is a dangerous diversion from these tasks. It ties workers to bosses in the search for a mythical united Scotland. Instead, Scottish workers must take their place in the vanguard of the working class movement, able to play their part in uniting the working class across Britain for an offensive on the root cause of poverty, homelessness, unemployment—the capitalist system itself. ■

**A** RECENT article by Chris Bambery in *Socialist Worker* started by asking the question "Should Scotland separate?". Any reader who expected a clear answer to this question was to be sorely disappointed. At the end of a full page article Bambery concluded: "... a socialist alternative is needed, whether within the United Kingdom or an independent Scotland."

This is a classic example of the Socialist Workers Party's (SWP) tailism—its inability to stand against the stream of reactionary ideas when workers begin to take them up.

The opinion polls are showing strong support for independence. Significant numbers of young workers are being influenced by the Scottish National Party (SNP) and its demands for an independent Scotland and suddenly the SWP cannot argue against separatism. Instead it takes no position, it is neutral on the question.

This neutrality is justified by all sorts of spurious "left" arguments. In Chris Bambery's pamphlet, *Scotland's National Question* we are told: "Scotland is not in any sense an oppressed nation, but socialists have no interest in maintaining the unity of the British state—an imperialist state that has spread mayhem across the globe."

Later Bambery claims: "We are for the destruction of the British state by any means. Clearly our preference is through socialist revolution. But if the United Kingdom imploded through nationalist tensions we would not shed one tear."

## SOCIALIST WORKER/MILITANT

# Tailing the Nationalists

So if the United Kingdom imploded like Yugoslavia the SWP would shed no tears? Or does Chris Bambery think that "we British" would handle our national disintegration in a more "civilised" fashion?

Such a position on the national question has nothing in common with Marx or Lenin. We are for the greatest unity of the British working class. The breaking up of this unity along national lines—English, Welsh, Scots—would be a massive blow to the working class struggle against capitalism and the British state. Scottish independence fought for by the SNP would only be won on the basis of uniting Scots of all classes against the English.

Marxists stand for the right of national self-determination up to and including separation. This means we are absolutely against any coercion aimed at keeping a people within a state against its will.

We are for the absolute right of the Scottish people to separate if they so decide. But this does not mean that we are neutral on the issue. Far from it. Marxists argue tooth and nail within the working class against separation from the United Kingdom and against nationalist arguments. The only reason the SWP does not is sheer opportunism.

Unlike the SWP, Lenin and the Bolshevik Party were absolutely clear on this question. Lenin wrote in *Pravda* in 1913:

"The class conscious workers combat all national oppression and all national privileges, but they do not confine themselves to that. They combat all, even the most refined, nationalism, and advocate not only unity, but also the amalgamation of the workers of all nationalities in the struggle against reaction and bourgeois nationalism in all its forms. Our task is not to segregate nations

but to unite workers of all nations."

Of course that did not stop Lenin from advocating the right of nations to self-determination, and even urging support for wars of national liberation by oppressed colonial and semi-colonial countries, as in Ireland.

But Scotland is not an oppressed nation. Separation would not be a blow against the imperialist system—but it would be a blow to the fighting strength of the British working class within which the Scottish labour movement has played a militant and sometimes vanguard role.

On the question of a Scottish Assembly the SWP is positively ambiguous. In 1979 the SWP argued against an Assembly and for a "No" vote in the referendum on it. By 1987 it was once again bending with the wind of nationalism, dumping its previous position. Bambery now argues:

"We champion a Scottish Assembly only in the sense that it can become a means of confrontation with Thatcher and the British state—something the SNP wishes to avoid."

The SWP is not alone in jumping onto this particular bandwagon. *Militant*, which has gone as far as launching a separate Scottish Militant Labour, is positively enthusiastic about an Assembly as a means of forwarding the struggle for socialism in Scotland:

"In the immediate period we will fight alongside others for a Scottish parliament or assembly with wide ranging powers which could be used to begin the socialist transformation of Scottish society, as the first step towards a socialist Britain and a socialist Europe" (*Militant*, 13.12.92)

Exactly what "wide ranging powers" would an Assembly have to have to "begin the socialist transformation of Scottish society"? The powers to dissolve the army, arm the workers, expropriate capitalist industry and place it under the control of the workers, dismiss the unelected judges etc, etc? Do the "Marxists" of Scottish Militant Labour really believe these can be achieved through a parliamentary assembly? If they do they are dyed in the wool reformists: if they don't then they are just misleading the workers.

The Scottish Assembly is a complete diversion from the problems facing Scotland's workers and should be resolutely opposed. If it comes into existence it will be just one more talking shop to fool the working class. ■



## RACISM

**B**LACK PEOPLE have traditionally been loyal supporters of Labour. Until the mid-1980s the Labour Party could consistently rely on 80% of the black vote. But recent opinion polls show that Labour's support amongst black people has fallen to 41%.

The reason isn't hard to find. While the Tories play the race card, desperate for election victory, Labour can only wring its hands and point to its own record in government—"we too can be hard on crime and illegal immigration". At best they offer ineffective legal palliatives. At worse they openly collude in perpetuating racism.

Black people experience racism in every area of daily life. On the streets they face racial abuse, harassment and violent attack. They face systematic harassment from the police, who patrol their communities like an occupying force and criminalise those who resist racist attacks and abuse. They suffer from discrimination in jobs, housing and education.

Thousands of black British people are officially second class citizens under the Nationality Act. The racist immigration and asylum laws are not just an injustice for those denied freedom of movement by them, but are a permanent incitement to view black people as an "alien" minority.

Labour promises nothing to fundamentally alter this situation. Instead, pandering to the lowest common denominator at election time, Labour becomes the party of "law and order", of tough immigration laws.

Take the Asylum Bill. It is a racist bill designed to close the "loop-hole" of refugee status which is the only way for a black person to gain the right to come to Britain. It is proposed as a means of stopping "economic migrants" coming into Britain.

Despite initially opposing the Bill on the grounds that "genuine refugees" would be hit, Labour always agreed with its central premise. According to Harriet Harman, "no-one wants to allow a high number of bogus applicants into the country".

So it was no surprise when Roy Hattersley cynically offered the Tories a deal in parliament: they would rush the Bill through with only minor changes... to remove race as an issue in the election!

It is the same story with every

aspect of racism and black oppression.

Take the police, for example. Labour may improve police complaints procedures, but the racism in the British justice system goes far deeper than a few bent coppers.

The whole system is racist, consigning enormous numbers of young black people to jail and borstal, subjecting black communities to systematic police harassment, and then criminalising those who resist. Labour's promises will do nothing to change this.

To eradicate racism we have to eradicate its cause: the profit system and the system of imperialist domination. It is this system which feeds national chauvinism and racist stereotyping. It is this system which demands a pliable "peripheral workforce" of low paid black and women workers. And it is the employers who run this system, who are masters of the divide and rule tactics which use racism to disorganise and weaken the work-

ing class. Workers should demand that Labour stops flapping its hands in horror at racism and start tackling racism at its roots.

Labour must repeal the 1984 Police Act, the Public Order Act, scrap all immigration controls and the Nationality Act. It must ban plastic bullets, CS gas and all the repressive measures designed to smash black resistance. It must disband all special police riot squads.

Labour should make all forms of racial discrimination and harassment illegal. But only a massive programme of public spending on

new homes and services can begin to eradicate discrimination in jobs, housing, education etc, in a progressive way. Otherwise, as with the ill-fated experiments of the Labour left councils, anti-discrimination policies become mere gestures and grant black people an equal share of fewer resources.

Real anti-discrimination measures are what black people should demand from Labour. But Labour has no intention of implementing them. Its search for votes means Labour will not challenge the racist consensus. That is why black workers and youth, along with the

whole labour movement, have to organise to fight.

Against police harassment and racist mobs we have to support black self-defence and build black and white workers' defence squads. This, and not the utopia of a "democratically controlled" police force, is the best way to combat racist attacks.

We have to fight every deportation and every immigration raid with workers' action.

In place of toothless "equal opportunity" policies we have to fight for workers' control over employment practices and massive public investment to provide jobs for all.

In the unions and the Labour Party we have to fight for the right to black self-organisation—caucuses and full representation at every level.

That is the way to tear to shreds the electoral race card which Labour's leaders fear—not by running away from racism but by engaging it in a bitter struggle to the death. ■

Dean Family Campaign and  
Panchadcharam Sahitharan Memorial Committee

## MARCH FOR JUSTICE

SATURDAY 28 MARCH

Assemble 12.30pm

Plasnet Park, Plasnet Grove, London E6  
East Ham tube (District Line)

# Labour and social oppression

**A**T THE end of thirteen years of Tory rule, women remain underpaid, shouldering a double burden of work at home and in the workplace, with millions trapped in poverty. Their average total wages are still only 68% of men's and women's jobs are often only part-time and temporary.

With divorce and separation rocketing, 18% of households are now headed by lone mothers, and at least a third of these rely on Income Support.

Tory policies have increased working class women's misery. Their meagre rights to job and wage protection have been removed by Tory "de-regulation" and Tory governments

## WOMEN

have consistently blocked the imposition of EC directives on part-timers' and maternity rights.

Meanwhile the Tories have cut child benefit and also cut Income Support to single mothers by obliging them to chase absent fathers for maintenance. In addition mothers who want to get out to work find the cost of child care prohibitive.

Community care under the Tories has meant care through women's unpaid labour. The Invalid Care Allowance is currently worth only 60%

of the retirement pension!

Against this record Labour policies could hardly fail to seem better. But Labour's programme for women is in fact as thin as the rest of its policy proposals once the rhetoric is stripped away.

Labour's "big idea" for women is the creation of a new Ministry for Women which would introduce a new Sex Equality Act to "coordinate action for sex equality across all government departments". The new Act should combine the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts, extending the definition of indirect discrimination and establishing that discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy is unlawful.

Abolishing the get-out clauses that employers have used to dodge the effect of legislation is certainly important. But the reality for thousands of women is that legal rights are little defence against employers—especially in times of recession. Desperate for work, women take low paid, insecure jobs. Without decent union organisation and hard campaigning for women's equal pay and rights, millions will remain trapped.

Labour claims its minimum wage proposal will help such women. A national minimum wage, set at half the average male full-time earnings, should benefit four and a half million people—80% of them women.

Even if such a minimum wage were to be fully implemented, it would still leave women's earnings pitifully low. In practice, employers will resist the minimum wage proposals at all levels.

The employers' organisations will try to water them down and more jobs will be made part-time. The record of previous Labour governments shows that Labour will back off, just as they cancelled their reform and public spending programmes in response to the demands of the bankers and the IMF in the 1970s.

Labour proposes to restore child benefit to 1979 levels. In fact the Tories have already nearly done this for the first child. Labour's vaunted extra spending will amount to little more than a few pounds for families with more than one child. Child benefit will remain a derisory sum compared to the real costs of bringing up children.

Labour proposes to increase the real value of child benefit "as soon as resources allow". Labour's pledge on the under fives boils down to "every three and four year old whose parents want it gets the chance of nursery education". The under threes and their mothers get much vaguer promises of "integrated child care".

In fact a glance through Labour's proposals affecting women shows they are simply reforms which tinker around at the edges. Anything substantial is postponed to a hazy future.

Real change for working class women would need much more than Labour is promising. Women need guaranteed free, high quality child care. They need full protection at work, whether working full or part-time. They need a decent living wage in their own right. They need opportunities for education long denied them. They need genuine free abortion on demand. They need properly funded health and community services. In other words, working class women need the right to an independent future free from poverty, dependence and oppression.

A Labour government tied to the bosses and bound by an economy run for profit cannot deliver such a future. Working class women need to fight for one. That means organising to fight against the next government so that we never again have to pick up the pieces of a shattered welfare state. ■

**A**T THE end of February Stonewall, the lesbian and gay rights campaign, released the results of a new poll. It showed that 74% of the British public now think the age of consent should be the same for both homosexuals and heterosexuals (currently it is 21 for gay men and 16 for everyone else).

## Prison

In Britain sex between two under-age gay men can lead to two years in prison and up to five years if one man is over 21. Prison sentences for consenting gay sex with an under-age partner are sometimes as long as those given to rapists and frequently twice as long as those for "unlawful sexual intercourse" with a girl aged 13-16. An average of 200 gay men a year are jailed for these victimless "crimes".

The facts show the bigotry behind our supposedly even-handed judicial system. And in their last term of office the Tories have endeavoured to make life even worse for lesbians and gay men. The new Section 28 of the Local Government Bill stops local authori-

## AGE OF CONSENT

ties from "promoting homosexuality"—in reality from doing anything to specifically meet the needs of lesbians and gay men in local government services and education. The recently amended Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill is used to criminalise consenting sex between gay men.

Labour promises to introduce legislation to guarantee that lesbians and gay men are not discriminated against, to reform the Criminal Justice Bill and abolish Clause 28.

Good, but in addition a Labour government must act immediately to remove all homophobic legislation from the statute book, decriminalise all consensual sexual activity and release those, like the Operation Spanner defendants, in prison because of consenting sexual activity. It must support lesbians' and gay men's right to self-defence against queer bashing.

Crucially a Labour government should abolish the age of consent. At

the moment all it promises on this is "a free vote in the first session of Parliament".

In practice this means that Labour MPs will be able to vote any way they like on a private members bill which may or may not be introduced by an individual MP, rather than by a future Labour government. In addition Labour has made it clear it intends to advocate a reduction to 18 not equalisation.

## Votes

Labour is scared of public bigotry losing them votes on this issue. The Stonewall opinion poll blows apart even this reactionary excuse for failing to act. But even equalisation of the age of consent is not enough.

Whether it is 16, 18 or 21, the age of consent is fixed at an arbitrary age. It was originally introduced in the nineteenth century to protect young children from prostitution. It is now

used in an oppressive way to prevent young people (especially gay men) from having consenting sexual relationships.

This legislation clearly does nothing to protect the thousands of victims of sexual abuse. Insofar as any legislation is the answer to sexual violence and abuse there should be other laws based not on age but on consent.

## Abolition

Workers should support any move by the Labour Party to equalise the age of consent for gay men. However, we are for the complete abolition of the age of consent. To combat child abuse Labour must ensure that there are properly funded and trained social services, which do not try to force children into stereotyped sexual identities.

In schools Labour must ensure children are given sex education designed to help them understand their sexuality and make their own decisions about it, as well as information on health care and access to contraception and abortion. ■

AS LONG as Thatcher was Prime Minister Labour had, in the Europe question, an issue on which it could pose as more functional to the British bosses than the Tory Party. Thatcher's refusal to enter the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) proved crippling to both the manufacturing bosses and the financial services giants of the City.

Both these groups of capitalists' main sphere of activity is the EC, and their inability to take full advantage of the 1992 Single Market because of Thatcher's intransigence was an important factor in the palace coup which ousted Thatcher.

Thatcher and the anti-European wing of the Tory party represented more than just an outmoded, "twilight of Empire" faction which could not adjust to new political realities. It represented a small but decisive section of British capitalists: the owners of the massive multinationals whose sphere of activity lies in the Americas and in the wider world economy. They see a protectionist single European market as a threat rather than an economic opportunity.

So as long as Thatcher remained in office Kinnock limited Labour's differences with Tory Euro policy to the call for membership of the ERM, the jibe that Labour could "fight for Britain" more effectively than Thatcher, and the call to implement the "Social Charter".

Now both Major and Kinnock are caught between the same strategic split in the ruling class. Neither dares offer a vision of Britain's role in Europe beyond a pragmatic fight for "Britain's interests" within the structures of the EC.

Labour's policy on Europe is probably more devoid of actual content than on any other issue. It amounts to:

- the immediate inclusion of Austria, Sweden, Finland and Switzerland into the EC with "eventual membership" for the former Stalinist states
- implementation of the Social Charter
- the extension of Qualified Majority Voting in the European Council of Ministers from economic to social questions
- full utilisation of the EC regional aid programme to boost manufacturing industry
- more binding EC legislation on pollution
- a promise to "fight for Britain within Europe"

All the important questions about Europe, not just for the workers but also for the bosses, are to be answered after Kinnock is safely inside Number 10.

Despite John Smith's attacks on Major and Lamont for causing and prolonging the recession, Labour will studiously ignore the main economic lever the Tories have used to achieve that recession: the pound's high value within the ERM. Though Labour will almost certainly devalue the pound within the ERM if they win the election they dare not mention this fact.

This is a classic example of the bankruptcy of bourgeois electoral politics. If Labour did announce this devaluation the response of the international currency markets during the election campaign would almost certainly ruin their chances of getting elected.

The question of the Single European Currency is not even mentioned in George Robertson's "positive programme". The decisive issue which dominated the Maastricht Conference and will dominate British economic policy in the next five years cannot be openly mentioned, still less addressed with a concrete policy.

Labour's commitment to "a democratic community" amounts merely to more majority voting on a coun-

A recent issue of Labour Party News gave a whole page to MP George Robertson to outline Labour's "positive programme for Europe". The page designer had a lot of white space left to play with! One of the problems of tailoring Labour's politics to what the bosses want is that, on Europe, the British ruling class is split. Without a clear lead from the bosses Labour's Euro-programme

## LABOUR AND EUROPE

# Not an election issue?



Labour's George Robertson MP

cil of twelve fat capitalist ministers. The most important question—Euro-parliamentary control over the European Commission (unelected bureaucrats) and Council of Ministers—is not concretely answered. Labour promises to fight for "a balance between the Westminster and Strasbourg parliaments—each playing its part". Any wiser? No, and you are not intended to be.

On the question of making the supra-national political bodies democratically accountable the Labour leadership has a double reason to shut up and say nothing.

Both the Tories and the Labour left oppose greater powers for European political bodies. This is the one issue which has prompted the Labour left to venture out from its election-time Trappist monastery.

UP TO 500 people attended a Moscow street meeting on 7 March called to protest against Yeltsin's economic reforms. The meeting was organised by an alliance of anarchist and left socialist groups, including *Rabochaya Vlast* (Workers Power).

Its aim was to provide a focus of opposition to Yeltsin separate from the Stalinist/fascist led movement which is trying to take workers down the blind alley of national chauvinism and support for a military crackdown.

The protest received coverage on national TV. Amongst the crowd there was lively discussion of the organisers' message: no to capitalism, chauvinism and Stalinism, for workers' and soldiers councils, the seizure of the property of the new bosses and the placing of production and distribution under workers' control.

Seventy-five copies of *Rabochaya Vlast* No 2—containing the LRCI's action programme for the CIS—were

So with Kinnock selling out working class interests with every gust of hot air he emits the most important initiative for Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner et al is their planned conference to "Derail Euro-Federalism"—clearly a demand that will rouse millions of workers to action in defiance of Neil Kinnock!

With Labour's policy on Europe deliberately emptied of all content, that leaves the Social Charter.

Labour is committed to "signing the Social Charter and opting-in to the Maastricht Social Charter". What difference will this make?

The Social Charter is a capitalist document, drawn up on the insistence of Germany and France, to stop countries with fewer workers' rights and social benefits from using cheap labour to undercut capitalists in the more developed European countries in the Single Market.

It was also designed, in particular by France's Jaques Delors, to destroy the advantage gained by the British capitalists after Thatcher smashed union rights in the 1980s.

Nevertheless the original Charter contained some reforms which it is possible for workers to fight for, to demand implementation as a way of preventing cheap labour and poor benefits being used to level down the living standards and social gains of the whole European working class.

But with the latest recession and

amounts to little more than the promise to keep its options open. Labour is desperate to take Europe off the electoral agenda for fear of giving the Tories the opportunity to portray the party as unpatriotic. The only clear difference with Major's Tories is Kinnock's promise to implement the Social Charter. But even that leaves little for workers to get excited about, writes Colin Lloyd.

the opening up of cheap labour markets in East Europe it has become clear that levelling down European workers' living standards is a strategic goal for the EC in the 1990s.

So guess what has happened to the Social Charter. At Maastricht its authors took the lead in chopping out anything which workers could use as a defensive weapon in the coming battles.

Instead of a series of legally binding commitments on minimum wages, minimum benefits, union rights etc, all the promises of the Charter are followed by the magic words: "in accordance with arrangements in each member state". Its commitment to defend collective bargaining and negotiating rights is subject to "conditions laid down by national legislation and practice". The same happened to the defence of the right to strike.

At Maastricht a further obstacle to the implementation of the Social Charter was raised. Britain excluded itself from the process of voting on implementation of the Charter—the so-called Social Chapter of the Maastricht treaty.

Labour's election promise amounts to the commitment to opt into this process, that is all. On all the main issues this "process" has become an extremely slow one, due to the process of horse-trading as the European employers attempt to saddle their main rivals with "worse" employment conditions and

social benefits.

This does not mean we should conclude, like Labour MP Ron Leighton in *Socialist Campaign Group News*, that:

"There is nothing the Social Charter can do for us that we cannot do ourselves with a Labour government."

The emergence of the EC has given the fight for workers' rights and social benefits an urgent international character. It is no good simply fighting for better pay and conditions in Britain if capitalists are free to move their plant to, and buy their materials from, countries with cheaper labour. That strategy leads to the dead end of import controls and economic nationalism.

Instead workers have to form a European alliance to fight for the full implementation of all the the Social Charter's progressive demands. More importantly they need to draw up their own programme of action for 1992, their own demands meeting their own needs, as opposed to reforms dispensed from above by the benevolent capitalists of Paris and Bonn. And they need to start organising international unity in action from below.

None of these needs are addressed by Labour's Euro-programme. It is an exercise in evasion which confirms the utterly pro-imperialist character of the party, compounded by the problem that it can no longer be sure exactly what imperialism wants!■



sold, along with ten copies of the *Trotskyist Manifesto* in Russian.

The importance of our work in the CIS should be obvious to every labour movement activist. We need to raise the banner of real socialism and build

a revolutionary workers' party in order to fight against the mass unemployment, war, dictatorship and fascist genocide, that the restoration of capitalism holds in store.

For this work money alone is not

enough, but it is still a vital necessity and we possess very little. Please rush donations to the Dave Hughes Memorial Fund for work in the CIS (cheques to Workers Power) to:

BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

## IRELAND

# Put Sinn Féin to the test!

BY THE IRISH WORKERS GROUP

**D**ESPITE NEARLY a quarter century of open struggle against British rule in the Six Counties, no section of workers has been won to take up the fight against British repression on a class basis.

The trade unions have consistently refused to stand by the oppressed nationalist population even at moments such as Bloody Sunday and the H-Block hunger strikes. They have preferred to maintain class peace with the loyalist state, occasionally rallying sections of workers to demonstrate for "peace" and against the IRA.

The reformist workers' parties—the Northern Ireland Labour Party and Republican Labour—were both ground out of existence as the lines of struggle were fixed after 1971.

The mass of protestant workers remain tied to reactionary Unionism, consenting to the oppression of their Catholic nationalist fellow citizens.

The mass of Catholic workers rally to the nationalist parties, having experienced systematic discrimination and oppression for a century because of their identification with the Irish national movement. The most oppressed and combative of them, especially in the urban ghettos, aspire to Irish unity and vote Sinn Féin. The other half of them follow the urban petit bourgeois and vote SDLP in the belief that the sectarian state can be peacefully reformed.

Every election, therefore, is a plebiscite on the existence of the loyalist state and on the legitimacy of open struggle against it. For that reason, revolutionary communists cannot stand aside but must take clear sides with the candidates of the republican movement. The IWG has repeatedly taken this position, while openly continuing, for 15 years, the political struggle against the perspectives, programme and strategy of the republicans. Voting for Sinn Féin implies no political support whatever for their utopian nationalist politics.

This time, Sinn Féin is contesting 14 of the 17 constituencies. They have announced that:

"... the party's candidates will be standing on their record of service to the community, on Sinn Féin's comprehensive policies on all aspects of public policy that affect people's lives and on the republican demand for freedom, justice

## Troops out now!

On one issue at least John Major can be sure that there will be no political attacks from the Liberals or Labour. That issue is Ireland. In the name of "combating terror" Labour will maintain its bi-partisan policy of supporting to the hilt the British state's repressive terror against the anti-unionist community of Northern Ireland.

Labour's conference policy—support for the eventual unification of Ireland "with the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland"—is not worth the paper it is printed on. The Northern Ireland state was gerrymandered at birth to give the loyalist protestants an inbuilt majority. There can never be a "democratic" solution to a state designed to repress democracy.

Workers in Britain should make Ireland an election issue by demanding that Labour breaks from its bi-partisan policy, goes beyond its half-hearted commitment to get rid of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and commits itself to the immediate unilateral withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. ■

and peace in Ireland." (AP/RN, 12.3.92)

But it is not for such a brazenly reformist political fudge that the most oppressed nationalists will vote Sinn Féin.

It is because the combined armed and political republican movement remains the only mass-based force openly struggling against British imperialism. And it is to these active illusions in the petit bourgeois nationalist led Sinn Féin that revolutionaries must relate—calling on workers to break with the SDLP, and on all workers to maximise the vote for Sinn Féin as a blow against reactionary loyalism and its imperial masters.

Nationalist workers must, however, be won to demand that the Republican movement puts the need for mass action to the fore once more in the struggle. Ever since Bloody Sunday, and with only partial exceptions such as the H-Block struggle, the republicans have elevated armed guerilla tactics into an overriding strategy. This has relegated the anti-unionist masses to almost defenceless passivity in the face of increased repression for two decades.

Mass action means community and workplace democratic organisation, united fronts of workers, republicans and socialists, and the fight for the widest solidarity action throughout Ireland against extradition, emergency powers and special courts, for release of political prisoners, for British troops out and disarming and disbanding of the RUC and UDR.

It means demanding clear and unequivocal support from Sinn Féin both inside and outside parliament and councils, for working class action to fight redundancies, to cut

the hours not the jobs, to resist anti-union laws, cuts and privatisations and to win massive schemes of public works at union rates to abolish unemployment.

It means demanding that Sinn Féin breaks decisively with the Catholic church. Sinn Féin must re-instate and fight for its previous call for women's right to choose abortion in Ireland, North and South. Sinn Féin must unequivocally fight for the right to divorce—a fight from which it stood aloof in the Irish referendum of 1985.

Gerry Adams led Sinn Féin to overcome traditional distrust of "politics" and to take their seats in local councils. But his "politics" have proven ever more opportunist from year to year as he courts alliances with the Catholic church and bourgeois nationalism and demands inclusion in talks with the Unionists and SDLP.

When Adams won his West Belfast seat in 1983 he refused to take his seat or to use it as a platform to advance either the anti-imperialist or the class struggle, despite all his left pretensions.

We say to anti-unionist workers on whom Adams depends for votes: demand that if re-elected he should take and use his seat as a tribune of both anti-imperialist and working class struggle!

Sinn Féin's response, we believe, will confirm that the interests of the working class are no more central to Irish republicanism than they are to the SDLP. It will confirm that workers North and South need a new kind of party, an all-Ireland revolutionary workers' party committed to revolutionary class struggle against capitalism and British imperialism and the fight for a workers' republic. ■

## Defend Iraq!

topple Saddam after their victory in Kuwait.

And to break the deadlock in their own election campaigns—as well as in the UN talks—they have declared their willingness once again to unleash death from above against Iraqi workers and conscript soldiers.

Workers in Britain must condemn Bush and Major's gunboat diplomacy. In the event of any military action against Iraq we must stand squarely

for the defeat of "our own" troops and the victory of the Iraqi defenders. Imperialism has no right to dictate who can and who can't possess arms.

In the event of a strike there must be massive protests in Britain.

We must demand that Labour breaks from its bi-partisan support for slaughter in the Gulf and gives a clear commitment to end sanctions and withdraw all troops from the region. ■

## Vote Nellist/Fields!

What should the attitude of workers be to the assortment of "left" candidates standing in this election? Given the right wing stranglehold on Labour, isn't there plenty of reason for supporting alternative candidates? Lesley Day explains Workers Power's position.

We are arguing for a vote for Labour because, as the party based on the working class, it is important to put it to the test of office. Only in special circumstances do we make exceptions.

Elections are a chance to argue for revolutionary communist politics—for a different kind of society and a different kind of democracy.

If we were able to we would stand candidates on our own uncompromising revolutionary programme. The gains to be made in putting across the message, winning workers to revolutionary ideas and building our organisation would make this worthwhile. However, our size, resources and implantation in the working class at the present time make this impossible. For the most part, the best way to argue for our politics amongst a wide layer of workers is by campaigning with them for a Labour vote.

Amongst the various alternative candidates are the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and the "Communist Party of Great Britain"—as reconstituted by the Leninist tendency after the old CPGB fell apart.

These two otherwise very different groups share a classically sectarian approach. As Alec Long told *Leninist* readers in January, they are not in the campaign "because of those workers the campaign may attract to communism". Instead the purpose is "to bring the idea of the Communist Party to the attention of advanced workers".

Similarly, the RCP's campaign is "not so much about winning votes as about recruiting supporters to the party". Nothing wrong with that of course—if it was on the basis of propaganda for a clear revolutionary programme. But a glance at recent issues of the RCP's newsletter *the next step* reveals that they have been desperately searching for a political basis for their campaign. To the question "Why vote RCP?" they reply, "because we represent a break from the grey of British politics".

This increasingly apolitical sect dismisses such questions as opting out of hospitals, taxation policy and training as "irrelevant issues".

The RCP have no programme, let alone a revolutionary one. The *Leninist*, on the other hand, have a programme that cannot break free of the constraints of the left Stalinist tradition that this sect arises from.

Neither of these organisations has any serious support in the working class, neither represents any major class struggle battles, neither will be standing on a revolutionary communist programme. There is no reason to support them. In fact their campaigns are a fruitless diversion from the central task facing revolutionaries—breaking workers from the grip of Labourite reformism.

The Militant is also standing candidates in this election. Here we must make a distinction between Terry Fields and Dave Nellist and the Scottish Militant Labour's candidate, Tommy Sheridan. Nellist and Fields both represent the continuing fight against Kinnock's witch-hunt. They were the duly elected MPs for their constituencies, who were summarily expelled from the party and who are now fighting candidates imposed by Walworth Road.

Coventry South East Labour Party members, asked to choose a new candidate from a Kinnock-approved list, wrote "Dave Nellist" across their ballot papers. The Labour Party would not issue the voting figures, only declaring that Coventry council leader Jim Cunningham, now implementing a vicious £9 million cuts package, was the official Labour candidate!

Workers Power consistently argued that Nellist and Fields, and any other democratically elected candidate blocked from standing by the right wing bureaucracy, should stand to challenge the witch-hunt and act as a rallying focus for all those prepared to fight the right wing machine.

Our support for Nellist and Fields is not based on their programmes. They do not offer a revolutionary alternative to Labour. Militant, a centrist organisation—one vacillating between reformism and revolution—has endorsed programmes for Nellist and Fields which are no more than left reformist platforms. Dave Nellist's manifesto gives no guide to workers on how to fight back. Indeed, it seriously misleads worker militants by implying that a Labour government could bring socialism, if only it had the right policies.

But both Nellist and Fields remain candidates of struggle. That is why it is right to support them. Workers Power supporters will be canvassing for Dave Nellist and at the same time, arguing that only working class action and revolutionary change, not parliamentary law making, can win socialism.

In the Walton by-election last year we supported Lesley Mahmood because she represented a real struggle against both the witch-hunt in Liverpool and the right wing council's onslaught on council workers' jobs and all workers' services. Her candidature was a referendum on the poll tax and the cuts, and she had the support of the key sections of workers that were on strike against the council.

However, the reasons for supporting Nellist, Fields and Mahmood do not apply with Tommy Sheridan, the Scottish Militant Labour candidate in Glasgow (Pollock). Like Nellist and Fields he will be standing on a left reformist programme. Unlike them he does not represent either major sections of the working class engaged in struggle or a fight against the witch-hunt.

Sheridan may be fighting his campaign from jail as a poll tax prisoner—and of course we must campaign vigorously against this scandalous imprisonment—but the struggle he did lead against the poll tax has ebbed considerably. Nobody could honestly claim that he was now "representing" the Scottish anti-poll tax movement.

Sheridan only represents Scottish Militant Labour, and this organisation offers no way forward for Scottish workers. There is no reason to support it against Labour. ■

**G**EORGE BUSH and John Major are both trailing in their race for re-election. Why should that bother the Iraqi people? The answer is to be found in the thousands of tons of military hardware that steamed into the Gulf as negotiations over the dismantling of Iraqi weapons plants reached deadlock.

United Nations Resolution 636 demands sanctions against Iraq for as long as the country retains a missile and chemical weapons capability. Millions of Iraqi people are being made to pay through economic misery for Bush and Major's failure to

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## BNP/NF ELECTION THREAT

# Smash the fascists!

**BRITAIN'S TWO main fascist organisations, the British National Party (BNP) and the National Front Flag Group (NF), will be standing candidates in this election. It is vital that the workers' movement mobilises in every constituency the fascists contest to deny them any platform whatsoever.**

Since the 1987 election the fascists have been slowly growing. In particular, the BNP has targeted run down towns and inner-city areas. The combined effects of the recession and the miserable failure of Labour councils to defend basic services and housing have created conditions that have benefited the fascists. In East and South East London, where the BNP will concentrate much of their effort, poor housing, high unemployment and massive cut-backs in council services have bred resentment amongst white working class voters.

The BNP moved in with their "Rights for Whites" campaign, blaming the local black population for the problems caused by capitalism. This is a filthy lie.

The reason there is a housing crisis in the inner-cities is because of Tory housing policies. Labour councils, instead of defying these policies and implementing house building programmes to meet people's needs, spend their time evicting people who fall behind in their rent, sending in poll tax bailiffs and sacking building workers.

### Shortages

Black people do not cause housing shortages, or any of the other problems faced by white workers. When the bosses close factories or sack workers they do so because it suits their drive for profits. And it is black people who suffer heavily from the attacks of capitalism. Unemployment for example, far from being caused by black people, is at its highest levels amongst black people, especially youth.

Yet the fascists, as part of their plan to inflame divisions in the working class, scapegoat black people. They play on the racism spawned by

centuries of capitalism's oppression of black people—from colonialism, through slavery, to second class citizenship today—to win support for their fundamentally anti-working class, fascist project.

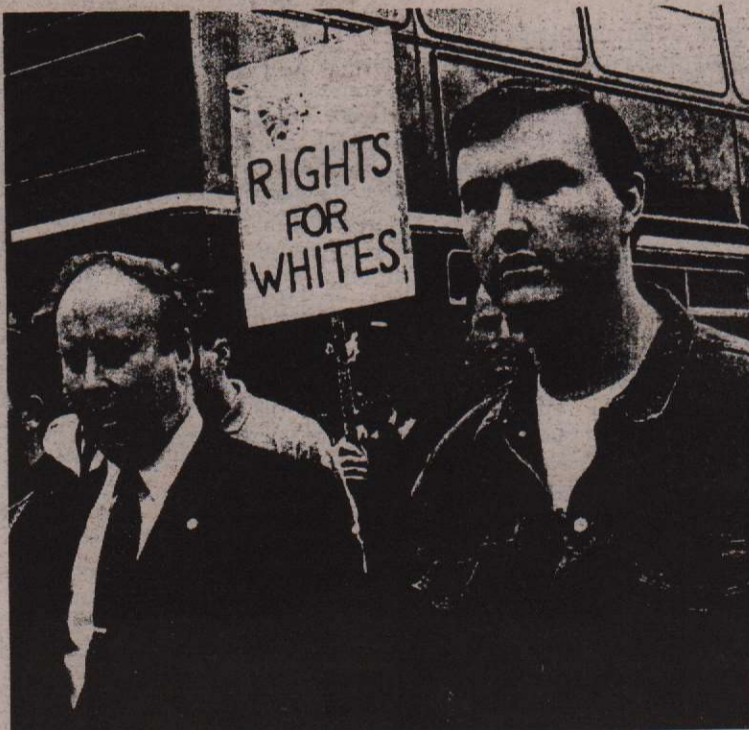
The long term aim of the fascists is to smash the independent organisations of the working class and rule on behalf of capitalism. Their racist "Rights for Whites" campaign is a stepping stone to this aim. By dividing workers along the lines of race they try to weaken us in the face of our common enemy—the bosses. We must not let them succeed.

### Dictatorship

The fascists will deny us all democratic rights. They are committed to establishing a brutal dictatorship. The leader of the BNP, John Tyndall, wrote a pamphlet called *The Authoritarian State*, promising the destruction of unions, the destruction of all elements of democracy (even sham parliamentary democracy), the outlawing of homosexuality, compulsory repatriation of all black people and confining women to the home. This is what fascism really stands for.

Today these plans take the form of creating a climate that encourages racist physical attacks on black people, like the one that resulted in the tragic death of young Rolan Adams in Thamesmead, just down the road from the BNP HQ. They take the form of violent attacks on socialist paper sellers, labour movement meetings and anti-fascist protesters.

It is wrong to think that we can afford to ignore the fascists and hope that they'll simply go away.



Führer Tyndall with bodyguard Tony Lecomber (the mad bomber), marching in London's East End

They will grow in proportion to the labour movement's indifference to them. They have grown amongst white workers precisely because the official labour movement is on its knees. It does virtually nothing to defend jobs, to protect services, to fight for working class interests. In despair white workers have turned to fascist organisations as a "radical" solution to their radical problems.

The labour movement needs to act swiftly to put a stop to this situation. The BNP and the NF must be denied a platform. There can be no question of giving organisations committed to the destruction of all democracy any democratic rights to help them achieve their goal. They must be smashed.

The BNP are standing 14 candidates, the NF at least 16 candidates. Their message of race hate must be stopped. In every constituency they are standing the labour movement must combat them. It must make sure that the fascist lies are countered. Every time the fascists try to meet, canvass, march, sell their papers or give out their leaflets, they must be physically prevented from doing so.

Anti-fascist organisations must mobilise local communities and labour movement organisations to stop the fascists in their tracks—to stop their public meetings, to drive them from the estates. We need the mobilisation of the widest possible forces to ensure that we have the numbers, the organisation and the physical strength to rain blow after blow on the fascists so that their attempt to use the election to build up their strength is completely thwarted. ■

**NO PLATFORM FOR FASCISTS!**

## UNITY IN ACTION

IN THE election campaign Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), to which Workers Power is affiliated, will be mounting a vigorous challenge to the fascists of the BNP and NF.

For nearly three years AFA has campaigned in the East End of London, where BNP *führer* John Tyndall, and his deputy, Richard Edmonds, are both standing. Last November AFA mobilised a 4,000 strong demo through Bethnal Green in East London. This was both the culmination of months of work in the area and a notice to the fascists that AFA was in the area to stay.

During the election AFA will be leafleting this constituency, along with Bermondsey in South London, Rochdale, Glasgow, Birmingham, Leicester, Cardiff and other places the fascists are standing, hammering home the anti-fascist message.

But AFA will also be working hard to mobilise as many people as possible to physically confront the fascists. This is what marks AFA out as the most militant anti-fascist organisation in Britain today.

In the last few months a number of organisations have sprung up declaring that they too will organise against the fascists.

The Socialist Workers Party re-launched the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), black organisations have set up the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) and Militant have joined the rush to do anti-fascist work by setting up a Youth Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (YCARF).

Workers Power believes that there are problems with all of these campaigns.

The ANL is an undemocratic, SWP-run campaign, which despite its rhetoric will not commit itself to no platform for fascists. ARA has no clear-cut commitment to militant action, preferring to act as a lobbying organisation, accumulating big name sponsors, including Tories and clergy—people who would run a mile from supporting black self-defence or physically confronting the fascists.

However, in every locality, and within AFA itself, Workers Power argues that every effort should be made to commit these campaigns to joint action with AFA. Within these campaigns there will be many militants who are not afraid of the need to confront the fascists.

We will propose unity in action to deny the fascists a platform. It is highly likely that the self-appointed leaders of these other campaigns will work overtime to seal off their memberships from the message of militant anti-fascism that AFA stands for.

It is our job to undercut these leaders and prove that AFA is not only the organisation with the clearest commitment to direct action against the fascists, but also the only non-sectarian anti-fascist campaign, the only one seriously committed to building the workers' united front against fascism.