

Workers Weekly

Internet Edition

Durham Miners Gala and Big Meeting, July 8, 2017

Northern Region of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

133rd Durham Miners Gala

Upholding the Spirit and Traditions of the Miners!

Building the Independent Political Movement of

the Working Class!

The Durham Miners Gala epitomises the spirit and traditions of the mineworkers and their communities, some of the best that the working class has given rise to in Britain. At the same time, it epitomises looking to the future, to renewing this spirit, to uniting the workers around their aims, to anticipating a society where working people are the decision-makers and share weal and woe with their sisters and brothers across the world in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. RCPB(ML) greets all the participants in this 133rd Gala in this spirit.

This year's Durham Miners' Gala and Big Meeting is being held following the June 8 general election which was a debacle for Theresa May and the Conservative Party. The deep political crisis which started with the EU referendum before last year's Gala has continued when the people said *No* to May this year. At the same time this has also created a dangerous situation, with Theresa May attempting to carry on with a minority government in creating a post-Brexit consensus and implementing an anti-social agenda in Britain whilst engaging in a pro-war empire-building aim abroad.

May's now infamous and derided call for "strong and stable leadership" has only resulted in the deepening of the political crisis. Her erstwhile colleagues regard her as a "dead woman walking". Rumours abound about plots within her party to remove her as soon as is practicable. Her minority government is shored up by a corrupt deal with the DUP while she is reportedly begging for support from the Lib



Dems over crucial issues not covered by the "confidence and supply" arrangement with the DUP. A general election before the full term of five years specified by the Fixed-term Parliaments Act is widely predicted. However, the austerity programme is being implemented as never before.

Theresa May's Queen's Speech represents a reactionary programme for a so-called "global Britain". It goes without saying that it will do nothing to safeguard public services, or the future of the NHS, the right to decent, safe housing, or even the right to life, as was so tragically exposed by the Grenfell Tower inferno.

Thus despite the eloquent partisanship of Jeremy Corbyn on behalf of working people and against austerity, the election has demonstrated the illegitimacy of the Westminster electoral democracy, that it is the financial oligarchy which holds the power, and that as long as this is the case, anarchy rules, a government of police powers, not laws, holds sway, and the working people are deprived of power.

The vital question for the working class in these circumstances is what must be done to chart a path to bring about a change that favours the working class and people.



Rightly, today the Big Meeting will be talking a lot about the remarks made by Alan Cummings in his eve of Gala message from the Secretary as to how Jeremy Corbyn confounded all his critics by increasing the Labour Party vote. Sadly, Dave Hopper, the longest serving General Secretary of the Durham Miners Association, died just one week after last year's massive gathering and is not here to see it. As Alan Cummings points out, the Durham Miners Association had a proud history long before the Labour Party was founded and "became a political force in the land our mining communities built their own co-operative stores, their aged miners homes, their clinics and doctors panels, their reading rooms, welfare schemes and social clubs".

The immediate programme of the working class is to block the agenda of austerity, racism and war, charting a path for a pro-social and anti-war government. It has been said that the miners were hewers of coal, and what the workers need to be in the present are the hewers of society. It is so crucial that, in the modern era, the working class builds on its traditions of struggle and class

builds on its traditions of struggle and comradeship by taking up its responsibility to the whole of society and to upholding and defending the rights of all. One might say that this is the modern rendition of the slogan that has been upheld by workers throughout society that an injury to one is an injury to all.

So what steps are required? What must the workers do to build and strengthen the Workers' Opposition? Of course, workers must and will step up their resistance to the anti-social agenda and privatisation, and demand and fight for the right to health care, education, decent pensions and standards of living, and overall for a change in the direction of the economy. But workers must crucially also reject and oppose the institutions and old political arrangements which have so amply demonstrated to be in crisis and keep the people out of power. How and with what to replace these archaic forms which are incapable of embodying the will of the people? The working class must become an organised political force in its own right. It must work out its own independent politics. This requires new basic organisations of the class, which empower the workers to identify their interests and work out how to unite to effectively implement them. It requires their being able to select candidates at election time and have control of the agenda they implement.

As we take part in the Durham Gala, let us all unite around the need to build a Workers' Opposition to fight for the alternative, to defeat austerity and defend the rights of all. Let us adopt the programme for democratic renewal so that the people are increasingly empowered to make all the decisions in society. The independent political movement of the workers can be built which will bring about change that favours the people and the nations which at present constitute Britain. Grasp the opportunity to bring about a new direction for the economy and society!

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