

**A**t this time when the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) is celebrating its 15th anniversary, seeking the way out of the deepening all-sided crisis remains our Party's most important preoccupation. The government of John Major claims that there is no way out of the present crisis except by subordinating the interests of the whole society and all individuals to those of "business". However, such policies have been the fare for more than fifteen years and the situation has gone from bad to worse. These policies manifestly only deepen the crisis. They lead the government to demand even greater sacrifices from the working class and other working people and levy tribute on the whole of society. Is there really no way out of the present crisis other than that proposed by the government? On the important occasion of its fifteenth anniversary, RCPB(M-L) reiterates that there *is* a way out of the crisis and that it can be found precisely by rejecting the government's policies and charting a course which puts the well-being of the people at the centre.

Faced with the present situation of deepening crisis it is futile to have debates up in the air as to which is the best system in the world. The need of the hour is to work to create such a system on the basis of the appreciation of the problems of the present and the experience of the past, especially of the 20th century. This experience includes both that of socialist construction and of the decay of capitalism at the highest and last stage of its parasitism and moribund nature. It includes also the destruction of the pseudo-socialist states, in which all the socialist countries which went through capitalist reforms from the late fifties onwards, especially the Soviet Union, had their economies destroyed. A modern socialist system must be constructed by using Marxism-Leninism as a guide. It is quite clear that the present system in Britain does not work for the working class and that it blocks the path for the progress of society. Seeing that it is necessary not to be doctrinaire, it can be stated that the way out of the present situation lies in putting the well-being of the people at home and abroad at the centre of all economic, political, social and cultural activities. A change in the direction of government policy and in the motive of production, in accordance with the needs of the people, would be the starting point for the deep-going reforms which are necessary to get the society out of the present crisis.

## **CAPITALISM TODAY**

As capitalism goes deeper and deeper into crisis, the capitalist ideologues make even more outlandish claims about its nature and its future prospects. The government claims that the crisis is only temporary and that, as the only way out of the crisis, the people should make ever greater sacrifices so as to ensure that, as John Major says, "business wins". If we look at the present system in Britain, we see that it cannot develop without chaos and the destruction of the productive forces, since it is not capable of uninterrupted extended reproduction. Crisis is its fellow-traveller. This system cannot use science and technology in the general interests of the society; harmonize the individual interests of the people with their collective interests and the individual and collective interests with the general interests, of society. It cannot overcome its general tendency of the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. This system inevitably means aggression and war. In the final analysis, it is parasitic and moribund and over-ripe for overthrow.

So it can be seen, for example, that as Britain emerges from the present recession, the country is faced with the horrors of continuously high levels of unemployment. Although production and profitability are showing signs of growth, unemployment remains at the same high level, and all predictions are that this will continue. Old jobs are being destroyed faster than new jobs are being created. It is acknowledged that this persistent unemployment is a global

phenomenon, to the extent that the G-7 held a conference in Detroit on the matter this week. Figures issued by the International Labour Organisation in Geneva on March 6 show that about 30% of the world's workforce, or 820 million people, are currently unemployed or under-employed. The ILO Director-General said that the new figures "demonstrate why we call the employment situation a global crisis, far more serious than the economic problems of the 1980s". He said that for the first time since the Great Depression of the 1930s the industrial countries, as well as developing countries, are facing long-term, persistent unemployment. The ILO said there were at least 120 million registered unemployed around the world, although the real numbers, including those who never registered or have stopped looking for work, are "almost certainly higher". In addition, about 700 million workers are under-employed – engaged in a level of work or economic activity that does not permit them to reach a minimum standard of living. The ILO said that job growth in 1993 had been hindered by the general stagnation in world output, resulting in a global fall in average per capita income for the fourth year in a row. The *UN World Economic Survey 1993* described the world economy as listless. World output had been growing well below potential since 1990. For the third year in succession the rate of growth of world output was below world population growth. Stagnation characterized the developed market economies and decline those in transition in eastern Europe, while the developing economies showed highly variable growth. The survey also pointed out that while enough food is produced globally to feed the entire world population, 20% of this population is, in fact, undernourished, with famine and under-nourishment increasing in sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America.

The same pattern can be seen in Britain. John Major may well boast to businessmen, as he did in Glasgow on February 18, that as a result of Conservative policies "we have moved from recession to growth", or as he did at the Lord Mayor's Banquet on November 15 that "we are on our way to rebuilding prosperity". In this regard, latest government figures show a rise in industrial production of 2.7% from November 1992 to last November, with a rise in GDP of 2% for the same period, with a prediction of a rise of 2.5% for 1994. Unemployment, according to official figures, dropped from 10.6% of the workforce to 9.9% over the same period but in January rose to 10.3%. In addition, Cambridge Econometrics predicts that the present official level of 2.7 million unemployed will drop to 2.5 million by the turn of the century and to 2.2 million by 2005. However, even these small decreases in unemployment levels are offset by the fact that most of the new jobs created are, and will continue to be, of women working part-time in the service sector, together with self-employed jobs. A recent survey by *The Times* also shows a sharp increase in male part-time jobs in manufacturing. Manufacturing industry employment fell by 40% from 1971 to 1992, while service industry employment rose by over one third, the biggest increases being in banking and financial services, where employment doubled. At the end of 1993, bankruptcies were rising not falling, with an average of over 400 companies going out of business each week. So John Major's boasts ring somewhat hollow.

In the last general election campaign John Major spoke of creating "a classless society" and "a nation at ease with itself ... a Britain in which effort is rewarded; and everyone has a stake in our country's future. A Britain where every youngster can aim high; every family can build for its own future." However, the reality is that the gap between rich and poor in Britain is increasing. Between 1979 and 1991, only those with an annual income above £38,000 showed an increase in disposable income, while the disposable income of the lowest paid was halved. In 1991, the top 1% of the population owned 18% of the wealth, while the bottom 50% owned only 8% of the wealth. Estimates for those living in poverty vary between one-fifth of the population (British Association for the Advancement of Science) to one-third (Shelter), while some estimates put at one-quarter the proportion of children living in poverty. The number of people without homes has trebled between 1986 and 1991, while housing standards show but slight improvement regarding unfit dwellings, with a large increase in dwellings in serious disrepair, over the last two decades according to official figures. These are the facts.

Historically speaking, one of the greatest achievements in the struggle against medievalism was the recognition of the responsibility of the state for the preservation and continuous raising of what has been universally recognized as *social or public well-being*. In this category are included such vital aspects of people's lives as individual and public health, education and welfare services. What is happening at this time is that instead of taking this great achievement over medievalism to its logical conclusion – by guaranteeing such services to all members of society from the day they are born to the day they die – these services are being withdrawn on the basis of such bald justifications as those provided by Margaret Thatcher who asserted that “there is no such thing as society”, only, as they say now, people “providing for themselves” and “families taking responsibility”.

In other words, the spokespersons of government, industry (and even labour, in some cases) are demanding a retreat to medieval conditions as the only recourse to keeping profits high. They want to keep the capitalist economic base, the large-scale social process of production, with a *medieval superstructure* dominated by monopolies and oligopolies which have no responsibility to society, while all members of society are compelled to adjust to this, even at the risk of disease and death. Furthermore, while it is a fact of life that the present system cannot provide for the working class and people, what is most outrageous and ominous for the people is that the government, industry and labour leaders are justifying this state of affairs by claiming that this is how things ought to be. But even more so, just as in the past the free-holders, the free peasant proprietors, driven from their land, were declared to be vagabonds and criminals and were executed for wandering around the countryside, having no means of subsistence whatsoever, so too today public opinion is being created to blame those who are the victims of this system for the plight they find themselves in, so as to punish them further.

## **THE ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS**

Faced with these circumstances, the working class must declare that it has a solution, instead of merely complaining that it is losing previously won gains. It must fight for a way out by ensuring that there is a public guarantee to life and liberty for all. It can be said that the struggle is between those who are bringing back medievalism in order to guarantee their own interests – by protecting a system which cannot and does not provide for all – *versus* those who want to take the struggle against medievalism to its logical conclusion – which includes bringing about the deep-going transformation of the system through revolution – in order to ensure that it guarantees the lives and liberties of all. Such an economic and political system is the order of the day.

The working class has suffered most from the effects of government policy, which pushes medievalism, and from the policies of the Labour Party before, which have also been opposed to the working class leading society forward through its own independent programme and action during this latest period of crisis. The working class is the only thoroughly revolutionary class and a social force which can rally all other revolutionary forces around itself and close the door to medievalism once and for all. With such a high development of the productive forces as exists at this time, including the most recent scientific and technical revolution, it stands to reason that the working class must provide itself with modern definitions and defeat the worn-out arguments of the champions of medievalism. Such modern definitions are necessary so as to open the road for the creation of a society which is fit for human beings during this latest period of crisis.

What is the present role of the working class in this regard? It must be said that the present role of the working class was assigned during the great 1973-74 conflict. We should remember the winter of 1973-74, when Edward Heath instituted the three-day week and raised the question, “Who rules the country?”, only to see his government fall months later in the face of the resistance of the working class, particularly the miners. The last great battle of the working class was the heroic miners' strike in 1984. It was proved that without the working class assuming its role as the leader of society, everything would deteriorate. The real life experience of the working

people testifies to the truth of this. Even though the number of strikes in recent years has been the lowest since records began to be kept 100 years ago, the consciousness of the working class about *What Kind of Society?* is growing steadily, as can be seen in the stubborn struggle of the health workers and teachers for an enlightened policy in their respective spheres. The growing consciousness that the working class cannot liberate itself without the most enlightened, revolutionary and modern definitions of democracy, human rights and politics is impossible to deny. The experience of our Party's work testifies to this.

The working class remains, in sum, at the centre of the forward march of society. The calibre of its enlightenment and the direction of the working class movement can be recalled in the struggles led by the Chartists in the first half of the last century. While their charter was not immediately realized and some of their demands are even now yet to be realized, the organized working class acted as a spectre behind the shoulders of the Disraelis and Gladstones for the remainder of the century. It saw high points in the great strikes of the unskilled in the early years of this century, in the great battles on Clydeside during the First World War, in the actions for demobilisation after the war and against intervention in Russia and Poland. It saw a high point in the General Strike of 1926, which clearly put the immediate need for a new system on the agenda. Many other great battles have been waged, in spite of the signing of the Social Contracts between the Labour government and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in the mid '70s and in spite of other acts of treachery by the labour traitors. The working class has kept up its fight in the face of the alliance of the financial oligarchy and the labour aristocracy, acting through the trade union leaders and, politically, through the Labour Party.

A stage has now been reached when the financial oligarchy has come to a dead-end. Everyone can see it for what it is – a block on the progress of society. Its alliance with labour is breaking down, seen in the fact that the Labour Party is increasingly despised by the workers. On the eve of a new upsurge of this movement, every labour traitor is running like a rat from a sinking ship. As they say, the days of “beer and sandwiches at Number 10” are long gone. The working class is leaving the Labour Party in droves and the TUC is having great difficulty in justifying its existence in the class. As can be seen in what has been called the “relaunch of the TUC for a new era” announced on March 1, the role of the TUC is now cast as that of a mere pressure group for one of a number of sectional interests lobbying with those in power in Westminster and elsewhere. Its role is merely to provide certain “services” for a dwindling trade union membership, not even pretending to act as the trade union centre fighting against the encroachments of capital and for the workers' economic, political and social interests. It seems no coincidence that in recent months John Monks, the TUC General Secretary, has been talking about “shared responsibility” between government, employers and unions, while the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) speaks of a “shared wish” among employers and employees for working relations unlike traditional trade union dealings, relations which will “never again include the capacity to disrupt the commercial and day to day life of the nation and to exercise the excessive control over government experienced in the late '70s”. All these developments point to the fact that the working class, increasingly disillusioned with the politicians, especially those of the Labour Party, and with the trade union leaders, finds itself on the threshold of providing itself with modern class consciousness and taking up its independent role for the creation of a new society. This is the space for the working class and it is also the space for the doctrine of communism, which must occupy it on the basis of modern definitions.

## **THE WORKING CLASS AND OTHER SOCIAL FORCES**

Besides the overall space for the working class, it can already be seen that the working class and other working people are in the forefront of the struggles against the government's policies on education, health care, community care, mental health and other social issues. The teachers have waged a long and bitter struggle against government policies, including a boycott of the compulsory testing of pupils introduced by the government against widespread opposition from

educationists at all levels. As a result of that boycott, a notable victory was won in August when the government was forced to climb down on the implementation of these tests, although the situation remains largely unresolved. Consciousness and struggle about racism, dangers to the environment and war are rising amongst all sections of society. The working class and the doctrine of communism have a lot of space to manoeuvre in this broad field so as to open the path for the progress of society.

National consciousness is also growing amongst certain peoples as in Scotland and Wales. In Scotland, a strong movement has developed in recent years for a Scottish Parliament and some change in the relations between Scotland and Westminster. This movement, largely spearheaded by the middle strata, has the support of all political forces in Scotland bar the Conservatives, and has the support of the Scottish TUC as well as some 90% of the people. A similar movement, at a lower level, is developing in Wales. Throughout Britain there is particular concern about the question of the Constitution, as well as widespread anxiety about the justice system which is increasingly revealing the truth of what lies hidden behind the unwarranted claims of impartiality and fair play: the ugly face of class prejudice and the sullied instruments of class rule. There is widespread disillusion with politicians, with the major political parties, and with the state in general, which negates both national, social and class aspirations. While there is an irresistible drive to direct the discontent against John Major's government, a broad feeling is developing that this will not be enough in order to bring about the necessary transformations. A movement cannot be based just on discontent. It must have an objective class basis. It is also becoming increasingly clear that the opposition to John Major's government is an opposition to the entire shift towards medievalism. This battle must be fought within the broad framework of creating a new society. As far as the recognition of discontent is concerned, even John Smith, leader of the Labour Party, acknowledged this in a speech to Charter 88 on March 1, last year, when he said: "I have no hesitation in saying that there is an undeniable and pressing need for constitutional reform in this country. Undeniable because ... our structures and institutions are clearly failing properly to represent the people they were set in place to serve. And pressing because of the mounting sense of disenchantment and cynicism amongst the people of this country about our political system, a deeply disturbing trend that must be checked if we are to secure the future health of our democracy." The shocking cynicism of his words hardly needs commenting on.

## **THE PRESENT WORLD SITUATION**

Theoretically speaking, this is a period of the retreat of revolution occurring within the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution. It is a period in which the forces of reaction are on the offensive and are attempting to turn back the clock on every front. Many problems resolved by the Second World War and since have been un-resolved, while new ones have been created. The US and others are openly demanding that socialism should be completely wiped from the face of this earth, including the very ideology, and that no people should be permitted to fight for their rights. They are seeking to impose on the peoples of the world their concept of a "free market economy", of "pluralism", "representative democracy" and a "new world order". What is being done in Britain, establishing medievalism in the superstructure in order to protect the economic base of the monopolies and oligopolies, is also being done abroad. The big powers, using the United Nations Security Council as their main instrument, openly proclaim that the principles of "non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries" and the "peaceful co-existence of different systems", adopted at the end of the Second World War, no longer apply. Thus the United States sent its troops into Somalia uninvited; it is continuing to impose unfair conditions on Iraq; it is stepping up its brutal blockade of Cuba with the declared intention of bringing down the system there; it is threatening to attack North Korea by concocting a "nuclear issue"; and, more generally, it is escalating its "carrot and stick" policy all over the world in order to bring other countries into line.

Meanwhile, despite the proclamations of a “new era of peace and security and co-operation” made at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War, the international situation is characterized by growing disequilibrium and sharpening contradictions between the big powers. Struggle is mounting between the major powers for the redivision of the world in this new period. Trade wars are developing and new blocs are emerging around the United States, Japan and a European Union dominated by Germany. The dangers of this to world peace can already be seen in the tragic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, which is the direct result of interference by the big powers. The dangers of a new world war are becoming more evident. All the same, the factors for revolution are also growing.

The contradiction between the imperialist powers and the oppressed peoples has not disappeared and it will not do so without its resolution finally in favour of the people. Oppressed nations continue to raise their voices in defence of their rights as evidenced by the annual summation by the General Secretary of the “Group of 77” developing countries this year. Despite the brutal blockade, Cuba continues to stand heroically for its independence and for the right of its people to build the socialist system they have chosen. It is winning growing support worldwide. North Korea continues to fight independently for the reunification of the Korean motherland and against a US presence on the Korean Peninsula. The People’s Republic of China, Cuba and other countries continue to expose the pretext of human rights used by the US and other countries to interfere and attempt to destroy their systems. The Iraqi people continue to resist the most savage blockade through which the US and other big powers are trying to bring them to their knees. The people of Somalia are carrying on their resistance for the restoration of their national unity and in defence of their nation. On many fronts the big powers find it increasingly difficult to have their way. The Ethiopian people, following their victory in overthrowing the Mengistu regime, are persisting, in the face of great difficulties and continuing attempts at interference, in charting their own path. Despite the blocks put in the way of its progress, the agreement by which Israel and the United States recognized the Palestinians is a positive feature. So too are the developments in South Africa, even though there is disappointment that an agreement has been made which leaves the racist state machine intact. And the fact that the British government has, for the first time in history, openly recognized the right of self-determination of the Irish people, as it did in the Downing Street Declaration, must be seen as advantageous for the working people both of Ireland and Britain, regardless of the government’s determination not to take this to its logical conclusion by pledging withdrawal and an end to its interference once and for all.

On a world scale, the contradiction between labour and capital remains unresolved. It is sharpening, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries, on the political questions, especially on the right to govern, and in the economic sphere on the question of guarantees of social well-being. The working class, having taken centre stage for the resolution of the crisis with the Great October Revolution in 1917, having remained in that position through many heroic battles, in particular the great victory of the defeat of fascism in the Second World War, is emerging again to play its role in history. The fundamental contradiction of this epoch remains that between capitalism and socialism and the objective conditions are ripe for the creation of a new system.

## **THE GENESIS OF CAPITALISM**

The capitalist era began in Britain in the 16th century with the seizure by the new nobility of the lands owned by the free peasant proprietors and of the state and common lands, for the purpose of wool production, and with the brutal expulsion of the peasants from the countryside into the cities to provide labour for the growing manufacture. For a century and a half this seizure was carried out with impunity in defiance of the law until the Enclosures Acts of the 18th century legitimized the seizure by the nobility of the people’s lands as private property. The expulsion of the peasants from the land took place with the utmost barbarity, with the most cruel punishments, grotesque tortures and mass executions of the hapless victims found wandering the countryside.

Draconian laws governed the hours and wages of those forced into manufacture right up until the 19th century, when the logic of capitalism made some of them no longer necessary.

The dawn of capitalist wealth and production had as its basis the discovery of gold and silver in the Americas and the brutal exploitation which went with this; the conquest and looting of India and other countries, where colonialism was established with terrible cruelty and the making of fabulous fortunes from nothing; the barbaric hunting down and transportation of slaves; and the waging of commercial wars against European rivals.

Modern industry in Britain also developed with the utmost violence, the stealing and sale of children from the workhouses to provide the labour needed in the factories, where the most ferocious torture and murder took place, besides suicide. Such was the genesis of capitalism.

Its development into the modern era of monopoly capitalism and imperialism has seen, on a world scale, primarily devastation and famine, the horrors of fascism and war. What is being said and done today by the government is like a case of *deja vu*. The government is trying to repeat history. Today, it is not expropriated peasants who are seen wandering the countryside but millions wandering in cities, thrown onto the streets by the very mechanism of capitalist production in the advanced capitalist countries. Whole continents such as Africa are driven to disease and despair, not to speak of Latin America and elsewhere.

### **GOVERNMENT POLICY AND ITS EFFECTS**

John Major in a speech to businessmen in Glasgow on February 18 spoke of the vital need for British business to be competitive, for the government to help businesses beat the international competition. He said: "Only if business is successful will we have the wealth to pay for all the services we care about: good education, high quality health care, our culture and traditions, a society which protects the weak and gives people and their families room to grow. We need to be clear: if business wins, Britain wins." John Major forgets to mention that the very mechanism of capitalist production produces a rich minority on the one pole and a poor majority on the other, and that whether business wins or loses this remains the case. John Major cleverly hides this fact, as what he is really saying is that people should not care about what happens to them under the present system. They should accept the increasing poverty and the withdrawal of social programmes in return for a paradise waiting for them in some never-never land. It is like preaching to people to live in purgatory in order to procure a place in heaven. Besides being questionable theology, the same logic when cast as an economic argument is even more fallacious. When the motive of production is the making of the maximum capitalist profit for the owners of the means of production, how will it help the working class and working people of Britain if they succeed? Success of the one is actually the ruin of the other; that is the relationship established between the lords of capital and labour by the very mechanism of capitalist production. According to John Major, on the other hand, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. His call for the success of business is an open call for intensified exploitation, the only way to reap maximum capitalist profit.

Successive governments, since the series of recessions began in the 1970s, have made the cutting of public expenditure the main plank of their policy. In pursuit of this they have made massive cuts in spending on education, health care, welfare, community services, the arts – in short, on all public services. The latest figures show that between 1981/82 and 1991/92 the proportion of GDP used for public spending fell by 4.6%. The *Treasury Bulletin* of Summer 1993 said: "One of the Government's major fiscal objectives is to reduce total public spending as a share of GDP over time." In the Thatcher years these cuts were carried out under the pretext of "rolling back the interference of the state", in providing "individual choice" and other such arguments. In reality what has been going on has been the steady retreat from the aim of guaranteeing full life and liberty from the day a person is born to the day of that person's death.

When it was profitable to do so, the bourgeoisie even spoke of public guarantees, as was the case in the 19th century. It even went so far as to erect a welfare state in this century in order

to lure people away from socialism and to provide for itself the means for making maximum profit. Sensing no danger coming from world socialism and communism at this time, the bourgeoisie finds it profitable to withdraw any public guarantees. While no leader, not even Margaret Thatcher, has gone so far as to openly speak of ending the National Health Service established in 1945 or the public education established in 1944 or the other public services, the argument is put forward that these services are not a fundamental obligation of the state to all citizens, but something that people must consider “making provisions for” themselves, accepting “responsibility for”, and so on, with the state providing only for those “most in need”. It seems, however, that it is the “businesses” – those which want to be internationally competitive – which are in fact considered “most in need” of the capital which is otherwise invested in social programmes!

Government representatives do not want, however, to see this connection made in the consciousness of the people. They do not want anyone to know that both poverty and riches are produced by the same mechanism of capitalist production and that when they speak of those who are “most in need”, it is a pretext to rob the state treasury for the benefit of “business”. Their thinking was further illustrated by Treasury Secretary Michael Portillo, in an interview on November 7, when he said: “My fear is that if we try to look after everybody whether they need it or not, we shall not even meet the basic ambition of providing for those who need it.” In other words, the provision of public services depends not on the need to create a humane society with public guarantees as its essential ingredient, but on this availability of funds sorely needed by “business” whose “victory” in the international market is held as the precondition for prosperity in Britain.

At this point, perhaps, it is necessary to recall that if production is geared towards satisfying the increasing cultural and material needs of the people, the economy would never go into crisis. But this would mean that “business” would no longer be able to make maximum capitalist profit. On the contrary, it would have to return to society its most important asset, human happiness, an asset which has been expropriated by big business in return for the misery which it has spread across Britain and around the world.

Kenneth Clarke’s November Budget also illustrates the nature of government policy and its effects. The Chancellor stated that a main aim of his Budget was to cut the budget deficit, currently standing at £50 billion. He claimed that he would reduce it to £38 billion next year, eliminate government borrowing to finance current spending by 1997-98 and eliminate government borrowing entirely by the end of the decade. Under this argument, he instituted savage cuts in public spending. He stated: “We must ensure that billions of pounds of the nation’s savings are not poured into the public sector, savings that are better used by the private sector, to support investment, expansion and jobs.” Kenneth Clarke is ready to hand over what he calls the “nation’s savings”, a euphemism for taxpayers’ money, to the private sector, whose aim is to maximize capitalist profit, and not to the public sector, whose aim ought to be to guarantee social well-being to the populace. According to this logic, the handing over of billions to the private sector is considered an investment while funding the public sector, including social services, is considered an expenditure, a waste. In reality, however, it is the former which is robbery and the latter which is an investment in both the short-term and long-term interests of society.

In pursuit of his logic, Kenneth Clarke went ahead and reduced unemployment benefit entitlement from 12 to 6 months; restricted entitlement to, as well as reduced, invalidity benefit; increased National Insurance contributions; raised the pension age for women from 60 to 65; cut student grants by 10%, and forced universities to reduce intake; cut expenditure on the arts and other expenditures, in addition to tax rises to come into force in April. Meanwhile, he made tax and other concessions to businesses. The government is doing things entirely opposite to that which needs to be done and is contributing to the further deepening of the economic crisis. The way out is to do exactly the opposite to what Kenneth Clarke is doing. Since the time of the Budget, John Major has said, in an interview on February 18: “We had to borrow all this money

to get us through the recession; now we have to pay it back.” The question arises: why was this money borrowed? Was it borrowed to help the private sector or the public sector? Was it borrowed to help people tide themselves over the recession of the capitalist economy or to keep big businesses from going under? In recent years, servicing the interest on the national debt alone has cost around £17 billion annually, nearly twice the amount spent on education. This sum amounted to some 7% of total government expenditure for 1991/92 and is predicted to rise to 9% of total government expenditure over subsequent years. Already in the eleven months of this fiscal year, the government has borrowed £34.7 billion, compared with £27 billion for the same period last year. Will this policy of cutting public spending and of handing over the “nation’s savings” to the “private sector” help to solve the crisis?

These same aims and effects can be seen in the particular policies regarding education, health care, welfare and other social services. In education, for instance, the last two decades have seen massive cuts in investment, as well as measures both to weaken the state provision of education and at the same time to increase central government control, mainly through the Education Reform Act of 1988. Incidentally, this Act, the so-called “Baker Bill”, had only two months of consultation compared with the more than two years’ consultation for the 1944 Butler Act in the midst of war. One of the first actions of the Thatcher government, in 1979, was to halt the development of the comprehensive system, strengthen private education through the bogus “democracy” of the Assisted Places Scheme, as well as abolish the statutory obligation to provide school meals, a key welfare state measure of the 1944 Act. The 1988 Act, under the hoax of such concepts as “increasing parental choice”, set up City Technology Colleges to be funded jointly by industry and state. It established financial self-management of schools, allowed opting out from local authority control, ended tenure in schools and universities and instituted a national curriculum with compulsory testing of children at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. It is these changes which have met with almost universal opposition from educationists at all levels. People are demanding an enlightened public education policy, including a guarantee for free and universal education. In 1983, a Department of Education and Science official explained the philosophy of the changes in an interview with the *Times Educational Supplement*. “People must be educated to know their place,” he said. “We are beginning to create aspirations which society cannot match.” What this official meant was that class divisions of the society should continue and aspirations, as he says, “which society cannot match” should be eliminated.

In health care, to give another example, government policies over two decades and, in particular, the National Health Service and Community Care Act of 1990, have similar aims and effects. Whatever the pledges of even the most reactionary Ministers to preserve the NHS, the cuts, the setting up of an “internal market”, the setting up of trusts, the resulting closure under rationalisation of key facilities, can only have the effect of “privatising” health care with the state providing only minimum care for what they call “those in most need”. Under the community care provisions, many public institutions have been closed, and facilities for the care of old people, the mentally ill and others thus have to be found “in the community”, with totally inadequate funding provided. This has led to the widespread privatisation of this type of care, resulting in great exploitation of the patients and their families, as well as to several well publicised tragedies. Once again, the vital needs of the people and the future prospects of society are being sacrificed in the interests of the maximum profit of the monopolists in the period of crisis.

In the political sphere, despite the widespread dissatisfaction with the political process and the low opinion in which politicians and the major political parties are held, the government continues to defend the status quo as far as constitutional reform and the political process are concerned. Sovereignty in Britain rests, as it has done since the so-called Glorious Revolution in 1688, with what is called in constitutional terms the Monarch in Parliament, not with the people. Over the centuries which followed 1688, while the suffrage was widened — although it took until 1928 for full adult suffrage to be achieved — this rule of the Monarch in Parliament became concretized in the development of the party system and the dominance of the Cabinet

representing the majority party. This has persisted up to the present day, with virtual absolute power resting with the Cabinet of the party which holds the majority in the House of Commons. The only role bestowed on the electorate is to file through the polling stations every five years or so to choose between candidates already selected by the major parties. In the sphere of the economy, during the 391 years since James I became king, the social process of production has developed to a high degree, while the ownership has been kept private by force of arms. In the same fashion, in the political sphere, while the suffrage is universal, the electorate does not select the candidates from amongst their peers and does not participate in governance. Private ownership of the means of production and virtually absolute rule by the executive is the basis of the economic and political crisis, which the government, of course, does not want to recognize.

Rather than bring about the changes required by the system, the present government and its immediate predecessor have consolidated this undemocratic system. Under Margaret Thatcher, major decisions were increasingly made by what became known as the inner-Cabinet, with the increasing use of the royal prerogative to by-pass even the elected Parliament as it stands. Now, under John Major, this process is being taken further in the same direction with the coming Deregulation Bill which was announced in the Queen's Speech in November. This Deregulation Bill will allow Ministers to revoke parts of legislation already passed into law by Parliament by what is being called a Henry VIII clause. The government has already said that it will use this statute to revoke various pieces of legislation affecting employment practices and other measures which it says hamper business.

Regarding rights, a situation persists in which the human rights of citizens of the country or, more strictly speaking, its residents, are not recognized simply by dint of their being human and living here. No rights are considered inviolable. What rights are recognized are beset by 1,001 restrictions, and the power of the government and the monopolies overrides all rights. The British state and its laws and policies, for instance, are still outmoded. They smack of racism, national chauvinism and narrow-mindedness. The British Nationality Act of 1981, as well as the various Immigration Acts and the Asylum Act, create different classes of citizens and deliberately mix up nationality and citizenship. This leads to widescale discrimination, as well as gives the green light to the most backward elements to commit crimes against the immigrant and national minority communities. To give another example, workers have no rights by dint of being workers. What are known as "workers' rights" are more strictly only immunities granted by the state against prosecution for hampering trade. In the conditions of crisis, even such gains made by the working class have been eroded by the Thatcher anti-trade-union legislation under the hoax of providing rights to the "individual" against so-called powerful vested interests.

The government is also stubbornly defending the status quo as regards the Union of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Despite an overwhelming demand among the Scottish people for a Scottish Parliament, with most polls suggesting as much as 90% support, John Major refuses to seriously consider such a move. The government argues that the Union has brought enormous benefits to Scotland and that it will not contemplate anything which would threaten this Union. The fact is, however, that the British state as presently constituted was founded on the basis of the suppression of first the working people of England, then the people of Wales, of Scotland and of Ireland. It has also to be noted that Scotland was only united with England in 1707 by decision of a Parliament of traitorous elements in which the people had no representation. Why, then, is the right of the Scots to decide to reverse the decision not recognized in this modern day and age? The fact that Britain has no written Constitution means that such rights as the right of self-determination of the Scottish and Welsh nations have never been codified. Again, in the interests of the rule of capital, the course taken by the government exacerbates rather than solves the growing constitutional crisis around these questions which concern the British state.

Regarding Ireland, the British government has for the first time openly recognized, in December's Downing Street Declaration, the right of the Irish people to self-determination. This

has never been previously so stated in history. Not in the Treaty which partitioned Ireland in 1921, not even in the Treaty which acknowledged the existence of the Republic of Ireland in 1949, was such a principle ever put forward. Now, forced by the international situation, because of its need to have its hands free in the contest with the other big powers to redivide the world, the British government needs peace in its own backyard. But even in making moves to end the 25-year armed conflict, and in admitting to the right of the Irish people to determine their own affairs, the government refuses to take the principle to its logical conclusion. If it recognizes the sovereignty of the Irish people, then what is Britain doing there? What reason can it have not to take the step which is the key to peace, the step of declaring its intention to withdraw from the north of Ireland and not to interfere in Ireland's affairs, particularly when the government of the Irish Republic has pledged not to take over the six counties by force? Instead, the British government maintains its alleged right to occupy the six counties and to have the last word in any peace process, thereby attempting to put the onus on the IRA, rather than on itself, to bring the violence to an end. Thus, while the demands of capital dictate that the British government establish peace, still it refuses to accept the logic of the situation and so blocks the peace process and keeps the conflict and the tragic situation unresolved.

In foreign affairs, the government has carried on with its policy towards the European Union, again for the benefit not of the people but of the monopolies and oligopolies. How is it possible to have a continent-wide union when there is so much internal chaos and dislocation and even the British state has run its course? Instead of facing the problems at home head-on, the government keeps pushing what is good for the economic elite. While the implementation of the measures agreed upon in the Maastricht Treaty for monetary and political union appear to be receding further and further into the future, the government has nevertheless committed Britain through the European Union, not only to a loss of sovereignty but, among other things, to partnership in a bloc dominated by the monopolies which, together with the other emerging blocs, threatens world peace. It carries on with enormous defence spending – £23.5 billion in the November budget – thus continuing the militarization of the economy. It remains a member of the warmongering NATO alliance, now assuming authority to operate outside the European area, with all the dangers which attend such a move. On the world scale, Britain, like the other big powers, is engaged in a vicious struggle for the redivision of the world.

### **THERE IS A WAY OUT**

It must be stressed that there can be no getting away from the fact that the fundamental struggle in Britain is between capitalism and socialism, as can be seen in the necessity to create a new society. It is manifesting itself between those who are using the pretext of the "private sector" as the basis of prosperity, in order to plunder the state treasury and block the path to progress for their own benefit, and those who are demanding investments and public guarantees for the well-being of all. A vigorous class war is raging on the issue of social cuts – a war designed on one hand to take society back to medievalism and on the other to take it forward towards the creation of a new system fit for human beings. A great space has opened to broaden this struggle by opposing any narrowing between the two sides and by bringing forth modern definitions. Our Party has a great role to play as the most important subjective factor in this struggle. It should raise the consciousness of the class and organize it to lead this battle, in terms of both the immediate aim of blocking the government and the monopolies in their drive to shift the burden of the economic crisis onto the shoulders of the workers, and the long-term aim of creating a socialist society.

This is the way out of the present situation. Capitalism came into being with the seizure of the people's lands, their violent expulsion and brutal exploitation. Now, in its final monopoly phase, it can have no other aim but to secure maximum capitalist profit for the monopolists themselves. If the monopolists were to act in any other way, they would cease to be capitalists

and their system would no longer be the capitalist system. It means that the monopolists have no way out of the present crisis, even if they were to demonstrate a will to find one.

It is sometimes suggested that the Labour Party is an alternative. However, the Labour Party is stuck with old definitions and old prejudices and the narrow and very limited aim of coming to power in order to make capitalism work. On the economy, John Smith almost echoes John Major in advocating, as the basis of providing what he calls a better “quality of life”, a strong economy which can compete internationally – a call which was warmly received when he became the first Labour leader ever to address the CBI in November. Prior to this, the Labour Party Policy Review of 1990 said: “Improving the quality of people’s lives obviously depends in large part on generating the wealth necessary to pay for it. That, in turn, depends on success in achieving greater competitiveness.” In other words, the claim of the Labour Party is primarily that it can manage the capitalist economy better than the Tories. As to the cutting of spending on public services, it only has to be remembered that the savage cuts began not with Thatcher, but with the Callaghan government of the ’70s, and that only the most modest promises have been made for an incoming Labour government. It was noteworthy that the Commission on Social Justice set up by the Labour Party was equivocal on the obligation of the state to provide public services. Furthermore, on March 3, Donald Dewar, shadow Social Security Secretary, announced that Labour was dropping its pledge to increase retirement pensions and made it clear that a Labour government would rely on private and occupational pensions to boost pensioners’ incomes, with only a minimum guaranteed income for those who had no other resources. On political and constitutional questions, the Labour Party proposes changes in the Upper House, the establishment of Scottish and Welsh Assemblies, a Bill of Rights and more accountability and a referendum on the issue of proportional representation. It does not advocate, however, and nor do the proposals from even its most radical wing advocate, any change in the Cabinet system of government which dominates or in the monopolisation of political life by the major parties. On Ireland it promises withdrawal only as a distant aspiration. In many ways it outdoes the government in its commitment to European integration and in following the interventionist policies of the other big powers.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

As a conclusion, in the sphere of the economy, the necessity for a change in direction is felt by the majority of people in Britain. Why should the economy be run solely with the aim of achieving profits for the benefit of the privileged minority? It must be run so as to develop the productive forces and for the benefit of the people. And the people must have a say in its direction. Spending on public services must be seen as an investment in the future, not as a wasteful “expenditure”, as Kenneth Clarke so callously and arbitrarily says. Such spending must be increased, not decreased, with the aim of meeting the vital needs of the people and of the progress of society for education, for healthcare, for welfare, for the arts and sports and other necessities. It cannot be accepted that such necessities are not affordable. Why, for instance, should the repayments to the moneylenders be affordable, but adequate education and health provision be deemed unaffordable? Why can the moneylenders not wait to receive their payment? A modern definition of social spending must be based on the principle that the highest level of development of society, including the level of education and culture, must be made available to all members of society irrespective of their circumstances. It cannot, in a modern democratic society, be the preserve of only a privileged strata. If society does not provide these things for all its members, who will? And, as with the economy, those whose lives will be affected must be part of the decision-making process.

In the political sphere, changes must be made which empower the people themselves, not in terms of the old undemocratic and long-outmoded system of Cabinet rule and monopolisation of political life by the parties, but in such a way that the working people themselves are able to exercise their sovereignty. There must be democratic renewal of the whole political process with,

among other things, a mechanism established which enables the voters to select their candidates from their own workplaces, educational institutions and communities. People must not have candidates imposed on them by the big parties and they must also be able to initiate legislation themselves. Rights must be recognized on the basis of a modern perspective, such that all residents of the country are guaranteed equal rights simply by dint of being human and living here. Thus, for instance, such laws as the British Nationality Act 1981 must be repealed; laws must be fought for which grant full and equal rights of citizenship and residency to all who reside in Britain, irrespective of national background; while the cultures and languages of the immigrant and national minority communities must be given all assistance to flourish by the state. This would go a long way towards eradicating racism and upholding the rights and dignity of all nationalities. Workers must be guaranteed rights by dint of being workers, the producers of all the wealth of the society. Similarly, women, who are experiencing a broad attack on their economic, social and physical well-being, especially in the sphere of health care and child support, must have their rights guaranteed. By virtue of their participation not only in the production of real life but also its reproduction, women have claims upon society to guarantee their health, safety and well-being, as well as that of the younger generation. The education of the young people, who constitute society's greatest asset, and their employment remains society's responsibility. It must be fulfilled at once. The claims of the new-born, the children, the unemployed, the poor, the disabled and impaired, the pensioners must be recognized. In sum, a genuinely humane society must recognize the claims of all its members, individually and collectively, in harmony with its general interest.

As regards the British state, the only guarantee of national rights will come with the renewal of the British state, the establishment of a modern state based on the equality of the freely participating nations. In other words, an equal union of the nations in a new and modern state, if they so desire, must be constituted. Clearly, one state and three governments with equal rights within the union would be the way to resolve the problems coming from the past. Of course, the new state has to be agreed upon by the people of England, Wales and Scotland and not imposed on them. Each people should have their own parliaments and exercise sovereignty in their own affairs, which is in no way limited by anything except their free will to be in the union. Meanwhile, Britain must immediately declare its intention to withdraw from Ireland and to cease any interference in the affairs of the Irish people. Only such measures will unlock the gateway to peace and to the full development of good-neighbourly relations between the peoples of Ireland and Britain, as well as guarantee full rights to the Irish residents in Britain and an end to attacks on them by the state. In order to strengthen this modern state, it will be imperative that Britain halt its policy of militarization, end its policy of political and monetary integration with the European Union and withdraw from the European Union. It must end its membership in the NATO alliance and stop meddling in the internal affairs of other countries. There must be democratisation of international affairs.

It must be recalled that the death of James I, 369 years ago, signalled the end of feudal absolutism. At that point civil war broke out on the issue of the direction of society. It led to the execution of Charles I and on-going changes. From everything which is going on in the country today and its role internationally, it looks as if Britain is faced with another historic decision at this time. Should the old system carry on or should a modern system be established based on the requirements of this age? Do the state and its governments have the right to levy the kind of taxation as is being done today and to borrow money on their own behalf without the people having a say in the matter? It is no exaggeration to say that the vast majority of people feel the need for a modern society in which they have control over their lives, while a small minority, which constitutes the ruling circles, keeps clinging to the past. Our Party must be in the forefront of the majority fighting for a modern society.

Finally, comrades and friends:

Considering the above, our Party can only call on all communists, all progressive and democratic forces to come together to constitute one, mass Communist Party, which is based not on some nostalgia about the past but on modern definitions which fulfill the requirements of the present. All communists and progressive and democratic forces should give this proposal serious thought so that a new situation can be created by strengthening the Communist Party as the indispensable subjective force of proletarian revolution. At the same time, our Party must call upon the class conscious workers to join the Party in order to ensure that it is the working class which leads the way out of the crisis. Furthermore, our Party must join with all the people of Britain in their struggle for a modern constitution, a modern state based on voluntary and equal union and for people's empowerment.

Taken together, what the majority is aspiring to is a new society, a socialist society. What is wanted is not socialism in the old "British" colours, but socialism in modern colours. It is a socialism which will open up a path for all people, not just the English. Our task, as communists and democrats and progressives, is to ensure – as was the case some 369 years ago when the old system began to be destroyed and a new system began to emerge – that the outcome of the present struggle is also the defeat of the dying system, the capitalist system, and its replacement with a new system, a modern socialist system.

At this celebration of its 15th anniversary, our Party calls on all the communists, the progressive and democratic forces and all those who are aspiring to a modern society, to take up the task of building a mass Communist Party based on modern definitions, uniting all people in a storm against "the cuts" and against a return to medievalism, and working together with all for the empowerment of the people and for the creation of a socialist society!