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PREPARE FOR GENERAL STRIKE

It is now clear to everyone in Britain that we are in the midst of an enormous economic and political crisis.

After years of declaring that 'everything is fine,' that 'there are just a few minor problems,' the government has imposed a state of emergency and is threatening to force acceptance of Phase 3 of its incomes policy at all costs. Every single day of this year has seen wages cut into by soaring inflation. The standard of living of large sections of the working class is falling. Nothing could show more clearly than these facts the dead end into which capitalism has brought us.

But worse is undoubtedly to come. The enormous balance of payments crisis—a deficit of nearly £300 million in October—shows the state of British capitalism is getting steadily worse. The same thing is happening on an international scale. As even the employers' magazine *The Economist* put it on 17 November, 'Japan and America are slipping into recession.' In order to try to solve its economic problems (in fact a hopeless task), capitalism will use the same methods as it has always done, holding down and cutting the living standard of the working class in order to hold up profits.

Ruling class prepares

The employing class, the government and the state are quite aware of what this policy means. Their aim is to prepare to defeat the wages struggle of the working class and to impose penal anti-union and anti-working class policies. If this can be done under Phase 3, then it is calculated that rising unemployment, which is going to reappear in a big way in 1974, will finish off the militancy of the working class. Once this has taken place, the Tories calculate they can win a general election victory and impose still further attacks on the working class.

The basis for such ruling class victories is already being laid and tried out. The coming wages struggles against Phase 3 are going to be met with fierce resistance from the ruling class. The economic situation of British capitalism means that the employers cannot afford, from the point of view of their profits, to make any important concessions on wages and conditions.

Throughout the summer the employers were making preparations for the coming battles. Huge strike funds running into millions of pounds have, for example, been established by the Engineering Employers Federation (who last year paid out £2 million in profits compensation in the Manchester engineering strike alone). Tough tactics are already being used by employers in individual disputes. At Chrysler, for example, mass redundancies were threatened and thugs were hired to drive lorries straight through picket lines. The same thug elements were used to break pickets in the Sheffield *Morning Telegraph* strike. The press is

being tuned up to attack strikers, as it was in the power workers dispute in 1970 when it encouraged people to beat up strikers. Already a press campaign has been started against the miners. The NIRC has stepped up the attack with huge fines on the AUEW and the T&G.

Most important of all, the government has declared a state of emergency. This allows them to commandeer goods and to make unlimited use of the police and army. As Labour MP Norman Atkinson pointed out in the House of Commons on 13 November, it also means that the government has the right to arrest trade unionists. The formation of special anti-picket and anti-strike police squads has been speeded up. We have seen them in action against the Hull dockers in the last dock strike and against the pickets in the Footprint strike in Sheffield: if all else fails, the ruling class has got this heavy brigade ready.

Victory possible

Despite all the ruling class preparations, the working class can win the coming massive struggles, provided a decisive fight is waged. The only forces which can solve the present crisis—the forces of the working class and its allies—are coming more and more into open conflict with the government, the state and the employers. It was to be expected that sections of the working class such as the miners, the engineers and the dockers would fight back against Phase 3. But sections of workers with no long history of militant struggle, for example firemen, ambulancemen and power engineers, have also taken up the fight.

In fact, if we add up the forces which already are, or shortly will be, involved in the struggle against the government and against Phase 3, then there is no doubt that the working class is in an overwhelmingly more favourable position than the employers and their state. Over five million workers have wage claims coming up in the months ahead. The miners in 1972 showed what even 260,000 can do in a determined struggle. The Glasgow firemen have already shown how to punch a hole through Phase 3. Five million workers, not to mention the many millions more who would be drawn into a decisive struggle, can smash right through Phase 3, put an end to the Tory government and open up the road to socialism.

Certainly the employers and the state are beefing up their preparations for resistance to Phase 3—by preparing special police anti-picket and anti-strike squads, by preparing employers' strike funds and so on—but they are still too weak to smash any really determined working class struggles. The speed with which the government moved to release the Pentonville Five last summer shows this conclusively.

In addition, the ruling class is deeply divided within itself, with sections turning from support of the traditional ruling class party, the Tories, to support for the Liberals. Furthermore,

almost all the groups which in past periods of social crisis have supported the ruling class—for example students—now have their own grievances against the capitalist system and could be won to the side of the working class.

The possibilities for victory are better than at any time in the past. Provided the struggle is carried through in a determined way there is no unconquerable obstacle which the ruling class can put in the way of the working class. If the working class is defeated it will mainly be due not to anything the Tories or the employers do, but to false policies within the working class movement.



Robert Carr—has announced new action by police to combat mass pickets

Organise the struggle

The last few years have seen enormous strides forward within the labour movement. But on the most crucial question of all—how to reap the gains of big working class victories such as the miners strike and the Freeing of the Five—progress has been very small. After the miners strike last year, instead of finishing off the job and hammering the Tories into the ground, the TUC let the government off the hook by starting up negotiations with it on an incomes policy.

To make it worse, after the magnificent struggle to Free the Five, the TUC went back to the negotiations again and continued them throughout Phase 1 and Phase 2. The result was the defeat of the gas workers and the hospital workers, and a fall in workers' living standards.

The tremendous position of strength built up after the miners strike was wasted. If the struggle against Phase 3 is to be successful an entirely different type of policy has to be put forward to that which has been guiding the working class in the past year. All pussyfooting around has got to stop.

All the attacks by the employers and state can be beaten. But only provided two things are done. First, the struggle must be organised. This means the establishment in every area of bodies to organise pickets, to decide who shall and who shall not have sup-

plies cut off, to organise defence of pickets against the police, to arrange food and supplies for occupations, and to gain support from other groups of workers. Second, the widest possible numbers must be drawn into active involvement in the struggles.

It was the tens of thousands of people who were drawn into activity in the miners pickets which allowed that decisive strike to be won. To get this type of mass active support, every worker must feel that he has real control and a real interest in what is going on: direct involvement in all decisions about how the struggle is to be carried on.

This does not exclude using the full time resources of the union—only a fool would suggest that—but it does mean that one of the oldest rules of working class democracy has to be given a new force: *the people who take decisions about the struggles must be those who actually have to fight them.* It is only in this way that the maximum possible solidarity of all those in struggle can be gained.

Union officials have a valuable role to play, if they have the right policies, in contacting other groups of workers to gain support, and assisting in negotiations. However, at all times the workers actually engaged in the struggles must have the information to decide what is the best course of action and to judge what their representatives are up to. This can only be done through mass meetings and elected strike committees.

These types of moves have already developed in some recent key struggles. In the building workers strike, action committees of the various unions involved were set up locally. In the miners strike, mass meetings of the pickets were organised in some areas to decide tactics and strategy. In the Manchester engineering strikes, moves were made to set up a city-wide strike committee. Most importantly of all, in the recent Glasgow firemen's strike a democratically elected strike committee, with frequent mass meetings, was able to organise successfully a struggle against the employers, the union bureaucracy and the government.

Prepare the struggle

This type of organisation is also necessary in the preparation of the struggle. For example, the AUEW National Committee instructed the union executive to carry out a campaign of publicity to explain the claim and why it was being put forward. So far practically nothing has been done on this. It is only by seizing the initiative locally that real preparation can be made for the claim.

Completely different to this lack of preparation (until recently) for the engineers claim was the magnificent organisation in many areas for the strikes against the NIRC fine on the AUEW. A meeting of 600 shop stewards was held in Glasgow to decide on the strike, another of 400 met in Birmingham and another of 800 in Manchester. The result of this degree of organisation was the tremendous strikes, with

well over 400,000 out, on 5, 12 and 19 November. Such shop stewards meetings also succeeded in reversing the positions of right-wing District Committees, as in Leeds.

Steps to overcome this lack of preparation have been taken in some unions recently with the call for CSEU stewards meetings, for prepara-

tion committees in the NUT, and for London weighting allowance committees in NALGO. It is absolutely necessary to step up these actions throughout the trade unions with mass factory and workplace meetings to discuss the claims and how to struggle for them. Local and national conferences of shop stewards' representatives should be organised to discuss how to carry forward the struggle—shop stewards' quarterlies, combine committees, or important shop steward committees could convene these.

An excellent example of such a step is the call from prominent engineering convenors, supported by the Sheffield District Committee of the AUEW, for a national engineering convenors conference on 14 December. Docks shop stewards are also holding national meetings to discuss the way forward.

In almost all struggles, the tactic of occupation will be vital. Not only is it the best defence against lock outs, scabbing, and police attacks, as dozens of recent struggles have shown, but every occupied plant can become a nerve centre for communications and the organisation of every type of activity.

In the coming struggles militants must fight for:

- *mass meetings of workers to explain and prepare the coming struggles.
- *local, regional and national meetings of shop stewards delegates to plan the struggle.
- *strikes to be occupation strikes whenever possible.
- *conduct of the struggle at all levels to be in the hands of those engaged in the struggle: elected strike committees on the local, regional and national level.
- *no secret negotiations: elected representatives of the workers to be present at all negotiations; all negotiations to be regularly reported to mass meetings of workers, who will have the final say on all agreements and major decisions.

A particularly important role in the coming struggles will be played by the pickets. Last year two of the most important strikes—the miners strike and the building workers strike—were only won because of the massive use of flying pickets. This year, in the first Chrysler dispute, the company would have easily won without the picketing of the Stoke engine factory by Ryton workers.

Defend pickets

The ruling class is well aware of the power of picketing and, for this reason, has been concentrating its attacks throughout the summer on this form of struggle. In the Footprint dispute in Sheffield police smashed into a mass picket, arresting the district secretary of the AUEW and other pickets. On the legal front, according to a court decision made this April, it is now illegal for a picket to stand in the middle of the road in front of a scab even if no violence is involved. Most serious of all, the trial of the Shrewsbury 24 is a systematic attempt to prevent all future use of mass and flying picketing.

The ruling class is completely aware of how vital the picketing issue is. The first step at the beginning of the state of emergency was to set up a special central 'anti-picket' command in Scotland Yard. This will have special mobile squads to send out to attack pickets. The Home Secretary, Carr, announced this quite openly at a Leicester Tory meeting on 12 November when he said 'We have arranged for police forces to make co-operative arrangements with their neighbouring forces so that at short notice they can send reinforcements.'

The employers are prepared to go beyond the use of the police. In the *Evening Standard* on 21 November, the director of the Coal Merchants' Federation of Great Britain, Mr. Leslie Chambers, said quite openly that they would call in troops in order to get coal past the pickets. Troops have already been used in the

writing in the *Guardian* on 17 November, is even more explicit. He says of pickets, 'Can the police and forces alone cope? Might there not be a need for enlisting the aid of the armed forces as an adjunct to civil power.' He also makes it clear he is not alone when he says: 'There is reason to believe that this problem has exercised the minds of many policemen.' Even if the army is not needed this time it will be in the future, he concludes: 'It may be ... that the confrontation will not take place—this time! ... Yet the nagging doubt remains in the minds of many people that sooner or later this problem will have to be resolved.'

It is quite clear that the coming months will see the most massive attack on picketing rights for decades. If the state can succeed in defeating the picket lines, all hopes of the working class winning the coming battles will be lost. *The self defence of picket lines will be one of the most important of all the coming fights.*

But if the police are making their preparations, the working class has also shown it is perfectly capable of defending its picket lines. When the police savagely attacked the Hull dockers' picket lines in the last docks strike the dockers called in mass reinforcements and fought back with the same weapons as the police. When the police consistently broke the miners' picket line at Saltley, 50,000 engineering workers struck and 10,000 staged a mass picket which sent the police fleeing in disarray. Although it is at present still small, the mobilisation against the Shrewsbury trials was given a big boost on 3 October with strikes by Liverpool dockers and building workers across the country. The arrest of pickets in Sheffield was met by a one-day district AUEW strike.

These types of action must be enormously stepped up, however, if the defence of picketing against the new attacks is to be successful.

- *For the formation in every strike of teams of flying pickets under the control of an elected strike committee.
- *For the organisation of self-defence of picket lines.
- *For demonstrations of solidarity with the Shrewsbury 24 in every area; prepare for mass strike action if the 24 are not acquitted.

Extend the struggle

Another key to winning the coming struggles will be solidarity between all groups of workers. The most clear cut victories over the government, such as the Freeing of the Five and the closure of Saltley coal depot in the miners strike, have all been achieved where groups of workers have forged solidarity across union or industrial barriers. But while most workers in struggle turn to other sections of the trade union movement for support, they often overlook the fact that there are other potential allies, both inside and outside the working class, who can be drawn into a common struggle.

The first of these groups are students. Far from being the scabs of the General Strike days, students now almost always side with the working class in struggle. In the miners strike, for example, the NUM executive said that apart from other sections of the trade union movement the most powerful support they had received had been from students. What is more, students are increasingly going into struggle against the government themselves. Already this year over 140,000 students have taken part in actions over grants and accommodation. Students must be organised to support workers struggles and the labour movement must take up the demands of students.

The struggle against the Housing Finance Act is still going on in many areas. Industrial action can support this fight, but tenants organisations also have a vital role to play in strike struggles. They can house and reinforce picket lines, popularise the demands of the strikes and so on. Joint organisation with tenants groups is an important way of drawing new forces into the struggle.

Undoubtedly the greatest potential source of support, all too often forgotten by the trade union movement, is *women*—both as workers and as wives of workers. Certainly in the miners' strike wives played an important role, but in far too many struggles women workers

a force to be drawn into the struggle. This is disastrous. Not only is enormous potential wasted, but a dangerous class is created in the defences of the working class. Most of the continual press stories and advertising against strikes is not aimed at the strikers but at their wives.

In every possible case women workers and wives of workers must be actively involved in pickets, occupations and so on. The Fisher-Bendix occupation showed the way here with regular meetings, not only of the men in the strike, but their wives as well. Where such active involvement is not possible, then at least regular leaflets and information sheets must be produced to keep the wives informed about the development of the strike, and to counteract the lies of the press, radio and television.

However, in order to win women over to the struggle in a massive way it is necessary to struggle for the rights and interests of women. In fact, the trade unions have such a terrible record even on elementary issues such as equal pay, that it is surprising women ever bother to have anything at all to do with the working class movement. If the support of half the working class is really to be gained for the struggle against Phase 3 the demand for:

*Equal pay now

has to echo through the working class this winter.

Another group who must be drawn into the struggle are black and immigrant workers. They are one of the most oppressed sections of the working class, are subject to a whole range of restrictions imposed by racist laws, and suffer continual harassment at the hands of racist state authorities, especially the police and the courts.

However racism is not the exclusive possession of the estate—it is deeply implanted in the trade union movement and the working class. This is a serious weakness which the ruling class will try to use to split and weaken working class struggles. In order to unify the working class in the coming battles we must fight to:

- *Purge the trade unions of all forms of racism.
- *End all racist laws: the Immigration Acts, the Alien Acts, the Pakistan Act.

The biggest single danger facing the working class in the coming struggles will be that of individual groups of workers having to face the combined strength of the ruling class. If we take only those workers who have already started action against the government in one form or another in recent weeks we find miners, firemen, ambulancemen, railwaymen, power engineers, dockers.

Centralise response

If their struggles were united into one centralised offensive they would easily defeat the government and the employers. But at present they are all going into action separately. This was the recipe for disaster that defeated the gas workers, the hospital workers, the Manchester engineers, the post office workers and many others. In the face of a centralised ruling class attack the working class response must be a centralised one.

The best form of this would be a *general strike*. Ten million workers united together would smash through any wages law and soon put an end to the Tory government as well. But the TUC has consistently refused to take up this most effective way of dealing with the situation. This does not make it wrong to demand that the TUC call a general strike, indeed the demand for a recall TUC Congress on Phase 3 to call a general strike must be put forward—but it does mean that it has to be understood that the trade union leadership will not carry through an effective struggle against the government.

Militants have to work for other ways of co-ordinating the working class attack. Already steps are being taken in this direction in some areas. Miners and engineers are actively discussing how to unite their struggles. In London, the District Council of ASLEF and the busmen's delegate conference have voted in favour of joint action. Local conferences have been held in some areas to discuss how to co-ordinate the struggles. These steps are particularly vital to draw in the weaker groups of workers

government on their own.

***For local conferences and action committees in every area to prepare the struggle against Phase 3.**

***Unite the struggles—unite the claims; for a miners-engineers alliance; for the uniting of every wage claim and struggle at local and national level.**

***For a general strike.**

No talks

One of the most powerful political tools the ruling class has had to prepare its offensive has been the TUC-Government talks. These talks both implied that the working class has some interest in helping the Tories out of the



Firemen's strike showed the way—a democratic union bureaucracy and smash through the pay

economic problems that British capitalism has created, and at the same time suggested that some compromise is possible, even in the present crisis. These talks led completely away from the urgent task of preparing the inevitable struggle. It was obvious even to the blind that a massive confrontation—not a cosy tea-room chat—was on the order of the day.

It is quite possible, as the showdown comes closer, that the government will try to reopen the talks as a diversion from the struggle. The past performance of the TUC suggests that they will walk quite eagerly into this trap. Trade union militants must prepare to campaign vigorously against any attempt to renew the TUC-Government talks.

However the danger of renewed TUC-Government talks are only one of the threats to the little independence that trade unions still have under the law. Both the Industrial Relations Act and the idea of an incomes policy are powerful weapons in the hands of the ruling class.

The recent £100,000 fine imposed on the AUEW in the Con-Mech case, and the decision that the T&G must pay compensation, which may amount to even more, in the GAS case, represent a major stepping up of legal attacks on the trade unions. This puts paid to the bureaucrats' dream that the limited mobilisation by the TUC against the Industrial Relations Act, the refusal to register under

followed by some unions, had successfully 'put the Act on ice.' The ice is now thawing—and with a vengeance. Using the most vicious clauses of the Act and confirming the worst fears of trade unionists, the NIRC has launched an attack on the most basic right of the trade union movement—the right to strike.

This attack exposes the bankruptcy of the way in which the union bureaucrats have fought the Act in the past. Only an all-out offensive against the Tories can force an end to the Act, the NIRC and the whole gamut of legal attacks on trade union rights.

The sole purpose of an incomes policy, and that includes one proposed by a Labour government, is to undermine the power of the working class. Fortunately, awareness of this fact is spreading rapidly throughout the

for a long time. But the important thing is to start the struggle *now*, and we will find out *in practice* who is right. What has to be done is to start united action with *every* section of the working class movement—of which the trade union 'lefts' are a very definite and, like it or not, very important part.

What even the CP members must realise, however, is that it is absurd to put yourself in a position where there is no way of carrying on the struggle if the trade union leaders *do* back out. This is why the shop stewards conferences, the strike committees and so on are so vital. If Jones and Scanlon back out, however, then at least some organisation will have been built which can carry forward the struggle.

What is more, even if you think the main aim is to push the 'lefts' into action, then the best

had to rethink this strategy. To persist with the Industrial Relations Act would have meant a showdown with the working class movement—something which the Tories were not ready for at that point.

But the retreat by the government was only temporary—they simply took a different tack and turned to the incomes policy and the criminal law. The freeze legislation imposed many of the same tough legal restrictions on the right to strike as the Industrial Relations Act, and picketing came under fire through the prosecution of the Shrewsbury 24 and similar cases.

Today, as the Tories are preparing for a major showdown, they are summoning up all the resources they have built up over the past years: the incomes policy, the criminal law, the police, *and* the Industrial Relations Act.

But it would be wrong to assume that simply defeating the Tories in a showdown over Phase 3 would *automatically* drive them from office. They are capable of playing the octopus over again and, after a temporary retreat, find some new way of attacking the working class, with the aim of wearing down its strength in a series of drawn-out skirmishes.

The working class movement, in order to end the Tory attacks once and for all, must direct its energies *specifically* against the brains behind the whole attack: the Tory government must be ended.

The massive strikes of the last few years have shaken the Tory government to its foundations. The answer to getting rid of the Tories is obvious—it is necessary to unite the strike struggles into a decisive thrust to get rid of the Tory government. *A general strike to bring down the Tory government must be the aim of the left.*

We can be absolutely certain that in the coming struggles there will exist the possibility of an upsurge large enough to get rid of the Tories and a lot more. We must prepare the working class for this opportunity. If anyone declares that this aim is 'illegal' we have one very simple answer: the working class has always achieved anything worth having in a struggle *against* the law—from the Tolpuddle martyrs to the Freeing of the Five, every experience shows this. The ruling class has never hesitated to change the law, or even overthrow it completely as we have seen so recently and so horribly in Chile. The working class must be guided by its interests, which are those of the overwhelming majority of society, not by what the ruling class says is the law. This is the only way the working class has ever gone forward in its history.

Fourth, if the strike continues any length of time the working class will obviously want to start running various essential services for itself, but deny them to the government, the employers and the state. If this is not done the ruling class will use things to its own advantage. For example, in the power disputes they cut off power to council estates but kept it going to factories. The same was done in the gas workers dispute. In the miners strike, in the guise of supplying coal to pensioners, they tried to keep the coal merchants supplied. The working class has to organise to ensure that it is *its* organisations which take these critical decisions and not the state.

For reasons such as these the working class has always had to form special elected organisations to wage every massive general strike. In the British General Strike, for example, elected Councils of Action in many areas issued permits to vehicles it believed should be allowed to move and prevented others being moved. Councils of Action also took over the handling of supplies and decided to whom they should be distributed. They also organised and trained pickets to defend the strike, and took over the policing of areas and kept the regular police and army out. All these types of organisation will be necessary to win any general strike.

A whole series of measures of *workers control* will have to come to the forefront. All printing facilities will have to be taken over for the use of the working class. Briant's in London has already shown on a small scale what can be done here. All power to government and employers' premises should be cut off, while keeping it going to working class houses. Organisations must be set up to keep food supplies going. All these actions must be under the control of the Councils of Action which will enforce the democratic decisions taken by the striking workers and organise defence against police attacks. Without these things no massive strike can be carried through to success.

Basis for socialism

But the election of Councils of Action in each area will do something more than just ensure the strike is won. It will open the way for socialism. The first step in a socialist revolution is, after all, nothing but the transfer of all economic and political power into the hands of the working class.

When the decisions on what shall be produced and how it shall be produced are made by the working class according to their needs, and not by the employers or their state in the interest of profit, the first decisive economic step to socialism is being taken. When the policing of an area is taken over by the working class, organised through elected Councils of Action, the political basis for socialism is being laid. All that is necessary to do is to consolidate this power nationally and to break the resistance of the ruling class. The basis for socialism has then been created.

Of course fully formed Councils of Action could only appear, as they did in 1926, immediately before or during the strike itself. But even now the first steps can be taken to prepare such developments. All that is necessary is to collect together on a local elected basis representatives of all those workers going into struggle against Phase 3 and an important step forward will have been taken.

Already some steps have been taken along this road. In Rotherham 100 delegates representing miners, engineers and steel workers, as well as tenants associations, attended a conference sponsored by the Trades Council to discuss the way forward. In Chesterfield 250 delegates, from all sections of the trade union movement and the Labour and Communist Parties, held a similar conference. These types of activity can lay the basis for real Councils of Action in a general strike. Even more modest united actions now—through local action committees for example—can bear big fruits as the struggle heats up.

Policies for the crisis

From the facts we have already put forward, it is clear that the coming months are going to see the biggest class struggles for decades. These clashes are going to come regardless of the ideas of any working class political organisation. The only question which is at stake is how well



ed strike committee and frequent mass meetings enabled them to hold firm against the treachery of tions despite all the efforts of the Government and the press.

trade union movement. This year both the AUEW and ASTMS conferences came out against an incomes policy under *any* government.

***A complete end to the Industrial Relations Act and all anti-union laws.**

***No incomes policy under capitalism—No renewal of the TUC-Government talks.**

The issue of the TUC-Government talks raises the whole question of what attitude to adopt to the trade union leadership. This is an enormously controversial question even on the socialist left. The Communist Party, for example, have great faith in Jones and Scanlon. Certainly they make mistakes, so the Communist Party says (for example supporting the TUC-Government talks was a 'mistake'), but when it comes to the crunch they will be on the right side. We think this faith of the Communist Party and others is completely misplaced.

'Left' Bureaucrats

While Jones and Scanlon are certainly more left than someone like Chapple, they have shown by their actions at Chryslers, in the docks dispute, on questions such as the 25 companies dispute in the Labour Party, that when the real crunch comes they finish up on the *wrong* side. Scanlon is already trying to avoid a national engineering strike. This

way to do this is to organise at the base. The task is to begin *now* to organise the rank and file. *Practice* will show who is right on the left leaders (and it will show we are right), but whatever the outcome, the working class will be in a position to go forward. The course of action of the Communist Party, which leaves the working class without any organised alternative to the 'left' bureaucrats, leads to disaster.

Tories out

It is the employers and the state—in short the whole capitalist system—which are the real reasons for the present attacks on the working class. But the policy of the ruling class is at present being organised by the Tory government, which is spearheading the assault on the working class. While getting rid of the Tories would not finish the job, it would be a decisive step forward to deal with this mastermind of the capitalist offensive.

In the past the Tory government has behaved like an octopus—no matter what individual policy has been defeated it has put a slightly different one in its place to do the same job.

For example, the first measure it attempted to use to chain the working class was the Industrial Relations Act. After the railwaymen's strike, the Freeing of the Five, and the AUEW's

equip the working class to deal with the crisis. We have already shown in this article what the view of the International Marxist Group is on the present situation. What policies are put forward by other organisations, and why should they be rejected?

Our differences are obvious with the leadership of the Labour Party. The Labour Party's policies rely totally on elections and, as a result, they have taken no steps to mobilise the working class in the strike struggle against the Tories and the employers. The Labour Party is not preparing the working class for the coming struggles. Of course many individual members of the Labour Party have played a tremendous role in the struggle. Even some entire Councils—most notably Clay Cross—have been in the forefront of the fight. We believe that unity should be forged with Labour Party members in the coming battle, in particular to put Labour Party controlled facilities at the disposal of workers engaged in struggle. Labour Councils should take a clear position on the strike struggle, putting their facilities at the disposal of strikers, and fight against the use of the police anti-picket squads in their areas.

Many, although not all, Labour Party members think that the only real way out of the situation is to elect a Labour government. But the whole record of Labour in office and the nature of its reformist policies proves that a Labour government, by itself, will solve nothing.

We are for the return of a Labour government in an election: but only as a *means* of stimulating and furthering the struggle and organisation of the working class, not as a *substitute* for that struggle and organisation. The organisations created in the fight to overthrow the Tories will not become redundant if a Labour government is elected. They will be needed to organise the struggle for socialism—the seizure of factories, the establishment of workers control of production, the regulation of prices in the interests of the working class, the preparation of organised resistance to a ruling class counter-offensive—demanding at every turn that the Labour government endorses their actions and recognises their authority.

In particular every serious socialist—whether inside or outside the Labour Party—must fight the dangerous idea that the best way to get a Labour government elected is to abandon the fight against Phase 3 and have a 'quiet' run up to the next election. If the Tories can impose Phase 3 on the trade union movement without a fight they will be able to launch an all-out attack which will split and demoralise the working class, while rallying many middle class people who have recently deserted the Tories for the Liberals back around the Tory banner. The surest recipe for keeping the Tories in office would be to give up the fight against Phase 3.

Communist Party

The policies of the Communist Party are really going to be put to the test in the coming struggles. The CP is the main organised left-wing force in the trade unions. If it took up the right policies, the effect would be enormous. Unfortunately, however, apart from its many wrong positions on international questions such as democracy in the USSR and so on, the politics of the CP cannot provide an answer to the present situation. They are wrong on three vital issues.

On the question of the general strike and the Tory government the position of the Communist Party is false and contradictory. On the one hand they correctly point out the reactionary nature of the Heath government. The *Morning Star* on 17 November said 'Heath's government is a disaster for the British people. It is savagely attacking the living standard of all workers and pensioners. It is a threat to democracy, moving more and more to dictatorial rule.' If this is the case then clearly the Tory government must be got rid of at once by all means possible. But the CP avoids the crucial question of *how* this is to be done.

Sometimes it appears to come close to facing this problem. Bert Ramelson at the CP Congress called for 'a special TUC to organise a mass confrontation that would bring down the government as well as its policies.' In his pamphlet *Carr's Bill and How to Kill It*

Ramelson also called for 'actions of general strike dimensions.' But, as a whole, the CP's official policies avoid the crucial question of the sure way to get rid of the Tories—a general strike.

This failure to take up a clear line on the general strike and how to get rid of the Tories is bound up with the second wrong aspect of the CP's policy—its relation with the trade union leadership. The CP places the whole weight of its politics on an alliance with the trade union 'lefts'—in particular Jones and Scanlon.

Of course no one can blame the Communist Party for seeking united action with trade union leaderships. On the contrary this must be sought at every opportunity. Neither is the CP wrong for pointing out that there is a difference between the 'left' and the 'right' in the trade unions. Only a fool thinks that, for example, Scanlon and Chapple are the same. Where the CP goes completely wrong, however, is that they organise the struggle in such a way that it depends totally on unity with trade union 'left leaders' so that the struggle cannot be carried on successfully if these leaders finish up on the wrong side.

For example, in 1970 the CP helped to build a massive movement against the Industrial Relations Act through the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. This managed to get 500,000 workers to strike against the Act on 8 December 1970. Quite correctly, the Communist Party sought to get union leaderships to support the LCDTU conferences and to support the strike.

Some union leaderships, for example that of SOGAT, did so. Other unions, notably the AUEW, were forced by the pressure created by the LCDTU to call even bigger strike action, and over a million workers were out in 1971. All this was excellent. But the Communist Party totally failed to organise to carry on the struggle if the trade union leadership retreated. On the contrary, after 8 December the CP wound down the LCDTU: it did not meet for six months and undertook no independent actions.

The result was that after the TUC ducked out of the struggle at a special congress, the movement was left in a dead end. The LCDTU conference held after the special TUC, months too late, was only a third the size of the one held for the 8 December strike. A similar story could be told in struggle after struggle.

One of the main reasons the CP will not take up the slogan for a general strike to get rid of the Tory government is precisely because it would bring it into conflict with the 'left' trade union leaders who are not at all prepared to support such a policy.

The third reason for the failure of CP policy in the present situation is its position on a general election. The Communist Party thinks socialism can come peacefully following the election of a socialist government. For this reason it sees general elections as absolutely of key importance. It is waging a big campaign for a general election. This policy is completely wrong at the best of times. It becomes completely reactionary in a period approaching a general strike.

Faced with a general strike which threatened to topple the government and smash the power of the ruling class, the Tories would undoubtedly like to resort to a general election. The reasons are obvious. When the workers are engaged in a mass strike their feeling of solidarity is tremendous. Democracy is immediate and widespread: through mass meetings and elected workers councils workers participate in the taking of all decisions. The working class begins to take the running of society into its own hands.

A bourgeois general election is totally different. The working class is split up as they go one-by-one to the ballot box. The workers are split up as individuals in their homes while the press and television spread lies. Instead of the workers participating through a direct democratic process in taking all decisions, they are forced to elect someone over whom they have no real control, to take all the decisions. It is for this reason that de Gaulle called an election at the height of the French General Strike in May

1968. The answer of the revolutionary working class movement to this has always been to counterpose the real democracy of workers councils and councils of action to the phoney democracy of bourgeois elections. On the field of trade unionism the CP in general still understands the role played by bourgeois elections. It knows perfectly well that a secret ballot type of manoeuvre is put forward by the boss precisely to destroy the direct democracy of the workers in mass meetings. Such manoeuvres are designed to split the workers up as individuals and destroy the solidarity of the working class. When it comes to politics however, by making a general election the decisive struggle, the CP plays right into the hands of the ruling class.

The CP is even more short-sighted here than the ruling class. The ruling class has no intention of accepting a general election result if it goes against it. The tragic events of Chile show this only too clearly. The working class must be told openly that a general election called in the middle of a mass strike wave—in particular in the middle of a general strike—would be a manoeuvre of the ruling class. The CP declares instead that the general election would be the decisive thing, and so plays right into the hands of the ruling class.

Revolutionary left

As for the groups which describe themselves as 'revolutionary', they suffer from very confused ideas on the solution to the present crisis.

The largest organisation on the revolutionary left, the International Socialists, really has no clear line at all on how to deal with the present situation. It calls for the setting up of 'rank-and-file' organisations, but is confused over what are the central tasks which face the rank-and-file of the working class movement at this turning point. It does not spell out the need for a general strike, does not campaign for local conferences and Councils of Action—indeed, it has no clear proposals at all as to how the working class can unite and prepare for the coming fight against the Tory Government. It does raise the need to drive the Tories from office, but has no proposals for how this can be achieved. Finally, it has no ideas as to how the coming struggles can be turned into a struggle for socialism.

The Workers Revolutionary Party (formerly the Socialist Labour League) acts in a very sectarian fashion and refuses to engage in united actions with other organisations who do not accept its particular viewpoint. At the same time it has a right-wing political line: over the past few weeks it has centred all its propaganda on the need for a general election. Like the Communist Party, it talks vaguely of the need for 'united working class action' to drive the Tories from office, but refuses to call clearly for a general strike and the moves needed to prepare for this.

Much the same is true of the *Militant* current in the Labour Party. They call for a 'mass campaign to force out the Tories', but never spell out what this actually means in practice.

The International Marxist Group, whose views are represented here, is, of course, a small revolutionary group, not a mass organisation like the Labour Party. We are nowhere near as large, and do not have the same degree of influence in the trade unions as the Communist Party. Indeed, we are significantly smaller than the largest of the so-called 'revolutionary' organisations—the International Socialists.

However, we are the only organisation on the left with a clear understanding of the situation in which the working class now finds itself and with clear proposals as to how the movement can go forward to defeat the Tory Government and the ruling class. In the interests of putting those proposals into action we are prepared to engage in united actions with any organisation or individual in the working class movement.

For that reason, despite our small size and limited influence at present, we are confident that we can play a very important role in the coming struggles. For that reason we urge all those committed to defeating the Tory Government, fighting for the interests of the working class, and advancing the cause of socialism, to work alongside us and consider joining our ranks.

The International Marxist Group

The International Marxist Group is one of the younger and smaller organisations of the revolutionary left, but we believe that the correctness of our ideas will prove to be a more important asset in the coming struggle than the greater numbers which many other organisations possess.

The IMG now has members in every major trade union, has played an active role in many strikes, and has been an important force in bringing such struggles as the trial of the Shrewsbury 24 to the attention of the trade union movement as a whole.

We are part of an international organisation—the Fourth International, founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938—which is increasingly able to play a major role in workers struggles throughout Europe. It is our understanding of the importance of internationalism which has placed us in the forefront of campaigns in solidarity with the fight of the Vietnamese people against American imperialism, the fight of the Irish people against British domination, and the struggle of the Chilean workers and peasants against military dictatorship.

Our views on the problems presently facing the working class in this country are presented in detail above, but can be summarised as follows:

*For a general strike to kick out the Tories.

*For the formation of representative Councils of Action to lead this struggle and open the road to socialism.

*To prepare now for a general strike and Councils of Action: for a miners-engineers alliance, meetings of shop stewards and workers representatives in every area to prepare the struggle, elected strike committees.

*For the organized defence of the working class against attacks from the police and other forces of the state.

*For the unity of the greatest number possible around the struggle of the organised workers' movement: for an all-out effort to insure the involvement of women, for an end to all forms of racism in the trade unions and all racist laws, for measures to organise the support of tenants and students.

The IMG fights for united action with all organisations of the working class movement on each and all of these policies.

If you agree with these policies you should find out more about the International Marxist Group with a view to joining us. This is the way in which you can most effectively contribute to a successful, socialist outcome to the coming struggles.

I would like more information about the IMG

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