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Where we stand



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Thatcher's Britain Rotten - ripe for socialism

AS of March 1983, registered unemployment stood at 3.1 million. When those on temporary job schemes and the unemployed who do not register are added, the jobless total comes to 5 million — one in five of the workforce.

Two out of three school-leavers cannot get jobs. Long-term unemployment is increasing even faster than total unemployment. These jobless figures are bound to increase in the short term; and there is no sure prospect of them decreasing substantially for many years to come. For millions, the only future in capitalist Britain is a future on the scrap-heap.

Britain's basic manufacturing industries are in decline. In the world boom of the '50s and '60s, they grew, though slowly and inefficiently compared with elsewhere. In 1970 British steel production reached its peak and began to decline. By 1979 it was 23% below the 1970 level. Between 1979 and the fourth quarter of 1982 production declined by a further 49%.

Car production rose until 1972. In 1982 it was 46% of the 1972 level. Employment in manufacturing has fallen from an all-time high of over 9 million in 1965 to 5.4 million in February 1983.

The decline has turned into a collapse since 1979. Between June 1979 and February 1983, employment in manufacturing fell 23%. More than one job in every five disappeared. Researchers reckon that for

every 100,000 people who lose their jobs, deaths increase by 5,000, mental hospital admissions by 6,000, and prison intake by 1,900.

Mass unemployment helps bosses to establish a rule of fear over employed workers. Speed-up is imposed. Between the 4th quarter of 1980 and the 4th quarter of 1982 output per person employed increased 13% in manufacturing overall, 14% in engineering and 27% in steel. Shop-floor organisation is blitzed. Already the Prior and Tebbit laws have outlawed practically all trade union action except by workers at their own workplace against their own employer on straightforward wages and conditions issues. Still to come are full implementation of these laws and — if the Tories get a chance — further, even more vicious laws.

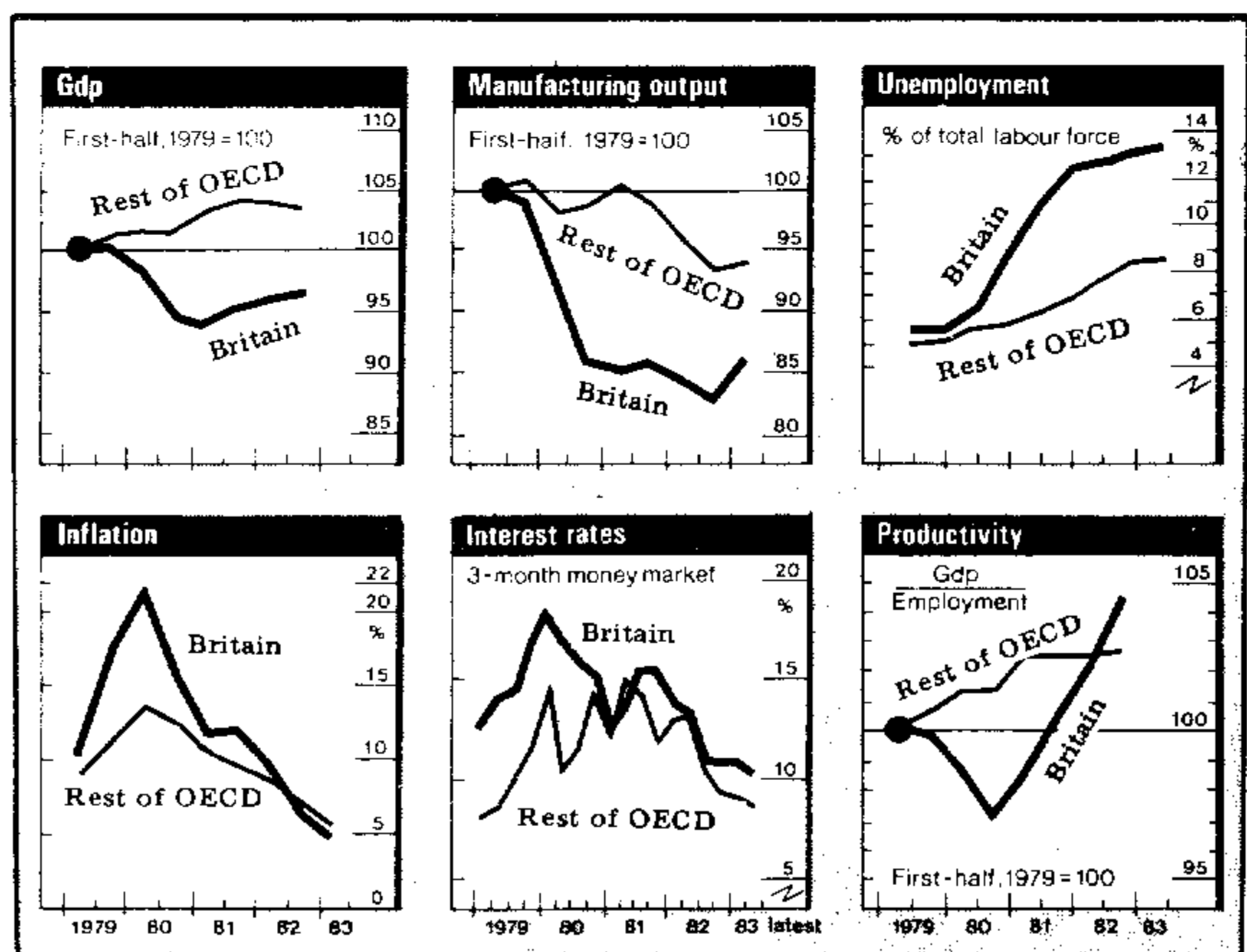
Millions stagnating on the dole while the lucky ones with a job face increasingly brutal exploitation — and around them the towns and cities rot, public services decay, and the law of devil-take-the-hindmost gains sway.

Poverty and inequality are increasing. Already in 1979 eleven million people were living below the poverty line of supplementary benefit plus 40%, while the top 10% of the population owned around 60% of all personal wealth. Now at least another 2½ million people are below the poverty line. Since 1979 the poor have got poorer and the rich have got richer because of:

- unemployment,
- Tory public sector pay policy ('cash limits'),
- tax cuts for the rich totalling £2,400 million per year,
- cuts in real value of state benefits,
- increased national insurance charges hitting the lower-paid hardest,
- increases in items like prescription charges (up from 20p in May 1979 to £1.40 in April 1983) and council rents (up from £6.40 average in 1979 to an estimated £14.45 in 1983-4).

Women are hit hardest. More school meals workers' jobs have been lost than steelworkers'. Inequality of pay between men and women has increased. As public provision for the care of children, the elderly, and the sick is cut back, women lose their paid jobs — and find they have to do the same work as unpaid labour in the home, looking after relatives.

Black people have also suffered specially. Deportations have increased dramatically. A new Nationality Act reinforces immigration obstacles. Even according to the Home Office there has been 'a fairly steady rise' in racist attacks 'since about 1977 and a marked rise since 1980'. As from October 1982, 'overseas visitors' are being charged for NHS treatment — which means that black people sometimes have to produce



their passports when they go to hospital.

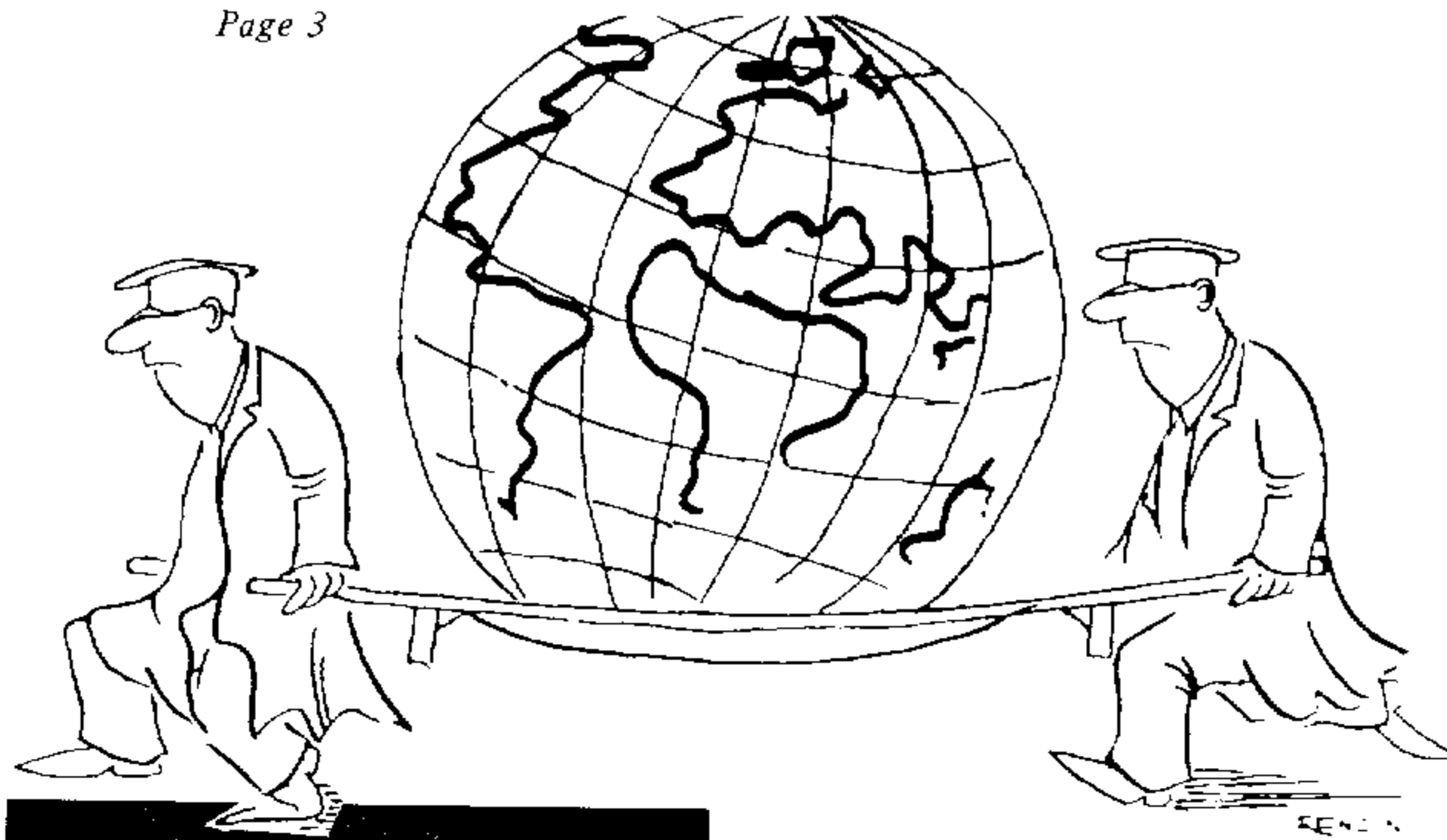
Public investment on housing has been cut by one-half between 1979 and 1982. The Tories claim not to have cut NHS spending: but in fact they have squeezed the NHS so much that in London alone over 50 hospitals are facing threats of closure. 582 schools were approved for closure by the Thatcher government in the three years 1980-2; over 26,000 teachers were registered as unemployed in September 1982, and one in five newly qualified teachers was unable to find a job. Fourteen out of Britain's 44 universities face cuts in funding between 20% and 44%.

Amidst this decay, the growth areas are the police, the prison population (now over 44,000, in jails built to house fewer than 39,000), and the military machine. Between 1978-9 and 1983-4 (estimates), military spending is up 22% in real terms, while spending on public services is down 9.5%.

96 Cruise missiles are due to be installed at Greenham Common in December 1983, and a further 64 at Molesworth by 1986.

Trident missiles are planned by the Tories for later in the 1980s. Four large nuclear-powered submarines will be built to carry these missiles. The project will cost £9 to £11 billion over the next twelve years.

For the same cost we could have 450 new district hospitals. The Tories' total planned defence spending for 1983-4 is £16 billion — £20 a week for every family of four.



Tory leader Cecil Parkinson, speaking in Argentina in August 1980: "A new government was elected in Britain just over a year ago. That government, of which I am proud to be a member, is making the most fundamental changes to the economic and industrial fabric of the country probably since the second world war — and those changes bear a remarkable similarity to the changes being made by the government here".

employment in many 'Third World' countries is 40% or more. 30 million unemployed in the OECD is a disaster — but unemployed in the 'Third World' are reckoned at 500 million. Even employed workers in those countries are poorer than the unemployed in Britain. The purchasing power of an average textile worker in Hong Kong, for example, is about 56% of a worker in London; in Manila, 15%; in Jakarta, 6%. 800 million people in the 'Third World' are in absolute poverty — starving or on the brink of starvation.

Since the 1960s especially, the great multinationals have taken the whole capitalist world as their chessboard in deciding where to locate production. General

Motors, for example, produces cars in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, West Germany, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Philippines, Portugal, South Africa, UK, Uruguay, Venezuela and Zaire, and has associates in Colombia, Iran, Japan, Kenya and Korea. The top 50 British manufacturing companies now do 44% of their production overseas. Between 1979 and 1982 they cut their UK workforces by 307,200 to 1,263,400, and increased their overseas employment by 38,000 to 803,300.

The share of the manufactured imports of advanced capitalist countries that came from 'Third World' sites increased between 1962 and 1980 from 5% to 13%. More and more, the capitalists take a world view in looking for cheap labour and suitable production sites. We need a world view to deal with them.

British capitalism plays an important role in this world set-up, despite the decline of its basic industries. UK direct investments abroad — totalling \$41 billion in 1978 — are 15% of the world total stock, a bigger share than any country except the US. And London is the world's biggest international banking centre, twice as big as New York. Of the mountain of debts owed to banks by 'Third World' countries, \$46 billion (September 1982) is to banks in the UK.

A world on the wane

THE Tories say that Britain's economic disaster is due to the world slump.

But what causes the world slump? A slump there certainly is. Unemployment in the advanced capitalist (OECD) countries stands at 30 million: it has been rising steadily since the early '70s and drastically since 1979. Exports of manufactured goods from the advanced capitalist countries fell 9.5% between 1980 and the fourth quarter of 1982.

Trade wars are simmering. The world financial system is in chaos. The big-business magazine, the Economist, a firm supporter of the present system, put it like this:

But if Brazil, Mexico and South Korea all decided in the same year not to pay back their loans to Western banks (a not totally inconceivable event), then 100% of the capital and reserves of America's nine biggest banks would be wiped out. They would be technically bust and that would be the end of the international finance system as it is now known.

All this chaos and misery does not drop from the sky. It is the product on a world scale of the same system that the Tories champion on a national scale in Britain.

But it is true that the crisis is a world crisis — a crisis of a world system. Chains of cause and effect run right round the world today. From (for example) a decision by Saudi Arabia to raise oil prices, to balance-of-payments problems for the USA, to an increase in US interest rates, to difficulties for debt-bound Poland and moves by the Polish government to raise meat prices, the ricochets travel fast.

It is a world crisis — and an unequal crisis. In fighting against the devastation wrought in Britain, we must remember that we are part of an international struggle, and that the devastation elsewhere makes Britain seem almost prosperous. Un-

What Thatcher and Reagan represent

MONETARISM is not a new theory. Dennis Healey introduced it as British government policy in 1976. Nor is it a new idea to let 'lame ducks' drown. The Heath government pursued just that policy in 1970-72.

What is new about Thatcher and Reagan is their brazen class-war determination. Up to and even including the 1974-5 recession, post-1945 capitalist governments have sought to 'manage' crises — at the expense of the working class, to be sure. Now Thatcher and Reagan are letting the crisis rip and riding through it on the basis of the rule of fear.

As the Republican Party convention opened in the slump city of Detroit in July 1980, a Reagan official commented candidly on the delegates: 'There's nothing these people like, but there are a few things they goddamned well hate'. That middle class spirit of resentment at everything that gums up a system where the rich get richer and the poor know their place is the spirit unleashed in government by Thatcher and Reagan.

Their policies have not succeeded. In Britain, the profits (the real rate of return

on assets) were still only about 4% in 1982 — better than 2% in 1981, but still way below the 10% of the 1960s. And, in this system, profits are ultimately the measure of success. Reagan has been no more successful.

Lack of economic success, however, does not mean that the Thatcher/Reagan syndrome will fade away. On the contrary — unless it is defeated politically, it will become more brutal, more vindictive, and more ferocious. And we are finding that to defeat it politically is not so easy. Paradoxically, it is the economic disaster partly caused by Thatcherism that gives Thatcherism a chance to retain political support.

As the crisis rages, people get more and more fed up with bland politicians' assurances that a bit of business-as-usual economic juggling will smooth things over. Thatcher's tough talk, her promise of a path that is painful but virtuous, rings a chord. And, as the Economist magazine points out: 'One of Labour's difficulties will be to convince even its own voters that it really believes in its remedies. Mrs. Thatcher will not have the same problem'.

RESOLUTE



The socialist alternative

THE Tory press exaggerates Thatcher's 'resolute approach'. The 'Iron Lady' can be humbled, and has been by the water workers in 1983 and the miners in 1981. It is in comparison with the leaders of the labour movement that Thatcher appears footsore and invincible. What is desperately lacking is a leadership in the labour movement which talks tough and means what it says, at least to the degree that the Tories do for their class.

For the decay and injustice around us do not come from natural causes. They come from a system that can be changed.

The top 10% in Britain own 60% of all personal wealth. But 'personal wealth' includes items like houses and cars. Almost 100% of the wealth that brings power is in the hands of that top 10%. They own about 90% of all shares and 84% of all land, according to 1976 Royal Commission figures.

Most people live by selling their labour — or, more precisely, their 'labour-power', their capacity to work. Some don't. Those are the people with the wealth that brings power. They own the factories and offices. They live from profits.

Where do profits come from? The factory-owners buy workers' labour-power. From one point of view, this is a straightforward commercial exchange of equivalents. The labour-power is sold for a wage which more or less corresponds to its value. The value of labour-power, as of every other commodity, measures the amount of average social labour necessary to produce it — so the wage more or less corresponds to the amount necessary to continue the supply of labour-power, i.e. the amount necessary to maintain the working class families at the normal minimum living standard of the given society. It is 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work'.

But, looked at more closely, the exchange is not so straightforward. The worker sells not just a particular useful item, but his/her strength, time and energy. The employer buys, not a particular useful item, but the general power of producing new value. When the employer 'consumes' the workers' labour power, in combination with the machinery and raw materials, new value is produced. The value produced by a day's labour can be greater than the value of a day's labour power — and capitalist labour discipline makes sure that it is greater. Thus at the end of the day the employer comes out with surplus value over and above recouping his/her initial outlay.

The employer who starts with £1 million ends with £1 million plus 10%, or whatever. This is the essence of it. The aim of production, under capitalism, is not to make useful goods and services — that is a side

effect — but to make money.

All creativity and all technical progress is channelled into money-making for the wealthy few. That is why capitalism is an unequal system where the whims of the rich take priority over the needs of the many. It is a rat-race system where cash relations define, determine, and limit human relations.

And it is a blind, chaotic system. Whether the employer can sell his £1 million plus 10% worth of products is never guaranteed in advance. Competition drives each capitalist to expend his capital and his production as rapidly as possible. The balance between that expansion of production, and the growth of effective demand, can only be realised after the event — by crises which drive production down when it overloads demand. The system can restructure itself only through periodic, spasmodic crises.

Capitalism means the most brutal domination of blind economic laws over humanity. It also creates, for the first time, the conditions for humanity to win conscious control over economic and social life.

Capitalism has extended scientific knowledge, developed technology, and repeatedly revolutionised communications; and, unlike previous social systems, it has

created a basic exploited class — the working class, the great majority of the population in countries like Britain — which is concentrated, educated and organised.

Many shop stewards' committees could take over their workplace tomorrow and run it better than the capitalist management. A number of combine committees have produced detailed 'workers' plans' for their companies. The same principle of democratic workers' management and planning can be applied to the whole economy — if we can establish common ownership of the major means of production, and the political power of the working class.

This is the socialist answer. It will not solve all problems. Women's oppression, for example, dates back thousands of years and will not be ended immediately by a socialist revolution. But a socialist revolution can sweep away unemployment, by organising production according to need and not profit. It can end poverty at a stroke, by redistributing resources. And it can open the way to ending other oppressions.

Without a socialist revolution, there is no prospect but that the decay of the capitalist world — and especially of Britain within it — will become worse.

A workers' government

Britain has a powerful labour movement. Since the mid-1960s, by its direct struggle, it has blocked all the successive and varied attempts of one government after another to restore the equilibrium of British capitalism at the expense of the working class. Each one of the last three governments (Wilson, 1970; Heath, 1974; Callaghan, 1979) has fallen in the wake of a humiliating defeat at the hands of the trade unions.

The Sunday Telegraph, 24.4.83, on union / management talks in the BL Cowley 'washing up time' dispute:
 "Although three rooms had been booked for the talks apparently the different groups drifted between them rather than talking in entrenched little parties. One member of (hotel) staff said she had difficulty distinguishing who were the bosses and who were the union men ... all the suits looked the same".

Yet this tremendous power to block the plans of the bankers and bosses has been matched by no comparable power positively to impose a working-class solution. Indeed, the TUC has been unable to secure even very minimal reforms, even from Labour governments. Why?

The ideas of the ruling class have an in-built advantage. The commercial relations of capitalist society appear to be natural, not a human creation: and within those relations, 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work' seems like a reasonable programme for workers. Such a programme may lead to big and bitter trade union struggles — but it also excludes any challenge to the system as such, and implies acceptance of 'viability' arguments in times of slump. The schools, the press, the radio and TV all reinforce this hold of ideas which imply acceptance of capitalism.

Yet this is not the end of the story. The working class also has its own 'education system' — the organisations that it has built up in decades of struggle. And each new

Joe Gormley, former president of the NUM: "We shall have fights with governments of all varieties but we must never give the impression that we or any other union will go on strike in order to change the government".

struggle, by raising the self-confidence of workers and revealing the potential of collective action, can win new recruits to socialism.

If the machinery of the labour movement were used to agitate, educate and organise for socialism, then conscious support for a transformation of society could quickly be won. But it isn't. The 'ideologists' of the working class are overwhelmingly the full-time trade union officials. But the top officials are women and (much more often) men closely tied to the ruling class. Their salaries and work conditions rank them among the privileged. Their union positions bring with them a string of lucrative jobs on the side — places on government committees, on nationalised industry boards, and even in private industry. As one observer commented on these officials' 19th century fore-runners, they embody in their own careers the class harmony that they preach for society.

Thus these 'ideologists' of the working class are actually agents for class collaboration. In the direct struggles of workers they play a treacherous role: their fear of the mobilised working class is stronger than their desire to fend off the employers' attacks.

The leadership of the Labour Party is of the same social and political stripe as the top trade union leadership. It seeks to administer the system while introducing reforms bit by bit. And when the top civil servants, the bankers and industrialists, the police chiefs and army commanders — the people who run the state whoever runs parliament — veto those reforms, then the Labour leaders shelve them.

The ties between the leadership of the labour movement and the capitalist state and the undemocratic structures in the labour movement that enable that leadership to insulate itself from the rank and file, are the twin pillars of British conservatism. They are crucial in neutering the labour movement as a power for radical change.

That is why the fight for democracy in the labour movement — and, specifically, the movement since 1979 for democratic reforms in the Labour Party — is so important. It is inseparable from and central to the fight to replace the bureaucrats with a new, revolutionary leadership, committed to the independent interests of the working class and based on and accountable to the rank and file.

And it leads straight into the fight for a new sort of 'Labour' government — one that no longer administers the existing system, but begins an assault on it.

We argue that it is not enough to get a new Labour government — though the achievement of such a government even under a Dennis Healey is of course a central objective of the labour movement. We need more. We need to fight for accountability in the labour movement and for socialist policies. And we need to organise and agitate to push that fight to the most radical conclusions.

With the present political positions of the Labour Party and even of the leaders of the left, we will get a Labour government which is fundamentally more of the same, possibly with radical trimmings. It will not serve the working class, and in present conditions it will not be able to adequately serve the ruling class. It will not even placate them.

The right wing know this: and so they want to make the Labour Party a stable



The general secretary of NALGO is on a salary scale from £27,000 to £31,000; NUPE, from £18,116 to £19,768. The EETPU's general secretary is paid £18,100; the CPSA's, £22,000. Other unions would not release the information to us.

For many general secretaries such salaries are only the start.

Geoffrey Drain of NALGO is a director of the Bank of England and a member of the National Economic Development Council. Clive Jenkins of ASTMS is a director of the British National Oil Corporation (BNOC) and a member of the National Research Development Corporation and the British Overseas Trade Board. Gavin Laird of the AUEW is also on the BNOC board, as well as the Industrial Development Advisory Board.

Roy Grantham of APEX is a director of Henley Management College. From 1977 to '81 he was on the board of Chrysler/Talbot UK.

These jobs on the side continue after the trade union term of office expires.

Among retired trade union chiefs: Joe Gormley of the NUM is a director of the British Investment Trust, Joseph Parks & Son, and United Racecourses. Alan Fisher of NUPE is a director of Harland & Wolff and of British Airways. John Boyd of the AUEW has posts with the British Steel Corporation, ACAS, and the Atomic Energy Authority. Frank Chapple of the EETPU is on the Horserace Totalisator Board and the National Nuclear Corporation Board. Tom Jackson of the UCW is a director of BP.

(Information on directorships etc. from the Directory of Directors 1983 and Who's Who 1983).

bourgeois governing party again by means of a purge.

The only serious alternative to the right wing programme is for the Left to go forward — to fight for a Labour government which is controlled by the labour movement rather than the established state apparatus and which starts a real attack on the wealth and entrenched power of the ruling class. We propose a fight to transform the labour movement so that it becomes able to create such a government.

Some on the left believe the capitalist state can be transformed. We do not agree. But a common need and a determination is shared to oppose and fight the Tory government and to oppose any moves, even by the Labour Party in government, to load the cost of capitalist decay and crisis onto the shoulders of the working class.

We can organise a joint fight for a workers' government which begins the assault on capitalist power. That does not mean losing ourselves in consoling fantasies: if

"In October 1974 after the second General Election I was reappointed to the Department of Industry and one of the briefing sheets in the package was headed 'For an Incoming Labour Minister — If not Mr Benn' — which indicated a premature hope of the reshuffle that occurred nine months later. It however gave me a useful insight into the policy which the Department hoped my successor would follow — as indeed he did.

I believe that academic research on the full set of briefs prepared by the Civil Service for Minister in all Departments in all governments when they enter office and throughout their term since the War would offer a more accurate explanation of policies followed and why than a similar study of the manifestos upon which each Government was elected". (Tony Benn, 'The case for a constitutional civil service')

the Labour Party really were to strike at the power and wealth of the bosses, then, we believe, they would strike back, using their army and state forces. Even under a workers' government, the working class itself would only serve and protect its own interests by organising itself outside the rhythms, norms and constraints of Parliamentary politics, expanding its factory shop stewards' committees, combine committees, trades councils, etc., and creating new action committees, to be an industrial power that could as necessary dispense with the Parliamentarians.

In 1919 the leaders of the Triple Alliance of miners', rail, and transport unions met the then prime minister Lloyd George. Lloyd George told them: "If you carry out your threat and strike, then you will defeat us. But if you do so, have you weighed the consequences... For if a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state".

"From that moment on", the miners' leader Robert Smillie said later, "we were beaten and we knew we were".

But to counterpose the full revolutionary programme of a state based on workers' councils to the actual political processes within the actual labour movement is to make that programme empty words. To the labour movement activists engaged in the fight for Labour democracy and socialist policies, we propose the objective of a Labour government based on the labour movement and taking serious measures against capitalist power.

We propose this without demanding prior agreement on our view of the full revolutionary implications of such an objective — and trust to the logic of the class struggle to provide the basis for our activity to secure the further development of those implications.

There is no need to seek doctrinal guarantees, elaborate calculations about future possibilities, slogans designed to sew up all questions in advance, or fearful formulas which place protection against hypothetical future opportunist dangers above the job of developing the logic of the class struggle now. Whatever the guesswork, the slogan of a workers' government has in any case a tremendous educational value in organising and rallying the left.

State tyranny is not socialism

A secondary reason why the labour movement has been unable to change society is the horrible example of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe. If this is revolutionary socialism, many think, then better stick with social democracy.

The struggles of Solidarnosc have shown vividly in life what Trotskyists have argued for decades — that working-class socialism cannot be identified with the Stalinist systems, but is mortally hostile to them.

The Solidarnosc programme demanded:

- Workers' self-management in the factories: managers to be subject to recall by elected workers' councils.
- 'Opening the books' of the bureaucrats' economic planning
- 'A reform that will abolish the privileges of the bureaucracy'
- Wages and social benefits to be protected against inflation by escalator clauses
- Trade union inspection of health and safety at work
- The right to work for all
- Expansion of creches and nurseries. Extended maternity leave, with job security
- Longer holidays and a five day work week (instead of six days)
- Free elections, civil liberties, and 'abolition of secrecy in public life'
- Access to the media: 'the allocation of paper, printing facilities, and broadcasting time must be subject to social control'
- Free trade unions and the right to strike.

The confusions and hesitations among the Solidarnosc leadership are secondary. In the fight for such demands, the socialist side was Solidarnosc's, not the bureaucrats'!

In our view the 1917 Russian revolution was a genuine workers' revolution. The Stalinist system is its political negation, not a continuation. Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks had no illusions about 'socialism in one country' — they thought that the Russian revolution could give a lead for revolutions in Western Europe. When the workers of the West were defeated, and the revolution was thus isolated in backward Russia, a faction of the revolutionaries (led by Stalin) came together with careerists and officials from the old regime to create a new bureaucracy. Over the 1920s and '30s this bureaucracy consolidated itself and its power, eventually wiping out almost all the revolutionary militants of the Bolshevik party. It imposed a vicious police-state regime which has since been replicated in Eastern Europe and also in China, North Korea, etc.

The nationalised economy created on the strength of the 1917 revolution still remains and is still worth defending. But socialism means a workers' revolution in the East as well as in the West.



The programme for a workers' government

Jobs and services

We must organise the unemployed into trade unions and other mass organisations, together with employed workers, to win the right to work. On the basis of such organisation, all the work on hand should be divided among those seeking work, by reducing hours — without loss of pay. An immediate 35 hour maximum working week should be among the first measures of a workers' government.

But the problem is not lack of useful work

to be done. In Haringey, North London, workers fighting a hospital closure have produced a 'people's plan' for health provision in the area. Such plans in every area would reveal many new jobs that need to be done.

A programme of expanded public services; construction of new hospitals, houses, schools, and transport systems; conversion of arms industries to socially useful production; and real re-training, all at trade union rates of pay, would create millions of new jobs.

Open the books

Both private capitalists and the state reply: we can't afford it! The labour movement's answer should be: if capitalism is incapable of satisfying workers' demands for the most basic rights, then let it perish.

We call for the opening of the full accounts of health authorities, education authorities and other public sector bodies to elected committees of trade unionists.

The figures revealed would expose the wholesale profiteering by the banks, by private suppliers, and by building companies, as well as uncovering future planned cutbacks in service and manning levels. And they would provide the basis for a struggle to force the nationalisation without compensation of these parasites under workers' management.

We say that if employers claim to be unable to maintain a workforce at a living wage, we should demand the opening of their books. Not just a balance sheet — which many employers will produce if it is to their advantage — but all books, files and accounts. We demand to know where all of the money has gone. We want to know the connections with the banks and the interest paid to them. We want to know the arrangements they have with suppliers and traders. We want to know the source and cost of raw materials and the rake-off being made by retailers, etc. If this proves beyond doubt that the problem is not the 'greed' of the working class but the fact that crisis-ridden capitalism cannot offer the working class a decent standard of living, we have to present a socialist solution.

If the individual capitalist is indeed bankrupt, the answer is not to capitulate but to broaden the struggle.

Nationalisation

Factories shut down by private businesses should be nationalised and reopened, with reconversion of production if necessary. And nationalisation also needs to be extended into profitable sectors of the economy. Industries like cars, steel, rail, and coal need to be integrated into a democratically-decided workers' plan, with the nationalisation of the profitable components and supply industries.

Nationalisation should be without compensation, except for small shareholders. The millionaires have already been royally 'compensated' for years by the surplus labour which provides their profits.

All such workers' plans will be wrecked and sabotaged so long as the capitalists retain control of the banking and credit system. Even to nationalise all the leading banks is not sufficient, as the recent experience in France shows. All the major financial institutions must be taken into state ownership.

But for the state-owned banks to be real instrument for rational planning, it is also necessary that the state is one controlled by the workers.

Wages

Socialist planning includes planning of wages, the Labour right wing argues. In reality this argument is used to shackle wages while the bosses and bankers rampage freely. Their profits and prices are not 'planned' or genuinely controlled — nor can they be, for an economy can be run according to profit or according to socialist planning, but not both simultaneously.

The 'National Economic Assessment' is

only the latest way of dressing up wage controls — the latest way of protecting capitalism from workers' wage demands. The labour movement's task should, on the contrary, be to protect workers' wages from capitalism. The sort of 'incomes policy' we need is a national minimum wage set by law, and automatic escalator clauses to increase wages, benefits, pensions and grants monthly in line with a working-class price index. And these cannot be a substitute or buy-out for the fight to secure real increases.

Nuclear disarmament

In 1974 US strategy changed from 'Mutually Assured Destruction' — a system based on organising massive retaliation to wipe out any attacker — to a strategy centred more on 'tactical' nuclear weapons which can be used for 'limited' nuclear wars against conventionally-armed opponents. Cruise and Trident are part of this 'first-strike' strategy.

But any nuclear arsenal has its own logic — a logic towards war. We demand unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Having developed and used nuclear bombs quite 'unilaterally', the US and NATO now talk piously about 'multilateral disarmament'. In truth disarmament will never come out of warmongers sitting at a table.

Then what about defence? In reality the purpose of the NATO nuclear arsenal — this massive machine for the planned slaughter of millions of people in Eastern Europe — is not to protect against the (fabricated) threat of a nuclear strike against the USSR. It is to maintain the power of these chief world-exploiting states.

Britain's army has been in action continuously since 1945 — almost always in defence of British imperialism against liberation movements. The chief enemies against which the majority of Britain's people need defence are close at home: NATO and the British Army itself.

The labour movement's defence policy should be for a people's militia, democratically controlled by the labour movement and the communities, and based on universal military training. And Britain should withdraw from NATO.

"On Tuesday 24 November (1964) we had our most desperate meeting with the Governor of the Bank (of England). Claiming that our failure to act in accordance with his advice had precipitated the crisis, he was now demanding all-round cuts in expenditure, regardless of social or even economic priorities, and fundamental changes in some of the Chancellor's economic announcements."

Not for the first time, I said that we had now reached the situation where a newly elected Government with a mandate from the people was being told, not so much by the Governor of the Bank of England but by international speculators, that the policies on which we had fought the election could not be implemented; that the Government was to be forced into the adoption of Tory policies to which it was fundamentally opposed. The Governor confirmed that this was, in fact, the case...

I recognised the force of his arguments."

(Harold Wilson, 'The Labour Government 1964-70, p.64-5)

The Police

The police hierarchy in Britain, through such voices as James Anderton and the Police Federation, is highly and explicitly political, and becoming more so. It is also largely outside elected control.

Local police forces should be fully controlled by elected local authorities, which should have power to hire, fire, and instruct police chiefs. Special forces like the SPGs, IRUs, Special Branch, MI5 etc. should be disbanded.

At the same time defence squads will continue to be necessary for black communities facing racist violence or picket lines under attack. And we can have no faith in the ability of democratic control to transform the police force.

An armed force — deliberately separated off from society; soaked with authoritarianism, racism, and sexism; structured to be an unthinking, disciplined support for the established order; commanded by Tory die-hards; and regularly used to beat down struggles of workers and the oppressed — such is the police at present. It can at best be checked by formal democratic controls, but hardly turned into a friendly force. It needs to be dismantled and replaced by organised labour movement/community patrols.

"The world can't go on as it is without some fool or some maniac or some accident triggering the kind of war that is the end of the line for all of us" — Ronald Reagan, May 1983.

Because of a computer error, the US nearly launched nuclear missiles early in 1980. Ronald Reagan said: "If the war had taken place, I would see to it that the computer firm would lose its contract with the US government".

The state machine

Labour right-wingers accuse Marxists of being a threat to democracy. In reality we are much more for democracy than those right-wingers are. They tamely used Parliament in 1976 as a rubber stamp for the policies imposed by the IMF. We favour abolition of the House of Lords, the monarchy, and official secrecy, and maximum use by the labour movement of parliamentary rights, powers, and possibilities.

"In April 1974", reports Counter Information Services, "a secret Cabinet committee of the incoming Labour Government approved the already escalating price (of the Chevaline Polaris-update programme) ... Further cost escalation provoked a review in 1975 when a forecast of £400 million was approved ... In mid-1977, with estimates at the £800 million mark, a Cabinet group seriously considered scrapping Chevaline. But the logic of expensive weapons development prevailed ... All this was subject to no control by Parliament or even by the full Cabinet. The same went for R&D work for Trident commissioned by the Ministry of Defence from Rolls Royce in 1976 and Aldermaston in 1975."

Who are the democrats? The rank and file Labour activists, or the top leaders who conspire behind closed doors with the military establishment?

But the issue does not end there. Lord Denning has called for judges to declare illegal any moves by a Labour government to scrap the House of Lords. He himself did a practice run by declaring it illegal for the

Labour Greater London Council to carry out its manifesto commitment on cheap fares. Robin Leigh-Pemberton, Thatcher's recent appointee as Governor of the Bank of England, has warned that he would not cooperate with moves by a Labour government to devalue the pound. Michael Carver, who was chief of the British Army in 1974, revealed in a debate with Pat Arrowsmith in 1980 that when Heath fell, "Fairly senior officers were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army would have to do something about it..."

We must expect that the ruling class would strike back at a government really going for a 'fundamental shift in the balance of wealth and power', or even a radical reformist government of the type of Allende's in Chile. First they could use bureaucratic obstruction and economic sabotage; then, if necessary, direct intervention by the army, perhaps using the Lords, the monarchy, and/or the courts as a 'constitutional' cover.

A labour movement committed to socialist change, unwilling to buckle in the face of such ruling-class resistance, will have to be able to take on the permanent state machine and the entrenched power of big business. And that cannot be done just through parliamentary votes. The hierarchies of the permanent state machine are solidly manned by ruling-class die-hards. For example, in 1975, 83% of judges had been to public school, 72% of top army officers, and 62% (1970) of top civil servants. Top civil servants frequently get top jobs in big business or banking after leaving the civil service. These people will never act as a neutral administrative machine to implement socialist policies. The present armed forces will have to be disbanded, the civil service totally restructured, etc. To do this the labour movement will have to be ready to acquire and to use arms against the ruling-class resistance.

The Labour right-wingers who pontificate so much about parliamentary democracy show no will at all to defend what is democratic about parliamentary democracy against such ruling-class sabotage. All their concern has been to defend what is least democratic about the present parliamentary forms — as for example when championing the right of Labour MPs to speak and vote as they like, against the moves by the rank and file to exercise control over them through re-selection.

Present-day British parliamentarism is by no means the highest or ultimate form of democracy. The elected House of Commons is a feeble legislative junior to a powerful executive machine which largely controls it through the powers of the prime minister (who is not elected, but appointed by the Queen). The voters can only mark a cross once every five years — there is no right of recall.

The labour movement should fight for a new sort of democracy — a 'workers' parliament', if you like. State officials should be elected and paid an average skilled workers' wage. Official secrecy should be abolished. The 'workers' parliament' should combine legislative and executive functions in a single body. Power should be decentralised to local and factory 'workers' parliaments' as much as possible. Most fundamentally, there should be frequent elections and the right of recall by electors over their delegates at any time.

The Gdansk joint strike committee that developed during the rise of Solidarnosc was such a 'workers' parliament' — or at least the beginnings of it. Such 'workers' parliaments' or 'workers' councils' could develop in Britain in many ways — possibly, as in Poland, in the course of a struggle by the labour movement for its rights against an unelected state machine.

"The reformists systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed" — Leon Trotsky.

Women's liberation

WOMEN are still at the bottom of the heap. They're stuck in the lowest paid, least skilled, and most disregarded jobs, doing the repetitive drudge work for a pittance.

Though the bearing and rearing of children is necessary for the whole of society, it is treated as a woman's personal responsibility, and made an obstacle to any sort of advance in the world outside the home.

Now the Tories' cutbacks in public spending have meant more women thrown out of work, and more nurseries, nursing homes and old people's wards shut down, leaving women to mind the children, the sick and the old at home.

A woman's low status at work is reflected in the home, where the man regards himself as master of the house, with a woman for his personal servant. Little wonder so many women are bullied and battered in their homes.

For capitalism, women's unpaid domestic labour in the home, the 'family wage' for men, and low pay for women, are all part of the profit-making system. This vicious circle must be broken. Full public childcare facilities are needed to free women to take their places in society on equal terms

According to the UN, women put in two thirds of the world's work hours, receive one tenth of the world's wage and own less than one hundredth of the world's wealth.

In Britain, the average married woman spends between 23 and 35 hours a week doing household tasks; her husband spends, on average, less than 10 hours a week.

Of all women of 'working age', 65% are in paid employment; and 62% of married women are in paid jobs.



with men.

The present-day family structure — father at the head, mother and children below — is an oppressive unit. It serves to organise society in a way that's convenient for capitalism. It depends on the mother figure providing the care for the children and the husband, the cooking, the washing, and the cleaning.

We say that these tasks should be socialised — that women should not have to do them, and that they could be organised collectively in the community. This would make more sense economically (you could have a free laundrette instead of 30 private washing machines); it would also free women from the drudgery and boredom of the housework and enable them to play a full equal part in the production and throughout society.

The family is also oppressive for the children, as the parents have absolute authority over them. How many times do you hear 'Because I say so', as a reason for having to do something?

The present family system has not existed forever. It is a convenient economic unit for capitalism, which restricts and oppresses women and children. The economic and legal restrictions which force people to live in such units should be removed, and there should be a choice.

One child in eight lives in a family headed by a lone parent. Only 13% of all households are made up of a 'male breadwinner', a wife who is not in paid work, and dependent children. Yet the entire tax, benefits and wages system is built around the family wage brought in by the male breadwinner

Such changes need a huge economic upheaval, and a planned economy. Also, the struggle for socialism can't be successful without the women of the working class coming forward to fight for their rights. Socialist revolution and women's liberation are therefore inseparably linked.

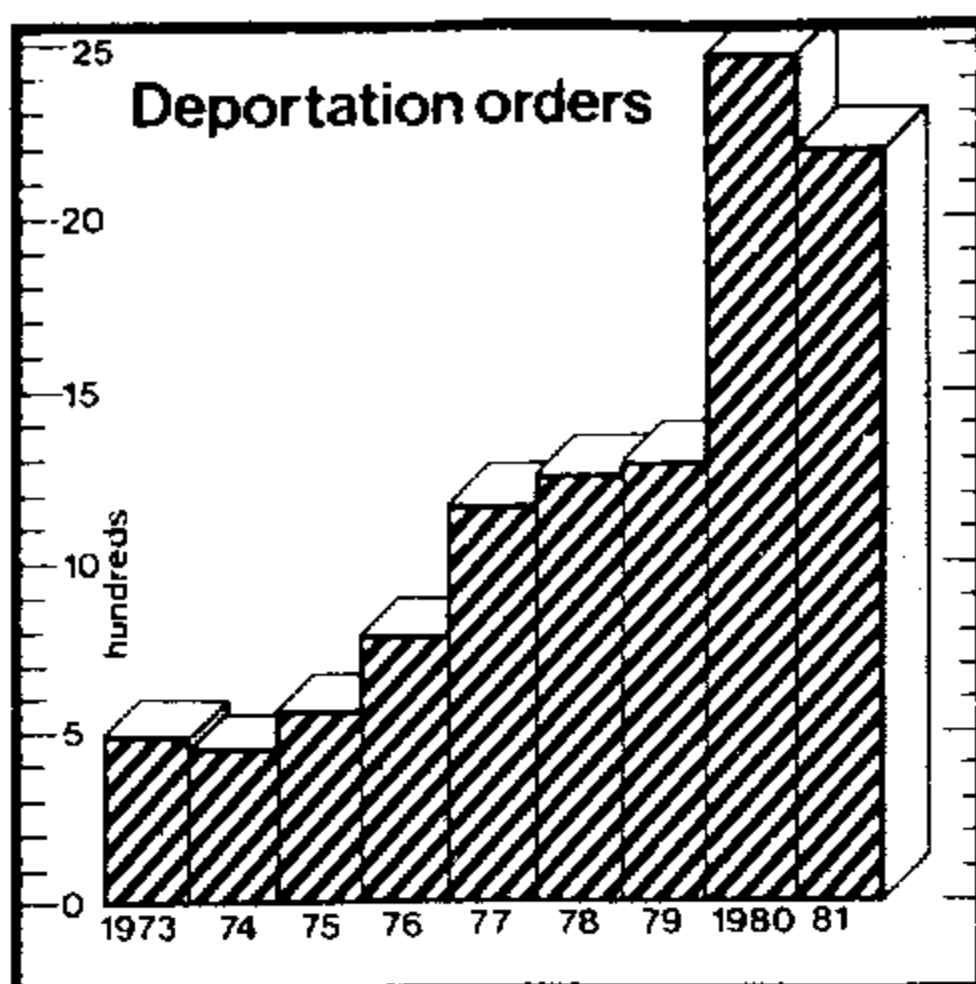
Immediately, legal and financial independence must be legislated for women. Free and freely available contraception and abortion is a woman's right, so that she can decide in her own time when and whether to bear children. Full equality means not only genuine equal pay, but equal training and opportunities and rights to a skilled job.

But formal equality won't be enough. A whole programme of positive discrimination in employment, elections to public positions, education and training will be needed too. None of this will be possible without a concerted drive to rid the labour movement of sexism and make it really habitable for women.

Black people

CAPITALISM, which revived slavery on a mass scale in the 'New World', and confined it to blacks, created modern racism.

The exploitation of Black Africa and India, and the collusion of the working class of the advanced countries in that exploitation and in the back-up work of bloody repression, underpinned it. A combination of large-scale immigration of black and Indian workers into Britain during the boom, creating a scapegoat target for racism, and the permanent uncertainty which capitalism imposes on the white



Margaret Thatcher: "People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture. People are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in" (30.1.78).

working class, perpetuates it.

It is a major divide-and-rule weapon for the bosses.

The immigration laws are not motivated by problems of Britain being overcrowded, but by racism. They allow free admission to vast categories of white people, but exclude blacks. They also provide the basis for a whole system of racist harassment of black people already resident in Britain. All immigration controls should be scrapped. There is no reason for the but racism.

Against fascist and racist thugs, the labour movement should support black self-defence, and seek to create the basis for united black/white workers' defence patrols. We should drive the fascists off the streets — deny them the possibility to meet, demonstrate, and rally their forces. Fascism depends on rallying individuals who are bewildered and driven desperate by the capitalist crisis, building on all their most reactionary prejudices, and giving them a feeling of power and identity through, first, violence against black people, and, if they grow strong, violent repression



of the labour movement. It cannot be combatted by debate, but only by force against force.

To call on the present capitalist state to ban fascists is, however, dangerous and wrong. Bans and police powers, in a capitalist state, are always turned against the working class. Many times in recent years we have seen the Public Order Act, introduced in the 1930s ostensibly against the fascists, used against the left.

To accomplish this programme of anti-racist and anti-fascist action, the labour movement needs to purge itself of racism, to remove all open racists from union or Labour Party positions, to campaign (using material in appropriate languages) to recruit black workers to the labour movement, and to give support to black caucuses within the movement.

Lesbian & gay liberation

MANY on the left see lesbian/gay liberation as an aberration, or at best as a matter of democratic tolerance for an aberration. This continues only because lesbian/gay oppression is so deep. At the very least one in ten of the population is lesbian or gay: with less repression more would be. But the combination of barbaric legal discrimination against gay men, and deep prejudices made more tense and emotional by the connections of the issue with people's fears of and about their own sexuality, make it a huge ordeal for lesbian and gay people to 'come out'. The very depth of the oppression thus makes it relatively invisible.

Homosexuality is in no way an aberration. All indications are that in a society with a minimum of sexual repression most people

would be bisexual.

All legal discrimination against lesbians and gays should be removed, and replaced by legal protection for them against discrimination. This formal equality needs to be supplemented by positive moves in areas like education to undo the legacy of past oppression.

Youth

THE Tory government has made a deliberate, and partly successful, effort to drive youth wages down. That's for the youth who get a job! Education has also been cut back — and police harassment of youth increased.

The youth labour schemes should be replaced by a programme of useful public projects at trade union rates. Full pay should start at age 16. The labour movement has to fight to unionise the schemes, and for Labour councils and unions to withdraw co-operation from the administration of the schemes.

Education needs to be expanded — and also changed, to create a completely unified comprehensive system which also encompasses higher and further education, with extended facilities for day release and grants for all wishing to pursue their education after the age of 16. Corporal punishment and petty rules should be ended, and school students' unions encouraged. Examinations and formal assessment should be imposed only when necessary to check technical qualifications.

To fight for the rights of youth, the labour movement needs to ensure these rights in its own ranks — full trade union rights for youth, youth sections in the unions, no attack on the rights of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Ireland: for self-determination

IRELAND has a British problem. The British partitioned Ireland in 1921 and created the artificial statelet in the North. Britain lopped off six of the nine counties of Ulster, and the boundaries were drawn in such a way that the Protestants were guaranteed a majority. Northern Ireland was run as a sectarian state, and the Protestants were kept loyal to Unionist (Tory) politics by marginal privileges.

While the Protestants declare themselves 'loyal' to Britain, the British state has difficulty in controlling the excesses of Orangeism. In the '60s Britain began some timid efforts at reform. This sparked off a mass civil rights movement among the Catholics. The Protestant bigots responded with brutal attacks and attempted pogroms.

In 1969 the British troops were sent onto the streets of Northern Ireland, supposedly to protect the Catholic minority from attack. Within a short time it was clear that the reason they had gone there was to protect the interests of the British bosses.

Since then we have seen massacres by the British Army like Bloody Sunday, January 1972, where 14 people were shot dead while on a peaceful demonstration, go almost uncriticised by the British media. Time and time again we heard of the 'terrorist' activities of the IRA, but hardly ever do we hear of the terrorism of the British Army who shoot down Catholics in

cold blood.

Since the late '60s, Britain has largely given up its feeble plans for reform, and its policy has been simply to restore order by trying to beat down the Catholics.

The top army officers who preach 'counter-insurgency' and organise strike-breaking in Britain do not become philanthropic peace-keepers when they cross the Irish Sea.

In Northern Ireland the British army is propping up a sectarian state based on Protestant supremacy. It is defending an oppressive and unjust set-up which cannot be made peaceful. And the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act', introduced by a Labour government in November 1974, supposedly as an emergency measure, has given new evidence for the old axiom: a nation which oppresses another cannot itself be free.

Only a united and independent Ireland — with all legitimate minority rights for the Protestants — can offer a way out. Labour's leaders pay lip-service to a united Ireland, but in practice continue the policy of repression of the Catholic minority in the North. Only a firm decision for troops out can give real content to this policy for a united Ireland.

The Republican movement is a militia of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland in its struggle against oppression. The left in Britain should solidarise with it against

British imperialism (though not supporting all its methods). The Republican prisoners of war are clearly political prisoners, and should be recognised as such. At the same time we must do all we can to help the development of a real all-Ireland workers' socialist party. An all-Ireland class movement, uniting Catholic and Protestant workers, would be the best way to create a united Ireland.

Britain and the world

DESPITE having released nearly all its colonies, Britain is still an imperialist power in the sense that British bankers and bosses draw profits from the exploitation of labour right round the world. And the South Atlantic war showed that the old gunboat politics are not quite so dead after all.

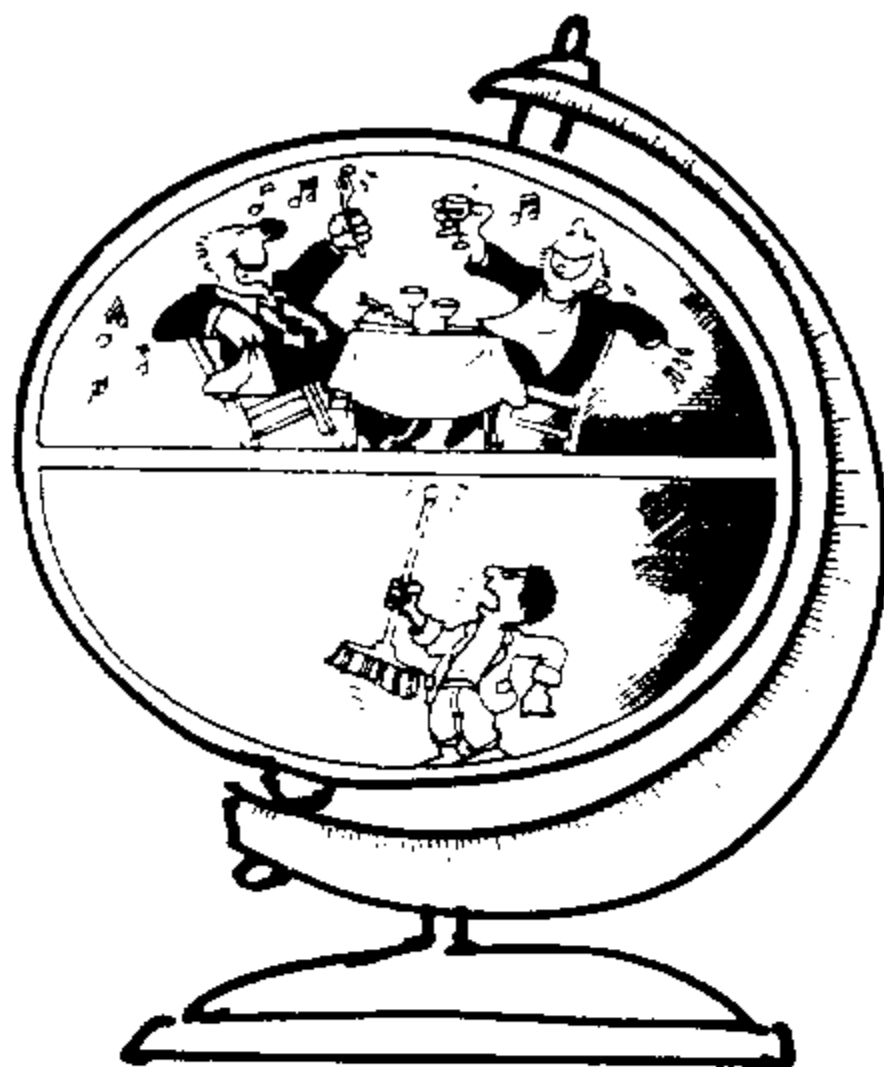
The international military and profiteering activities of Britain's ruling class are not the only menace for the workers and peasants of the 'Third World'. They also strengthen that ruling class's position within Britain.

The labour movement should place the needs of the underdeveloped countries in the forefront of its concerns.

We must fight for the unconditional cancellation of the vast debts of the poor countries to the international banks and to imperialist governments. We must demand the ending of economic discrimination against the exports of the poor countries.

A workers' government in Britain should cancel all claims to the holdings of British multinationals in the 'Third World'. And it should undertake a massive programme of economic aid — it would be better, in the view of the history of imperialist plunder, to call it reparations — aimed at helping the poor countries. For this aid to be practically useful we should call for it to be directed towards governments that take serious anti-capitalist measures in their own countries and towards national liberation movements in the still-oppressed nations.

The labour movement should give maximum support to the struggles of the FMLN-FDR in El Salvador, to the fight against apartheid in South Africa, to Namibia's



fight for independence, and to the fight of the Palestinian people for their own independent state free of Israeli oppression.

But the international dimension of a socialist programme goes beyond just anti-imperialism. Foreign trade takes about 25% of capitalist Britain's national income. It would be the same for a socialist Britain — unless isolation and encirclement by hostile states forced such a socialist Britain into a seige economy, in which case living standards would be seriously cut. Socialism cannot be built in one country alone. At best the working class of a single country can establish a bridgehead, a base, a starting point.

Also, neither the workers nor the capitalists of the rest of western Europe (at least) would just passively watch a socialist transformation in Britain — always assuming, which is far from certain, that Britain was first. A victorious struggle for socialism in any country in Europe would almost certainly have to become (at least) a cross-Europe struggle.

That our links and our sympathy must be not just with the 'Third World' in general, but more specifically and more closely with working-class socialist movements all across the world. And any workers' government in Britain must see as its immediate goal the Socialist United States of Europe — of all Europe, ousting the bureaucrats in the East as well as the capitalists in the West.

"Power in our economy still resides with the landowners and the bankers and the multinationals and the IMF and the EEC... It has always seemed to me strange that we should accept as normal that the electorate can hire and fire a Prime Minister but that workers can't hire and fire their management" — Tony Benn, in *Socialist Organiser* 24.1.80

"The Prime Minister (has) the power to appoint and dismiss Ministers without any constitutional requirement to get these changes approved by Parliament ... in effect enjoys the right to insist upon the appointment of the person he wishes to go forward (for chairmen of nationalised industries) Prime Ministers also appoint: permanent secretaries; ambassadors; chiefs of staff; the heads of the security services... This list excludes the Prime Minister's role in choosing... judges... complete personal control of the conduct of Government business... A Prime Minister is also in a unique position to control the flow of information... may secure the adherence of the UK to treaties which bind the UK Parliament without any requirement of the formal ratification by Parliament of those treaties..." (Tony Benn, 'The case for a constitutional premiership')

1974 included fundamental renegotiation of the Common Market, modernisation of British industry through the National Enterprise Board and planning agreements, and the social contract to bring trade union experience to bear on the formulation of government policies...

A long list of other policies are found in various different versions of the AES. Cripps himself adds:

- import controls and exchange controls,
- 'controls on the banking system',
- 'open government and industrial democracy'.

Some supporters of the AES call for outright withdrawal from the EEC rather than renegotiation. Other demands include:

- controls on export of capital,
- workers' co-operatives and industrial democracy,
- a wealth tax or a punitive tax on high income,
- cuts in defence spending and restored or increased social services,
- price controls (and, in some versions, wage controls),
- a 35 hour week. (Some supporters of the AES, like John Hughes, argue that workers should then be willing 'in return for the shorter working week', 'to settle for more moderate advances in weekly pay'.)
- more nationalisations.

According to which of these policies they stress, versions of the AES can range from mild reformism to sweeping radicalism. But usually the core of the argument centres around planning agreements, increased social spending, import controls and price controls.

Through planning agreements between the Government, unions and big companies, through increased social spending, and through new nationalised industry, investment will be jacked up. The increased investment will boost overall demand in the economy both directly and indirectly (for example, through the increased demand for consumer goods by workers in investment industries). It will thus pull the whole economy out of slump into expansion.

Alternatives

THE programme sketched out above is the policy we advocate for a government of the labour movement. The bulk of it can be implemented only by a government. But the demands in the programme also offer a guide and a perspective to immediate struggles — occupations against cuts, strikes for wages. Only in close connection with escalating militant direct struggles is a real workers' government likely to be established. Socialism, in our view, must be centrally based on the self-organisation and self-education of the working class in struggle. The liberation of the working class must be the task of the workers themselves.

This approach establishes a political

difference between and, on the one hand, 'Militant' — who tend to see socialism as just the passing through Parliament of an Enabling Act for the nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies — and on the other hand those who favour the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES).

What is the AES?

In the February 1980 issue of the paper 'Labour Activist', Francis Cripps explains:

'The Alternative Economic Strategy was first conceived as an answer to the failure of Harold Wilson's National Plan in the 1960s and as a positive alternative to the confrontation policies of Edward Heath...

'The key elements in the strategy envisaged when Labour came to power in

The import controls ensure that the increased demand does not just pull in more imports. And the price controls make sure it does not just lead to inflation. The other AES measures make sure the expansion benefits the working class.

Since investment will be under public control, the AES — so it is argued — will shift society away from the dominance of profit to what some AES supporters call a 'popular control economy'.

In this 'popular control economy' profit-making, large-scale private ownership of industry, and a market economy will remain. The changes proposed fall far short of the full socialist programme of collective ownership of the major branches of industry and democratic overall planning under the control of the working class. For some AES supporters (for example, Stuart Holland in his book 'The Socialist Challenge') more sweeping socialist change is undesirable; continuing private ownership and market economics is necessary to counter trends to Stalinist bureaucracy. For most people who support the AES, however, the more radical socialist programme is not undesirable, but just unrealistic in the immediate future. The 'popular control economy' is a more realistic first step.

But all the explanations of the AES say very little about the further steps. Alongside the mention of 'the injection of people versed in the economic philosophy of democratic and socialist control' into top jobs, there is also mention of mass pressure and mass involvement. But it is very vague: 'keen trade union pressure', 'the toughest possible union lobby', 'the negotiated and bargained support of the trade union movement' — all suggesting tough talk across the negotiating tables, rather than any action on the picket lines or on the streets.

The AES perspective is not one of stormy battles, but of the labour movement stolidly applying 'pressure' in the right directions while Labour ministers zealously issue their planning agreements and control regulations and rationing schemes and the capitalists sit it out with glum resignation.

But leaving aside the strict economic feasibility of the AES, it runs into serious problems here. How will it be enforced? Will the capitalists just grin and put up with it as their power and privilege is slowly whittled away? Will they sit quietly in the dentist's chair as their teeth are extracted one by one? Can the tiger be skinned claw by claw? Won't the British capitalists and army chiefs follow the example of their equivalents in Chile?

In a situation where acute crisis gives capitalism little leeway, not only a thoroughgoing socialist programme, but even a relatively limited policy like the AES would provoke violent reaction from the capitalists and their state machine. The experience of Chile proves that. Unless the workers are prepared to fight back, the result will be a counter-revolutionary massacre.

To try and give some justification to this blurring over of the fight against capitalist resistance, AES supporters often hint that the AES would not hurt the bosses too much. The bosses won't like being forced to invest more, but once the investment gets underway, there will be a snowball effect of general prosperity.

If only the capitalists knew their best long-term interests, they would support the AES too!

But the capitalists are not as stupid as that. The policy of spending one's way out of a crisis — first theorised by the Liberal economist J M Keynes in the 1930s, and still the heart of the AES today — has been abandoned by the leading sections of the capitalist class because in today's conditions it leads not to expansion but to infla-

One other aspect of the AES requires special comment: the call for British withdrawal from the EEC. Socialist Organisation supporters differ among themselves on this.

We all agree that the call for import controls should be rejected, and that we must argue for a Socialist United States of Europe. But we differ on whether or not to support the call for withdrawal.

Some argue that the call for withdrawal can be separated from demands like import controls and should be supported. Socialists cannot be neutral on whether or not the British imperialists cement a new economic alliance which will strengthen their hand against the working class at home and abroad. A British withdrawal from the EEC by a Labour government could be part of a fight to break up this European capitalist alliance, overthrow the component capitalist governments, and establish a Socialist United States of Europe.

Others argue that the call for withdrawal is misguided and diversionary. Yes, a socialist government in Britain would clash with the Treaty of Rome — but that would be the least of its problems, and right now the alternatives posed are Britain in the EEC vs. an isolated capitalist Britain. To say that OUR 'Britain out' means 'socialist Europe' is to evade reality. An isolated capitalist Britain has no advantages from a working class point of view.

The EEC does represent international capitalist rationalisation. But socialists do not oppose capitalist development. We oppose capitalism within its development. We condemn the capitalist classes not (as the pro-withdrawal case implies) for taking some limited steps to reduce barriers between nations, but for the insufficiency of those steps.

tion, uncontrollable state deficits, and balance-of-payments problems. And the panto of 'popular control' added by the AES to the Keynes policy would only irritate the capitalists without making any decisive working class planning possible.

A support of the AES could reply: 'Yes, we need a showdown eventually. But the revolutionaries themselves say it is not a question of revolution tomorrow. In the meantime we need immediate demands. The AES fills that need'.

The debate then focuses on the difference between the immediate demands we propose and those proposed by the AES. Some demands, like the 35 hour week, are common to both policies. But we propose a number of demands not in the AES. We oppose some of the AES policies, like import controls. And we consider planning agreements to be a right-wing pseudo-alternative to nationalisation.

What lies behind these differences?

Revolutionaries' demands are designed to be 'realistic' in terms of being close to the needs and the struggles of the working class. We aim to map a way forward for the strikes and struggles in which workers begin to move against the bosses, advancing the workers' unity, class consciousness, and political independence.

The AES demands are 'realistic' according to a different principle: in terms of being close to the needs and the activities of the capitalist nation-state.

The supporters of the AES at least nod recognition to the fact that capitalism's crisis is international. But then all their policies are national, focused on what the (British) nation state should do.

Consider import controls. The AES sup-

porters argue that British import controls would not lead to retaliation by other countries. We doubt the argument... but it is in any case beside the point when the philosophy of the AES indicates import controls all round, retaliation or no retaliation. There is nothing in the argument for import controls in Britain that cannot be (and is not) applied in almost every other country.

And import controls all round just mean less international trade, more slump, higher prices, and stricter barriers between nations. (Some economists argue that balanced import controls all round would allow each country to expand without problems of an inrush of exports and would thus, after successful expansion, actually permit a higher level of trade than without import controls. The scheme would make sense... if the world economy were an arena of rational planning rather than of ruthless capitalist competition).

A socialist policy must include a state monopoly of foreign trade as part of the general collectivisation of the economy. It would be a temporary measure until the country is integrated into a wider socialist federation — and it would go hand in hand with efforts to get international workers' unity in struggle, and to spread the socialist revolution.

Import controls within the existing system mean an attempt to export unemployment, and inevitably disrupt and divert from international workers' unity. Thus, while many workers passively support import controls, independent working class action for import controls is very rare. Serious campaigns for import controls are almost always joint employer-worker affairs.

So how 'realistic' is the AES? Many of its demands are state-control measures already tried and tested by capitalism, and can certainly be implemented... but usually in a form completely contrary to the best intentions of the AES supporters.

Thus the Social Contract, hailed in 1974-5 by most AES supporters as being 'despite ambiguities' a decisive step forward for trade union control of economic priorities, ended up exposed as a Social Con-trick. Price controls were brought in by the Labour government — and were a sham. So were planning agreements. And today's National Economic Assessment?

Industrial democracy of the sort proposed in most versions of the AES already exists in West Germany, for example — and is a means of drawing workers into helping organise their own exploitation.

Import controls already exist on goods like textiles, and may be extended. Stuart Holland commented recently: 'We may find that a right wing government of authentic or surrogate conservatives maintains that it has delivered 'the' alternative economic strategy, by introducing import controls, without any fundamental change in the balance or benefit of economic power in society.'

AES supporters could protest that we cannot judge their strategy by the actions of those who misuse it. But the misuse is built into the strategy. Because the only means proposed for realising the aims of the AES are pressure and lobbying on precisely the sort of people and institutions who will 'misuse' those aims, it is only a logical result that the radical-minded supporters of the AES end up 'deceived' and disappointed.

The AES can be translated into real politics in one of two ways — by shearing it of its radical intentions and turning it into a state-capitalist programme for managing the crisis, or by removing the nationalist and socialism-by-stages framework and integrating its radical demands into a comprehensive socialist programme.

Transforming the labour movement

HOW will this programme be realised? We have to win a battle of ideas within the labour movement and the working class. But that battle of ideas is not separate from day-to-day economic and political struggles. It is principally in such struggles that workers are able to learn and to liberate themselves from the dead weight of ruling class ideas. The job of a Marxist grouping like the Socialist Organiser Alliance, as we see it, is to integrate activity on all the fronts of the class struggle — economic, political, ideological — into a coherent strategy and organising effort.

For decades, collaboration with the Tories and the bosses has been the normal way of life in the labour movement. Labour in Parliament is the Loyal Opposition, or governs in respectful partnership with the overwhelmingly Tory Whitehall chiefs and top bankers.

Labour councils 'manage' the cuts. Trade union leaders consult with the Government, sit on dozens of joint committees and councils, and take directorships in the nationalised industries — whether the administration is Labour or Tory.

The rank and file, on the other hand, are stage extras. Occasionally they are called into action to pressurise the bosses. When the rank and file themselves spontaneously take matters into their own hands, the leaders usually get alarmed and try to soften or to betray the struggle.

We must campaign for the movement to call its leaders to account, to replace the MPs, councillors and union leaders who still collaborate with the Tories, and to organise for mass action against the Tories. We should demand that the Labour leaders pledge themselves to complete repeal of the Tory anti-union laws and to restoration of all Tory cuts when they return to office.

Against a re-elected Tory government, we should call for Labour MPs to mount a campaign of Parliamentary obstruction.

We should insist that the TUC leaders break off their collaboration with the Tories

and the bosses in the National Economic Development Council and dozens of other governmental and industrial bodies. We must fight for Labour councils to defy the Tory cuts.

And we must try to inspire all the sections of the movement with the urgency of preparing for a head-on clash with the Tories, and equip them with the necessary democratic structure and flexibility to mobilise and educate millions of workers.

While the struggle inside the Labour Party must be continued — making the Parliamentary Labour Party accountable, defeating the witch-hunt, defending re-selection and making it work, building Labour Party workplace branches — it is crucial now to extend the struggle for labour movement democracy in the unions. The trade unions are the bedrock of the labour movement. Without democracy in the unions, any democracy in the Labour Party is — as recent reverses have shown — unstable and half-empty.

In the unions we have to fight for their independence from the capitalist state; for regular election (for terms not exceeding two years) of and right of recall over union officials; against postal ballots, for direct, participatory democracy; for a complete programme of democratic reform. We also need a continued struggle to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine bureaucrats and careerists, and also to create, as circumstances require, elected strike committees, action committees, caucuses and rank and file movements supplementing the official structures. In each direct trade union struggle, we should strive to be in the forefront of supporting, extending, and mapping a way forward for the struggle.

Important also is the women's movement. We fight to remould the labour movement to be habitable for women and to fight for their needs. On that basis a mass working-

class based women's movement can be built, and a socialist alliance created between the labour movement and the women's movement.

Some on the left, like Militant, hold that positive discrimination and autonomous organisation for women are divisive. It would be better, they argue, to focus on the issues that concern working-class women and men equally, and on that basis to develop a united class movement.

That would be more tidy, perhaps. But, tidy or not, it is not possible just to shunt women's liberation on as another carriage behind the locomotive of the fight for socialism. Women are fighting for their liberation now. Is it divisive? It certainly shakes up the traditional 'unity of the labour movement' wherein men may lead, speak, and decide while women mostly stay at home, get a supporting role occasionally, and are cursed for 'backwardness' when they fail to rally automatically and being 'diversionary' when they protest at the sexism which oppresses them through language and even through physical harassment. But it also creates the basis for a new, more meaningful, unity of the labour movement, one re-defined by the oppressed female majority of the working class in line with their needs and their active participation.

Others on the left, like the SWP, argue against work in the Labour Party. Sagely philosophising that 'you can't change the Labour Party', they justify abstention from the struggle to change the Labour Party which is going on right now. Even if this struggle is destined to end with the left being purged, it is still a vital part of the process whereby the left must organise itself, educate itself, and sort itself out. The SWP's abstention leaves it with a diet of straight militant trade-unionism on the one hand, and general socialist propaganda on the other.

The other side of that coin is the comrades who — repelled by the sectarianism of many left groupings — confine themselves to local work (often very energetic work) in their Labour Party or trade union, or in some particular campaign. Doing so, they feel they are free from the sometimes incomprehensible disputations of the left groups, and can see their work directly bearing fruit in the real labour movement. Yet their perspective implicitly assumes that some benevolent providence will see to it that on the crucial day all this individual activity meshes together organisationally and finds a clear common programme politically. All historical experience suggests that this faith is misplaced. Time and again big broad left movements have been disastrously misled or rapidly dispersed in a crisis for lack of a coherent, organised, politically clear hard core which could play a leadership role. There is, no doubt, a percentage of folly in the disputations of the left groups; but then the task is to dispute for wisdom against that folly. Clear, adequate socialist ideas cannot be improvised. They have to be worked at.

Socialist Organiser is committed to maximum left unity in action wherever possible. We initiated the Rank and File Mobilising Committee in 1980 — the broadest united front of the left ever to be created in the Labour Party. But we also seek to organise a cohesive Marxist left wing in the labour movement — both unions and Labour Party. The role that such a left wing can play — in integrating different fronts of the class struggle and working out their lessons; in fighting for policies based on those lessons; and leading practical struggles — is, we argue, irreplaceable. Join us.

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