



THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM

Programme of the Communist Party Price 40p.



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Introduction

The Communist Party aims to replace the crises, insecurity, profiteering, inequalities and social antagonisms of the capitalist society in which we live by a socialist society.

A socialist Britain would be run for people, not for profit – for the benefit of the majority, not a handful of big businessmen and financiers. Production would be socially controlled and planned, and everyone would be guaranteed the right to a job, a home, education and leisure. Freedom would be rightly understood, not as the right of individuals to exploit others, but as the power of human beings, collectively, by controlling their environment, to develop their individual interests, abilities and talents to the full.

For over a century, British socialists have had this vision. It still has to be made a reality. The Communist Party, in this programme, shows how it can be done.

It is not a programme for the next general election, nor a blueprint for the future, but a long-term strategy for a socialist revolution in Britain. It outlines the general lines of action and struggle which can bring about the unity of the working class and its allies for the winning of political power and the building of socialism. It is a programme of action.

The British Road to Socialism is based on the theory of scientific socialism first elaborated by Marx and Engels, creatively applying that theory to the situation in Britain and the world.

In it we make clear our view:

First, that the big social and economic problems which we face today can only be finally resolved by putting an end to capitalism and establishing socialism.

Second, that to achieve socialism the working class and its allies must take political, economic and state power out of the hands of the capitalist class.

Third, that this socialist revolution can be carried through in Britain in conditions in which world war can be prevented, and without civil war, by a combination of a socialist parliamentary majority and mass struggle outside parliament, ensuring a government that is determined and able to implement a socialist programme.

Fourth, that the forces exist which can put Britain on such a course, and that the need is to develop and unite them in a broad democratic alliance, led by the working class and embracing the great majority of the people.

Fifth, that essential to the achievement of the alliance and the advance to socialism is the building of a much bigger Communist Party.

Sixth, that the winning of power by the working class and its allies will not be a single act, but a process of struggle, in which an important stage will be the election of a new kind of Labour Government which will carry out a left policy to tackle the crisis and bring about far-reaching democratic changes in society, opening up the road to socialism.

Seventh, that the path to socialism in Britain is through the fullest development of democracy, ending monopoly domination, giving the people control of the economy, and transforming parliament into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of the people and the sovereign body in the land. In the socialist Britain for which we work there would be freedom for all democratic political parties, including those hostile to socialism, to operate, genuine freedom of the press, independence of the trade unions, and the consolidation and extension of civil liberties won through centuries of struggle.

Our programme is based on confidence in the ability of the British people, led by the labour movement, to transform our country and ensure that the full potentialities of every individual in it will be realised.

The task will not be an easy one. But in what follows we show how it can be done.

I Why Britain needs socialism

Britain is in a deep economic, political and social crisis. It is not the result of natural catastrophes, or forces beyond our control, but of the capitalist system under which we live, and of the world crisis of capitalism.

Since the end of the Second World War there have been Tory governments for about half the time, and Labour governments for the other half. They have differed in many of their policies, but neither have solved the basic problems. Always the economic miracle is to come. It never does. North Sea oil is presented as the hope for the 1980s. But whatever benefits it brings, it will not end the inequalities and injustices of our present society or resolve the crisis in the interests of the majority of the people.

After the Second World War, with the expansion of the productive forces, advances in living standards were won as a result of struggle and important social reforms were introduced. But in recent years things have been going into reverse. The concept of a health service free at the time of need has been undermined; educational advance is halted; the problems of housing get more acute; the future for millions of young people is bleak. There is widespread unemployment, and more are caught in the 'poverty trap'. Pensions remain at poverty level. But in health, education and insurance, wealth can buy privileged treatment and services; and vast sums are squandered on armaments.

The utmost struggle is needed even to maintain living standards, let alone improve them. The trade unions, the main defence of working people, are under constant attack. Millions of women are doubly oppressed, as workers and because of their sex. Black people suffer discrimination in jobs, housing and education, and are made the scapegoats for problems caused by capitalism.

The quality of life is under increasing attack. City centres become goldmines for property speculators. Long overdue urban renewal is further postponed. The countryside is despoiled, pollution is spreading, and fortunes are made out of 'land development'. The railways and public transport are sacrificed to the interests of the big monopolists. Culture is commercialised, and people are denied the opportunity to develop their

talents and abilities to the full. Human relationships are distorted and sex exploited for profit by newspapers, advertisers and big business. There are frequent examples of corruption and financial scandals.

Government is divorced from the people. Bureaucratic control by the state has increased as local democracy has been eroded. The ruling class tries to confine democracy to the right to vote in elections, and deny the people real participation in decision-making.

Hard-won democratic rights are increasingly threatened by authoritarian trends. There are calls for 'order' and 'strong government'. Army chiefs, with Northern Ireland as the training ground, prepare for what they call 'counter-insurgency action'. Police chiefs demand more powers, protect racist demonstrations and intervene increasingly in industrial disputes on the employers' side. Reactionary revision of the law is pressed for, and thinly-veiled preparations are made to block democratic progress. Parliament's sovereign rights are being eroded, and still more limitations on its powers are being demanded by reactionary forces. Although the government has been forced to propose limited measures of devolution in response to the national and democratic aspirations of the people of Scotland and Wales, efforts to thwart the fulfilment of those aspirations continue, and the English dimension is ignored. Even the right in principle for the British people to determine their own affairs is being eroded by membership of the Common Market.

Yet there is a way out of the crisis. By their actions people can change the situation. Britain has great resources and wealth and a highly-skilled population. At present those resources are under-used or mis-used. If they are to be fully used to provide a better life, there must be far-reaching democratic changes, giving the people control of the country's resources and leading to the replacement of capitalism by socialism.

Contradictions of capitalism

The root cause of Britain's problems is an economic and political system in which effective power is in the hands of a tiny minority of the people – the capitalist class, which is dominated by the big monopolists.

Capitalism's motive force is not production for the needs of society, but for the maximum private profit for the employers and bankers. The basis of the economy is the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class.

Most of the productive forces are privately-owned, and become concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. There is a constant pressure to subordinate the public sector and make it serve the interests of the private sector. The workers by hand and brain – the great majority of the population – own little but their labour power, their capacity to work.

The wealth they produce by their work is greatly in excess of the wages and salaries they are paid, and is the source of the profits of the capitalists.

Thus at the heart of the capitalist system there are deep contradictions. In modern society production is a social process, but ownership and control are predominantly private. Within the enterprise production is planned; but in society as a whole it is not planned.

The capitalists always try to increase their profits, not just for their own personal consumption, but to enlarge their capital so as to get greater productive power and make still more profit. In general, the more they can cut costs and limit increases in wages and salaries, the more profit they can make, and the more capital they can accumulate.

But to get the profit, the goods produced have to be sold. And since a major factor in the demand for goods is the level of wages and salaries, restricting them also restricts the market in each capitalist country.

These contradictions of capitalism are the basic cause of capitalist crisis, and the political and social problems it creates. They are the fundamental reason why capitalist production does not develop smoothly, but in a series of booms and slumps.

Over the past century the monopolies have grown in size and increasingly dominate Britain. Whole sections of the economy are controlled by giant companies and their subsidiaries, syndicates and trusts commanding their own sources of banking finance and holding sway over the market in their own field.

The big firms have taken over not only many of the small firms, but medium and large firms, and increasingly take over or merge with one another. Excluding the nationalised sector (roughly one-fifth), the top hundred firms in Britain were responsible for 25 per cent of manufacturing output in 1950. By 1970 they were responsible for 50 per cent, and it is predicted that within a few years they will account for 75 per cent or more.

The major monopolies are now multinational, investing and operating all over the world, and owing allegiance to no-one but themselves. Britain is outstanding in the extent to which it is dominated by the multinational firms. Their policies have led to a continuous export of capital, with under-investment in British industry and its consequent backwardness as compared to other advanced industrial countries. This process has been accentuated by Britain's entry into the Common Market, seriously threatening national control over the economy and natural resources, such as oil and natural gas.

Monopoly capitalism has become state monopoly capitalism, with the state and the monopolies closely interconnected. It can no longer exist without massive injections of state funds. The modern capitalist state has become more intricate and its functions greatly extended. It is the biggest

single employer – through the nationalised industries and its general apparatus. As it extends its so-called regulatory functions over the now highly complex capitalist economy, it does so mainly in the special interests of the monopoly and City sectors of capitalism.

While there is an extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, the great majority of the people own little but their personal possessions, and, sometimes, their dwellings. According to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth, reporting in 1975, the richest 5 per cent of the population owned nearly half the total wealth. The bottom 80 per cent owned less than a fifth. The wealth of the rich is mainly in the form of shares and land, so that a mere 320,000 people (eight out of every thousand) owned 70 per cent of all personally-held company shares, and 72 per cent of the land. Some 13 million people live on or near the official poverty line. They include those on low wages, old people, unemployed, one-parent-families, and many who are sick or disabled.

Capitalism's contradictions are not only in the sphere of economics. All human activities are seen as a source of profit. While men and women are exploited at work, their cultural, sporting and leisure activities are commercialised, and they are held to ransom as consumers by the big business concerns which dominate the supply and distribution of the goods they buy. The development of science is distorted, with its use for the super-exploitation of workers, degradation of the environment and pollution, and the development of weapons of mass destruction. The economic crisis of capitalism is paralleled by a deep political, social, cultural and moral crisis.

How capitalist rule is maintained

The concentration of wealth and economic control in fewer and fewer hands means that a small number of big firms exercise enormous power. Their decisions have a major influence on Britain's economy, on the extent of investment, the amount and type of goods produced, the prices charged, the balance of payments, and the position of the pound. Yet those who own and run them are not elected by, or responsible to, the people. It is a system which makes a mockery of democracy.

But the capitalist class does not only hold economic power through its ownership of the main sectors of industry and the economy and of the bulk of the country's wealth; it also exercises political and ideological domination in society, by direct and indirect means.

It dominates the state and government, not only when the openly capitalist party, the Tory Party, is in office, but, as experience has shown, under Labour Governments, too. Such governments, although they have

often introduced valuable reforms, have failed to challenge the monopolists and have subordinated working class interests to the effort to make capitalism work. But political power is not just a matter of the elected government, but of all the institutions of the state. Ruling class ideas and interests are deeply entrenched in all these institutions – the civil service, the police, the armed forces, the judiciary, the Foreign Office, etc. Through them, as well as through its economic strength, the ruling class exercises a degree of coercion to maintain its rule.

However, in Britain today it relies primarily on the fact that millions of people believe that the capitalist system is the natural way to organise society, that the present political system is truly democratic, and that there is no realistic or better alternative. Every new generation is influenced to accept this. The family and school often perpetuate and reinforce capitalist ideas among children, while among adolescents and adults the media and social and cultural activities increasingly assume importance. Most of those in charge of the main information, social, educational and cultural institutions of capitalist society accept its outlook and its values, and play an important part in securing acceptance of capitalist rule. But among those who work in these fields a struggle also takes place on the role of these institutions and on the ideas they disseminate.

The capitalist class, comprising a small minority of the population, seeks to ally itself with other social strata, through alliances involving a multitude of organisations of all kinds. Among these the political parties, including the Tory Party, the Liberals, and to some extent the right-wing sections of the Labour Party, play a particular role in securing support for capitalist ideas and policies in the sphere of mass politics.

All these efforts have not been able to prevent millions of people entering into struggle against the effects of capitalism, as a result of which they have won improvements in the standard of life over the years. But these advances are then attributed to the virtues of the system, and the belief is encouraged that, despite temporary setbacks, people can continue in the long run to improve their conditions within it.

Thus, as a result of a combination of the efforts of the ruling class and of people's own experiences and material circumstances, including the rise in living standards since the end of the last war, there is a large measure of voluntary acceptance of capitalist rule.

Within this degree of acceptance there have also been conscious struggles for social reforms and democratic rights, and working class and progressive challenges to some aspects of capitalist domination, expressed particularly in the founding and growth of the labour movement.

Of special significance in the people's experience in Britain is the character of the Labour Party. Its formation represented a break with the traditional capitalist parties, since it was based on the trade unions,

with the aim of giving political expression to the aspirations of the working class and achieving Labour governments. Its trade union base and federal structure distinguish it from social-democratic parties in other countries.

From the beginning there have been two main trends within it – the left and broadly socialist trend, and the right-wing trend, accepting capitalism, which has been dominant throughout its existence. The strategy of the ruling class, faced with this potentially hostile force, has been to contain it within the limits of the capitalist system. And, in fact, despite the election of Labour Governments, and whatever the social progress achieved, the social and economic system has remained capitalist, and the class divisions and social contradictions of society continue.

A major reason for this is the fact that the growing strength, organisation and working-class consciousness of the trade unions have not been matched by a growth in socialist consciousness, and that the decisive control of the labour movement, particularly on the parliamentary side, has therefore been, and still remains, in the hands of the right wing. So Labour governments have acted primarily as the administrators of capitalism. They have not made, nor had they the desire to make, any significant challenge to monopoly domination of the economy and the state. Whether in or out of office, the Labour leaders have helped to maintain substantial social support for the capitalist system.

Thus persuasion, politics and coercion are all utilised by the ruling class to maintain its rule. Though it is prepared to use coercion and violence, unless prevented by overwhelming working class and popular strength, it mainly relies on achieving a social consensus and class collaboration through its ideological control and influence, its alliances, and the effect of right-wing ideas in the labour movement.

To challenge capitalist rule the working class and its organisations need not only to defend and improve the living conditions of the people through economic struggle, but to overcome capitalist ideas and build alliances also in the fields of politics, ideology and culture. For all these areas are the arena of struggle between reactionary and progressive ideas, between the capitalist and socialist forces in society. It is a struggle which must develop in new ways and through new, as well as existing, forms of organisation, so that the people develop confidence in their own ability to run society.

World balance changed

The democratic and class struggles in Britain take place against the background of the world crisis of capitalism and the big change in the balance of world forces.

Until 1917, capitalism dominated the entire world. The various capitalist states not only exploited their own workers and resources, but secured super profits from their colonial empires, with Britain in the lead. This resulted in a big expansion of production, but as we have shown, progress was not continuous, proceeding through a series of booms and slumps – the ‘cyclical crisis’ of capitalism. The capitalist countries developed unevenly in relation to each other, and this led to conflict, and sometimes to war.

Now, although it is still powerful, capitalism is in its period of relative decline and decay, its period of ‘general crisis’. Its world domination has been shattered. The twentieth century has been the century of social revolution and national liberation. In 1917 the Russian Revolution led the way, and the world’s first socialist system was established in the USSR. Following the Second World War more socialist states were established, and today they include a third of the world’s population. The national liberation forces, inspired and supported by the new socialist world, put an end to the old colonial empires of the imperialist countries. The people of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, aided by international solidarity, won an historic victory against the world’s strongest imperialist power, the USA. This has been followed by important victories for the liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, and a big intensification of the struggle in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa.

The existence and support of the socialist countries have been crucial factors in helping the national liberation movements to achieve and consolidate their victories.

However, with direct colonial rule largely ended, imperialism has taken new forms – capitalism’s use of economic and political power to enforce unequal trade relations with the Third World, the control and exploitation of its natural resources by multinational firms, and political operations to destabilise governments or enmesh them in military alliances and financial indebtedness. But there is continued resistance to these neo-colonialist policies, and a powerful tendency towards non-alignment and anti-imperialism.

The economic, social, political and cultural advances of the socialist countries have shown socialism’s great potential for human development, despite the problems which exist within these countries and in relations between them. In the post-war period the Soviet Union and other socialist states have achieved consistent economic growth increases and maintained full employment and stable prices, in contrast to the crisis-ridden economies of the US and capitalist Western Europe, showing that capitalism will eventually be outpaced by socialism.

The NATO powers have been forced by the peace policies and strength of the socialist countries and the pressure of the world movement for peace

to begin to negotiate measures of detente, including the signing of the Helsinki Agreement. But there are still powerful forces in the imperialist countries which resist moves to end the arms race and support the development of new means of mass destruction such as the neutron bomb and the cruise missile.

Important changes have taken place within the capitalist world. The US supremacy which was a feature of it in the earlier post-war period has been challenged by the rise of other capitalist states, notably West Germany and Japan. True, though the US is still by far the strongest capitalist power, it has lost the pre-eminent position it occupied in recent years. At the same time, the period of post-war economic expansion has been replaced by stagnation and depression. The growing demand of the former colonial and under developed countries for control over their own natural resources and for trade relations based on equality puts an increasing strain on the capitalist world economic system.

Its monetary system is in disarray. Contradictions between the capitalist states grow. The Common Market was originally encouraged by the US, not only as an economic grouping directed against socialism, but as the political counterpart of NATO. Despite the subsequent efforts of the EEC countries to develop it also as a counter to the US and Japan, deep-rooted differences within it impede the efforts to integrate Western Europe economically and politically.

There have also been major political shifts to the left in Western Europe. The fascist regimes in Greece, Portugal and Spain have been ended, and new possibilities for advance opened up. The left forces in France and Italy have made major advances, opening up new prospects of fundamental political and social change in these countries.

The capitalist world is still strong, with the greater share of world production and assets and a huge military machine, and its leaders are bitterly hostile to socialism and national liberation. World peace is not yet guaranteed and continued efforts are needed to strengthen the peace movement.

Nevertheless, a decisive tilt in the balance of world forces has taken place in the direction of socialism and progress. This change continues despite all setbacks and efforts of imperialism to redress the balance. It is the main feature of the world today.

Because of the growing strength of socialism, national liberation and the working class and progressive forces, more favourable conditions have been created for the advance to socialism in Britain without foreign military intervention. Unity with those forces throughout the world helps us in the struggle for such an advance.

Britain's crisis

In Britain, the first capitalist power, once the most powerful of all, the crisis is especially deep. London used to be the centre of the biggest colonial empire in history and the financial capital of the world. The pound was the monarch of the world monetary system.

All that has changed. New capitalist nations, and especially the us, entered the scene and challenged Britain for supremacy. The people of the colonies have fought for, and in most cases achieved, political independence. By the end of the Second World War the British Empire had been greatly weakened. The need for a complete break with past imperialist policies was urgent. Instead, successive governments, whether Tory or Labour, have continued with such policies. Central to them was the effort to maintain the international role of the pound and of London as a major financial centre. There was huge investment abroad at the expense of investment at home. Colonial wars and repression continued after the war, neo-colonialist policies have thwarted the efforts of the former colonies to achieve real independence, and racist and oppressive regimes have been backed in Southern Africa. Britain played the role of junior partner in us imperialism's efforts to hold back national liberation and direct the cold war against socialism, and there was a gigantic waste of resources on arms and bases abroad.

In the initial stages these policies, though their cost was enormous, did not prevent some advances in living standards being made. But by the mid-sixties their effects had become disastrous, with the forced devaluation of the pound in 1967 and acute balance-of-payments crises. The modest rise in living standards was slowed down, then halted, and finally turned into a fall.

The contradictions of the British economy and the policies of successive governments have resulted in the lowest economic growth rate in Europe, the lowest investment per worker among the major capitalist countries, repeated attempts to impose incomes policies or wage restraint, and increasing attacks on the social services.

The illusion of a 'special relationship' with the us, based on a common interest in holding back the advance of national liberation and socialism, only resulted in increased us economic and political domination of Britain. Similarly, when the big monopolies, backed by successive governments, pushed for and achieved Britain's entry into the Common Market, this not only imposed serious limitations on the country's sovereignty, but resulted in a big trade deficit with the Market, higher prices, and further economic difficulties for Britain.

The country's economic and political problems have been accentuated by the attempt to impose a military solution to the crisis in Northern Ireland, where British Governments have continued to pursue a policy of

repression and denial of democracy. The growth of the civil rights movement and of democratic struggle in Northern Ireland led to the collapse of the Stormont regime which had operated there on behalf of British imperialism for 50 years. But successive governments, both Labour and Tory, have sought under the system of direct rule to prevent the further development of united struggle involving the whole of the working class.

They have openly tolerated right-wing and Unionist para-military terror, and the army itself has been responsible for torture, many killings, mass arrests and the maintenance of a martial law presence in working class areas. British imperialism has exploited the divisive IRA bombing campaigns both in Ireland and Britain, which have made more difficult the development of joint action by the working class and labour movements of Britain and Ireland. The cost of this repression has been the loss of hundreds of lives and the squandering of millions of pounds, while the experience that the army has obtained in Ireland is a serious potential threat to democratic rights in Britain.

Racist and fascist organisations have taken advantage of the worsening situation in Britain to put the blame for social and economic problems on the 2.5 per cent of the population who are black. Full advantage is being taken of the deep-rooted racist ideas which have resulted from Britain's colonialist history. There has been a growth of racist propaganda, of provocative racist marches organised by the National Front, of violence against black people, and of support in elections for racist and fascist candidates. The racist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia benefit from the activities of racist organisations in Britain. Though black people bear the brunt of this oppression and discrimination, racism is a menace to black and white working people alike. It sets workers against each other, and helps the capitalist class to maintain its rule.

As the crisis of the capitalist world deepened in the mid-sixties, increasing efforts were made by the ruling class to put the burdens of it on the working people. Resistance to the consequent attacks on wages, employment, the social services and the quality of life showed that the post-war experience had raised the level of the people's expectations, and that they were prepared to act to achieve them. As we show in the next chapter, new forces came into the struggle and new forms of action were developed. The increasing strength of the trade union movement was displayed in the struggles against the Industrial Relations Act and in support of the miners, eventually leading to the defeat of the Heath government in 1974.

But despite the efforts of the labour movement and other forces the capitalist forces were able at crucial times to create confusion, describing, for example, high wages and trade union militancy as the main cause of inflation, and so holding back the struggle. For the most part the various

movements did not develop beyond the stage of defensive struggle, they were often isolated from each other, and the left advances in the trade union movement were not accompanied by comparable political advance among the people.

Strategy for socialism

The lesson of the past thirty years is that it is not enough to fight defensive battles, or for each group to fight only for what it conceives to be its own interests under capitalism. What is required is awareness of the need for a common struggle to end capitalism, which will, in the first stages, weaken the grip of the monopolists and begin to tackle the grave economic, social and political problems of Britain in the interests of the working people.

Millions of people who are not yet convinced of the need for socialism are nevertheless deeply concerned about the present plight of Britain and the effects of capitalism's crisis. The big question is whether they will be won to struggle for democratic, political and social advance, or whether the Tories and other reactionary forces will be able to take advantage of frustration and confusion to secure support for policies which would further worsen living standards and increase the danger of authoritarian rule.

A great and urgent responsibility therefore rests on the labour movement and other progressive forces. They need to put forward and campaign for an immediate policy which, as outlined later, can rally all those seeking a way out of the crisis and unite them in a broad alliance for democracy and social and political change.

As people are drawn into this movement of struggle and action, the Communist Party and other socialist forces need to raise their political consciousness and convince them of their common need to end capitalism and advance to socialism. For the experience of past decades has also shown that capitalism's crisis cannot be solved within the limits of capitalism. A new strategy of social change is needed. It must be a strategy for a socialist revolution.

Only socialism can overcome the basic contradiction of capitalist society from which every aspect of the crisis flows. Socialism replaces private ownership by social ownership. The social process of production is matched by social ownership of the means of production. Production for private profit is replaced by production for social needs.

Socialism creates the best conditions for the development of democratic control and popular initiative. Industrial democracy becomes a reality with the development and extension of a new type of nationalisation, and the democratic planning of production makes possible the full use of

modern scientific and technological advance to eradicate poverty and raise the standard of living. The scandalous contrast of extreme wealth for a few and hardship for millions can be ended. A new quality of life, in relationship to work, the family and the whole environment, and a common social purpose, can be achieved.

More than that. Instead of power being in the hands of a tiny minority, it is in the hands of the overwhelming majority. For the fullest extension of democracy, socialist democracy, to become possible, the working class and its allies, must take power out of the hands of the capitalist class. This is what is meant by the socialist revolution.

We are in a world in which social change is taking place on an unprecedented scale. The growth of the socialist world, the sweep of national liberation, the struggles of the working class movement throughout the world have, as we have pointed out, brought about a decisive change in the balance of world forces. Thus we have the opportunity to carry out social transformation in conditions in which world war can be prevented and without the social collapse and human destruction such a war would bring.

The advance to socialism can only take place through the active democratic struggle of the great majority of the British people. But because of their overwhelming potential strength, and because of the changed balance in the world, we believe that we can achieve socialism in Britain without military intervention and civil war.

2 The forces for change in Britain

The forces exist which, if strengthened and united, can put Britain on a new course, tackle the crisis in the interests of the people, extend democracy and open the way to socialist revolution. Glimpses of their potential strength have already been seen in the struggles of past years. Wide and diverse sections of the people have been reacting against the adverse effect of capitalism and capitalist policies on their lives.

The need is to show that these struggles are linked with each other, and to unite the various sections in a broad democratic alliance. This would embrace the great majority of the people, and be overwhelmingly superior in numbers and strength to the forces which want to maintain the status quo. The objective basis for this is that those who own and control the monopolies which dominate the economic and political system in Britain are only a tiny minority of the people, pursuing policies which conflict with the interests of the great majority. These monopoly capitalists are the main enemy in the way of democratic, economic and social progress.

The social forces and movements which can be won to an awareness of this, and be brought into an alliance against them are, on the other hand, all involved in the battle for an extension of democracy. This is a common thread running through the various struggles – for trade union rights, for free collective bargaining, the right to work and industrial democracy, for the rights of ethnic minorities and against racialism, for the national rights of Scotland and Wales, for a democratic solution in Northern Ireland, for women's liberation, for young people's rights, for the protection of the environment, for peace and against NATO and the Common Market.

This common thread provides the basis on which the broad democratic alliance can be built. But as the alliance develops it must more and more encompass all the political, social and economic demands of these forces and movements, and not simply the points they have in common.

Classes in capitalist society

Building the broad democratic alliance involves an understanding of the class forces in capitalist society in Britain.

The working class

The leading force in the alliance will be the working class, whose interests are most directly opposed to those of the capitalist ruling class, and whose strength and capacity for organisation enables it to give leadership to all the democratic forces in society.

The working class includes the great majority of the population: those who sell their labour power, their capacity to work, in return for a wage or salary, and who work under the direction of the employers (who own the means of production, distribution and exchange) or their agents.

Among the workers are those in mainly manual occupations, such as mining, engineering, building, dock work, etc. This is the section often traditionally called the working class, but in fact the boundary is far wider. It embraces also non-manual workers in industry and distribution, such as technicians, clerical and sales workers. These also do not own any means of production, depend on the sale of their labour power to the capitalist employers, and as a rule have no control relationship to the means of production. Then there are those engaged in education, the health service, the civil service and local government. Though they do not sell their labour power directly to capitalist employers, indirectly their work contributes to the capitalist production of goods and profits.

Though some of these workers may regard themselves as 'middle class', and often work in institutions which help to perpetuate capitalism and its ideas, they are objectively part of the working class. Their interests broadly coincide with those of the workers in manual occupations, and indeed the distinction between manual and non-manual work is more and more being broken down by modern processes of production.

The working class is the most important of the forces that can be ranged against monopoly capital, not only for immediate demands but for socialist change. It is important not just because of its numbers, but because of its special characteristics as a class, and the decisive role it plays in society. It mines the coal, drives the trains, makes and operates the machinery, produces the power, grows the food, prepares and prints the newspapers, and staffs the local and central government apparatus. The conditions of its work have led millions of its members to organise a powerful trade union movement, whose roots go back 200 years: the life of society as a whole depends on it. It is not static in its composition and structure, for changes take place within it as a result of changes in the nature of production, and the concentration of production under capitalism results in many who were formerly small capitalists or self-employed becoming wage or salary earners.

There are considerable differences, and sometimes conflicts, between its different sections. They differ in degree of trade union organisation and class consciousness; in political understanding, organisation and allegiance; in their function in relation to the productive process and

social life; and in the degree of their ties, real or imagined, with the capitalist class.

At the heart of the working class are those in the basic extractive, transport and manufacturing industries who have always played a leading role in the development of the trade union and labour movement. Although they have declined in numbers, these workers, because of their experience, organisation and degree of class consciousness, continue to play a leading role in the working class movement. They have frequently demonstrated their power in industrial action and solidarity. Among these workers the need for trade union organisation became clear at an early stage, and the class struggle took a more open form.

In recent years, because of the way capitalism has developed, there has been a big decline in many traditional industries, and the rise of new industries. Even in the older industries there have been many changes in the methods of production. Then there has been a substantial increase in the number of non-manual workers in industry, while developments in the social services and the operations of the state have also resulted in increases in the numbers of workers employed in these sectors.

In the past, many non-manual workers have held aloof from the traditional working class, and even from trade union organisation. But changes in the nature of production and the impact of capitalist crisis have produced a transformation in recent years, with a great increase in trade union organisation among these workers and a readiness to take action to defend their interests. Much more is involved here than just an increase in the size of the working class. For example, the carrying of trade union organisation and ideas of class solidarity and socialism into sections of workers employed in the state machine and in the mass media represents an important extension of the potential power of the working class to act in mass struggle outside Parliament, as well as through elections.

Another important development has been the participation of many more women in the production process and in trade unionism. Their struggles against the discrimination from which they have suffered have been a significant new feature in the industrial scene. Although there has often been completely insufficient support from the movement as a whole, these efforts have begun to change the position and have already achieved the passing of the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts, imperfect though they are, and increasing support for the demands of the Working Women's Charter.

Winning black workers, who often find themselves in unorganised factories, for active participation in the trade union movement, and giving them its full support, is vital. As many examples, including the Grunwick strike have shown, they can display great courage and militancy and enrich the whole movement.

Because the great majority of the population is in the working class, achieving its unity is a central task. This means overcoming the sectional differences which at present divide it and limit its consciousness, and building alliances between the different sections of the working class. Only by developing its class and socialist consciousness, and strengthening its unity, will it be able to emerge as the leading force in society around which other sections of the population can be united in the struggle for socialism. This involves recognition by the labour movement that, as well as pay and conditions, the areas of housing, education, the social services, the family, women and race, are central areas of struggle.

Combating the narrow sectionalist trends which affect both the manual and non-manual sectors, requires an understanding of the differences which remain, despite the tendency for their conditions of work and political and class consciousness to converge. Their experience of class struggle, their forms of organisation and activity, and their approach to many questions still vary considerably, making the task of uniting the working class a complex and difficult one which calls for an organised and conscious effort.

The capitalist class

The capitalist class comprises the owners and controllers of the means of production, distribution and exchange – the factories, banks, shops, land, etc. – and their agents. People in higher managerial positions and in the higher echelons of the civil service and the state apparatus, although they sell their labour power, are part of the ruling class because they act directly or indirectly on behalf of the capitalists, identify with them, and often own substantial amounts of company shares.

Even as a whole the capitalist class is only a small fraction of the population. But within it there is a still smaller minority exercising the dominant power – those who control the very big firms, which not only exploit their workers, but also operate at the expense of many smaller businesses, small shopkeepers and small farmers.

These small enterprises are among the first victims in periods of acute capitalist crisis, many of them going bankrupt, being forced to close down, or being swallowed up by the big firms. When working-class standards are cut, small producers, shopkeepers and traders are also adversely affected.

There is therefore an objective basis for an alliance between the working class and many in these sections of the capitalist class, against the common enemy – the big British and international capitalists. There will be big problems in building such an alliance, since the smaller employers are in a contradictory position in relation both to the monopolists and the working class. They face the prospect of being squeezed out by the big firms, but are also often linked to them as suppliers, or as distributors of their

products. They usually see it as in their interests to keep wages down for the sake of their profits, and working conditions are often worse in small workplaces. On the other hand, small employers generally face problems when the living standards of the working class fall and unemployment rises.

The labour movement needs to show them that there is no solution to their problems in lining up with big business against the workers. It must seek to win them to the side of the working class, and prevent them becoming a prey to right-wing and fascist propaganda. This means campaigning for specific measures to assist them, such as cheap credits, restrictions on monopoly price manipulation, control of rents, relief from high rates, the abolition of VAT, etc., as well as winning them for the wider democratic demands of the labour movement.

Intermediate strata

While in contemporary capitalist society the great majority of people are either members of the working class or the capitalist class, there are also those whose relation to the means of production places them in an intermediate position.

Middle-grade management and the middle ranks of the state apparatus act to a considerable extent as agents of the capitalist class, but the degree to which they exercise control over the means of production is often limited, and their income is derived mainly from selling their labour power for a salary. They may therefore be considered part of the intermediate strata between the capitalist class and the working class.

Members of family businesses, small shopkeepers and small farmers who employ little or no labour are another such group, as are those among professional sections like architects, lawyers, doctors, writers and artists, who are self-employed. They are affected by the social and economic crisis of capitalism, and by the way in which it holds back advances in spheres with which they are particularly concerned, such as housing, health and culture.

Policies need to be advanced by the working class and progressive forces which will win as many as possible among these sections for the broad democratic alliance.

The labour movement

The main influence of the working class on society is expressed through the labour movement, though this does not yet comprise the whole of the working class. It includes the trade unions, the Labour Party, the Communist Party and the Co-operative movement, and such organisations as the shop stewards committees and Trades Councils.

The British labour movement is one of the best organised and potentially most powerful in the capitalist world. It has engaged in repeated struggles against the effects of capitalism. Yet its power has not been fully used in these struggles, and still less in a struggle to end capitalism and build socialism. This is because, powerful as they are, the majority of the organisations of the working class are still dominated by an outlook which accepts capitalism, and prevents their power being fully used to achieve socialism.

During the formative period of the development of the working class, Britain had a manufacturing monopoly as 'the workshop of the world'. Although other states later developed and challenged this position at the end of the nineteenth century, the British capitalists were able to develop a fresh source of super-profit by establishing the greatest colonial empire, exploiting hundreds of millions of people in other countries as well as at home. Over a long period this gave them the resources, strength and confidence to make concessions which resulted in many sectors of workers feeling that provided they organised and struggled, they could make sufficient advances within the system. The ending of capitalism was either seen as unnecessary, or as a remote aim to be achieved by transforming it through a process of piecemeal reforms. This was the basis for the dominant outlook, reformism, which developed in the labour movement.

Its main features include class collaboration rather than class struggle; the view that the state is neutral and can serve the purposes of a Labour Government as well as Tory or Liberal Governments; and the belief that the industrial power of the workers should not be used for political, but only for economic ends. Even the traditional definition of socialism (as, for example, embodied in Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution) has been frequently challenged, with attempts to remove the aim of social ownership.

The large and complex ideological apparatus of the British ruling class has functioned continually to strengthen this outlook, so that it remains strong even in the period of deep crisis, when it is no longer so easy for concessions to be made to workers. The way in which, over many years, leaders of the working class movement have been drawn into the practice of class collaboration, as part of the capitalist power structure, and have enjoyed some of its rewards, including company directorships, has made reformism particularly strong at the higher levels of the movement.

But within the labour movement there has been a constant contradiction between the class interests of organised workers and the class collaborationist policies of reformism. This has been reflected in the recurrent clash between the socialist convictions of many members of the movement and the repeated failure of Labour Governments to carry out socialist policies. These internal contradictions have resulted in the Labour Party, formed from a combination of the mass trade unions and the early

socialist societies, being from the outset a battleground between a right-wing trend, composed of the most consistent exponents of reformist policies, and a left-wing trend, which has often challenged the practical policies resulting from reformism, and to a lesser extent the basic ideas of reformism. The issues on which this right-left conflict has been fought out have constantly changed, and the political positions of individuals have shifted, but the clash has been constant and will continue.

Changing the dominant outlook of the labour movement, winning it for left policies and breaking the grip both of economism and reformism, involves a battle in all the sections and at all levels of the movement. The Communist Party has played a significant part in this battle from its foundation in 1920, and has been associated, directly or indirectly, with all the major left developments.

The arenas of struggle between the left and right trends include the trade unions, the Co-operative movement and the Labour Party.

The **trade unions** are class organisations, founded by the workers to defend themselves against the employers, and primarily concerned with the economic struggle. They are not, and cannot be a substitute for political parties of the working class. Nevertheless, because of the federal nature of the British Labour Party, with its trade union affiliations (unique among social democratic parties), many unions play an important role within it. The direct impact of government policy on the economy, arising from the development of state monopoly capitalism, has also resulted in the unions becoming increasingly concerned with political and social questions. Governments, and especially Labour governments, have sought their collaboration in the carrying out of government policies.

Thus winning the trade union movement at all levels – from individual members and shop stewards committees to national executives, trades councils and the TUC – for mass action on immediate questions, and for support for social and political change, is vital. This has been demonstrated in the recent period, which has shown that industrial militancy is not enough, and that there is a need to combat the economist outlook which sees the trade union struggle on economic issues as sufficient in itself. That struggle needs to be linked with a political perspective if it is to produce lasting gains for the working class. This has been consistently stressed by the Communist Party, which considers it vitally important that its members should work to strengthen the trade unions, the shop stewards movement and workplace organisation for social and political, as well as economic struggles. Action on social issues, such as pensions and pollution, and on questions concerned with the control and direction of production, such as the alternatives to arms production, helps break down the divisions between work, home and community.

Such a vigorous fight for the interests of their members could help the trade unions draw into their ranks the millions of workers who are not yet

organised, as well as giving new life to the branches and workplace organisations. In particular, they need to do far more to attract, organise and draw into activity the young workers on whom the future of the movement depends, especially through the establishment and strengthening of youth sections. A stronger and more united left fight is needed to end the still dominant position of the right. This must be conducted at workplace level, among the mass of the workers, and not just at the level of union leadership. To win workers to a socialist, and not only a militant, class, outlook, increased political activity by the Communist Party and the Labour left in the workplaces is essential.

The **Co-operative movement** was built to organise and defend workers as consumers, parallel to trade unions organising at their place of work. With its ten million members, its enormous assets of tens of millions of pounds in property, and its political and educational facilities, it represents a potentially powerful force of struggle for socialism. It needs to make inroads into monopoly distribution; to expand greatly its share of retail trade, still under ten per cent; to increase its trading and other links with the socialist world; and to use its great power and influence much more, in close liaison with the trade union and political wings of the movement.

The **Labour Party** is the mass party of the working class, with about 6 million affiliated members and several hundred thousand individual members. It enjoys the electoral support of large sections of the working class. Thus changing the politics of the Labour Party is bound up with changing the politics of the working class. The reformist outlook which is dominant in the Labour Party sees it as confined exclusively to a parliamentary role within the capitalist system. Its political role is seen almost entirely as participating in elections, and it carries out little or no socialist education. Far from developing mass action, as well as electoral work, the right wing has tried to hold back such action whether by the Labour Party or the unions and the shop stewards.

This outlook is reflected in the structure of the Labour Party. The parliamentary party, and especially the Cabinet or the Shadow Cabinet, in practice determine the key policies pursued, as well as electing the party leaders, and annual conference decisions are not binding on the parliamentary party or on Labour governments. The activity of the local organisations is overwhelmingly electoral in character.

The left within the Labour Party has opposed right-wing policies, and has often succeeded in winning the annual conference for a left position on important questions. Its influence in the Labour Party executive committee has also increased. But it has not been able to break the right-wing grip, especially on the Parliamentary Labour Party, or decisively change the right-wing policies of Labour governments. Its growth is of great significance, and could be assisted by more activity by

ward and constituency labour parties, with the fullest participation of trade union delegates. But more than this is needed to bring about real changes, particularly in strengthening democracy within the Labour Party, in the selection of MPs and their relationship to the local parties, and in the election of the party leader.

The Labour Party left is not a cohesive and united force. While some of its members are influenced by Marxist ideas, most are still influenced by the reformist outlook on such questions as the need for mass struggle in the workplaces and localities, incomes policy, the nature of the state and the issue of political power in the struggle for socialism. The parliamentary and constituency left has often underestimated the importance of the left fight in the unions. When the unions were almost entirely under right-wing control, some of the Labour left saw no future unless the union link was severed, so changing the traditional basis of the Labour Party. But the Communists and others on the left argued that the task was to win the unions for left policies as part of the process of winning such policies in the Labour Party and throughout the whole labour movement.

Because the Labour left still lacks a clear political perspective, is not centrally organised and is not sufficiently related to the many extra-parliamentary movements and struggles, it cannot by itself bring about the necessary transformation in the outlook and activity of the labour movement. Nor is the answer to be found in the various ultra-left groups, which have in common a narrow interpretation of Marxism and a mistaken strategy, and whose tactics are therefore often adventurist and irresponsible.

The vital need is for an organisation of socialists, guided by the principles of scientific socialism, active everywhere among the people, in all the struggles, in all the unions, in all the progressive movements, and able to give leadership to them – in other words, an organised party, as distinct from the left groups in the Labour Party, the separate unions and the other social forces and movements. It was to fulfil this role that the Communist Party was founded in 1920 by Marxists in the Labour movement.

The Communist Party

What are the essential characteristics of a party capable of giving the leadership needed in the struggle to transform the labour movement, strengthen working class unity, build alliances with other democratic movements in society, and achieve socialism?

First, it must be based on Marxism-Leninism, including a developing British Marxist tradition, which enables it to analyse the nature of society, the character of class rule, and the varied forms of oppression experienced

by the working class and other sections. Without such an understanding the Marxist party cannot properly grasp the nature of different forces and the part they have to play, and develop a strategy which will lead to socialism.

Second, it must be organised for socialist revolution. It must therefore be firmly rooted in the working class, because of its leading role in society, and especially in the industrial working class. The party must be capable of welding together all progressive movements at a local and national level. It must be capable of initiating and assisting in all the people's campaigns. In order to develop political consciousness it needs to be organised both in the workplaces and localities for mass struggle, not just for propaganda.

Third, it must be a democratic party, one which draws on the initiative and creativity of its membership in planning and carrying through its activity and policy and electing its leadership. To this end the party must create new and close relationships within its own ranks – between different sections of workers, between men and women, black and white, young and old, workers and intellectuals. Only in this way can the party overcome the expression among its members of the sectionalism that divides working people.

Fourth, the party needs to be centralised, to be capable of fighting, struggling and intervening as a disciplined and united collective once policy is decided. It is this, among other things which makes the party capable of acting in a unique way. These last two points embody the principles of democratic centralism.

Fifth, it needs to have close relations with the Communist movement in other countries, based on the independence and equality of each Communist Party in a world movement which is making history on a global scale. Such international solidarity is vital not only in the immediate struggles, but for the achievement and building of socialism.

Building and strengthening a party with these characteristics is essential to the strategy for democratic advance and socialism outlined in this programme.

Since its foundation the Communist Party of Great Britain has been a party of struggle, involved in all the main battles of the working class and the labour movement, generating class and socialist consciousness and showing the need to win political power and advance to socialism.

It is democratic; it is centralised; it is, and always has been, deeply rooted in the British working class and labour movement. Unlike the Labour Party, it is organised to initiate and take part in struggle in an all-round political way; it is internationalist in outlook; and, basing itself on Marxism-Leninism, it has a viable strategy for socialist revolution as well as the capacity to give leadership in the daily struggles.

But it is still too small: its internal democracy needs enrichment, including the development of much closer relationships between different

sections and levels of the Party; its roots among many sections are still weak. The important work already done in developing Marxism in relation to British conditions needs to be carried very much further forward. It needs to grow both numerically and politically. To become a leading political force, capable of uniting the movements for democracy and socialism, able to involve millions extending control over their individual and collective lives, the Communist Party must become a political magnet, drawing new forces towards itself from the labour movement and from all other sections.

It aims to inspire discussion with a view to developing activity and struggle, not only in the traditional forms of the labour movement, but among all democratic organisations and social forces. It aims to win the confidence of those potentially revolutionary forces among those coming into political action. It must help, organise and educate a new generation of active Communists to invigorate, staff and lead its organisations in the workplaces and community, and conduct consistent public work. It aims to encourage positive cultural movements, recognising their place in the lives of working people.

It needs to increase its electoral activity, giving the maximum possible number of people the opportunity to vote Communist, and winning representation in Parliament as well as more local Council seats.

It must also endeavour to show more effectively in experience of action, as well as by explanation, that class collaboration has to be replaced by class struggle, that the 'neutrality' of the state is an illusion, that only if parliamentary struggle is combined with mass struggle outside parliament can the working class and its allies win significant victories, and that the problems we face can only be successfully tackled by a strategy for socialist change. Ready to listen and learn, as well as to provide strategic leadership, Communists will more and more become a trusted and respected popular force. In this way the Communist Party aims to become a mass party – not just a party with a bigger membership, but, with its members drawn from and involved in every section and area of our society, a party through which more and more people are drawn into political action.

This is an essential condition for the Communist Party to develop its distinctive political role as a force which leads from where the people are, which fights for the unity of the working class, and for the cohesion of the broad democratic alliance at every stage. Only in this way, with a mass Communist Party, can right-wing influence amongst working people be overcome and replaced by socialist consciousness.

At the same time, however large our party, we could not envisage achieving this by ourselves. Other parties, social forces and organisations will play an essential role in this process. But the distinctive aspiration of our party is, in placing our policies before the people, to give this

movement coherence and vision, and to exercise democratic leadership.

The Communist Party, as part of the labour movement, seeks no special privileges within it. What it does seek, however, is the removal of all discriminatory bans and proscriptions directed mainly against Communists, but also affecting others on the left, which only help the right wing by keeping the movement divided. Communists want to restore to the trade unions the democratic right to elect, from among those who pay the political levy, delegates of their own choice to the Labour Party.

In the electoral field, proportional representation would not only make Britain's electoral system much more democratic, but would create more favourable conditions for uniting the left and achieving Labour-Communist unity.

Developing the Communist Party along the lines indicated is crucial for the building of the broad democratic alliance, for changing the outlook of working people and for transforming the labour movement. This perspective requires a much larger and more broadly-based party, with a significant electoral base. The Communist Party does not, however, seek to replace the Labour Party as a federal party of the working class, but rather to strengthen its original federal nature, and we see a much more influential Communist Party as crucial to the future of the Labour Party itself, and to the development of the labour movement and the broad democratic alliance as a whole.

As right-wing ideas and leadership in the labour movement are progressively defeated and replaced by people and policies committed to struggle against the monopolies, as the Communist Party itself grows in strength and influence, and as bans and proscriptions are removed, so new opportunities will open up for still more developed forms of Labour-Communist unity, including in the electoral field, and with the possibility of future affiliation to the Labour Party.

The youth organisation of the Communist Party, the Young Communist League, has similar aims. Through its branches and its paper, *Challenge*, it seeks to win young people to the broad democratic alliance, to which they can make a big contribution. Campaigning on the specific issues which affect young people, it tries to win them to struggle on these and other questions which affect the whole of society. It shows the responsibility of the capitalist system for unemployment, inadequate training, education, sport and leisure facilities, and bad housing. It seeks to build the unity of young people in the struggle for a better life. It opposes racism and imperialism, and develops solidarity with the Communist Party in the fight for socialism.

One of the main sources of capitalist power is its control of the press, television, radio, cinema and other media, through which it influences millions of people and secures a large measure of acceptance of capitalist rule. The labour and progressive movement needs to fight for the right to

reply and put its case on television and radio and in the capitalist press. But it also needs to have its own means of mass communication. For generations, it has under-estimated the importance of this. The weekly journals *Tribune* and *Labour Weekly*, and some trade union papers, have played a part in the shift to the left in the labour movement, but much more is needed, especially to counter the daily propaganda of Fleet Street.

The only national daily newspaper which is co-operatively-owned and free of control by the press lords is the *Morning Star*. Maintained in existence, with its predecessor the *Daily Worker*, since 1930, by the tireless support of its readers, it acts as a forum for the labour and progressive movement, advocating left unity and putting the case for socialism. Helping to build the broad democratic alliance, it forges links between the labour movement, other social forces, and wide sections of the British people. Its role is crucial, and all on the left should support it and help to increase its circulation.

Social forces and movements

The basic force for change in our society is the class struggle between workers and capitalists. However, capitalism not only exploits people at work, it impinges on every aspect of their lives. Thus they react to it, and often struggle against its effects, in their communities, in their leisure activities, as men and women, black or white, young or old, Scottish, Welsh, Irish or English. So movements and groupings develop which may not belong to a major class (for example, students) or embrace people from different classes and strata (for example, black, national, women's, youth, environmental, peace and solidarity movements). Hence the broad democratic alliance needs to be not only an expression of class forces, but of other important forces in society which emerge out of areas of oppression not always directly connected with the relations of production.

The struggle for women's liberation is a central political question for the working class. The emancipation of women is an important goal in itself. In addition, unless women are involved in the overall struggle for socialism, and men in the struggle to resolve the specific problems of women, the possibilities of developing working class unity and the broad democratic alliance will be greatly diminished. Thus the fight for women's liberation is an integral part of the struggle for socialism, and needs to be taken up by the whole labour movement.

The subordination of women to men in society is experienced by all women, but working class women are doubly oppressed. They are exploited because of their position as workers and discriminated against because of their sex. The movement for women's liberation which has developed in recent years has been a major stimulus to thought and action

on these questions. It has focused attention on the sexual division of labour, particularly on how women's role within the family, economic dependence, and responsibility for child care, limits educational opportunity, career prospects and participation in social and political life on equal terms with men. This has highlighted the debate and activity on economic and social issues like equal pay and child care, and shown the importance and potentialities of organising on related questions like abortion and battered wives. It has also raised other questions on the nature of personal relationships, human sexuality, and the future of the family, with which the progressive movement needs to concern itself much more than in the past. Support for the basic demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and of the Working Women's Charter, and the overcoming of sexism, the defence of male privilege, are essential parts of the struggle to build the broad democratic alliance. Significant also is the development of the gay movement, which aims to end prejudice and discrimination against homosexual men and women.

The black movement also raises important issues. Black people are oppressed not only as, in their majority, members of the working class, but because of their colour. The struggle by the black movement and other ethnic minorities against all forms of racial discrimination is a vital democratic question. Racism is fundamentally anti-human. Eradicating it from British society is a task for all, and not only a problem for the ethnic minorities. At the heart of the problem is the unity of all workers, black and white alike. This is why fascism, the worst enemy of the working class, preaches racial hatred to divide the workers in the interests of capitalism.

There have been significant developments in action and propaganda against racism. Such actions achieved the passing of the Race Relations Act, though this needs to be implemented and strengthened so as to combat discrimination and incitement to race hatred more effectively. Black people's organisations are growing, and are becoming increasingly aware of the need for the unity of black and white people against racism. There is also a growing awareness of the need for joint action between all democratic and progressive forces in this fight. However, the response of the labour movement is slow and inadequate, both nationally and in many localities, and far more needs to be done to counter the divisive effects of racism.

The labour movement must play the decisive part in winning the working class to reject racist ideas and practices, and in defending black people from discrimination. It needs to work to bring together in the widest unity all who can be won to resist racist trends, oppose the provocative marches of fascist organisations like the National Front, demand the prosecution of those preaching racial hatred, and urge the repeal of racist legislation like the 1971 Immigration Act.

In response to the national problems of Scotland and Wales, national movements have developed. Their origins lie in centuries of oppression and deprivation. The economic distortions of capitalism, the decay of extractive and basic industries and the parasitic development of British imperialism have meant that the two countries have shared with underdeveloped areas of England lower-than-average levels in housing, health, education and leisure facilities, and greater poverty, neglect of social conditions and unemployment. But these problems have had an additional dimension in that they undermine the population, social, community and cultural life of the two nations. The economic rundown intensifies the discrimination against national and cultural rights. As part of the resistance to this process, national consciousness has increased, and there has been a rapid development of nationalist parties, largely as a result of the failure of the labour movement to champion the fight for national rights. The interests of the people of Scotland and Wales will best be served by devolution with effective legislative and executive powers. The Scottish and Welsh people, in common with all others, must have the right to self-determination and independence, but the big political and economic issues which face the British people as a whole arise from the class nature of our society and require the unity of the working people of Scotland, Wales and England for their solution. It is the responsibility of the labour movement to show this, to give leadership in the fight for national rights, and prevent right-wing forces from using the issue to confuse and divide the people.

Within the communities and localities a mass of problems exists – on housing, urban decay, transport, the environment, health, leisure and cultural facilities. Associated with them is the lack of democracy in local affairs and the increasing trend toward central government dictation over local councils. In response to these problems many movements and organisations have developed: tenants' and residents associations, environmental groups, community newspapers, theatre and other cultural groups, transport campaign groups and broad committees against social service cuts. Not only are working people affected every day by these problems, but it is also increasingly an area in which capitalism is intervening and profiting. The battle for participation in local politics and the struggles around all aspects of community and environmental issues are of concern not only to the groups directly involved, but to the whole democratic alliance. It is especially important that the organised working class takes up these issues and establishes close links with the various movements concerned. Local councils themselves, with the winning of more left Labour and Communist Councillors, can play an important part in tackling these problems and strengthening local democracy.

New areas of struggle have been opened up by the growth and activity of such sectors as teachers, civil servants, scientists, technicians,

journalists, local government and social workers. As well as being concerned with their economic situation, many of them are also concerned with the social purpose of their work, with democracy in their institutions, and their relationship to the rest of the labour movement. Thus discussion and activity have been developed on such important issues as the content of education, teaching methods, private education, the viability of the health service, private beds, the use of science, and the role of social work.

The peace organisations which exist bring together many of those who are determined to maintain world peace. But the desire for peace extends far beyond their ranks, and needs to be expressed in a much more powerful and broadly-based peace movement as part of the broad democratic alliance. The organisations and movements concerned with solidarity with the national liberation struggles also have an important part to play.

Young people are a social group with specific problems, and their unity needs to be built in the struggle to resolve those problems. Within the various movements young people have played a prominent role, reflecting not only their natural energy, but the extent to which these movements are concerned with questions of culture and ideas.

Unemployment is leaving its mark on an entire generation of young people, and aggravates the discrimination faced by young women and black people. Discontent among them is increasingly met by harassment from the authorities, and there is the danger that continuing youth unemployment could lead to the strengthening of right-wing trends stemming from growing frustration and a lack of contact with the left and progressive movement.

In contrast to the presence of young people in many movements is the weakness of most progressive youth organisations. The chief exception to this is the National Union of Students, which has made an increasing contribution to the democratic struggle, in response to the way in which the educational system is shaped and distorted by the needs of the ruling class and monopoly capital. It has helped to develop the battle against cuts in educational expenditure, striven for the full employment of teachers, and raised important issues for debate such as democracy in educational institutions, curriculum reform and teaching methods. It has also participated in and associated with many of the struggles of the labour and democratic movement, and in movements of international solidarity.

On a more limited scale the National Union of School Students has developed activity on similar issues in the schools. But more needs to be done to extend democracy in the schools and give school students more say in their education.

While the establishment of the TUC Youth Conference and the Campaign Against Youth Unemployment represent an important

advance, both remain limited in their impact and influence on young workers. This reflects the historic neglect of young people by the labour and progressive movement, which needs to campaign on their demands, provide organisational structures and social facilities for them, and particularly fight for their right to work. In this way it can also influence the wider youth movement and bring great numbers of young people into active participation in the labour movement and the broad democratic alliance.

In recent years the pensioners' movement has taken on a new militancy, and has received more backing from the trade unions and local labour parties in its battle for adequate pensions and the extension of those social services dealing with the elderly and disabled. The Labour movement needs to be won for more vigorous and consistent activity in support of these demands.

Many religious people are deeply concerned about the conflict between their religious ideals and the oppression and exploitation of capitalist society. They accept their social responsibility in the world, and are prepared to fulfil it. They, and many humanists, see the need for social change. Such individuals, and the organisations of which they are members, can play an important part in democratic and social struggles.

Alliance — not isolation

It is clear, however, that if these movements and their struggles proceed in isolation from each other, they can do no more than challenge the position of the ruling class on a series of different issues, and not its overall domination. If they are isolated from the labour movement, not only will they themselves suffer from the lack of its support, but the working class will be unable to fulfil its role of the leading force in society.

The labour movement needs alliances with these other democratic movements because, in supporting their aims and aspirations, it becomes increasingly aware that class oppression, and the struggle against it, extend far beyond the workplace, and embrace strata beyond the working class. Such alliances are needed to bring the political weight of the overwhelming majority of the population to bear on the minority ruling class. They can lead to a greater awareness of the forces that oppress all workers, and also strengthen working class unity. It is therefore through such support and association that the labour movement becomes more conscious of its own national role as the leading force in society, and better able to fulfil that role, both now and under socialism.

Further, because many among such sections as teachers, journalists, scientists, civil servants and doctors have historically played, and still play, a big role in helping the ruling class to secure voluntary acceptance

of its position, changes in their position are of major significance. The association of the whole labour movement with the progressive demands and struggles of these sections, therefore, can help to undermine the political and ideological domination exercised in society by the ruling class, and strengthen the position and credibility of the working class as the alternative leading force in the nation.

Finally, if the working class does not win over to its side other strata which are also victims of monopoly, there is the danger that reaction will be able to organise them and use them against the working class.

The work of the left is vital in building the broad democratic alliance. Left unity needs to be promoted both in the practical development of activity and in the battle of ideas. There are those who will be united by an understanding of the need for fundamental change, and those who will become involved only on specific issues. Communists and the labour left have a special role to play in developing broad left unity and in helping to build the alliances, of which only the most politically conscious sections of the new forces will see the need, between different sections of the working class and different social and political movements.

The Communist Party, as the organised Marxist political party, has a key and decisive responsibility. Throughout its history it has been active on many of the questions around which the movements detailed above have been campaigning – the fight against racialism and fascism, for women's rights, peace and national liberation, Scottish and Welsh parliaments, education, housing and the other social issues. Just as it works to overcome sectional divisions within the working class movement and unite it for the struggle against capitalism, so it can help the labour movement and the other social forces to see the need for alliances between them, to the benefit of all.

Winning a new popular majority

We have described in this section the forces and movements which, brought together in a broad democratic alliance, with a labour movement won for left policies as its core, can transform Britain.

The strategy we have outlined will, in the first place, help the left to win the political majority inherent in Britain's social structure, with its huge working class – something that the Labour Party's old strategy has signally failed to do. As far back as 1935, Labour had already won 38 per cent of the vote in a General Election. In 1945 it got 48 per cent, and in 1951 registered its high-water-mark of 49 per cent. But in 1974, after 40 years of political experience, it was back to 39 per cent, or roughly the 1935 level – a striking indication of the failure of the old strategy. Achieving a decisive advance in the Labour vote is bound up with the need for a new strategy.

The traditional right-wing approach of adopting capitalist policies to win the so-called middle ground in politics, has been consistently tried, and has consistently failed to win the majority of the electorate to Labour's side. Reformist policies always play into the hands of the Tories and help them to make a come-back. Right-wing Labour's forms of nationalisation, and right-wing opposition to further nationalisation, present the Tories with effective anti-nationalisation propaganda. Right-wing Labour's immigration policies help and encourage the most racist elements inside and outside the Tory Party. Labour incomes policies pave the way for the Tories to return to operate their forms of wage restraint.

The labour movement therefore needs to end the policy of 'managing capitalism' and instead to take a course which challenges capitalist power, and, by helping to build the broad democratic alliance, opens the way to change in the direction of socialism.

Alongside this must go the initiation, leadership and encouragement of mass struggle. The reformist strategy is based entirely on the ballot box. The mass of the people are accorded a strictly limited voting role, and MPs are regarded as little more than lobby fodder. Only the top parliamentary leadership have an active role to play; the masses have a purely supporting role. This is wrong, and would be wrong even if the parliamentary leadership had a better policy. Mass struggle outside parliament has a vital role to play now and in the future – as a political educator of millions of people whose socialist ideas will be developed in such struggle; as the essential means for ensuring that an elected Labour parliamentary majority does the job it was elected to do; and as the essential weapon for breaking the resistance of the monopolists and their political representatives and transferring political power into the hands of the working class and its allies. Indeed the major changes won throughout the history of the labour movement have mainly come as a result of the struggle outside Parliament.

A labour movement with socialist policies which challenged the monopolies and which led masses of people in struggle against them could break out of the present vicious circle of British parliamentary policies, rallying wider sections around itself, detaching from the Tory, Nationalist and Liberal parties many of their present supporters, defeating the poison of racialism and winning the support of both black and white working people, and building a new, popular anti-monopoly majority.

To bring this about will require a big development of left unity and a much stronger Communist Party. Decades of the old two-party system, with both party leaderships equally devoted to managing capitalism, even if in slightly different ways, have deeply confused masses of the people. Illusions about the present system are deep-rooted. But the old historic strategy of three-quarters of a century of reformism has clearly failed: however difficult the struggle, this alternative that we propose is the only way forward.

3 Towards socialist revolution

The essential feature of a socialist revolution is the winning of state power by the working class and its allies. This can only be achieved when the great majority of the British people are convinced of its necessity and prepared to use their strength and organisation to bring it about. At each stage of the struggle, therefore, the aim of the left must be to win the working class and democratic forces – the majority of the people – to defend the gains already won, and to take the next steps in extending democracy, improving living standards and opening the way to socialism.

Success depends on the left becoming the dominant force in the labour and democratic movement and on the building of a mass Communist Party as part of that left. The working class and its allies, the overwhelming majority of the people, must aim to win the leadership of the nation and thereby decide its future destiny. The broad democratic alliance, developed and strengthened in mass struggles, must be reflected in a parliament which becomes a political expression of those struggles. The activity of the working class parties in parliament will need to be intimately linked with the mass struggle outside, each reacting on the other. In this way, the growth of the broad democratic alliance will result in a parliamentary majority enabling the formation of left, and later socialist, governments.

This strategy is based on our political and social conditions, historical traditions, degree of working class organisation, and the new world setting. Every socialist revolution is unique in specific respects. There are universal principles, such as the transfer of state power, but no universal pattern or model which can be followed. Export of revolution is a myth. Decisive social change can only arise out of the particular circumstances in each country.

Britain's road to socialism will be our own road. The fact that it will be different from that taken in other countries is due not only to the specific position within Britain, but to the changes in the world brought about after the October Revolution in Russia, in 1917. This, the most significant event in world history, showed in practice that the workers and their allies could gain state power and construct socialism. But the path of the revolution, insurrection and the creation of the Soviets as organs of

power, and the subsequent development of a one-party system, were determined by the particular conditions and background of Tsarist autocratic rule, counter-revolution and civil war, and imperialist intervention. Similarly, the methods by which socialism has been established in other countries have been determined by their particular circumstances and by the world situation at the time.

The different conditions and history of Britain, and the changed balance of world forces, make it possible to achieve socialism in Britain by a different road. The working class is the majority of the population. The potential power of the labour movement is enormous. Together with its allies it can isolate the big capitalists and confront them with overwhelming strength. The democratic forces have had long experience of struggle and have won civil liberties and democratic rights which, though under constant attack, give the basis for carrying forward the political struggle. Parliament, itself the product of past battles for democracy, can be, and needs to be, transformed into the democratic instrument of the will of the working class and its allies, who constitute the vast majority of the people. Though there is the possibility of outside intervention against a socialist government, this has been diminished by the change in the world balance of forces.

Through the democratic transformation of society, including the state, in all the stages of the struggle, democracy can be carried to its utmost limits, breaking all bourgeois restrictions on it, and creating the conditions for advance to socialism without armed struggle.

Next stage in the revolutionary process

The achievement of state power by the working class and its allies will not be a single act, but the culmination of a process of struggle. The length of this process will be determined by the outcome of the struggle at various stages. Breaking the grip of the capitalist class on every area of life, political, economic and cultural, and winning the majority of the people for socialist policies, is a complex, difficult and many-sided process which will, as all previous experience shows, take time.

It is impossible to proceed overnight from Labour governments which in effect manage capitalism to a government which introduces socialism. The political conditions for establishing a socialist government do not yet exist: they have to be won. Left governments are part of the process which must show the need for much more fundamental change, while at the same time creating more favourable conditions for such change.

A strategy for socialist revolution has to be able to show the way forward and indicate the stages in that process as well as the ultimate objective.

The next stage is to expand and unify all aspects of the struggle of the working class and its allies, and to raise its aims to the winning of a new type of Labour government, which will begin to carry out a left policy. Bound up with this is the nature of the alternative programme to that of the ruling class, and the development of democracy at the grass roots in fighting for it. The essentially defensive stage of resistance to ruling class attempts to put the burden of the crisis on the people must be developed into the battle for the complete alternative policy, and for the new type of Labour government which will carry it out, supported and pressed forward by the power of the mass movement and a strong Communist Party.

This alternative policy needs to be one which will rally the widest support from those who want to combat the crisis and its effects, even if at this stage they do not see the need to change the system itself. It must be seen as relevant and realistic, but must also make inroads into monopoly power. It must safeguard the national interests of the British people, now under attack from international monopoly capital – an attack facilitated by Britain's entry to the Common Market. The ability of Britain to survive as a manufacturing country, and its capacity to decide its own destiny, are at stake. The fight to safeguard Britain's industrial future is central to the future of the working class and the development of revolutionary struggle.

The left has the task of putting Britain on a new course, so that far-reaching changes in society are initiated, the crisis is tackled at the expense of the big capitalists and not the working people, democratic rights are greatly extended, and the quality of life and personal freedoms enhanced. Its programme, therefore, must be democratic and bring social change – in the economy, in the state, in education, in culture and elsewhere. The essentials of such a programme can be summarised as follows:*

Economic policy

a) For a government to exercise effective control over the operation of the economy, the key firms among the top firms which dominate the economy must be nationalised, while at the same time drastic controls must be instituted over the investment, production, and employment policies of those remaining in private hands (which at this stage would

* Detailed plans on various industries and social questions cannot be included in a programme of this kind. They can also vary from time to time in the light of new developments. The Communist Party produces both short and long term proposals of a more detailed character on many such issues, to supplement the general policy outlined in this programme.

still be in the great majority). The decision on specific firms to be nationalised should be agreed by the movement after the widest consultation. The big banks and the major insurance companies must be nationalised if effective control of the economy is to be exercised. The oil industry should be added to the existing nationalised industries. In all cases only limited compensation should be paid to shareholders. All energy resources should be publicly controlled and managed as part of an overall plan. Further large-scale nuclear development should only take place if and when the vital issues of safety and our responsibility for the future of humanity are satisfactorily resolved. There should be an integrated transport system, with the emphasis on providing better and cheaper public transport. Britain should urge and support international action to control the activities of the multinational firms. Increased public control of the economy would require not only the passing of laws in parliament, but the mobilisation of the working people. There would need to be full democratic participation by the workers in decision-making at all levels.

b) A key question would be the balance of payments, which has to be tackled in a new way. The steps outlined above can lead to a transformation of the structure and efficiency of British industry based on increased and carefully-directed investment in the main industries. These steps have to be combined, however, with a ban on the export of capital and the ending of military expenditure overseas. The repeated and fatal attempts to "solve" Britain's immediate balance of payments problems by resorting to the international financiers and borrowing, which place major restraints on the country's sovereignty and freedom of decision, should be ended. Major overseas shareholdings of British firms and institutions should be sold off, the proceeds used to reduce indebtedness, and the role of sterling as a reserve currency ended. Selective import controls would have to be imposed. Withdrawal from the Common Market and an end to its economic and political restrictions would enable Britain to determine its economic strategy and develop its trade on a world scale. These measures would enable some of the key economic problems to be tackled, and secure an important degree of planned development of the British economy, as well as a change in its direction.

c) There has to be a change of social priorities so that there is a big extension of social service spending on pensions, benefits, housing, health and education. Military expenditure should be severely curtailed and part of the arms industry converted to peacetime production. A wealth tax should be introduced, corporation taxation increased, taxation on lower income groups reduced or abolished, and interest rates cut. Price controls should be enforced and VAT abolished. The role of the Co-operative

movement in distribution and production should be extended. Increased rates of growth resulting from these combined measures, and the consequent reduction in unemployment, would provide big additional resources for social spending. There should be full restoration of collective bargaining and increased wages, together with an agreed national minimum wage.

All these policies would require the closest co-operation between the government and the unions. A government carrying out such a progressive economic policy could be assured that the unions would take this into consideration in forming their wage demands.

The fierce resistance to this policy which would come from the monopolists and bankers at home and abroad would have to be met by mobilising wide popular support for it on the basis of full democratic discussion at every level in society, and by co-operation with progressive governments and movements in other countries. The right of the democratically-elected government to carry out its programme would be firmly maintained. Concentrating the measures of nationalisation on the main monopoly groups would create possibilities for dividing the capitalist class and preventing united capitalist counter-action. The private sector of the economy would be subject to the general economic controls necessary to ensure the carrying out of the government's programme. There would also be practical measures to help small businesses, shopkeepers and farmers, in the form, for example, of cheap credits, the abolition of VAT, and rent controls.

Extending democracy

A central problem facing the left is how to democratise power and extend democracy. This is not just a question of freedom to express opinions and vote in elections, important though these are. Democracy concerns the extension of control by the people over every aspect of political, economic and social life. This can only be fully realised as socialism is built, but a start must be made in the process of fighting to achieve socialism, and this should be a key part of the programme of the left forces.

MPS should have greater control over the executive; there should be provision for their recall; voting should be on the basis of proportional representation; the House of Lords and the Monarchy should be abolished. Local government should be made more democratic, with all council and committee meetings open to the public, and more consultation with electors between elections. New relations between central and local government and local democratic institutions such as community associations, trades councils, local health councils, etc., should be

developed, giving them more influence over national decisions and more power in local affairs.

The civil service should have a democratic structure and should be made more immediately accountable to parliament and the people, and its top personnel radically changed. Drastic changes should be made in the Official Secrets Act to stop it being used as a means of suppressing essential information or as a weapon of victimisation.

Democratic changes in the armed forces and the police are vital. Britain under left governments would need efficient and adequately-equipped armed forces to defend it against enemies. But it is essential that the domination of their upper echelons by representatives of the capitalist class should be ended, and that members of the forces should have full trade union and democratic rights. This should also apply to the police force, and the use of both for strike-breaking or other actions against democratic rights should be prohibited. Democratic supervision of the police and armed forces by parliament and local authorities should be strengthened.

Left governments should also take the most vigorous measures to combat racism. All racist legislation such as the 1971 Immigration Act should be repealed, and any regulation of immigration should be on a non-racial basis. The Race Relations Act should be strengthened and implemented. A programme of expanding social services, housing and education, taking account of the particular problems of minority groups, should be instituted to end the present conditions of deprivation in which so many people live. This would remove some of the underlying grievances exploited by the racists.

The parliamentary structure must be transformed so as to provide for an effective voluntary union of the nations of England, Scotland, and Wales. The Scottish and Welsh parliaments should have adequate legislative, economic and financial powers to begin to deal with the basic problems of their countries. The people of England should have similar rights in relation to their affairs. These changes would be important steps in the re-structuring of the governmental system so as to give the people far greater control over their lives.

The trade unions, fully independent and free from government interference or control, would have an important part to play in influencing government policy and supporting it against attacks from the right. A big development of industrial democracy, shifting the balance of power in favour of the workers, would be vital to the carrying out of these policies and in overcoming monopoly resistance. Workers elected directly, and others appointed by the TUC, should comprise a majority of the management boards of the nationalised concerns. The boards' responsibilities of decision-making on all important matters should be on the basis of mutual agreement with the trade unions. There would be a

similar participation and control at all levels. Such steps would make a significant contribution to the extension of workers' control and industrial democracy within the nationalised industries and firms, and to the democratic planning of the economy. In the remaining private sector, workers' participation in management should be opposed, since it would be disguised class collaboration. The necessary extension of industrial democracy in the private sector should be achieved by struggle by the unions. They should seek to expand the area subject to collective bargaining and mutual agreement to include all important decision-making, e.g. forward manpower planning, investment and the location of development projects. Mandatory provision of all relevant information to the unions, or 'opening the books', is a pre-condition for an effective extension of such collective bargaining. Much greater control over the organisation and policy of educational institutions, hospitals, local government and welfare services must be exercised by those who work within them, as well as by the public through its democratic organisations. This will help to improve both their efficiency and the service they give to the community.

The practical foundation for women's liberation must be laid by the full implementation of equal pay and equal opportunities; the provision of adequate nurseries and child-care facilities; the extension of public services such as laundries and non-profitmaking restaurants; more outpatient abortion services and more research into, and provision of, contraception, so that women have the right to control their own bodies.

The development of a live artistic culture should be stimulated, and those involved in the arts, sport, leisure, and education should be encouraged and helped to use their abilities, inventiveness and imagination to satisfy the cultural needs of the people. In this way intellectuals would make a major contribution to the creation of a society in which culture would cease to be dominated by commercial considerations, and people's talents would be developed to the full. This would also involve the provision of the necessary financial and material resources by the government and by local authorities. Science and technology should be democratically controlled and planned, and become less remote from the people, and should no longer be subordinated to the needs of the big monopolies.

Monopoly control of the newspapers and the media should be ended. As a first immediate step, the situation in which one firm or individual can control several daily and Sunday newspapers should be dealt with, and no one firm or person allowed to control more than one daily or Sunday newspaper. Further steps should be urgently taken to break up the monopoly groups, and government-owned printing facilities acquired from them should be placed at the disposal of democratic bodies, such as trade unions, co-operatives and social groups, at reasonable rates. The newsprint

and ink firms should be nationalised. All television and broadcasting services, both national and local, should be democratically controlled. All democratic parties should have the right to own and operate their newspapers and presses, and their representatives should be accorded full access to the media. The expression of racist views in the media would be prohibited.

A new foreign policy

Britain should pursue an independent foreign policy, based on the principle of peaceful co-existence, co-operation with socialist states and progressive forces in the capitalist world, and support for the national liberation movements. It should campaign for detente and the fulfilment of the Helsinki Agreements, withdraw from NATO, and work for an agreed dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact and their replacement by an all-inclusive European Security System, as a step toward world peace and security. Further, Britain should unilaterally renounce nuclear arms, dismantle existing nuclear war bases in Britain, and support a treaty to outlaw the manufacture and possession of nuclear weapons by all nations, with a similar prohibition of germ and chemical warfare. It should work for general and complete disarmament.

Independence should be granted to all remaining British colonies and all British troops abroad should be withdrawn. All foreign military bases in Britain should be wound up. Active support should be given to national liberation struggle, particularly in Southern Africa, where British capitalist interests are aligned with reactionary racialist governments, and to the achieving of a lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of United Nations resolutions and guarantees of an acceptable homeland for the Palestinians. Britain should repudiate neo-colonialist policies and make a significant contribution in aid to the third world anti-imperialist countries.

It should ensure a democratic solution in Northern Ireland, based on the implementation of a Bill of Rights, the end of all repressive measures, the withdrawal of British troops to barracks, and financial and other measures to begin to tackle the appalling problems of poverty and unemployment. These steps would create conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended and British troops withdrawn completely. The British Government should recognise the right of the majority of the people of Ireland to rule the whole of their country, and should co-operate with their representatives in bringing this about by consent. These policies would lay the basis for a new relationship of co-operation between the peoples of Ireland and Britain.

These are some of the points we put forward as the basis for the left alternative programme. The struggle for them starts now, and is part of

the process of bringing about a left government which would put them into effect. The detailed working out and application of the programme by such a government would take into account the economic situation and the balance of forces at home and in the world.

A new kind of Labour government

The programme we have put forward includes proposals which should be pressed on whatever Labour government is in office. But its full implementation could only come about as a result of the election of a new type of Labour government – not a reluctant right-wing government compelled to implement one or two left measures, but one which would be the product of, shaped by, and responsible to the broad democratic alliance. This could only come about as a result of further decisive change to the left, in the Labour Party, its national executive committee and parliamentary party, in the strength and size of the Communist Party, and in the relationship of the Communist Party and the Labour Party. It is in the course of this struggle that leaders would emerge who would comprise a government elected on the basis of the left programme, and determined to carry it out.

To guarantee this change, a stronger Communist Party is essential, with Communists in parliament and the local councils, and a big extension of its influence in every sphere of political life. Communist representatives in parliament would be essential to the left fight for a fundamental change in society. This is shown both by British experience and by the important left developments in other West European countries. The leadership and record of service to the working class movement of the Communist Party in struggles outside parliament needs to be reflected inside.

The fundamental characteristic of a government committed to the left programme would be its attitude to the class struggle and the respective classes. Unlike previous Labour governments, it would tackle the economic problems in the interests of the working people and in the process shift the balance of class forces against the big capitalists and their allies. It would not be a socialist government carrying out a socialist revolution, but one which, in close relationship with the mass struggle outside parliament, would begin to carry out a major democratic transformation of British society.

This could produce a further left shift in the labour movement, widen and politically enrich the broad democratic alliance, and strengthen the left parties. In particular, the influence of the Communist Party, because of its nature and unique role, would be greatly increased, as it gave leadership to the mass movement and won parliamentary representation. Subsequent left governments, therefore, would almost certainly be of a

different composition – with the Labour Party shifting further to the left, the Communist Party being increasingly represented in government, other progressive forces perhaps being added, and new forms of Labour-Communist unity being forged. As a consequence the programme of subsequent left governments would also be more far-reaching.

The relationship between governments and the broad alliance

The success of such left governments would depend on the closeness of the relationship with the mass movement, their willingness to respond to its demands and initiatives, their capacity to mobilise the movement, and their ability to move at a pace which would strengthen the broad democratic alliance. Co-operation with, and support from, the trade unions, the Co-operative movement, the political parties of the labour movement and the other existing progressive organisations would be vital. Especially important would be campaigning at local level through the various organisations and movements, above all through the trades councils. New forms of popular organisation and new forms of struggle, giving united expression to the demands of the people, would also undoubtedly develop. They cannot be forecast in detail, but would probably include factory councils, neighbourhood committees and tenants committees, linked to more representative trades councils and helping to organise and mobilise the people and resist the sabotage of the ruling class. It would be of the utmost importance for the left governments and the broad democratic alliance to encourage the development of such new forms of organisation and struggle as an element of the new state power by which the working class and its allies will eventually govern the country.

The governments' actions would strengthen the position of the working class, widening its alliances and deepening the political understanding of the broad democratic alliance. First, to the extent that they successfully tackled the country's problems, promoted social justice and extended democracy, they would strengthen the appeal of the left forces. Second, by shifting the balance of forces, left governments would greatly strengthen the position of the working class and its allies. For example, nationalisation and greater democratic control over the economy as a whole would weaken the economic power of the big capitalists, and the measures taken to democratise the media would also help to undermine their ideological power and influence. Similarly, democratisation of the state structure would begin to break the grip of the ruling class over the various parts of the state apparatus. Third, resistance from the right would demonstrate the vital importance of extra-parliamentary action, especially

at times of acute struggle around particular actions of the government or in relation to elections. It would also underline the need for the government to go further: for example, to nationalise more big firms, control currency movements more effectively, speed up reforms of the civil service and the armed forces, etc.

The revolutionary transition

The process described above can produce a profound change in the balance of class forces in the country. For social revolution and the transition to socialism, however, state power is critical. What is needed is the transfer of state power from the old ruling class to the working class and its allies, and the transformation of the state apparatus so that it serves the needs of the working people. On no subject in Britain is there such hypocrisy as that of the state. The modern state is the product of monopoly capitalism. The major civil service and army reforms of the past period were carried through to shape a state machine which would serve the needs of capitalism. The social composition, training and indoctrination of the higher echelons of the state apparatus are governed by this aim. Governments come and go, but the social nature of the existing top state personnel is permanent. On retirement they almost invariably join the boards of big business, and the reverse process also takes place.

Labour governments so far have made no basic changes in the social composition and functioning of this apparatus, and, in fact, have often strengthened the capitalist grip on it. But left governments can and must change the composition and structure of the state machine by democratising it. Even before any such government is elected, this must be fought for. There should be no illusions – this will be the most bitterly contested aspect of the programme of left governments, not least from within the state machine itself.

A left majority in the House of Commons and the establishment of a left government would mark a major change. It would mean that the legislature and the executive would have passed out of the hands of the capitalist class into those of the working class and its allies. At this stage the rest of the state apparatus – the armed forces, police, civil service, etc. – would still be controlled by the class representatives of capitalism. But Parliament's authority is central to the British political system, and it should be used by the left majority and the left government, with the backing of the mass struggle of the people, to carry through a radical transformation of the state apparatus to correspond to the political change expressed in the electoral verdict of the people. This would mean carrying further the steps outlined earlier, including changes in top personnel, in

methods of recruitment and training, and in the way the various departments function, as well as the abolition of some departments, the addition of new ones, and more democratic rights for those working in the state apparatus. This process, in which the state machine will become increasingly an arena of class struggle, would bring the mass of state employees into closer relationship with the rest of the working class, thus carrying still further the process of transforming the state. Alongside such democratic changes within state institutions, steps to ensure more control of them by the elected representatives of the people should be introduced.

Meeting capitalist resistance

The ruling class will fight against this process by every possible means. Even before labour governments of the left emerged, and particularly after their establishment, there would be the utmost resistance from the ruling class to prevent their establishment, with violent campaigns in the media, hostile demonstrations, economic sabotage by big business, attempted removal of assets from the country by the multinational firms, and contrived runs on sterling. The aim would be to create an atmosphere of social chaos in which the use of force could also be resorted to. All forms of international pressure, particularly from the us, would be exerted.

In such circumstances, the actual measures taken by the government would depend on the balance of strength between the capitalist forces and those of the broad democratic alliance. The most sustained pressure, mobilising the organised working class and progressive forces, would be needed to keep the government on a correct course and defeat the resistance of the monopolists and their allies. The Communist Party would have a special responsibility in this situation for developing and leading the mass struggle and campaigning on the political issues involved in the factories, localities, working class organisations, colleges and schools. As the struggles developed, the question of adopting further left measures would come to the fore.

Right-wing resistance could take legal forms, such as efforts to change the law to make the election of left governments more difficult or impose limitations on their powers, and attempts to overthrow such governments in general elections. Illegal methods, sabotage and an armed coup could also be resorted to.

The political battle will be conducted by the big capitalists mainly through the Tory Party. We hold the view that the struggle to achieve and build socialism should take place in conditions of political pluralism. That is, all democratic parties, including those opposed to socialism, should be guaranteed political rights and the right legally to contend for power in elections. The expression of racist views, however, would be

prohibited by law. The declared position of the labour movement, including the Communist Party, is that it would respect the verdict of the electors, and that a left government would stand down if defeated in an election. The possibility of the Tory Party and its allies being able to inflict such a defeat on the left would be reduced to a minimum by the correct policies of a left government, winning the support of the majority of the people, taking them into its confidence, and extending their democratic rights.

The aim would be to win away from the Tory Party many of those millions of working people who still vote for it, and indeed this is a precondition for the establishment and success of the left government. The Tory Party's position would be further weakened by the measures taken against its principal backers, the big monopolists, and by the steps taken to break monopoly control of the press and open up the mass media to the working people. Moreover, it is likely that, as the country moves left, the Tories will increasingly be racked by internal divisions on the question of how to avoid losing their mass basis. But the possibility of the Tories, or a coalition of capitalist parties, defeating the left government in an election, cannot be excluded. In that event, there would be no question of a coup from the left to reverse the electoral verdict, though it should do its utmost to rally the working people to resist attempts by the right-wing government to reverse the economic and political gains they had won.

The real danger of a coup would come from the right. If unable to defeat the left in democratic political struggle, the big capitalists, as history has shown, could well turn to the use of force. This was shown in Chile, and has been further demonstrated by the reaction of the United States and other Western governments to the advances of the left in Italy and France, and their political and financial support of the right-wing forces. In the event of such a right-wing coup being prepared, the left government should take effective measures to prevent it being launched. If, despite this, the coup was attempted, the government should have no hesitation in using force to defeat it, and mobilising the full strength of the working class and progressive movement to defend democracy.

The critical problem would be the composition and attitude of the armed forces. This faces the left with four tasks. First, democratic reforms in the armed forces are a vital question for today, and not just in the future. Second, at each stage every effort should be made to strengthen the broad alliance and its support for the left government, since this would have a great effect on the decision of the armed forces on whether or not to act. Third, the left needs to win direct political support from among the armed forces themselves. This would be assisted by the democratic reforms already proposed, and by the way in which the strength and activity of the broad democratic alliance affected members of the forces. Finally, the left governments themselves would need to transform the

structure and leading personnel of the armed forces as rapidly as the situation allowed.

A coup is neither inevitable nor impossible. Its possibility depends primarily on the relation of political forces. Hence the importance of winning the mass political majority, with the working class as its core, ready and willing to use its strength to support the left government. This also emphasises the need to win all democratic forces around the Labour movement, so isolating the right-wing forces. The more support there is for the left government, the less will be the possibility of creating the political atmosphere of tension and social chaos in which a coup could be launched.

This, then, is the process of transition to socialism in Britain as we see it. It can only come about when the majority of the people are convinced that it is necessary and that they want it and are prepared to overcome all the powerful forces which will strive to maintain capitalism.

As the battles to extend democracy and challenge the power of the monopolies sharpen, more and more people will come to see the necessity to end capitalism and build a new socialist society. And in those battles they will achieve the clarity, strength of purpose, unity and organisation required to do so.

It will be a process in which the strong points of capitalist power – economic, political and ideological – are successively taken over by the working people. The later stages of the democratic process would, in effect, be the period of revolutionary transition to socialism. This would involve carrying the democratic process to its conclusion – the complete ending of the grip of the monopoly capitalists on society, and the transfer of political and economic power and of the state apparatus into the hands of the overwhelming majority of the population, the working class and its allies.

4 Building a socialist Britain

Communists want not only a society in which people's needs are provided for by an abundance of goods and better social services, but in which their great and varied capacities can be fully developed. Changing the economic system is not an end in itself. It is a means of creating conditions in which human beings will be able to realise their full potentialities and work together for the common good, instead of being divided by class, sex, race or creed.

Capitalism distorts human individuality, subordinates men and women to the needs of the profit system, sets them against each other. Socialism aims to develop their individuality by creating a society in which exploitation and poverty are ended, and the resources of science and technology used to reduce the time spent in monotonous and mechanical jobs to a minimum, and vastly increase the amount devoted to leisure and creative work. Socialism is not a society in which the state and the government, as institutions separate from the people, either regiment them or do everything for them. It is the people themselves who have to build socialism, become involved in government, and be responsible for the development of society. In the process new attitudes to society, to work and to culture will develop. New relations, based on co-operation instead of domination and exploitation, will come into being between the sexes, between generations, between races and between nations.

Bringing about this change in society and in the outlook of men and women will not be easy, not only because of capitalist opposition, but because for a long period there will be the heritage of capitalist ideas in people's minds. This reinforces the need for the fullest development of socialist democracy, since it is only on that basis that such ideas can be effectively contested and defeated, and the outlook of people changed so that they take an active and conscious part in the building of the new society. Socialist democracy is not an additional, but dispensable, luxury, or something which can be postponed until a socialist economy has been created – it is essential to the building of socialism. Thus the broad democratic alliance, led by the working class and created in the struggle to defend and extend democracy under capitalism and bring about social

change, would continue to play a vital role in the development and enrichment of socialist democracy.

The economics of socialism

Because under socialism the main industries and means of production would be publicly owned, all the wealth they produced would be available for the use of the people as a whole, including that part of it which the capitalists now take as their private profit. Moreover, the removal of the fetters on production imposed by capitalist crisis would be removed, and the production of wealth greatly increased. Part of this social product would be used to raise the standard of living directly, in the form of increased wages, pensions, allowances and grants, or lower prices, or both. Part would be used to provide social services, such as health, education, housing and public transport, and for culture and leisure amenities. Part would be used for reinvestment in industry and agriculture, so as further to expand production. Finally, part would be used to provide funds and staff for the administration of the socialist state and for its defence forces.

The socialist government would have two main aims:

- 1) To complete the socialist nationalisation of all monopolies and other large concerns in productive industry, finance and distribution; of urban land, except that of owner-occupiers; and of large agricultural estates. Only limited compensation would be paid in the form of reasonable life annuities to individuals, provided by the state. It would be a phased nationalisation and would not include the small concerns.
- 2) To initiate socialist planning over the economy as a whole, to raise living standards and develop socially desirable production. This would be done in consultation with and in response to popular organisations in all the relevant fields.

Socialism in Britain would be built on an economic and industrial base that is more developed than in most countries. It is, however, an economy that has been distorted by capitalism. Socialist nationalisation and planning present the only possibility of correcting and eventually putting an end to that distortion. They would eliminate the wastage of chaotic capitalist society, guarantee full employment, and redirect national wealth to regenerating industry and to providing the vital social and welfare services the country needs. Socialism possesses an economic advantage over capitalism, whose contradictions mean that, despite its historical achievements, increasingly severe restrictions are placed on potential economic development. Because of its planned nature and

production for use, socialism would eliminate the cycle of booms and slumps. Technology itself would be publicly owned, rationally planned and applied across the board. As a result higher growth rates would be possible than under capitalism.

The financial policy of a socialist government would be a means of ensuring proper use of the country's resources, labour, plant, materials and land. Its budgets would be of a radically different pattern from those of capitalist governments. The main source of its revenue would be the publicly-owned enterprises. Personal taxation would take a simple form, with higher taxes on top incomes and reduced taxes on lower incomes, and the aim would be to keep indirect taxation down. Budget expenditure would include funds for expanding socially desirable production and for all social services. Drastic cuts in military expenditure would release resources for constructive use. Foreign trade and monetary movements would be planned. With overseas investment abolished, foreign borrowing curtailed, the role of the City eliminated, the speculative commodity markets closed down, and trade expanded, a rational handling of the balance of payments would become possible.

The success of socialist planning will depend on a detailed and intimate knowledge of the enterprises concerned, and on the commitment of the workers involved. A socialist government and its planning authority, in conjunction with the relevant trade union and public bodies and forces involved in the broad democratic alliance, would produce draft plans for discussion by the House of Commons, the Scottish and Welsh parliaments, and the people as a whole. Before adoption by parliament, the plans would be submitted to the unions, Co-operatives, consumer bodies and councils at regional, local and factory level. Both existing and new nationalised industries would be run on democratic lines of planning and consultation. Their boards would have a majority of workers elected from the industry and appointed by the trade unions.

With the advent of socialist planning and the ending of the direct conflict between worker and capitalist employer, the function of the trade unions would change. They would be independent of the state apparatus and active in defending workers' interests, and would also, through the development of industrial democracy, play a vital role in creating the economic basis for socialism, co-operating with the socialist government and strengthening support for it. Management would be democratic, with workers' participation at all levels, in planning industry as a whole and in every enterprise and department. The workers would have a dominant say in determining the conditions of work. Unions would be responsible for protecting the conditions of the workers and negotiating wages and other benefits. They, with the government, would need to guard against over-centralisation, bureaucracy, and the subordination of the interests of one section of the workers to those of another section. Excessive pressure

of production targets, abuses of the work force and unreasonable demands by managements or the central planning authorities would need to be avoided or corrected by the full development of industrial democracy.

This is one respect in which socialist nationalisation would be radically different from capitalist nationalisation, in which the boards have been mainly staffed by representatives of the capitalist class and have created a bureaucratic and undemocratic structure. Under capitalism it is mainly the profitable industries and services which have been nationalised, to provide cheap raw materials and transport for private industry. They were nationalised on terms which crippled their development and have had to meet huge interest burdens both to pay compensation and secure finance for development. All this would change under socialism.

The Co-operative movement would be encouraged. Already on the distribution side it is a weapon against the monopolists. This role would be enhanced and the co-operatives encouraged to expand into new production spheres for which they are suited. A co-operative development agency could assist in such an expansion.

Though the main industries and much of the land would be in public ownership, small businesses, shops and farms would have a place in socialist society. They would be helped to fulfil a useful role, with proper standards for those they employed, and would be free from the grinding pressure of the monopolies.

Planning, central and local, must benefit the consumers. Close attention would therefore be paid to consumer demands, the encouragement of public criticism and advice from consumers' organisations, which would be extended and would represent all sections of the people. Socialist economic planning would also have the vital task of safeguarding the earth's precious resources, minimising industrial pollution and protecting and improving the environment. There should be democratic accountability of all public bodies involved. Much of the wasteful duplication of individually-owned consumer goods produced under capitalism would be dispensed with, and there would be an increase in communally-owned and operated facilities which people would use according to need. A big increase in publicly financed and controlled scientific research and development could be a major factor in improving life. Properly applied, existing scientific and technical knowledge could release people from senseless and repetitive toil, reduce working hours, and provide a variety of leisure and employment possibilities not yet seen. To help bring this about, a big effort should be made to increase the scientific understanding of the people, so that they could participate in deciding on the proper use of scientific and technical knowledge and capacities.

Agriculture, already one of Britain's biggest industries, will become even more important, both to supply our own growing needs and to make Britain's contribution to the elimination of world hunger. It will require

a support programme by the state to achieve a high technical development and the supply of food at reasonable prices. The grip of the monopolies over farming through their control of the manufacture and distribution of fertilisers, insecticides, machinery, etc., would be ended. Farm workers' wages would be brought up to the level of skilled workers in other industries and housing and amenities in the countryside would be improved. Small farming would not be prohibited, but encouraged, and voluntary farmers' co-operatives would be promoted. The largest privately-owned farms would become state property.

As far as incomes generally are concerned, the huge gap which exists at present between those of the very rich and the majority of the people would be eliminated. Wages and salaries would be negotiated with the trade unions, taking into account the needs of society, and aiming to reduce excessive differentials.

A flourishing socialist economy would be able to meet the social needs of the people and improve the quality of life. It would give priority to providing housing to meet the requirements of all people at a price they could afford. The health service would be expanded and would be free and available to all. Educational opportunities would be greatly extended. Nursery school places would be provided for all children up to school entry age. There would be no private and selective schools, but the provision of genuine comprehensive education for all children, with the necessary buildings and facilities. Higher education would be expanded to serve the needs of society. The arts, sport, leisure and cultural facilities would all receive encouragement and financial assistance.

Pensions would be available at a lower age, but there would be opportunities for those who wanted to continue working to do so. Those who had given a lifetime's service to society would have pensions big enough to enable them to live in dignity and security, as well as good housing and social services. Children's and young people's rights and opportunities would be safeguarded both by a general expansion of the social services, especially education, and by specific measures to help them develop their abilities.

Foreign policy

A socialist government would give full support to detente and disarmament and the principle of peaceful co-existence between capitalist and socialist states. It would promote world co-operation and friendship, make war propaganda illegal and encourage organisations working for peace.

It would conduct its foreign policy on these broad principles:

It would work for a world without war and would renounce war as an instrument of foreign policy. It would support the ending of antagonistic military blocs, world disarmament and the banning of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. It would be vigilant in detecting and opposing new weapons and methods of warfare, including in outer space.

A world without war and conquest requires the victory of national liberation everywhere; an end to all fascist and racist regimes; full and equal rights and independence for all nations, respect for their national integrity and non-interference in their internal affairs. Hence all movements for national liberation would be supported; imperialist and neo-colonialist policies of continued exploitation ended; and full support accorded to measures to overcome poverty and the legacy of imperialism in the under-developed countries.

As a European nation Britain would be concerned to develop fully all-European co-operation in all important spheres, security, trade and economics, and social and cultural questions. On a world scale the aim would be to extend trade and co-operation on the widest possible basis, and in particular with the socialist countries and the countries of the third world. Socialist Britain would work to develop fraternal relations with other socialist countries and their greater unity.

Britain would seek to enhance the status and authority of the United Nations, in which all nations large and small should have their rightful place.

A socialist government would radically cut military expenditure. Its defence policy would consist in retaining adequate armed forces for Britain's defence from outside aggression and in fulfilling obligations arising from all inclusive alliances for this purpose, such as an all-European security organisation and the country's obligations arising from the United Nations. A socialist government would not, under any circumstances, allow the use of the armed forces or the police for strike-breaking and other anti-democratic actions or against the democratic verdict of the people.

Socialist democracy

With governmental and economic power in the hands of the working people they must use it to secure full control over the state institutions and complete their democratisation. This would not mean abolishing existing democratic institutions, but changing and improving them so

that they would more effectively serve the needs of society, as well as creating new organisations where necessary.

Parliament would be the sovereign body in the land, and Members of Parliament would exercise their powers as the elected representatives of the people without restrictions imposed by the Common Market or by the actions of the big monopolies and financial institutions. There would be full democratic control of the government by the parliamentary majority. A clear differentiation between the functions of the political parties and the state would be essential. The House of Commons and the Scottish and Welsh parliaments would be real national forums as well as decision-making bodies, debating statements of policy as well as voting on Bills drawn up in consultation with all relevant organisations. There would be Standing Committees to enable MPs to learn about and influence administrative policies, so that these were constantly brought under popular scrutiny. The House of Commons and the Scottish and Welsh parliaments would be the only legislative bodies. There would be no place for the House of Lords or the monarchy in a socialist Britain.

If necessary, the powers of Scottish and Welsh parliaments would be extended and the people of England would have similar rights in relation to their affairs, in the form found most suitable. These would be among the major steps to decentralise government and extend the involvement of the people. The right of self-determination, including separation, would be guaranteed, while the need for political, economic and social co-operation between the people of England, Scotland and Wales for their mutual advantage would be stressed. The unity of Britain can only be based on this principle of voluntary co-operation between the three nations.

The freedom of all democratic political parties, including those hostile to socialism, to contend for political support would be guaranteed. Different political interests and different views would continue to exist after the ending of capitalist power, and would require political expression. Classes would not immediately disappear with the establishment of socialism, and the elimination of class conceptions and of reformist ideas from people's minds is an even longer process. Such conceptions and ideas should be fought politically and not by attempting to ban their organised expression. Nationalist parties could well continue even after national rights have been fully attained. Moreover, even after class divisions are eliminated the need would continue for the expression of differing political alternatives and priorities, including in a parliamentary form, from among which the people were able to choose. Such conflicts in a fully-developed socialist society would not, of course, reflect irreconcilable antagonisms as in capitalist society. For all these reasons we stand for the plurality of parties, and for them having the right to maintain their organisations, produce their publications, and stand in elections.

All parties should be pledged to respect the verdict of the electors when elections take place, and to abide by the laws of the socialist state. If parties hostile to socialism failed to do so, and turned to the use of force to sabotage the democratic process, the socialist government and the working people would use whatever force was necessary to defend socialism.

The process of transforming the state apparatus from one serving the needs of the capitalists to one serving the needs of the people would be completed under socialism. A socialist government would ensure effective democratic supervision over state institutions and encourage citizens in the police, the armed forces and the civil service to exercise their full civil and trade union rights. It would rightly demand from those in the state apparatus that they should be loyal to the elected government. Those who proved unwilling to implement government policy, or incapable of doing so, would be retired or found other jobs. While those who tried actively to sabotage the implementation of socialist legislation would be dealt with under the law.

The judiciary would be independent of the executive, and no longer drawn, as at present, from a small privileged sector of the community. Magistrates would be appointed on the basis of nominations by the trade unions and other democratic bodies. Arbitrary acts of officials would be subject to appeal. A free legal aid and advice system would provide the necessary service for those who required it. Corporal punishment would be abolished, the aim in dealing with offenders would be their rehabilitation, and the death sentence would not be imposed for any crime.

A socialist democracy would strive to establish and guarantee full equality for all citizens irrespective of racial origin. Legislation and social policy would aim to overcome rapidly and completely the effects of discrimination and oppression suffered by black people under capitalism. Racist practices and advocacy of racist theories would be illegal. However, ideas and prejudices linger on in society long after the material basis for them has been abolished. A socialist society would therefore need to conduct a vigorous ideological campaign exposing the backwardness and superstition of racist ideas and seek to generate deep knowledge of and respect for the achievements and cultures of other nations and races.

Civil liberties won through the centuries would be consolidated and extended. These would include: habeas corpus to protect citizens from arbitrary detention; the right to be tried by jury; the right to strike and to demonstrate, associate and organise; freedom to think, work, travel, publish, speak, dissent, act and believe, subject only to those limitations required in any ordered and just society to protect citizens from interference and exploitation by others and to safeguard democracy. There would be freedom of religious worship and propaganda in public or

in private, equality for all religious beliefs and creeds, and separation of church from state. All discrimination against homosexuals would be ended and their full civil rights guaranteed.

Popular democratic power

A socialist Britain would guarantee rights to the people which many of them are denied under capitalism – the right to work, to a home, a good education and adequate leisure. But socialist democracy involves more than the guarantee of such rights, vital though they are. Its full development depends, whatever the formal structure, on the extent to which the people themselves exercise control in every area of economic, political and social life. Socialism alone makes such popular control possible. In a socialist Britain the broad democratic alliance would see the extension of this control as one of its major responsibilities.

As a result of the nationalisation of the monopolies and other large businesses, their management would be genuinely democratic, with workers' participation at all levels, in planning industry as a whole, and in every enterprise and department. The workers would have a dominant say in determining the environment and the conditions of their work. Local government would be brought much nearer the people, by changes in structure, by continuous discussion of policy and its operation, by the establishment of community councils with adequate resources and staff and by more participation of local government workers. Close collaboration between local councils and the trade unions, the Co-operative movement, tenants and residents' organisations and other such bodies would be essential.

A fruitful interplay between local and national organisations and bodies is essential for genuine participatory democracy. This has to be a two-way process, so that those with responsibility for overall planning are fully aware of, and responsive to, the pressure and desires both of those who implement and enact decisions and those who are affected by their results. Close liaison between MPs and local councils would be essential.

Tenants' associations, trades councils, women's organisations, local community groups and action committees would be encouraged, and new democratic organisations based on their struggles and experiences would develop. In the schools, universities and colleges, effective forms of democratic participation and supervision would be worked out, involving staff, students and parents. Similar principles would apply in the health service and other social services. To defend their interests under capitalism the British people have created a great variety of grassroots organisations. In a socialist Britain there must be the fullest encouragement

of such democratic initiatives, as an essential check to bureaucracy and to the abuse of power by the state.

The press and other mass media would be crucial to the development of socialist democracy. In the period of the transition to socialism the dissolution of the press monopolies would have already weakened the grip of big capital. Further steps would be needed to ensure that a democratic and lively press, radio and television service was developed to meet the needs of the people, with the state providing the necessary technical means for it. Political parties and social groups, trade unions, co-operatives and professional associations and organisations for women and young people would be enabled to publish newspapers and journals. Individuals would have the right to publish their own material. The national broadcasting and television services would be run by boards representative of the democratic organisations of the people, and directly accountable to Parliament. They would be under an obligation to provide adequate facilities to all democratic political parties to put their views. Local radio and television would be accountable to local elected organisations, and also be required to give coverage to varying political views. The production of specialist, community and factory papers would be encouraged, with the active involvement of the people.

Creative activity, experiment and innovation in all branches of the arts – the theatre, cinema, music, etc. – would be fostered and encouraged, without any administrative interference. Increased funds would be provided through democratically-run agencies. Conditions would be provided for the fullest development of scientific enquiry into natural and social phenomena, with the free confrontation of different ideas and theories.

Women and socialism

Major improvements in the position of women under capitalism can be won by campaigning for the practical conditions for their liberation and by combatting sexism. But the conditions for their full liberation can only be achieved as socialism is built and society moves towards communism. A socialist government would complete the practical basis for this by fully implementing any of the measures outlined in the previous section which had not yet been carried through. Women's control over their own bodies, with freely available abortion and contraception; socially-organised child-care, taking account of parents' responsibilities and wishes, housework and dependants; and equal rights to jobs and at work, would be basic rights in a socialist society.

But more than this is needed, as has been shown by the experiences of the existing socialist countries, which have ended legal and economic

discrimination against women but still have to conduct a constant battle against outworn ideas carried over from the past. There would have to be a sustained effort, in which an autonomous women's movement would have an important part to play, to end the sexual division of labour between men and women in the family and at work. This division of labour, which stems from women's child-bearing function in our society, is not inevitable nor eternal. The continued subjugation of women in their personal relationships which it involves would not only limit their potential role in building a socialist society, but deform that society itself. There would need to be a persistent and determined struggle against the deeply-ingrained prejudices resulting from generations of discrimination against women. The aim would be to create a deep respect among people for each other, on the basis of complete equality, within which both sexes would be able to use their skills and abilities for the benefit of all, and express themselves fully within personal relationships.

Political parties of the working class

The continuous development of the broad democratic alliance, built up in the process of the struggle for social change, would be vital for the construction of socialism. Within this alliance the working class would be the decisive element and would have the leading role in the construction of socialism. This is an objective social fact. That leading role, however, cannot be imposed. It would have to be won by work and example. Its parties, the Communist Party and the Labour Party would have the main responsibility in this respect, with the Communist Party increasingly playing a leading, though not exclusive, role. The trade unions have their own particular and vital contribution to make, not only economic but political. But the trade unions are, and would remain under socialism, mass non-Party bodies. They are not political parties.

Socialism can only be won and built on the basis of Labour-Communist unity. In this political process, both before and after a socialist government the Labour Party and the whole labour movement would increasingly turn to the left and socialism. The Communist Party would grow in numbers, influence and in the parliaments and local councils. Still closer bonds of unity would develop between the two parties.

The political organisations of the working class, therefore, would have the major role in winning the working people to elect a socialist government, in providing the personnel of the government, and in organising and leading the mass movement to sustain the government, particularly in moments of crisis. They would have the responsibility of developing the programme on which the government is elected and which it is pledged to carry out.

As far as the Communist Party is concerned, and we would envisage also that it would be the case with the Labour Party, this policy-making function will be democratically conducted in public congresses and conferences, in open and full debate in which all trends will participate. Decision would be by democratic majority.

As working class political consciousness deepens, the basis will be laid for a greater strengthening of working class unity. Different trends within this overall unity of purpose, however, will continue to be expressed in democratic discussion and controversy, and the working people will be able to choose between the political organisations of the working class, both in elections and in activity between elections.

The members of the working class political parties would have a special responsibility to ensure full internal democracy within their parties. This would be all the more important as these parties develop in strength and influence.

Towards a communist society

In the socialist Britain for which we are working, based on the principle 'from each according to ability; to each according to work', the conditions will be created for advance to a still higher form of society, Communism, based on the principle 'from each according to ability; to each according to needs'.

Such a society requires the production of an abundance of goods to satisfy the needs of all, and a new outlook of co-operation and concern for the common good, with the ending of attitudes and habits associated with the class-divided society of the past.

It will be a society without classes and in which the need for the state as an instrument of class rule will have disappeared. It will be free of exploitation, using science and technology to liberate people from monotonous toil, extending leisure and education and culture, so that human capacities are developed to the full – a society in which, in the words of the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".



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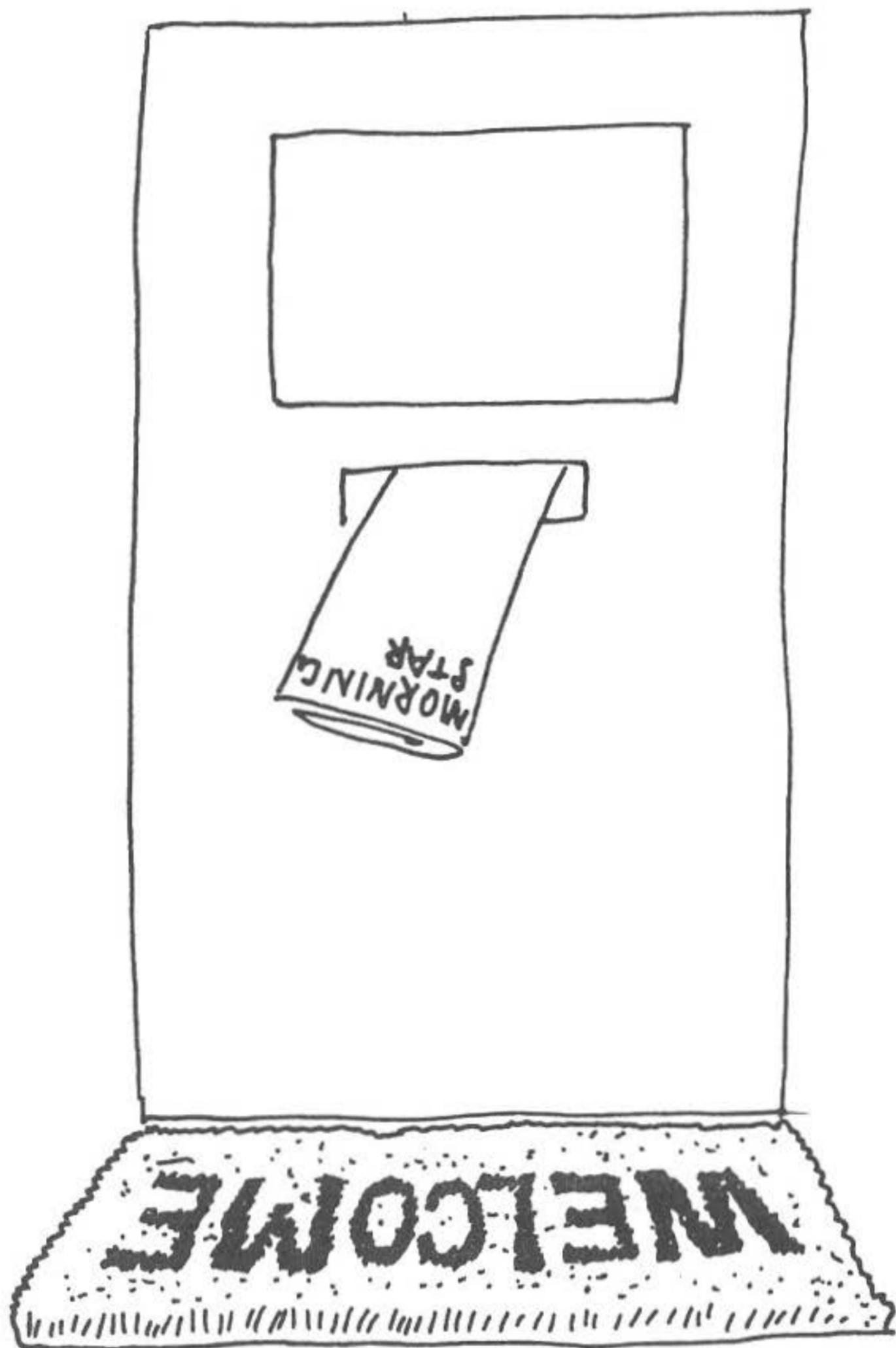
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