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FOR

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FOUR YEARS of Tory government have seen an unprecedented attack on the British working class. Breaking with the 'consensus' policies which dominated British politics for thirty years after the Second World War, the Thatcher government spearheaded a massive capitalist offensive against working people.

Thatcherism represented the decision by important sections of the ruling class that a radically new policy was needed to solve the chronic crisis of British capitalism. Their answer was simple and decisive: in order to boost the profitability of British capitalism, the working class must pay. And to do that, the power of the trade unions and the labour movement must be weakened. Thatcherism means war against the working class, against women, against black people, against youth, against anyone who challenges the logic of big business. It combines a huge economic attack with a vicious and callous ideological offensive in favour of authority, 'hard work', conformism, racism, 'Victorian family values', and above all against the values of the labour movement — social solidarity rather than individual greed.

The results are well known. Unemployment is really around 4 million. The output of manufacturing industry has dropped by 20 per cent. Rising taxes and attacks on social services make things progressively harder for working people. The trade unions have had restrictive legislation imposed on them. In 1983 less than 50 per cent of school leavers will find jobs.

But this is just the beginning. While the real income of the unemployed has fallen by 20 per cent, the income of many employed workers has not fallen so dramatically. The capitalists need a much deeper attack on working class living standards to restore the profitability of British capitalism. Thatcher has just prepared the way. Whoever forms the next government, the capitalist class — and behind them international big business in the form of the International Monetary Fund and the speculators — will demand harsher austerity measures. That will mean not just tougher controls on wages, but further attacks on the health and social services and the nationalised industries, and more restrictive trade union laws.

But the capitalist class threatens British workers in an even more fundamental way — through its preparations for war. Thatcher's Britain more than any other country supports President Reagan's new cold war against the Soviet Union and the peoples of the Third World. Cruise missiles and the Trident submarine programme are just the tip of the rearmament programme, which far from 'keeping the peace' only makes war more likely.

All this is bad enough. It is made worse because the labour movement is itself in crisis. The Labour and trade union leaders lack an effective answer to Thatcherism. It was the failure of the Callaghan government to defend working people which allowed the Tories to come to power after the 'winter of discontent' in 1979. Since then, the right wing of the Labour Party has done everything in its power to prevent radical socialist policies being counterposed to Thatcherism. A section of the Labour right has split off to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in an attempt to make a Labour government electorally impossible.

The trade unions leaders have moved might and main to sabotage an effective fight back against Thatcher among the rank and file. The magnificent eight-month struggle of the health workers was stabbed in the back by the 'softly softly' approach of the TUC. In the car industry, Michael Edwards and his successors were able to sack tens of thousands of BL workers, and launch all-out attacks on the shop stewards' organisation. In steel, 100,000 jobs have been lost while the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) leaders held up their hands and bleated — anything rather than mobilise the rank and file for a fightback. The huge support received by the healthworkers, in particular the broad response to their 22 September 1982 day of action, showed that the potential for struggle was there. But the Healey supporters among the trade union tops — the Weighells, Sirs, Duffys and Boyds — ably assisted by erstwhile 'lefts' like Moss Evans, have blocked mass action.

The crisis of the labour movement has not been solved by the attempts of Michael Foot to 'paper over the cracks', and create a phoney 'unity'. Insofar as it has been successful, it has been by muzzling the left. The right wing is preparing to step up its attacks on the party's left wing and to cuddle up to the SDP/Liberal alliance after the election.

Working Class Alternative

Britain is going through a prolonged and bitter class conflict. Either the capitalist class will deepen Thatcher's attacks to impose its solution, or the working class will carry through its own, socialist solution. Thatcher has seen this more clearly than the leaders of the labour movement. The right wing Labour and trade union leaders pine for 'normality', the good old days of the 1950s and 1960s, of moderation and slow but orderly progress. But those days are gone forever. The crisis of British capitalism might be solved if the working class was prepared to pay the price. But it would be a bitter and dreadful price, dominated by mass unemployment, state authoritarianism, widespread poverty and the ever-present threat of war.

If the capitalist offensive is not confronted and defeated, the gains of British workers over decades will be swept away. This is not the scaremongering vision of a few 'extremists'. Thatcherism has given us a glimpse of the capitalist future. It is a future which can and must be fought. To do that the labour movement must work out its own alternative. A socialist solution to the crisis means a struggle for policies which break with the logic of capitalism. It means breaking with yesterday's right wing leaders who have brought the name of socialism into disrepute. It means a fight to renovate the labour movement from top to bottom, to break it from the bureaucratic shackles and pro-capitalist politics which have prevented

any rank and file fightback.

Marxists in the labour movement are told that their solutions are 'utopian'. But the real utopians are those who have preached for decades that capitalism is reformable. Those who sat in successive post-war Labour cabinets and presided over pro-capitalist, pro-NATO policies, while support for the Labour Party tumbled.

Socialist Action's policies are not addressed to them, but to the thousands of Labour Party and trade union militants who want an alternative to the right wing; to the thousands of people, especially women, in the peace movement who have spearheaded the fight against nuclear insanity; to the thousands of youth and black people who confront the police state machine every day of their lives. Out of their struggle an alternative can be forged.

Policies To Fight The Capitalist Crisis

The Scourge of Unemployment

Every capitalist crisis brings an attack on the working class: the objective is to restore the conditions for a profitable expansion of capitalism once again. British capitalism has been in constant decline, as compared with its newer imperialist rivals, for more than a century. In the post-war period, once the cushion of empire was gone, the backwardness of British industry and its consequent lack of productivity was cruelly exposed.

The Tories sought to improve the productivity of British industry by driving the less competitive manufacturing firms out of business. The method they used was soaring interest rates, which put huge sections of industry in hock to the banks. This had two effects. Bankruptcies became an epidemic — not only the weak sectors, but even some of the more profitable sections of manufacturing industry went bust. Mass unemployment weakened the combativity of the labour movement. Workers were less able to combat the drive for productivity — speed up, new working practices — while threatened with closure and job loss if they resisted.

Meanwhile the sections of British capitalism which Thatcherism most benefited were those based on banking and finance, North Sea oil, and foreign investment. The Tories removed foreign exchange controls to ensure that finance capital could have an overseas bonanza.

Unemployment thus served an economic purpose and attempted to weaken and demoralise the working class. Days lost through strikes fell from 29½ million in 1979 to just over 4 million in 1981. But labour discipline has been paid for through a mountain of human misery. Unemployment is once again, as in the 1930s, becoming a catastrophe for working class families. The Tories have abolished the earnings related supplement, and held down social security increases below the level of inflation. Long term unemployment has increased dramatically — in some areas many people over the age of 45 have little prospect of ever getting a job again.

Unemployment has hit women, youth and black people particularly hard. Women are often the first to be made redundant because they have been the last to be employed, or work part time. But the increasing number of families in which the main wage earner is a woman shows this argument is bunk. The assault on women's employment is part and parcel of the capitalists' drive to get women back into the home to replace vanishing social services and to reinforce the sexist values of the family. If capitalism

expands, women can be summoned back once again, into the workforce to work for 'pin money'.

Unemployment has dealt a bitter blow to the prospects of young people. Two out of three school leavers face the dole and a staggering 42 per cent of the unemployed are under 25. Young people are increasingly deprived of financial independence and thrown back on to reliance on their families. Apprenticeships and other types of jobs training have been massively cut back. The Tories' Youth Training Scheme gives employers £15 a week if they pay young workers less than £40 a week — a deliberate attempt to lower the wage expectations of young people.

Black youth suffer particularly harshly from the effects of unemployment. One in six black people are out of work — and the proportion among black youth in the inner cities is much higher. Brought to this country at a time of economic boom, black workers are treated as fodder for the worst jobs, to be thrown in and out of work as suits the system. The confinement of most black workers to the worst jobs results from and reinforces the ingrained racism of British capitalism.

In the drive for productivity, those in work are made to work longer hours than any other workers in Europe. British workers work an average of 46 hours a week — a hundred years after the demand for the forty hour week was first raised! Overtime is essential for many workers to maintain their standard of living. But for the bosses, it is cheaper to have less workers and make them work longer. It is a scandal that the trade union leaders refuses to combat what for many workers is virtually compulsory overtime.

Unemployment is the biggest condemnation of capitalism — it shows that the criterion of *profit* is incapable of rationally organising society's resources. The construction industry is a perfect example. At least 400,000 building workers are unemployed. The demand for housing has never been greater, while house building is at its lowest level since 1920. Huge stocks of bricks litter the countryside. And the finance houses have huge amounts of capital. But it is not profitable to build more houses — because workers can't afford them at current prices. Any rational system would start a huge programme of house building.

Even though the real value of social security benefits has declined markedly, £17 billion is paid out each year to keep workers on the dole. Nothing could be more irrational.

To combat the scourge of unemployment the labour movement should demand:

- An immediate reduction of the working week with no loss of pay to 35 hours. This is just a first target. Already many European workers work 30 hours a week.
- In firms threatening redundancies, job sharing with no loss of pay. The working class should refuse to pay the cost of the capitalist crisis. No worker should lose her or his job because of the system's anarchy.
- A crash programme of public works to soak up unemployment. Houses and hospitals need to be built. The railways need electrification. There is no shortage of needs. Money must be raised from the banks and financial institutions to put people in work.
- A ban on overtime. The unions should demand that more workers are taken on to carry out extra production.
- A woman's right to work. Positive action for women and black

workers in jobs training and unemployment, including quotas, to ensure that for these sectors of the population work becomes a right.

- For the right of all young people to real jobs. Full trade union rights and rates of pay for all young workers in employment or training. For a £25 weekly minimum grant for all youth in further education.

To fight the effects of unemployment the labour movement should argue for:

- Occupations backed by the whole labour movement of companies threatening redundancies. If no solution is found, nationalisation without compensation under workers' control of these companies.

- Organisation of the unemployed. The worst effect of unemployment is to drive a wedge between employed and unemployed. The membership of the unions has fallen 2½ million. All unemployed workers should be in a trade union.

- A law guaranteeing the right to work. Work is a fundamental human right. It should be ensured by society. Unemployment is not 'inevitable'. Unemployment should be made a crime — not for the workers, but for the system!

Missile Madness

Nothing illustrates the priorities of capitalism better than the present surge in defence spending by the United States and Britain. The 'new cold war' originates from the crisis of world capitalism. During the late 1970s the worldwide economic and political interests of the United States came under threat from progressive or revolutionary movements in many parts of the 'third world'. America's friend in Iran, the brutal and dictatorial Shah, fell before a massive popular movement. In Africa, pro-western forces were defeated in Angola and Ethiopia. In Central America, the Nicaraguan dictator Somoza was overthrown by a revolutionary mass movement. Even under President Carter, the United States sought to defend itself against these movements and to prevent them spreading. With the advent of Reagan, US militarism has gone into top gear.

The United States has been getting economically weaker compared with Japan or Western Europe. But it is still overwhelmingly *militarily* stronger than either. It can use its military strength to assert its dominant position, its 'leadership' of the West.

The fundamental aspects of the US military resurgence have been:

- The construction of a huge counter-revolutionary strike force, the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). This consists of 250,000 soldiers who can be shipped anywhere within a couple of weeks. It is specially trained in desert and anti-guerrilla warfare.

- A new military creed which breaks down the barriers between conventional and nuclear war. 'Air-Land Battle Doctrine', as it is called, stresses the early and overwhelming use of nuclear weapons by the United States forces in any major conventional conflict.

America strives for overwhelming nuclear superiority so as to conduct its conventional military operations, or those of its junior partners like Israel, with relative freedom. It also hopes to put economic pressure on the Soviet Union through arms escalation. We are witnessing a global imperialist offensive. The invasion of Lebanon by Israel and US military intervention into Central America supporting the rotten Salvador dictatorship and subverting

the revolutionary Nicaraguan government, are the results.

NATO is a crucial component in the imperialist offensive. Cruise and Pershing missiles cannot be launched from the United States. The Trident weapon is part of the USA's huge nuclear overkill. A central part of the new nuclear doctrine is the notion that nuclear war against the Soviet Union is winnable. The doctrine of 'theatre nuclear war' justifies the possibility of fighting and winning a war against the Soviet Union in Europe.

Thatcher and the Tories are Reagan's most prominent European allies. Britain has become the United States floating aircraft carrier, with over 100 bases. Working people have no interest in Britain belonging to an imperialist alliance — NATO — as a junior partner of the United States. We have no interest in paying huge sums of money on nuclear weaponry. The labour movement, in addition to opposing Trident and Cruise missiles should demand:

- Immediate unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain.
- All US and NATO bases out of Britain — Britain out of NATO.

A socialist Britain would develop its relations with the third world and the non-capitalist countries at the expense of alliances with world imperialism. It would defend itself not against the mythical Soviet 'threat', but against imperialist threats, by mobilising and arming working people to defend themselves.

To fight NATO's nuclear madness the labour movement should commit itself to:

- Mass labour movement action to stop the missiles.

This should involve joint Labour Party-TUC demonstrations of hundreds of thousands and, above all, strike action. The most powerful ally of CND is the organised labour movement. Both the Labour Party and the TUC are committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament. To stop the missiles, protest action alone is not enough. The power of hundreds of thousands of workers must be brought into play. This must also involve:

- Trade union blacking of the missile sites and all their suppliers.

Jobs not Bombs

Britain spends 5.3 per cent of its income each year on defence. This year the government plans to spend £16,000m on defence — £20 a week for every family of four. Over the next decade £11 billion will be spent on the Trident missile system. This allocation of resources is insane. A kidney machine costs £7000 — about the same as an anti-tank missile. Yet hundreds of people die each year because of the lack of them. A body-scanner costs £1½ million. They can detect illnesses of all kinds at an early stage, and provide more accurate diagnosis. Few hospitals have them. Those that do have raised the money through private appeals, and maintain them through giving over 25 per cent of their use to private patients. By slashing defence resources can be mobilised to provide jobs and boost the social services.

It is a myth that this would necessarily lead to widespread job loss. Many weapons systems are brought from abroad — the money is simply wasted. Most defence industries can be used to produce goods and services for socially useful products. In a socialist Britain workers' organisations would be encouraged to follow the example of Lucas Aerospace workers, to draw up a programme for alternative use of the potential of the defence industries.

The choice of 'jobs not bombs' perfectly sums up the socialist alternative to the capitalist offensive.

Defending Living Standards

Under the Tories the capitalist offensive took the form not of compulsory incomes policy but a series of measures to worsen the standard of living of all but the well-to-do. Their measures included:

- Squeezing pay in the public sector through pay norms.
- Increasing the tax burden on working class families through VAT and National Insurance charges.
- Clamping down on social security payments.
- Increasing prescription charges and other medical charges.
- Squeezing expenditure on health, housing and education.
- Allowing gas, electricity, postal and transport costs to go through the roof.
- Pushing up council rents.
- Slashing the Rate Support Grant to local councils.
- Carrying through a huge programme of private asset-stripping of nationalised industries.

The pay of many workers in the private sector has held up relatively well. But the attack on overall living standards hits every working class family. The few Tory tax concessions have mainly benefited well-off families. Tory priorities can be seen in their huge increases in pay for army officers, judges and the police, and the huge amount spent on defence. If the Tories have been unable to cut public spending as much as they would have liked, it is only because of high defence spending, and the astronomic amount spent on unemployment benefit, despite a 20 per cent fall in its value.

The net result of this overall squeeze on living standards has been the re-emergence of poverty on a massive scale. Seven million people live on or below the 'official' poverty line. Five million more live just above it. Two out of three women manual workers and more than one in six male workers are low-paid.

A crash programme is needed to defend living standards, social services and the nationalised industries. The labour movement must fight for:

- A sliding scale of wages. Automatic pay increases to keep pace with inflation.
- A national minimum wage of £100 per week as the way to end low pay.
- A sliding scale of social expenditure. Real spending on the social services should not decrease with inflation.
- A freeze on all council and private rents.
- Abolition of health service charges.
- Social security payments to be linked with the national minimum wage.
- Abolition of Value Added Tax and other forms of indirect taxation — make the rich pay!
- A major programme of investment in the health and education services — let the unemployed doctors and teachers work!

The first task of a socialist government would be to defend living standards and launch an attack on poverty. That would have to be part of a comprehensive plan of spending and investment for the economy. The resources

are there — the millions spent on defence and the astronomic oil revenues, the massive profits of the banks and the monopolies.

The attack on the nationalised industries is an attack on the working class. Privatisation in telecoms, health and transport, means a worse service at higher prices — and huge profits for the City speculators. British Rail is under savage attack. Deprived of investment, forced to be 'profitable' in an industry which is not profitable anywhere in the world, the only result is privatisation of profitable subsidiaries, worsening services and rising fares. The labour movement must demand:

- An end to privatisation — defend the nationalised industries!

Incomes Policy

The Tories have attacked living standards without an incomes policy. In future they could revert to a formal incomes policy, or the sort which they have attempted to apply in the public sector through their 6 per cent and 4 per cent pay norms. The SDP/Liberal Alliance are committed to incomes policy. And Labour's manifesto includes a National Economic Assessment which amounts to an incomes policy in disguise.

Workers should reject incomes policy under capitalism. So long as the capitalist system exists, incomes policy always means *wage restraint*, a method of making workers pay for the capitalist crisis.

Defend Women's Rights — Against Sexual Oppression

The capitalist offensive has hit women particularly hard. Unemployment has produced a massive expulsion of women from the workforce — the real figure for female unemployment is probably over two million. Women's pay has declined proportionately to that of men. Women have suffered particularly harshly from cuts in social security benefits, and have greater difficulty claiming unemployment benefit — having to show that they can make arrangements for their children while out of work before they become entitled to claim.

The economic attack on women has been combined with a frontal attack on women's social role. Disappearing social and community services force women back into the home to look after the young, the old and the sick. The ideological offensive in favour of 'family values' and against community provision of social services pushes women back into the home. The social crisis is unleashing a flood of violence against women. Repeatedly abortion rights are coming under attack.

The net result of these factors is to begin to roll back the gains which women, especially working class women, have won in struggle. The fight for women's rights, and to open up the road to women's liberation, must centre on demands which give women economic and sexual independence:

- For a woman's right to work! For a woman's right to choose!
- Positive action in education, training and jobs.
- Free abortion and contraception on demand.
- Equal pay, equal rights, for women.
- Build an independent womens movement.

For Gay and Lesbian Rights

The right of lesbian women and gay men to free expression of their sexuality is a basic democratic and human right, as well as being a challenge to the



G.M. Cookson

ideology of the family. But the reinforcement of the family and of 'Victorian values' is deepening the oppression of lesbians and gay men in Britain. Sex between men under the age of 21 is still illegal, although the age of consent for heterosexuals is 16. Gay people suffer massive discrimination in education, employment and housing, and millions live in fear and misery as a result of prejudice and bigotry. Police violence and harassment of gay clubs and meeting places is widespread.

We fully support the right of lesbians and gay men to organise themselves autonomously. At the same time we call on the labour movement to put itself in the forefront of the struggle for homosexual equality. In particular we propose:

- An immediate reduction of the age of consent for male gays to 16 as a step towards its complete abolition.
- The banning of discrimination against gay people in housing, education and employment.
- The repeal of all sexual offences and other legislation which specifically discriminates against, or is used against, gay people.

Trade Union Rights

Tory employment supremo Norman Tebbit has introduced two Employment Acts as the first stage of an all-out attack on the trade unions. These have in-

cluded restrictions on the right to strike as legal immunities have been removed; limitations on solidarity action and the right to effective picketing; removal of employment protection for strikers; legal immunities for trade unions and officials in disputes have been removed; and the closed shop has been attacked through a 'scabs charter' allowing an anti-union minority to disrupt it. This is just the first step. Future plans include an attack on the political levy in trade unions and compulsory secret ballots before strikes.

The trade unions are the basic defensive organisations of the working class. Trade union strength is a major problem for the capitalists' attempts to boost the rate of exploitation and create a more servile labour force. But whatever government is in power the working class needs trade unions, independent of the state and self-governing to defend its basic interests. We demand:

- Hands off the trade unions! Repeal the Tebbit laws!
- No state interference with the unions — for the right to strike, for the right to picket, for the closed shop!

Against Racism

Black people in Britain are under attack. The Tory Nationality Act is deliberately aimed at restricting black immigration. It follows a series of immigration Acts, from both Labour and Tory governments, which had the same objective. The Act splits families, making it tremendously difficult for black women to bring their husbands to Britain. The immigration service and the Home and Foreign Offices have constructed an almost impenetrable series of barriers to black immigrants. This policy is part and parcel of trying to blame black people for Britain's crisis. The labour movement should demand:

- Repeal the Nationality Act and other racist laws!
- No immigration laws under capitalism!

Black people are constantly harassed and discriminated against in this country. Racial attacks number tens of thousand each year. Black youths are constantly harassed by the police. Discrimination against blacks reaches into jobs, housing, education and every aspect of society. The only means to combat discrimination and harassment is through:

- Positive action for black people in jobs, housing and education.
- Self organisation of black people. Self-defence against racist attacks!

The Strong State

The police, the armed forces and the security forces are instruments of capitalist coercion and rule. Successive governments have boosted police powers against the rights of trade unions, workers in struggle, black people — anyone who causes 'trouble'. The proposed Police Bill is just one more step on this road. It proposes greatly increased police powers of arrest, powers to stop and search people in the street, to hold them in custody without being charged, to fingerprint suspects and to search homes and workplaces.

As well as strengthening the police, the state has massively extended its computer records of suspected 'trouble-makers', including trade union and political activists: MI5 and the Special Branch are merely political police in disguise. The next steps for the labour movement in combating the rise of

the strong state are:

- Defeating the Police Bill.
- Abolition of the Special Patrol Group.
- Community veto over the police.
- Disbanding MI5 and the Special Branch.
- Repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

A further weapon in strengthening the powers of the state is the undermining of the jury system, and the loading of evidence in favour of the police. Socialists should demand:

- No police access to juror's personal details — a right denied to the defence. End police loading of juries!
- Abolition of majority verdicts.
- Restitution of the right of the accused to make a statement from the dock without cross-examination.
- Reinstate the right for jury trial of all but minor cases.

A socialist society would sweep away the capitalist police and the courts. While the labour movement and Labour councils should take no responsibility for the management of the police, they should demand the right to veto police decisions and expenditure. The labour movement has every interest in defending the dwindling legal rights of the accused.

End Britain's War Against the Irish People

The struggle in the North of Ireland has become an integral part of the crisis of British capitalism. The present situation in the North is the direct outcome of centuries of British oppression of the Irish people. Sectarian oppression of the nationalist-Catholic minority by the Protestant hierarchy is the outcome of the six-county statelet as a pro-imperialist enclave. It is an entirely artificial creation. Without British military and financial aid the Unionist state would be entirely untenable. The oppression of the nationalist community cannot be ended by a 'Bill of Rights', because the six-county state is sectarian in its very inception and nature. Justice will only be won by solving the national question. The Irish people must have the right to a united Ireland.

Successive British governments, Tory and Labour, have been unable to defeat the nationalist population and the Republican movement. Neither the British army, the H-block internment camps, nor the Diplock kangaroo courts have been able to stem the Irish freedom struggle. The Republican movement has grown in strength. Working people in Britain have no interest in the continued oppression of the Irish people. They must fight to commit the Labour Party to:

- Immediate withdrawal of British troops.
- Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.
- No Loyalist veto on a united Ireland.
- Full solidarity with the struggle of the nationalist population of the North.

The counter-insurgency lessons being learnt by the British army on the streets of Derry and Belfast will be used against British workers. Every British worker has a direct interest in stopping the brutal colonial oppression by the British army. In Britain it is particularly important to fight the dreadful record of the Labour Party on this question, and to commit Labour to British withdrawal. That is why we support the Labour Committee on

Ireland.

An end to British imperialism — out of the EEC

For much of this century huge chunks of the globe were painted pink or red as Britain's direct colonial possessions. Today that has changed, but British capitalism is still imperialist to the core. Britain has £84 billion worth of foreign investments. British banks like Barclays and Lloyds still reap a huge tribute from these investments, as do the big monopolies like ICI and Unilever, Lonhro and Rio Tinto Zinc. Britain's war against Argentina over the Malvinas was part and parcel of defending this economic empire. The labour movement should demand an end to Britain's imperialist world role. A socialist government would nationalise foreign assets held by British monopolies and banks and hand them over to the people of that country. Socialist Britain would change the existing system of British trade and alliances to create new relations with the third world and with non-capitalist countries. This would mean withdrawal from NATO and from the EEC.

The Common Market is a bosses' club. Its institutions create the beginnings of a common legal and economic framework, pulling resources to the centre of the magic triangle between Brussels, Paris and Hamburg. Working people have nothing to gain from the Common Market, economically or politically. To change Britain's foreign policy means a fight to break Britain's support for the most reactionary policies and regimes around the world. It means breaking the 'Atlantic Alliance' with the United States, and ending British support for US military aggression in Central America and other parts of the world. It means an end to 'Fortress Falklands' and Britain's continuing world military role. Above all it means an end to the power of British world capitalism:

- Withdrawal from the Falklands/Malvinas and from Hong Kong, Gibraltar and Belize.

Scotland and Wales

Capitalism develops in a geographically uneven way. Scotland and Wales suffer from regional underdevelopment. There is also a strong and growing sense of national identity among Scottish people and Welsh speaking people in Wales. In order to fight for the specific rights of the people of Scotland and Wales we fight for a national assembly in each country. The people of Scotland voted for an assembly, but were denied it by Westminster. In the event that this assembly continues to be denied, we advocate the formation of a Scottish Labour Assembly, as a powerful force for representation and mobilising the labour movement for the rights of the Scottish people. We fight for the *right of national self-determination* for the people of these regions.

Towards Socialism

The policies which are outlined above would be bitterly opposed by the capitalist class. It is inconceivable that the British ruling class would go along with a programme based on social need rather than profit. The dominant institutions of British capitalism are the banks, merchant banks, insurance companies and pension funds which between them dispose of billions of pounds each year and make lavish profits. Only by bringing these

institutions under social control could the goal of a planned economy be realised. Hand-in-glove with the major financial institutions are the British and multinational monopolies. They have the power to disrupt any socialist economic plan. To mobilise the resources for a planned economy we put forward the demands:

- Nationalisation of the banks and finance houses under workers' control.
- Nationalisation of the big industrial monopolies and all big foreign capital and trade under workers' control.

Other sectors of the economy, like the building trade, would have to be brought into public ownership to give society effective power over the essential public services.

The main alternative to these policies put forward in the labour movement is that of 'planning agreements' with big business, in the framework of the 'Alternative Economic Strategy'. Trying to implement planning agreements would paralyse a socialist government as the monopolies either tried to sabotage them, by shifting their resources out of the country, or by redeploying them on the basis of profit rather than social need. When the Labour government tried to achieve planning agreements in 1974-5, with Tony Benn as Industry Minister, it concluded but one agreement — with the Chrysler Corporation, who subsequently broke all their promises and ripped off the government for £40m. Only full nationalisation would prevent such a losing battle against the monopolies.

The nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy would be resisted every inch of the way by the capitalist class. The campaigns waged by the sugar, steel and shipbuilding industries against nationalisation by previous Labour governments are a small sample of what would be in store for a socialist government. British and international capitalism would try to bring a socialist government down through economic sabotage and a gigantic propaganda campaign. Only by mobilising the strength of millions of working people could such an assault be resisted. A national regime of *workers' control* in the factories and offices would have to ensure the co-operation of former bosses and technicians in a socialist plan of production. Everywhere workers' committees would have to be established to supervise and plan production within the framework of a democratically-decided national plan. The first task of these committees would be *checking and supervising* production, to guard against sabotage and disruption. Wherever possible nationalised industries would be brought under direct workers' management. The old bosses would be kicked out, although middle-level managers and specialists would in many cases have to be retained under workers' supervision. In those medium sized and small industries still in private hands workers' committees would be responsible for checking the production and business accounts of the bosses.

A revolutionary workers' government committed to a programme of nationalisation and workers' control could only come to power by a mass mobilisation of the working class which defeated the bosses and the state which defends their interests. It could not rely on the existing state and government apparatus to push through a socialist programme. If a government was elected on such a programme, it would immediately be confronted not only with the opposition of the media and big business, but also with that of the permanent civil servants, the army and the police — all instruments of capitalist rule. A workers' government would have to rely on mass working

class action to carry through such a programme. The armed forces would need breaking up. The police would be abolished. Eventually a socialist government would have to rely on the arming of the workers to defend itself.

Whether the transition to socialism passed through the stage of winning a majority in parliament — which is one possible if unlikely variant — or through a popular uprising of the type of the Russian Revolution, a showdown with the capitalists could not be avoided. No capitalist class has ever given up its power without a fight — the transition cannot be 'peaceful'.

A socialist government would base itself not on five-yearly elections but on the self-organisation of the working class. In every centre of workers' social activity — factories, schools, offices and housing estates — democratic mass assemblies would meet to elect workers' committees. These bodies would have important administrative responsibilities and powers, and send delegates to a local workers' council, which would exercise full political authority within the community. A national council of workers' delegates would be elected from the local councils to be the highest political authority in the land. Workers' representatives on these bodies would be subject to instant recall and paid no more than a skilled worker.

Fighting for a solution to the British capitalist crisis means fighting for a government which breaks with the logic of the capitalist economy and state. It means a government which fights without compromise for the interests of the working class.

Crisis In The Labour Movement

The deep crisis of British capitalism, and the advent of Thatcherism have caused a profound crisis of the labour movement. While the rank and file have tried to forge alternative radical policies, and to resist the capitalist offensive, they have been confronted by the Labour right and the trade union bureaucracy. A section of the Labour right wing has split from the labour movement to found the Social Democratic Party. The Labour Party's own lieutenants of capital — Golding, Healey, Hattersley, Shore and the rest — have opened up a witch-hunt against the left and the rank and file. There is a real danger that in the next period the right wing will try to make new deals or pacts with the SDP/Liberal Alliance, up to and including, a coalition. Any deals in government or in opposition, would be at the expense of every radical policy passed by Labour over the last few years. That, of course, is exactly the goal of the Alliance. Each and every coalitionist manoeuvre must be fought by the left wing.

While advancing our own revolutionary socialist programme we support every move by the left of the labour movement to unite around basic anti-capitalist policies such as nuclear disarmament, opposition to the EEC and incomes policy. The whole left must fight to win the labour movement away from the grip of pro-capitalist politicians and union bureaucrats. Socialist Action puts forward the slogan of:

- Build a class struggle left wing in the labour movement.

Such a class struggle opposition would have to be built both in the trade unions and the Labour Party. The best model in British history is that of the

Minority Movement in the trade unions, which was allied with the *National Left Wing Movement* in the Labour Party in the 1920s. Both these groupings drew together militants with different overall outlooks on a basic programme of reform of the labour movement and anti-capitalist policies. The first and foremost task of such a movement would be the fight for democracy in the labour movement. The democratic reforms gained in the Labour Party must be extended and built upon. In particular, the autocratic power of the trade union bureaucrats must be combated through the introduction of the elective principle at every level of the trade union movement: the abolition of secret ballots in favour of workplace and union branch elections; and the democratisation of the union block vote at Labour conferences. As a first step, we support the building of Broad Lefts inside the trade unions, and class struggle alliances such as Labour against the Witch Hunt, and Socialists for a Labour Victory inside the Labour Party.

The dominant left wing trend in the Labour Party is that associated with the policies put forward by Tony Benn. Many of these policies have been incorporated into Labour's election policy, though the right wing is preparing to ditch them at a later date. While making common cause with the Bennites on any anti-capitalist policy, Socialist Action does not give political support to Benn's overall political platform. While many of his policies are unacceptable to the ruling class, overall they represent a left reformist programme. A Bennite government would lack the means to implement the most radical of its policies; it would meet overwhelming capitalist resistance — both in Britain and from international capital. Only a revolutionary workers' government, which launched an all-out attack on capital and the capitalist state, would have the necessary power and resources to implement a socialist programme.

If a left wing Labour government were a real possibility in the near future, we would fight alongside the rest of the left to ensure its election. But at each stage we would demand that it broke with capitalism and the capitalist state, and took the necessary measures to defend the working class.

To carry through the fight for a revolutionary workers' government it is necessary to construct a mass revolutionary workers' party. The Labour Party has always been dominated by a bureaucracy even during its most left-wing periods. The most crucial component of that bureaucracy is the trade union leadership, historically dominated by the right wing, which controls the finances of the party and its annual conference through the block vote. Overwhelmingly the parliamentary Labour Party is made up of open agents of capitalism. The pro-capitalist politicians, and the labour lieutenants of capital in the unions, would split from the Labour Party if a genuine anti-capitalist left wing ever won a majority. It is inconceivable that a party of Hattersleys, Shores, Callaghans and Healeys would ever take the road to socialism.

The restructuring of the labour movement, and the emergence of a mass anti-capitalist party, will therefore almost certainly take the route of a split in the Labour Party. Such a split will be the political responsibility of the right-wing leaders. Whether socialists will win a majority in the Labour Party cannot be predicted in advance. But the battle for a socialist programme must be waged inside the mass organisations of the working class. Socialist Action puts forward the objective of:

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