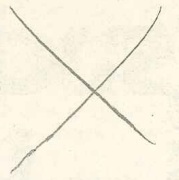


A CLASS VOTE AGAINST THE TORIES

Socialists
and the
ELECTION



MANY COMMENTATORS on both left and right are saying that this is the most important general election since the war. Yet in many ways it is a re-run of 1970, where a discredited Labour Government carrying out anti-working class policies was defeated by Conservatives, standing on a right wing platform similar to Thatcher's current policies. What has crucially changed, however, is the *context*. Today a Tory victory would represent a different and significant event. It would be a consolidation of the right-wing shift in capitalist societies that exists as much on the intellectual as economic and political levels. And in crucial ways it fits in with a "popular mood."

LABOUR PAVES THE WAY FOR THE TORIES

We should not be surprised at this. The social-democratic version of managing capitalism; without changing its basis or solving its contradictions, is bound to leave a sour taste in many peoples' mouths. By pursuing imitation Tory policies it whets the appetite for the real thing. If the mass of people are not turning to socialist alternatives, it is partially because those alternatives are completely absent within the orthodox Labour politics that Callaghan represents. The 1979 Labour Manifesto is a pathetic collection of meaningless platitudes. It does not even have the series of "socialist" policies that the 1974 version contained — which weren't carried out. Its conservatism has allowed the Tories to present themselves as the radical party of change!

DEATH OF LABOUR LEFT

This rightward drift has in no way been halted by the Labour Left. Foot, Benn and other heroes of the Left have gone along with it, keeping silent about any miserable policy, incorporated by the trappings of Ministerial power. The Tribune Group has made the occasional noise, but stunned by the defection of many of its leading figures in the party and unions to pro-Government positions and unwilling to organise opposition outside parliament, it is a declining and toothless force. What little opposition there is inside the Labour Party has been restricted to a handful of what the press likes to call the "hard left" MPs like Skinner

and Maynard. At times courageous, they are however, still prisoners of their party.

ENTRISM NO ANSWER

The most recent developments of the Left inside Labour has been the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV), made up of some "hard left" parliamentary candidates and various Trotskyist groups. Scornful of developments outside Labour like Socialist Unity they continue to trumpet the virtues of working to transform Labour from within. But while they are willing to engage in extra-parliamentary campaigns, when it comes to the crunch they cannot effectively combat Labour's policies. At election times they find themselves pushing defences of the Labour Government's record through peoples' letter boxes. At Edge Hill some of these comrades defended this by saying it was necessary to gain credibility inside the party. But telling lies for Labour will not win socialist credibility where it ultimately counts with the mass of the working class.

LABOUR NOT A "LESSER EVIL"

When assessing the overall attitude of revolutionary socialists to Labour and elections, it cannot be determined by the formal programme and policies. If it was, we would have to seriously consider the Liberal Party, whose manifesto on many issues is more radical than Labour's! Our attitudes are



determined by the relationship of the parties to the class forces in society. When we rightly say that the Tories will be worse, it is not because we believe that Labour is a "lesser evil." This lets them off the hook and disarms militants by giving Labour a permanent excuse for anything it does. Labour is a different evil, but one whose success for the ruling class is precisely because of its link with the working class. Although a bourgeois party in terms of its programme and leadership, the Labour Party rests on working class support. Although such support shows signs of declining in voting terms, it is constantly re-produced through the trade unions and the whole network of Trades Councils and other institutions of the labour movement. In contrast, The Tories are the party of the ruling class and despite their voting support across social boundaries, are seen to be by the majority of working people.

CLASS VOTE

It is this reality which of necessity determines the tactics of revolutionary socialists on the question of Labour and elections. When we say vote Labour, it is because it is a vote of class against class, not a vote for Labour. Until we can develop a powerful socialist alternative producing alternative political formations and opportunities

that situation will remain. It cannot be wished away by a policy of abstention.

TORY BASHING NOT ENOUGH

There is also the opposite danger that election periods become an excuse for simple "Tory-bashing". Aside from not forgetting what Labour has done, we should avoid a repetition of the 1970-4 period when the perspective of many militants was limited to "Heath Out." In this sense having Labour in government is better for developing a socialist alternative. Building an opposition under Labour may be harder, but in the long term it will be politically clearer and more durable. It is not that Labour needs to be endlessly "exposed", but that we must carry the uncompromising message to Labour supporters that if the struggle of the working class is to continue then its likely enemy is going to be their own government and party. Ultimately they will have to choose.

SOCIALIST UNITY

That choice is helped at this election by the standing of ten Socialist Unity candidates and the two independent campaigns of Brendan Gallagher against Mason and Pat Arrowsmith against Callaghan. Whatever the limits of the

size and nature of the Socialist Unity interventions, it will be the only one fighting for a genuine socialist alternative rooted in the whole breadth of working class struggles. Other candidates to the Left of Labour do not do this. The Workers Revolutionary Party carries on its usual manic sectarianism, does not support initiatives like the Anti Nazi League or the campaigns of the women and black movements. The Communist Party programme is not sufficiently different from Labour's to provide an alternative. This was graphically illustrated by the Daily Express whose front page story argued that point by point. The Labour and CP manifestoes were the same. So Big Flame does not advise a vote for these candidates, except where local campaigns go beyond these political limits. The SU intervention is a small start in bringing the politics of class struggle on the electoral terrain, as our comrades in Europe have been doing on a larger and more successful scale.

We believe the SWP were wrong to miss this political opportunity. The electoral alliance initiated by the International Marxist Group and Big Flame was inevitably weakened by their absence. Whatever the results of SU, the prospects for interventions in elections by revolutionary socialists must be a key future debate.

The Right to be Unequal

● The pursuit of equality is a mirage. What is more desirable and practicable than the pursuit of equality is the pursuit of equality of opportunity. And opportunity means nothing unless it includes the right to be unequal (Thatcher 16.9.75)



GUY FAWKES

The only person
to enter Parliament
with honest intentions

A WOMAN who grew up with Thatcher in Grantham remembers the following episode from their days in the sixth form. A natural disaster had struck somewhere in Africa and some of the school-kids wanted to raise money to send to the Red Cross. Thatcher was opposed to this on the grounds that "it interfered with the right of Africans to eat less."

Now this theme of the right to be unequal marks the Tory 1979 manifesto from the first page to the last "the balance of our society has been increasingly tilted in favour of the State at the expense of individual freedom." The manifesto then goes on to set out how "individual freedom" will be increased — at the expense of collective victories of the working class:

- making illegal secondary picketing
- abolishing the closed shop
- wider use of the secret ballot
- cut back in social security for strikers
- cash limits for public spending and
- no-strike agreements in "few essential services."

- a reduction in the top rate of income tax and an increase in taxes on spending like VAT which obviously hit working people who spend most of what they earn.

- the re-introduction of pay beds in the NHS

CREAM OFF

Underlying all these measures is the familiar Tory philosophy of giving a bump up to the people who already enjoy the advantages in life. Mrs Thatcher wants to bring about an irreversible change in the distribution

of the goodies, in favour of the middle and upper classes.

Frequently the Tories can be found proposing policies which are straightforward lunacy, such as the retreat from comprehensives. They argue that the bright kids aren't being given a fair chance since the abolition of the grammar schools. Yet recent research makes it clear that in good comprehensive schools, less "bright" kids are helped by being in contact with "brighter" kids without this in any way affecting the brighter kids. The research also shows that the quality of the school can make an enormous difference to how a kid develops. Tory proposals will make sure that direct grant schools cream off many of the academically best pupils and teachers and take us back to a grammar/secondary mod. situation that is not in the interests of working class kids. The only point of this and the other measures is to re-inforce middle class advantage.

ECONOMIC POLICY

The Manifesto gives the impression of a very poorly thought out economic policies. Maybe this is because the next government's economic policy

will to a large extent be determined by factors outside its control — the international situation, the IMF. Some of the Tory policy is just a joke — e.g. the re-sale to private enterprise of the ship-building industry (who's going to buy that lemon?). Since the Tories want to put back on state expenditure and increase defence spending (to match the Communist bloc threat), this will mean large cuts in spending in welfare and education. They have already said they would cut between £400 to £500 million on education

And there will be equivalent cuts in health — whatever Thatcher says in the election campaign. Patrick Jenkin, a likely Minister of Health in a Tory government, made this clear in an article in the Daily Telegraph:

"Is it really so unthinkable that people might be expected to pay towards the cost of their keep when in hospital? With hospitals unable to finance desperately-needed improvements, must we cling dogmatically to the concept of a service always free at the point of use?" No they won't!

A section of the Tory manifesto makes clear that "the welfare of animals is an issue that concerns us all" A point rubbed home by Thatcher's televised trip to the farm. The truth is that there is an old tradition in the ruling class of being more concerned with pets than people. After all capitalism has always worked on the law of the jungle, so it pays to look after the animals.

socialist unity

ELECTING TO FIGHT BACK

Paying for the crisis

Labour's main achievement has been to bring about a massive shift of wealth to big business. Six billion pounds were transferred in handouts, two thirds of the total fixed investment in industry. This has been financed by:

- Increasing personal taxation from 38.8 to 46.6%
- Holding down wages — between 1974-77 real earning fell by 7%
- Cutting services and public spending.

TAX

Even this is not enough for the Tories. They want to shift more wealth to companies. Tax cuts are central to the public image of their economic policies. Yet it is a myth that Britain is "over-taxed." 37% of gross domestic product is taken by tax and social security contributions. West Germany, France, Sweden and seven other countries all take more (see graph). The truth is that average wage-earners are taxed heavily, but companies are not. Corporation Tax has almost collapsed as a source of revenue and the figures for estate-duty and capital-transfer tax show a decline from

£1,055 million ten years ago to £370 million today, despite inflation.

UNEMPLOYMENT

To finance tax cuts the Tories will have to cut spending on education, and all social services and benefits. These will particularly hit women, putting an ever greater burden on work in the home and shedding jobs in the public services, where many women have jobs. Housing is also bound to suffer heavily. Building starts have fallen from 351,000 in 1972 to 267,000 in 1977, while 200,000 building workers remain unemployed. To add insult to injury the Tories and Liberals aim to sell off council housing, reducing the chances for decent housing of families on the waiting list to zero.

It's the enormous burden of interest payment which lies behind the cuts in public spending. In Islington, North London, 90% of council rents go in interest charges.

So, Islington Socialist Unity calls for the ending of such payments and nationalising the banks and finance houses without compensation. But the practical thrust of SU campaigns is to build action to stop the

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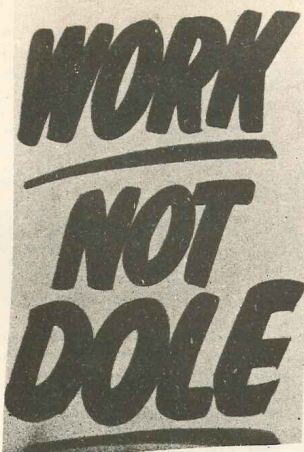
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Fighting for such policies is vital in areas where black people live. SU Candidate for Liverpool, Toxteth, Paul Adams spoke on the local radio recently against the widespread police harassment of black youth and called for democratic accountability of police to the community. We also actively campaign for the rights of gay people. A spokesperson from Gay Links recently spoke at a Liverpool SU rally, emphasising how much they welcomed our support and the chance to speak SU supporters have also been active in building "Reclaim the Night" marches, calling for the right of women to live without violent attacks and supporting the need for Battered Wives and Rape Crisis Centres.

Destroying our jobs

Labour should hold a competition for the sickest slogan — 1974's "Back to Work" with Labour, or 1979's "A vote for Labour is a vote for your Job." Tell that to the Dunlop workers — now swelling the 100,000 unemployed on Merseyside. We've seen nothing yet, the Cambridge Economic Policy Group, predicts 2.7million unemployed by 1985 and 3.7m by 1990. Labour's boasts about saving jobs refer mainly to their massive cover-up through the Youth Opportunities, Job Creation and Employment Subsidy schemes. The aim and effect has been to keep 180,000 people off the unemployment records.

The Tories will dispense with much of this, along with the National Enterprise Board. After all most of them think it's workers' own fault anyway. Sir Keith Joseph recently said that



rising unemployment occurs "partly because self-discipline, numeracy and literacy have deteriorated."

REDUNDANCIES

Socialist Unity has prioritised the need to fight for the 35 hour week and work sharing, with nationalisation under workers control of all firms threatening redundancies. Alongside workers plans for alternative production, these are the only practical means of saving jobs. Even then occupations are a necessary defence against closure. These are the perspectives Liverpool Socialist Unity has been fighting for around the Dunlops campaign and in Manchester, where the SU candidate, unemployed boiler-maker, Jeff West has challenged Industry Minister Gerald Kaufmann to debate his "redundancies will have to come" statements.



Youth

The non-parliamentary nature of SU is shown by the emphasis given to youth. Not only have most young people got a dead end future, but they haven't even got a vote to get politicians going with. As a Manchester SU leaflet put it "Old enough to be unemployed, too young to vote." SU groups like Nottingham have been helping to build SKAN and NUSS groups. Past election campaigns have produced enthusiastic "Revolution" youth groups in Glasgow and Edge Hill, Liverpool. A "School kids for Stanton" group has been formed and Pat Stanton, the candidate defeated Labour to win a 'mock election'. It's nice to think we've got a future,

WHERE SO

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- HULL Central Candidate: Pauline Stanton Hull Trades Council Executive
- LIVERPOOL Toxteth Candidate: Paul Adams
- LONDON Deptford Candidate: Janet Maguire (branch secretary)
- LONDON Islington North Candidate: Mike Simpson

THE 1974 Labour Election Manifesto committed itself to "Bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families," as well as to "eliminate poverty....increase social equality, improve the environment and....take power in industry genuinely accountable to the workers and community at large."

Although few on the left expected the Manifesto's promise to be translated into reality, many underestimated the extent to which Labour would implement fully-fledged Tory policies. Labour's sharp move to the right has underlined the need for a socialist alternative, and one which has no illusions that socialism can come through parliament. The election address of the Socialist

Unity candidate for Ardwick, Geoff West, puts it well:

"Whatever the result of this election, working people will still need to continue the fight. We don't believe that the issues can be solved by putting an X next to someone's name once every five years and then letting them get on with it. The policies Socialist Unity stands for can only be won by mass action based on the max-

imum involvement of working people in the crucial decisions that affect our lives."

As well as the ten Socialist Unity candidates in these elections, socialist alternative candidates have stood in two other constituencies: Pat Arrowsmith against James Callaghan in Cardiff and Brendan Gallagher, opposing Roy Mason in Barnsley.

Fighting fascists and the state

There are four black candidates of the major parties, one Labour, two Tories and one Liberal. All are conveniently in hopeless seats. But race is an issue, even for these parties. The Tories are going after the National Front vote: Mrs Thatcher has repeated that "people feel swamped by immigration".

Labour is trying to say nothing, apart from conceding to pressure to scrap the 'Sus' laws. Their record in introducing ever-stricter immigration controls has put off many black people. The Liberals are prepared to say openly that numbers are falling, so stuff about 'swamping' is rubbish.

SU refuses to play the numbers

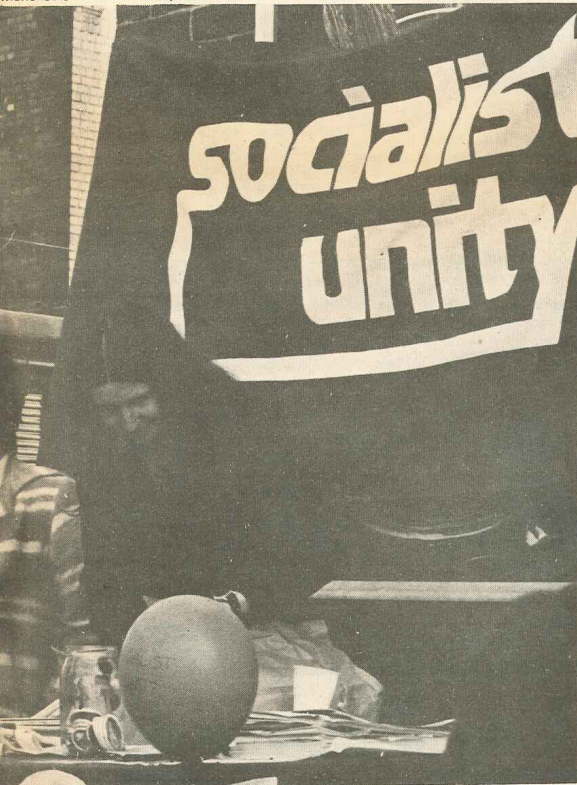
game. The need to fight the Immigration Controls is central to Tariq Ali's campaign in South-hall. His opponent is Sid Bidwell, who helped prepare the document dish up by the Select Committee on Race and Immigration that was too racist even for the last Labour Government. In Toxteth, Paul Adams, SU's candidate, shares the position of most black youth: at twenty two he's been on the dole for four years. As well as immigration controls, the campaign stresses the need to fight for positive discrimination in housing and employment, and building the local Merseyside Anti-Racist Alliance. All SU campaigns have been supporting Anti-Nazi League Activities



N.I.N. Photo Co-op.

25 pickets outside Durham Jail in support of 7 Irish prisoners held there in December.

Manchester Socialist Unity market stall



Big Flame Photo

Ireland- breaking the wall of silence

If you were reading about a foreign country where all of the parties were fighting an election without mentioning a war that country had been involved in for ten years, it would seem scarcely credible. Yet that is precisely the situation in Britain. Irish organisations, the Left and UTOM are trying hard to break through that wall of silence by making Ireland an issue. SU has been prominent in supporting the independent campaigns of Brendan Gallagher (whose son was falsely imprisoned by a rigged court) and Pat Arrowsmith.

H- BLOK

Along with UTOM we have organised and supported "blanket pickets" of Labour meetings to

highlight the position of political prisoners in the notorious 'H' Block. As well as leafletting in support of Troops Out and Self Determination for the Irish People, most SU groups have organised meetings for Gallagher and Arrowsmith. For many SU groups, Ireland is an obviously vital issue, especially in Islington where the MP is Michael Halloran, elected on the "Irish vote", but who has done nothing to oppose Britain's bloody repression in Ireland.

ARMY

The Committee to Elect Brendan Gallagher in Barnsley has been especially imaginative in its policies and activities. A success-

ful anti-recruitment picket and leafletting was held outside the Army Shop, forcing it to close, while churches have also been leafletted. The campaign has emphasised how the increased repressive measures and decrease in legal rights could be used in Britain against struggles here, and pointing out the similarities of the 'B' specials and Riot Squads to the SPG and other British police units.

SU has also been linking Ireland to Britain's other imperialist policies and calling for support for the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe as well as pointing out Britain's abject support for the Shah of Iran, and the need for workers and peasants to carry on the revolution there.

LEICESTER DOG DAY AFTERNOON

500 National Front marchers and 5,000 police turned Leicester city centre into a battlefield last Saturday 21st April.

Local people, especially the young, both black and white, joined with well over 1,000 Anti-Nazi League supporters to try and stop the fascists marching through the centre.

DOGS

For the police it was a major military operation. They were drafted in from all over the country. A helicopter directed a force including dogs, horses and men with riot shields, batons, masks and enough pure police savagery to make any football terrace seem like a picnic. All this plus an estimated £250,000 of public money just so a straggle of fascists from far and wide could parade their message of hate and violence on the streets of this city with a 20% black population.

It was all a sharp contrast to Glasgow where on the same day the police allowed an ill-protected Troops Out of Ireland demonstration to be attacked by young loyalists. Many demonstrators ended up seriously injured in hospital

SAVAGERY

The police's orders were obvious - to stop at nothing to protect the Front. They diverted our coaches away from the ANL meeting place

be seen to be believed. Indiscriminate kicking and punching from the word go. By the time of the Front meeting in a local school a whole main street was full of ANL demonstrators and local people. The police vehicles were accelerating up the road at breakneck speed and people were literally jumping for their lives. Luckily no-one was hit.

Police tactics were notable for the first use of dogs against demonstrators in living memory in Britain. Coming at the end of a week that included Sir Robert Mark's comments on the unions and the Police Federations barely disguised pro-Tory law and order adverts in the national dailies, it's easy to see the way the police handled Leicester as a boost to their campaign for wider powers.

PROFESSIONALS

Looking back it was a success for the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement. The ANL said it would keep Leicester city centre 'Nazi-free' and we did. The police had to divert the fascist march. There were many more of us than of the NF and together with some of the local community we gave the Front the welcome they deserved. But at the time it was very chaotic and in part demoralising, completely lacking any visible direction or organisation. In fact, we must learn from Leicester and organise better.

Finally, taking on the fascists in this country

SOCIALIST UNITY IS STANDING

- LONDON Tower Hamlets
Candidate: Ray Varnes (ILEA district secretary, NUPE)
- MANCHESTER Ardwick
Candidate: Jeff West (Boilermakers Union)
- NOTTINGHAM East.
Candidate: Ian Juniper (ASTMS)
- BARNSELY
Candidate: Brendan Gallagher (father of H-Block prisoner)
- CARDIFF South-East
Candidate: Pat Arrowsmith.

District

(ASTMS, ve)

STMS

socialist unity

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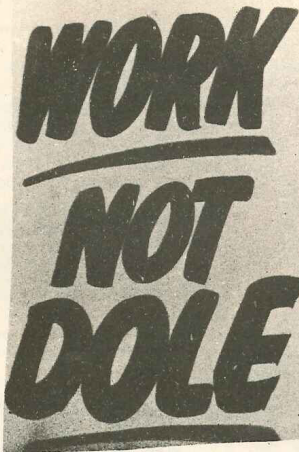
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Big Flame Photo