

Workers Press

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'New' Labour leaders spell it out: WELFARE STATE IS DEAD

THE inevitable declaration that a future Labour government will carry on with the Tories' work in killing off the Welfare State came in a speech from the shadow social security spokesperson Chris Smith.

■ Smith **STATED** categorically that the next Labour government will not restore the welfare cuts made by the Tories.
'Returning to 1979 and putting back in place what was there then is not the sensible way to address the need for social justice,' Smith last week told the Institute for Public Policy Research.

■ Smith **PROMISED** that Labour would keep the lid on welfare spending.

He admitted that the 'old problems' of poverty and joblessness remained, but state spending was not the answer: 'intelligent participation of the private sector' was now needed to tackle these matters.

■ Smith **WARNED** that the old Labour belief that increases in spending was the way to keep the welfare state afloat was dead and buried.

■ Smith **PLEDGED** that Labour would keep 'an eagle eye' on fraud.

BY THE EDITOR

the day of Smith's speech saw the Tories announce that in future people will be forced, assuming they have any money, to provide for their old age. The rest will presumably simply go to the wall.

On welfare benefits there is now no difference in principle between the Tory government and Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

■ Smith **INSISTED** that people must learn to fend for themselves and that any increases in welfare spending should be seen as a mark of failure, not success. The main emphasis will be on 'benefit-to-work' schemes, said Smith.

For this read yet more fraudulent 'retraining' programmes in which young people in particular are forced to work for a pittance for some of the most ruthless employers.

The blunt truth is that

decaying capitalism has less and less use for the labour of millions of people, including increasing numbers of middle-class people. Last week's announcement that the latest merger in the insurance world will lead to the loss of 5,000 jobs is a sign of the times (see page 5).

Smith proceeded to reject the idea that the state is necessarily the best provider.

A 'comprehensive' state-funded solution to the social

problems facing people was no longer necessary, he declared.

'Mixed solutions' were required. In future, 'individual contributions' would be necessary, and 'private sector' involvement encouraged.

Talk

This is pure right-wing Tory talk.

Smith is spelling out the fact that the post-1945 'con-

sensus' is dead and buried. After World War II the ruling class was forced to make important concessions to the strength of the working class.

The system of welfare benefits introduced by the Labour government under Attlee in the period 1945-51 was among the most important of these concessions.

Now capital can no longer afford such concessions. It must take from the working class all that it has been forced

to concede over the past 50 years.

Smith simply repeats the fact: a Labour government will launch yet more brutal attacks on the working class, the class that must be made to pay for the crisis of capitalism. Smith's remarks are the latest sign of how rapidly the Labour Party leaders lurch further and further to the right.

They are a dire warning of the shape of things to come.

Lips

Here he does not have in mind the sharks in the City or the big insurance companies licking their lips at the prospect of the fortune they will make when people are forced to take out private insurance against illness, unemployment and old age.

It is no co-incidence that

Tower Hamlets hits out for education on May Day



THOUSANDS of East London children stayed away from school on May Day. Over 500 children and parents marched on the offices of Tower Hamlets council to protest at education cuts which would mean the loss of up to seven teachers in the borough's secondary schools, and one or two from most of the primary schools.

This was the latest stage of a campaign which has brought together parents, teachers, headteachers, support staff and school governors at mass meetings and a Saturday morning demonstration. For most of the May Day demonstrators, this was their first political protest, and the arrival of so many at the lavish docklands office of the council was clearly unexpected.

Since the campaign began the chair of the education committee has been replaced, and there are signs that the Labour council is looking for a compromise which would find more money for schools.

Photo: Mick Regan

Liverpool and internationalism

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY will be celebrated on its rightful day, 1 May, from now on in Merseyside. That was the decision of this year's successful 3,000-strong workers' march led by the now historic banner of the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards.

Behind the 500 sacked dockers at the head of the march came the Women of the Waterfront with their banner, and banners from trades councils, union branches, shop stewards' committees, pensioners, political groups,...

It was fitting that the

Merseyside shop stewards organised and led the May Day in Liverpool. In February, their international conference rallied dockers and other workers in many countries to take solidarity action.

The dockers had called for workers to take the day off and join this international workers' day march. There was a large contingent of Unison workers whose branch had called for strike action on that day, and the Transport and General Workers' Union Liverpool office was closed as staff turned out to join the march.

This important conference is convened jointly by the ITUSC and ALISC. It will follow the 'Africa Month' here in Britain. We will be discussing and deciding how to take forward workers' international solidarity in the coming struggles. Delegates will be travelling from Africa, India, Bangladesh, South America, Russia, Ukraine and eastern Europe.

Therefore, rather than have a set attendance fee we are asking you to give whatever you can towards the cost of the conference and the fares of those delegates. A draft resolution will be sent to you, and we ask you to keep in touch during the preparation of the conference and let us have any resolutions and/or written material on the issues you wish discussed.

International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign — African Liberation Support Campaign
Conference address: PO Box 18, Epsom, KT18 7YR, Britain. Tel/Fax: +441372 721 550

AN INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' CONFERENCE

- Trade unions independent of the state and the employers
- Democracy in the trade unions
- Workers' internationalism

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Saturday—Sunday 8—9 June, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.
Near Holborn. Start 10.30am Saturday, 10am Sunday.

