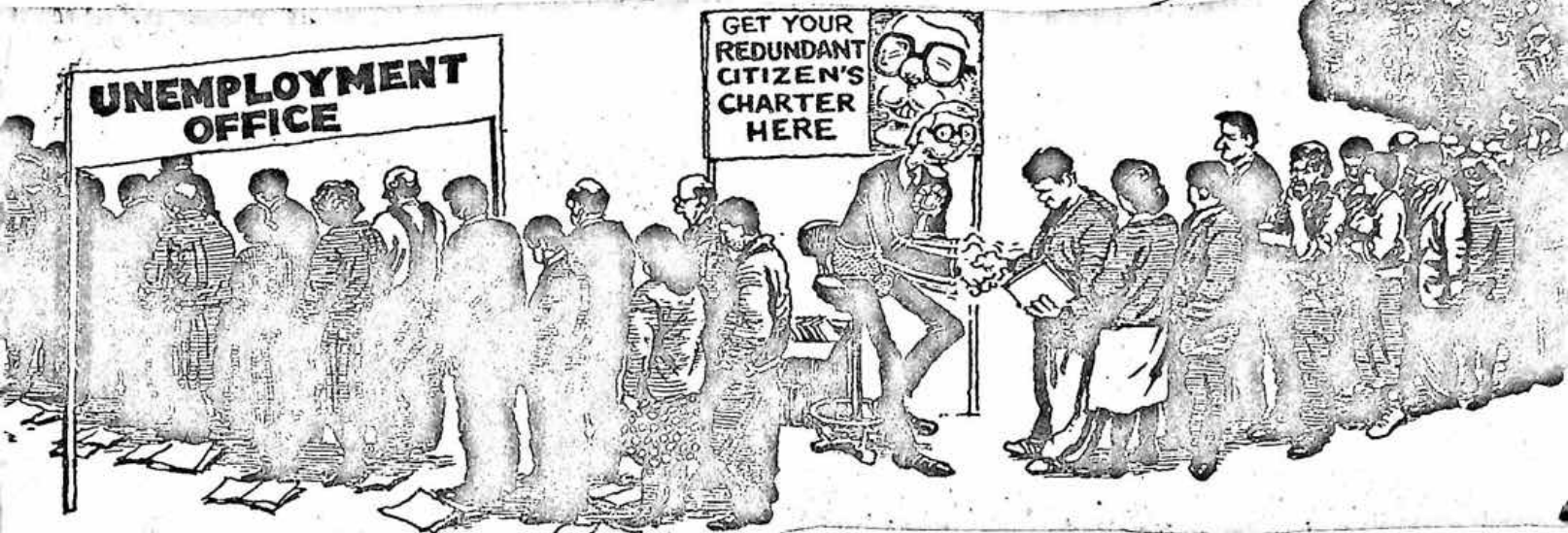


COMPASS

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A SOCIALIST ELECTION POLICY : 1992

A GENERAL ELECTION WILL BE HELD IN BRITAIN ON 9 APRIL.

A FALSE FACADE

The state in Britain, as in other developed capitalist countries is the machinery by which the wealthiest capitalists rule over the rest of the people. It is 'the dictatorship of Big Business', and parliament is no more than a part of that machinery, designed to provide a false facade to deceive the working people into believing that they live in a 'democracy'.



This does not mean, however, that parliamentary elections are of no concern to the working class. On the contrary, Socialists must exert special efforts to utilise the heightened interest in politics at such a time to explain to the working people the facts of political life. And although the electoral struggle must always be subordinate to the organisation of the working masses for revolutionary struggle, it is correct for the workers to strive to secure the election of at least some genuine representatives of

the working class -- not, of course, with any illusion that capitalism can somehow be abolished by this means, but in order to use the Palace of Westminster as a tribune to expose that illusion and to assist in the mobilisation of the working people for the revolutionary struggle which alone can establish working class power and build a socialist society

THE PRESSING NEED FOR A PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS

Since the degeneration and later liquidation of the Communist Party, all the

political parties which exist at present in Britain support policies which, objectively, serve the interests of a section of Big Business.

To some extent the minor differences in the electoral stances and programmes of these parties reflect merely the need for Big Business to appeal to strata of the working people of differing political levels. The Conservative Party appeals to the least advanced sections -- those with little or no class consciousness. The Liberal Democrats appeal to those sections which aspire to 'upward mobility' into the petty bourgeoisie and who see Big Business and the trade unions as equal threats to these aspirations.

The Labour Party appeals to the more politically developed sections of the working people who at least understand that their interests as workers are not the interests of Big Business and who believe that the Labour Party is, whatever its weaknesses, still a party representing the interests of labour. And for workers who have come at least to a minimum understanding of the need for socialist revolution, there are a number of pseudo-revolutionary parties, the policies of which, when analysed objectively, are seen also to serve the interests of Big Business.

Lenin's famous quip:

"To decide every few years which representative of the ruling class is to misrepresent the people in parliament is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism",

brings home very clearly the urgent need to rebuild a party of the working class, a genuine party of socialism based on scientific revolutionary principles, those of Marxism-Leninism. Only when such a party of the working class has been built can the working people make significant advances, can a really significant degree of direct class struggle be introduced into the electoral campaign.

NO BASIC CHANGE FROM THE ELECTION

Without any doubt, socialists cannot support any of these parties as parties serving specifically the interests of the working people. This applies also to the so-called 'left-wing' of the Labour Party, which comprises an unstable, fluctuating group of social-democratic politicians who serve the interests of capital by providing the workers who have rightly become disillusioned with the Labour Party the false hope that an internal change within it can transform it into a party representing the interests of the working class -- so holding them back from political action independent of the framework of the Labour Party. All the 'left-wings' that have developed within the Labour Party have shown themselves to be ephemeral and transitory -- providing their temporary members with publicity that is helpful to their careers as professional politicians in leading to their promotion to the hierarchy of the party -- on the attainment of which they have invariably revealed themselves to be no different from their predecessors. It must also not be forgotten that the nomination of every Labour Party candidate requires the approval of the openly right-wing leadership which requires to be satisfied that -- whatever demagogic 'left' talk and harmless abstentions the candidate may indulge in if elected -- he or she will obey the discipline of the party whips whenever called upon to do so.



Socialists must, therefore, accept the fact that, whatever party or coalition of parties forms the new government as a result of April 1992 election, it will bring about no basic change in the capitalist system, which is the fundamental cause of the social ills that afflict the great majority of the working people.

ABSTENTION?

Some of the pseudo-revolutionary parties and groups put forward what they allege to be the conclusion that should be drawn from the above analysis: that since all all political parties contesting the 1992 election represent the interests of Big Business, workers should not vote.

But the fact that all the political parties contesting the election represent, objectively, the interests of Big Business, this does not mean that the differences between them are only a matter of the strata to which their electoral appeal is addressed.

In past issues of 'COMpass' we have demonstrated that, in the conditions of moribund capitalism that exist in Britain, it is impossible for a single policy to serve the interests of both financial and industrial capital. The Major-led Conservative Party represents the interests of financial capital, which has prospered under the 'monetarist' policies associated particularly with Thatcher; the interests of industrial capital, which has suffered unprecedented decline since 1979, are represented by the Labour Party and the so-called 'wets' of the Conservative Party. The different interests of financial and industrial capital are reflected in the different policies of these parties towards such things as state subsidisation of industry (which affects the level of unemployment), interest rates (which affect mortgage repayments), the financing of social services (which affects the housing and educational prospects, and the prospects of hospital treatment, of countless working people), etc. There may only be a shade of difference between these policies, but it is a shade of difference which is a matter of life and death to tens of thousands of working people.

Since, for these reasons, it is in the interests of the working people that a Labour government rather than a Conservative government should be returned to office, socialists should for this reason record their votes for the Labour Party.

Despite its limitations and deceptions, 'parliamentary democracy' is vastly better for working people, and for the development of the socialist revolution, than open fascist dictatorship. It is, therefore, vital for working people to struggle by all means in their power to defend 'parliamentary democracy' against attacks on it from the ultra-right, against attempts to replace it by a fascist type of state.

Electoral struggle is one aspect of the struggle against fascism, even though it is not the most important aspect. Fascist candidates will be contesting certain constituencies in the 1992 elections. If in such constituencies anti-fascists were to abstain from voting, the proportion of the poll received by these fascist candidates would be artificially high -- thus encouraging the pro-fascist forces and disheartening the anti-fascist forces.

Furthermore, the right to vote, limited though its potentialities may be, is one of the democratic rights of 'parliamentary democracy'. To advise

working people not use this democratic right is to imply that it is of no value and so to play into the hands of the most reactionary sections of the capitalist ruling class who seek to inculcate the view that such democratic rights are 'useless' as part of the ideological preparation for a fascist dictatorship.

In the existing circumstances, to advise working people not to vote is harmful and reactionary. It is not accidental that this advice is put forward by such proven enemies of the working class as the anarchists.

'AS A ROPE SUPPORTS THE HANGED'

The election of a Labour Government is advantageous to working people in the task of exposing the Labour Party as a party which really represents the interests of Big Business. This task of exposing the Labour Party is an essential part of the supreme task of building a mass revolutionary movement in Britain. But Labour politicians in opposition frequently indulge in 'left-wing' demagogy in order to deceive the working people. In office, however, these politicians have to act, and it is in their actions alone that they can be exposed.

That socialists should advise working people, in the absence of a genuine party of the working class, to 'vote Labour' in order to assist in the exposure of social-democracy, was a line of tactics elaborated by one of the greatest Marxists of all time, Lenin, specifically in relation to Britain:

"British Communists should . . . help the masses of the workers to see the results of a Henderson and Snowden government. . . . Revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class and this change is brought about by political experience alone; never is it brought about by propaganda alone. . . .

We should take part in the election campaign, distribute leaflets advocating Communism, and in all the constituencies where we have no candidate we would urge the electors to vote for the Labour candidate. .

. . . I will be able to explain in a popular manner . . . that I wanted to support Henderson with my vote in the same way as a rope supports the hanged".

(V. I. Lenin: '"Left-wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 10; London; 1946; p. 126, 130).

CONCLUSION

The Socialist slogans for the 1992 election must be the clear and correct call:

OUT WITH THE TORIES!

VOTE LABOUR!

PUT KINNOCK IN THE DOCK!

'DEMOCRACY' IN ALBANIA

A general election held in Albania on 22 March 1992 resulted in a majority for the openly right-wing 'Democratic Party' which, according to the Election Commission, obtained 62.2% of the vote. The revisionist Socialist Party (formerly the Party of Labour) was said to have obtained 25.6%.

"Some of the Democrats' backers do concede that their own party's leader, Sali Berisha, may have disturbingly autocratic tendencies. . . .

Jack Buechner, president of the International Republican Institute, representing the Republican Party in the United States, said his organisation had given Albania's Democratic Party more than \$500,000 worth of equipment and aid".

('Guardian', 23 March 1992; p. 4).

Many of the former leaders of the Party of Labour, including Nexhmije Hoxha, Rita Marko, Adil Carcani, Foto Cami, Prokop Murra, Besnik Bekteshi and Llambi Gegprifti have been arbitrarily imprisoned since the liquidation of the party in June 1991. Nexhmije Hoxha was brought from prison 'to record her vote' but used the occasion only to refute the charge made by the new leaders that her husband, the late Enver Hoxha, had been a 'dictator'.

The Union of Jurists for the Safeguarding of Human Rights, based in Rome, has sent a petition to government officials in Tirana asking that an international observer team be authorised to attend the trials of the former leaders. A statement from the Union criticises the

". . . charges jointly formulated against them, the gravity of which does not appear to correspond to the imputed facts for which, furthermore, there is no indication of adequate individual evidence.

Convinced that following upon political changes, criminal charges cannot be laid for previous positions on sole account of responsibility held, and that proceedings must not be allowed to become instruments of propaganda in the political struggle".

THE UNACCEPTABLE FACE . . .

"British Aerospace said yesterday it would axe a further 10,000 jobs and continue its programme of disposals in the coming two years. . . .

The group . . . shed 30,000 jobs between 1987 and 1991".
('Guardian', 20 February 1992; p. 14).

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"British Coal's commercial director, Malcolm Edwards, said yesterday that British Coal could be reduced to 12 pits in the next two years, with 30,000 job losses".

('Guardian', 20 February 1992; p. 22).

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"Britain last year suffered its biggest single slump year since the Great Depression and the economy was still contracting as it entered 1992, the Government admitted yesterday" ('Guardian', 21 February 1992; p. 20).

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"British Telecom is to axe the jobs of 3,100 operators and directory inquiry staff in the continuing relentless drive of the privatised group to cut its costs. . . .

At least 15,000 more jobs are expected to have been shed by the end of the current financial year and the redundancies are expected to continue at the same level over the next few years. . . .

For the last quarter of 1991, profits were . . . £759 million". ('Guardian', 22 February 1992; p. 3).

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"Elizabeth Sigmund is just one of countless women with no entitlement to a basic state pension — and that has condemned her to a life of relentless poverty.

After struggling to bring up six children for most of her adult life, 63-year-old Mrs. Sigmund of Callington, Cornwall, believed she had made a worthwhile contribution to society. When she reached 60 she was surprised to find society thought it owed her nothing. . . .

The only women who qualify for a full state pension are those who have made National Insurance Contributions for 39 years". ('Guardian', 22 February 1992; p. 13).

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"Lloyd's Bank, while announcing profits up 9% to £645 million, yesterday, warned that might cut 'thousands more jobs' this year following a reduction of 8,500 in 1991".

('Guardian', 22 February 1992; p. 11).

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"National Westminster Bank . . . Chairman Lord Alexander said that the bank would . . . cut a further 4,000 jobs this year".

('Guardian', 26 February 1992; p. 13).

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"Dentists are 'astounded' by the Medical Research Council decision to accept money from the Sugar Bureau, the public relations arm of the industry, to draw up a research strategy into prevention of tooth decay.

'It is like putting Dracula in charge of a blood bank', said one dentist. The bureau, which is funded by Tate and Lyle and British Sugar, is 'not an objective body', said another".

('Observer', 1 March 1992; p. 3).

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"Massive pollution from a new fuel burned by Britain's privatised power industry will poison water supplies and increase acid rain. . . .

The National Rivers Authority says that allowing the industry to go ahead with plans to burn millions of tons of . . . Orimulsion, a cheap but dirty mixture of tars and heavy oils from Venezuela, will present the Government with the first major test of its new system of 'integrated pollution control'".
('Observer' , 1 March 1992; p. 3).

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"The jobless total has reached 2.6 million according to the Government's latest method of calculation -- or close on four million by the way it used to be counted ten years ago".
('Observer' , 1 March 1992; p. 7)

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Parents at Avenue Primary School, Sutton, Surrey.

" . . . are being asked for £100 donations to pay a teacher's salary"
('Observer' , 8 March 1992; p. 3)

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East Ender Amelia Schieferstein died in 1991 at the age of 87 after paying for more than 70 years into a Royal Liver Assurance life assurance policy, but the sum paid out on her death was only £101 --

" . . . less than 15% of the £767 price of her very basic funeral. .

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Mrs. Schlieferstein's daughter, Diane Munday, describes the £101 outcome as 'a despicable form of insurance robbery'. . . .

Almost half of Britain's leading insurance companies require at least a full year's premium to cover the cost of selling a life policy. In other words, an individual who signs up for a 25-year endowment, paying premiums of £100 a month, will forfeit at least the first £1,200 of premiums".
('Observer' , 8 March 1992; p. 9).

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"Robert Evans, chairman of British Gas, received a 17.6% increase last year, taking his salary up to £435,222. . . .

Mr. Evans was criticised last year for a 66% payrise and for receiving £28,000 of British Gas products to 'test' at home".
('Guardian' , 24 March, 1992; p. 24).

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"Donations totalling £440,000 made to the Conservative Party by Asil Nadir, the accused businessman, were drawn from his now bankrupt Polly Peck empire without being declared in the annual accounts.

This apparently constitutes a breach of the Companies Act".
('Guardian' , 4 March 1992; p. 1).

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"A rise of more than 40,000 in the unemployment total for February

brought the issue to centre stage in the election campaign yesterday. Official figures show a cumulative increase of well over 1 million since the start of the slump".
('Guardian', 20 March 1992; p. 1).

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