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WORKERS OF ALL LANDS UNITE!

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Red Front

FOR WORKING CLASS POWER -
FOR A SOCIALIST BRITAIN!



ORGAN OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANISATION OF BRITAIN

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A SOCIALIST ELECTION POLICY, 1970

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

When the Communist Party was the party of the working class and based itself on Marxism-Leninism, its electoral policy reflected the fundamental political fact that capitalism can be overthrown only by the forcible destruction of the state machine by means of revolutionary action. But today the Communist Party has thrown overboard all the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. It has ceased to be a revolutionary party; it is therefore no longer a genuine party of the working class striving to advance the cause of socialism; by preaching that "socialism" can be established through parliamentary elections, it has become a part of the apparatus of deception of the "Establishment".

This does not mean, of course, that parliamentary elections are of no account to the working class. On the contrary, Socialists and Communists must exert special efforts to utilise the heightened interest in politics at such a time to explain to working people the political facts of life. And, although electoral struggle must always be subordinate to the organisation of the working masses for revolutionary struggle, it is correct for the workers to strive to secure the election of at least some genuine representatives of the working class to Parliament - not, of course, with any illusion that capitalism can somehow be abolished by this means, but in order to

use the Palace of Westminster as a tribune to expose that illusion and to assist in the mobilisation of the working people for the revolutionary struggle which alone can establish working class power.

THE PRESSING NEED FOR A PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS

With the desertion of the Communist Party to the camp of monopoly capital, all the political parties which at present exist in Britain support policies which assist in maintaining capitalism. All represent, in other words, the interests of Big Business, and the minor differences in their electoral programmes reflect merely the necessity for them to appeal, on behalf of monopoly capital, to strata of the working people of differing political levels. The Communist Party directs its appeal to the most politically advanced sections of the working people who retain illusions about the parliamentary state; it even talks of "socialism". The Labour Party appeals to the next most advanced sections - those who at least understand that their interests as workers are not those of Big Business and who believe that the Labour Party is, at least to some extent, still a "workers' party". The Liberal and Conservative Parties appeal to the least advanced sections - those with little or no political class consciousness.

Not for very many years has a parliamentary election in Britain testified so very obviously to the truth of Lenin's quip:

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

But it also brings home very clearly the urgency to rebuild a party of the working class, a genuine party of socialism based on the revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism. Only when such an independent Leninist party truly representing the fundamental interests of the working class enters the electoral arena can a really significant degree of direct class struggle be introduced into an election campaign.

INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES OF THE WORKING CLASS.

Even in the absence of a Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class, and at this election, it is possible for militant workers in a few selected constituencies to put forward advanced representatives of the working class within an organisational framework independent of the capitalist parties. Such candidates must wage their campaign around a programme based on the most pressing, immediate needs of the working class --

on the struggle against legislation designed to restrict wages, to bind the trade unions into a state-controlled "labour front", and to lay the basis for a future corporate state;
on the struggle against rising rents;
on the struggle against fascist attempts to divide the working class on grounds of race, nationality, etc.

Where such a WORKING PEOPLE'S ELECTORAL FRONT can be established, every attempt must be made to reach and win the support of the various sections of the working people - trade unionists, tenants, immigrant workers, etc.

In the June 1970 election, however, in which the number of such independent working class candidates must necessarily be very few in number, a correspondingly greater emphasis must fall in socialist electoral work on the tactical task of exposing the existing political parties - always with the positive aim in view, and clearly expressed, of winning conviction for the necessity of a Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class.

THE EXISTING POLITICAL PARTIES CANNOT BE SUPPORTED

There remains the not unimportant question of what a worker with a socialist consciousness should do on polling day in the vast majority of constituencies, where the electoral choice will lie only between the candidates of the existing political parties - with a fascist and a "leftist" demagogue thrown in here and there for good measure.

Without any doubt, genuine socialists and communists cannot advise workers to support any of these candidates, for all of them without exception, as has been shown,

represent the interests of the capitalist class, the class enemy of the working class.

This applies as much to the so-called "Left-wing" of the Labour Party as to its openly right wing. This so-called "Left wing" of the Labour Party comprises an unstable, fluctuating group of social-democratic politicians which serves the interests of the capitalist class by providing to workers who have rightly become disillusioned with the Labour Party the false hope that an internal change within it can transform it into a party representing the interests of the working class - so holding them back from political action independent of the framework of the Labour Party. All the "left wings" that have developed within the Labour Party have shown themselves to be ephemeral and transitory - providing their temporary members with publicity that is often helpful to their careers in leading to their promotion to the hierarchy of the party and, when the party is in office, to Ministerial positions - on the attainment of which they invariably reveal themselves to be no different from their predecessors. Thus the so-called "left-wing" acts effectively as a reservoir out of which new reformist and opportunist leaders can be promoted to leading positions in the hierarchy of deception and demagoguery administered by the Labour Party, and thus ultimately to office in the state apparatus itself, as and when the real political character of the old leaders they are replacing has become too tarnished as a consequence of the more open role they are compelled to fulfil on behalf of monopoly capital whilst in office and they, along with the whole framework of social democracy which they control, are thus threatened with exposure. It must not be forgotten that the Wilsons and Castles who lead the attack upon the working class today were ten years ago members of the then "left wing" of the party. It must also not be forgotten that the nomination of every Labour Party candidate requires the approval of the openly right wing leadership, who require to be satisfied that - whatever demagogic "left" talk and harmless abstentions the candidate may indulge in if elected - he will obey the discipline of the party whips whenever called upon to do so.

The Communist Party differs only organisationally from the so-called "left wing" of the Labour Party. It ludicrously presents the establishment of "socialism" as possible by means of a parliamentary coalition of the Labour and Communist Parties. And with the decline and future disintegration of the Labour Party, it has been working for some time to lay the foundations of a new "left wing" type of Labour Party - made up of members of the Communist Party, "left wing" elements at present within the Labour and Liberal Parties, and trotskyites -

to take the place of the present Labour Party within the framework of the capitalist parliamentary system. And, in line with this, its day-to-day actions have become increasingly disruptive and reactionary - the most recent example being its opposition to the formation of multi-racial defence groups for the protection of black workers against fascist attacks on the grounds that such protection should be "left to the police" (who have long been looking on or joining in such attacks).

It is therefore abundantly clear that genuine socialists and communists cannot advise workers, in constituencies where no independent candidate of the working class is standing, to support any of the candidates of the existing political parties.

'PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY' AND FASCISM

This does not mean, however, that workers in such constituencies should be advised not to vote - the advice given them by the anarchists and by certain of the more disruptive maoist groups.

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

"We are not Anarchists and it is not at all a matter of indifference to us what kind of political regime exists in any given country: whether a bourgeois dictatorship in the form of bourgeois democracy, even with democratic rights and liberties greatly curtailed, or a bourgeois dictatorship in its open, fascist form. While being upholders of Soviet democracy, we shall defend every inch of the democratic gains which the working class has wrested in the course of years of stubborn struggle, and shall resolutely fight to extend these gains." (G. Dimitrov: Speech in Reply to the Discussion, Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, in: "The United Front"; London; 1938; p.109).

The electoral struggle is one aspect of the struggle against fascism, even though it is not the most important aspect. Fascist and pro-fascist candidates representing the "National Front" and the ultra-right wing of the Conservative Party will be contesting the 1970 election. If in constituencies where such fascist and pro-fascist candidates are standing, anti-fascists were to abstain from voting, the proportion of the poll received by these

candidates would be artificially high - thus encouraging the pro-fascist forces and disheartening the anti-fascist forces.

Furthermore, the right to vote, limited though it is, is one of the democratic rights of "parliamentary democracy". To advise workers not to use this democratic right on June 18th is to imply that it is of no value and so to play into the hands of the most reactionary sections of the monopoly capitalist ruling class, who seek to inculcate the view that such democratic rights are "worthless" as a part of the ideological preparation for the attempt, when objective conditions should demand it, to abolish "parliamentary democracy" in favour of an open fascist dictatorship.

In the existing circumstances advice to workers not to vote is harmful and reactionary, and it is not accidental that this advice is put forward by such proven enemies of the working class as the anarchists and the more disruptive maoist groups.

HOW A VOTE CAN HELP FORWARD THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

Clearly, therefore, all genuine socialists and communists must advise workers to use their democratic right to vote in this election, and to use it in such a way as will best help forward the movement of the working class to positions of class struggle and ultimately of revolutionary struggle - which alone can bring about the establishment of a socialist society.

Since, outside the exceptional constituencies where it has been possible to nominate an independent representative of the working class, - and it must be stressed that this is the most significant aspect of socialist electoral work, because it helps to promote the independence of the working class from the parliamentary framework of deception controlled by the political parties of monopoly capital - no candidate can be supported as representative of the interests of the working class, what does this tactic involve?

Since the next government will be one either of the Labour Party or of the Conservative Party, both of which represent the interests of monopoly capital, both of which represent the interests of the class enemy of the working class, it involves an analysis of whether the movement of the working class forward to positions of class struggle and ultimately of revolutionary struggle will be helped forward most speedily by the election of a Conservative government or by the election of a Labour government.

The next stage in the development of this movement will be brought about by those strata of the working class which are at present the more politically conscious, that

is, from those strata which tend at present to support the Labour Party and the Communist Party. The development of this movement is at present held back by a number of ideological trends which serve the interests of monopoly capital; by, for example, the social-democracy preached by the Labour Party, by the right revisionism preached by the Communist Party, by the "left" revisionism preached by the maoist and trotskyite groups.

The exposure of these ideologies as serving the interests of monopoly capital is thus a necessary pre-requisite for the development of class struggle and ultimately of revolutionary struggle. However, this exposure cannot be brought about by propaganda alone, but only when propaganda is combined with the practical day-to-day experience on the part of the working class of the actual role played by the bodies which put forward these ideologies. As Lenin put it:

"Revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class and this change is brought about by the political experience of the masses; never is it brought about by propaganda alone." (V.I.Lenin: "'Left-wing' Communism, An Infantile Disorder", in: "Selected Works", Volume 10, London 1946; p.126).

But workers can gain from their experience an understanding of the true character of a political party more easily and more quickly when that party is in office than when it is in opposition.

When, for example, the Labour Party is in opposition, its politicians may indulge in unbridled "militant" and "socialist" demagogy; they may assure the workers with hand on heart that if only their party had been elected in place of the Conservative Party, everything would be sweetness and light; they may bring forward "left wing" elements into leading positions to "demonstrate" to disillusioned supporters that the old reactionary tendencies have been "eliminated", and so on. But when such politicians form the government, they are compelled to act, to legislate, on behalf of their masters - the monopoly capitalists - and one single piece of anti-working class legislation, such as the Prices and Incomes Act, is more educative than a hundred pamphlets.

In the present circumstances, of the various ideological trends designed to deceive the more politically conscious strata of the working class, only the social-democracy of the Labour Party can be exposed in governmental office. It follows that the election to office of the Labour Party will assist in the exposure of the ideological trends designed to deceive the more politically conscious strata of the working class, and therefore in the movement of the working class to positions of class struggle and ultimately of revolutionary struggle, more speedily than the election of a Conservative government.

"AS A ROPE SUPPORTS THE HANGED"

That genuine socialists and communists in such circumstances should advise workers, in constituencies where there is no independent candidate standing representing the interests of the working class, to "vote Labour" in order to assist in the speedier exposure of social-democracy, was a tactical line elaborated by one of the greatest Marxists of all time, Lenin, specifically in relation to Britain:

"British Communists should ... help the masses of the workers to see the results of a Henderson and Snowden government, should help the Hendersons and Churchills to defeat the combined Lloyd Georges and Churchills. To act otherwise would mean placing difficulties in the way of the cause of the revolution, because revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class and this change is brought about by the political experience of the masses; never is it brought about by propaganda alone. ...

We would take part in the election campaign, distribute leaflets advocating Communism, and in all constituencies where we

have no candidate we would urge the electors to vote for the Labour candidate. ...

I will be able to explain in a popular manner ... that I wanted to support Henderson with my vote in the same way as a rope supports the hanged." (V.I.Lenin: "'Left-wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder", *ibid.*; p.126, 130).

Since Lenin wrote these words in 1920, social-democracy has been far from exposed among the more politically conscious strata of the working class, despite the election of several social-democratic governments. As Lenin pointed out elsewhere, the continued dominance of social-democracy over the mass of the British working class over the last fifty years and more has been primarily due to the fact that the intense exploitation of the workers and peasants in the colonial-type countries dominated by British imperialism, has brought in to the coffers of our monopoly capitalists huge sums in super-profits, a large part of which has been used to introduce new techniques of production; from the increased productivity resulting, the social-democratic labour leaders - in order to maintain their influence over the masses of the working class and to damp down working class struggle - have been permitted by Big Business to "win" by "negotiation" significant increase in the real standard of living for substantial sections of the working class, despite the fact that the share of the worker in total national production has fallen, i.e., his exploitation has increased.

With the victories of the national liberation movements in the colonial-type countries, the economic basis of social-democracy in Britain has been seriously undermined. This makes the exposure of social-democracy no less vital, but easier, and it is a measure of the renegade character of the revisionist leadership of the Communist Party that their betrayal of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism should have been perpetrated at this crucial historical juncture.

The advice of genuine socialists and communists to vote Labour in constituencies where there is no independent candidate representing the interests of the working class must, therefore, be sharply distinguished from the advice of the Communist Party to vote Labour because the Labour Party is "more progressive" than the Conservative Party:

"The Communist Party will always work for a Labour Government as against the Tories." ("The British Road to Socialism"; London 1958; p.13).

This policy, which ties in with the anti-Marxist-Leninist concept of the ultra-revisionist leadership of the Communist Party that the Labour Party can be transformed into a genuine "socialist" party, is outright deception of the working class,

The advice of genuine socialists and communists to vote Labour in constituencies where there is no independent candidate representing the interests of the working class is associated with the categorical statement that the Labour Party is not a scrap more progressive than the Conservative Party. It is based on the fact that millions of the more politically conscious strata of the working class do not yet realise this, so that further exposure of the Labour Party in office is vitally necessary to bring about the movement of the workers to positions of class struggle, and ultimately of revolutionary struggle.

The socialist slogan in such constituencies is the clear and correct call:

"Vote Labour !
PUT WILSON BACK IN THE DOCK !"

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