Workers' Weekly

Vol. 21 Nos. 11-12 May 7-14, 1994 20p

What Messages to the Workers on May Day?

What has happened to the traditional May Day demonstrations, with large rallies and declarations of working class solidarity? It might seem at first sight as though the labour leaders had abandoned the working class. It would be more true to say that the TUC leaders have abandoned any thought of the working class as a social force with an independent role, let alone a leading role, in society. How can they justify a call to the workers on May Day?

TUC General Secretary John Monks did refer to May Day. He said on May 1st, "First this is a day in which we recognise the values of paid work." This is in fact a call from John Monks for the workers to remain blind to their exploitation by capital and be content with a subservient place in this moribund society. Even more to the point, it neither focuses on what

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The Local Elections and the Need for a Modern Democracy

In the local elections on May 5, the Conservatives suffered their worst showing in local elections since 1979, and one of the poorest in their history. This was a very clear indication that the policies of the government aimed at cutting public services, aimed at shifting the burden of the crisis onto the backs of the people, are being rejected by the people at large.

However, there was not presented any clear alternative to these policies. Indeed, it seems to be a deliberate policy, particularly of the Labour Party, that alternatives cannot and should not be given. This represents their working hypothesis that the other parliamentary parties should ride on the opposition to policies which harm the people's well-being, while at the same time holding the view that – local single-issue politics notwithstanding – "business" interests, "competitiveness", a "business plan for Britain" are paramount.

Clearly the local election results taken as a whole show the depth and breadth of the rejection of the Conservative government's plans of cutting public spending, its attitude that each person must fend for themselves and devil-take-the-hindmost, its fraudulent strategy of, "if business succeeds then the country succeeds". But they do not show support for the opposition parties, and for the good reason that the alternative policies are not there. What they show is that the alternatives to the government's policies need to be consciously

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Work to study and distribute "Discussion" forges ahead

ONE of the exciting things about the study groups which have been set up around discussing the Party's draft document, *There Is a Way Out of the Crisis*, is the enthusiasm the participants have shown for this Central Committee document which is now the subject of discussion, dissemination and elaboration.

For example, in assessing the theoretical work embodied in the document, one comrade remarked that this fufilled a vital need, as an oasis in a desert without water.

In a report to *Workers' Weekly* submitted by a study group in London, it was pointed out how the discussion had highlighted that the thesis that there is a way out of the crisis received detailed substantiation in the document, both by showing that facts and figures reflect not just how bad things are but first and foremost that the objective situation points to there being a way out of the crisis, and secondly by emphasising the adverse consequences to society of

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What Messages to the Workers on May Day?

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problems working people are facing in society, nor what they should be doing about them, which direction they should be headed in, nor even recognises that the working class is in struggle. It does not address, let alone answer, a single question on workers' minds on May Day 1994. John Monks simply says that on May Day, "we celebrate the contribution which working men and women make to society, a contribution made through working together."

But on May Day 1994, the working class, increasingly disillusioned with trade union leaders of this type, is on the threshold of providing itself with modern class consciousness. What must it do, what programme must it take up? Demonstrations in Birmingham and Newcastle at least had the merit that they focused on the cuts in health care, including hospital closures, and other social programmes. But these demonstrations also suffered from the lack of any clear cut call addressing the workers by the trade union and labour leaders. Furthermore, there is no programme put forward by these leaders as to how the tables may be turned and the working class prepare to go on the offensive. In London, the workers were even more left out of account. A family festival had been organised by the local and regional Trades Union Councils in which the working class barely figured.

In none of these May Day events was there any recognition of the modern consciousness that the interests of society are served through the working class emancipating itself, that the working class must lead society with its own programme to extricate it from the crisis, a programme also that is not mere rhetoric about "workers of the world" without content or which adopts a narrow "workerist" point of view that ignores the interests of the whole of society.

It was the Party's May Day message which provided a guide to the way forward by declaring that the programme which the workers must inscribe on their banner, the programme which will remove the block on the path to progress for society, is that which puts the well-being of the people at the centre. It declared that the message of May Day most importantly centres around the working class taking up its responsibility as the leaders of society.

The Party's May Day message called on the working class to take up the programme that **There Is a Way Out of the Crisis**. It called on the workers to oppose the cuts in education, health care and other social programmes and furnish support to all those waging struggles in these sectors by demanding that these cuts be reversed and investments increased. It called on them to reject the government's stand that individuals have no claim on society, but that moneylenders and business alone have. And it called on the working class to fight for a socialist society on the basis of modern definitions, a society in which the claims of all are recognised by virtue of their being human.

Workers' Weekly

Newspaper of the
Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

May 7-14, 1994 Volume 21, Numbers 11-12

Subscription rates (Inland and EC):
45p per issue, £1.80 for 4 issues, £11.70 for 26 issues, £23.40 for 52 issues

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Against the Cuts

Polarisation of health care

COMING more than a decade after the Black report first showed the link between poverty and life expectancy, recent research shows that the increasing polarisation of society between rich and poor is leading to a deterioration in the health of the poor.

A series of articles published in the *British Medical Journal* have shown that the NHS is deteriorating rapidly with the differences between the health care received by rich and poor affecting their life expectancies and creating a two tier system in health care. Increasingly, the rich pay for private care and the poor fight for treatment in an under-funded public system.

Peter Phillimore of the University of Newcastle and colleagues studied mortality rates in 678 electoral wards in northern England and showed that although life expectancy has gone up overall, in the most deprived areas life expectancy has fallen for the first time since the 1930s. This means that the mortality gap between rich and poor has increased by a significant amount. The article suggests that the differences are not to do with individual life styles or even availability of good health care, but with the conditions in which people live. The worst figures are for men aged between 15 and 44 and are linked with high unemployment and low income. The government has answered by saying that to improve people's health care, "business must improve to improve overall prosperity"!

In the north of England, as in many other areas of the country, hospitals are being closed under the pretext of shifting resources to the improvement of preventative and primary health care. The research shows that for poorer people, the need for hospital treatment is greater and health education alone will not improve their life expectancy. On top of this, the introduction of market forces into health care with the 1990 Act is leading to a two-tier health service, a decrease in resources spent on direct health care, and open "rationalisation" of health care where some diseases of people over 65 are deemed as being not cost effective to treat.

According to the government, health care is not a right but a privilege which is available only to the extent that the economy allows, whilst individuals who can afford to can benefit from vastly superior health care. In essence, the funding of health care is being cut back because the demands which the money lenders and business are placing on society are considered more important than those of the people. There is a need for this to be met by taking up the demand that the claims of the people for proper health care in line with the development of society must be made available equally to all.

North of England correspondent

The Local Elections and the Need for a Modern Democracy

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put, and not only that, but that the struggles against these policies need to be further organised on the basis that the cuts should not only be reversed but investment increased.

Coming a few days after May Day, the day of working class solidarity, the local elections also brought to the fore that no path can be opened up for the progress of society without the working class playing its leading role. It is key that the workers must elaborate and put into practice their own programme, their own alternative, which proves that there is a way out of the crisis, that to put forward and fight for policies which put the well-being of the people at the centre is the order of the day.

Workers must take up and win support for the programme that there is a way out of the crisis, at the same time as furnishing support for all those struggling against the cuts by clearly putting forward and organising around the demands for investment in the future, demanding that everyone's claim on society be recognised.

Do the local elections bring the working class and people any closer to decision-making? It is certainly a very open question whether they can do so when even local politics is so dominated by the political parties, when both at local and national level the people are excluded from making decisions on any issues which affect their lives. The fact is that the concepts and norms of "representative democracy" permeate throughout society at every level keeping the working class and people out of the process of setting the agenda and making decisions. They operate so as to turn the working people into passive bystanders at worst and protesters against this or that policy or attack on their interests at best.

The outcome of the local elections shows that it is crucial for the solution of the problems people face that the working class itself must set the agenda, that it must put forward the policies that point the way out of the crisis.

Work to study and distribute *Discussion* forges ahead

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the working class not playing its leading role. Following the main presentation on the document – an overview of its main themes – there was an increased awareness among the participants that the line of march being pursued by RCPB(ML) in this immediate period represents the way forward, in particular the winning of people around the line of the Party, of not getting sidetracked or not seeing the wood for the trees, awareness of the place of the document in context of the Party's two-point programme. As was said during the discussion, the draft document as the basis for the general line of the Party represents a crucial step forward. The work in discussing the document in this period will stand all those who participate in it in good stead when the National Consultative Conference takes place on June 25-26 which will build on the draft document and mark a further advance for the Party and the working class in developing their programme for the way out of the crisis.

The consciousness of the participants in the study groups about the significance of the document reflects the emerging consciousness of the working class about its programme to open a path for the progress of society, it reflects awareness of the necessity for people to take up Marxist-Leninist thought, of the necessity of the workers becoming leaders of society

In a practical sense, there was also an awareness of the partcipants in the study groups of the need for developing plans for extending the space covered by *Discussion* in the communist and workers' movement and actually placing the quarterly review, as well as the draft document of RCPB(ML) itself, in that space in an organised way.

How the discussion will develop in the study groups and other discussion groups in the coming period will show how much the study groups are on their mettle. The study groups are one of the key elements at this time in the Party's organising work. In a sense they are the highest form of this work right now. It is refreshing to see their actual profiles taking shape, and their significance in drawing progressive and democratic forces closer to the Party developing.

Workers' Weekly encourages everyone to engage in and support this work. It calls on the whole Party to whole-heartedly take up its two-point programme which is gathering momentum.

Available as a pamphlet

THERE IS A WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS

Draft document released by the Central Committee of RCPB(ML) for discussion, March 19, 1994

ISBN 0 9523675 0 5

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DISCUSSION

Quarterly Review of Contemporary Marxist-Leninist Thought

Now Available, Vol.1 No.1, Spring 1994
Published by Ideological Studies Centre (ISC)

Business Enquiries to: New Distribution, BM Box 2568, London WC1N 3XX
Subscription rates (Inland): Single Issue - £2.50 + 50p p&p; Yearly - £10.00 + £2.00 p&p
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Hardial Bains Speaks at Launch of Quarterly Review *Discussion* in Britain

As an integral part of the reception held in Britain to launch the quarterly review *Discussion* on April 17, Hardial Bains, national leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), gave an important speech under the title *Modern Definitions for Laying the Foundations for a Mass Communist Party*.

Hardial Bains started by congratulating the Central Committee of RCPB(ML) on the occasion of its 15th anniversary in March. He said that CPC(ML) stands firmly with the draft document RCPB(ML) released at its anniversary rally for discussion, agreeing that it marks a big advance for the Party.

Hardial Bains pointed out that an advance in real life implies overcoming some block from the past opening a perspective for present and future work, not merely becoming more clear, and that when the two-point programme that RCPB(ML) had outlined is turned into life, this will be a great advance for the Party. Developing this point, he said that 1993 had also been a decisive year for the party, when it was seeking to work out solutions for the problems life had presented it with. Now it had worked out its programme of action, and he wished the Party success in the very important work it had set for itself.

All over the world, Hardial Bains continued, the bourgeoisie and world reaction are saying that Marxism-Leninism as an ideology is finished, that socialism as a system is finished. Why? They have never accepted Marxism as a legitimate world outlook, so why are they now saying it collapsed? The reason is that what has collapsed is their strategy for the reordering of the world. The US had worked very hard to eliminate the Soviet Union only to be faced with Russia, Germany and Japan as contending powers. This is a great debacle for them since it has created a disequilibrium, where the US has become a military power with no economic power behind it. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the collapse of a completely rotten system exhausted by the arms race, has only deepened the crisis. This is what the policy begun by Khrushchev and continued by Brezhnev has led to, he pointed out.

Where is the place in this for the claim that Marxism has failed, the speaker asked? We could start a discussion and challenge the bourgeoisie to tell us where Marxism has failed. We will point out the opposite, and present our platform based on the ideological consideration that the world should be reorganised on the basis of socialism and communism so that the disequilibrium which the world faces can be transformed into a new equilibrium on that basis. Let the facts speak for themselves.

It is very important in such a debate, Hardial Bains continued, not to take a defensive approach, since our programme is not faulty. The 20th century, he explained, has shown that when revolution was in advance and socialism being constructed, massive changes, such as the destruction of colonialism in its old form, took place in the world. The period from 1917 to 1953 was a very glorious period. What kind of logic is it that blames those who were the builders of socialism for its destruction?

First and foremost, he continued, it has to be taken into consideration that at this time people want solutions to their problems, not to hear who is to be blamed. In this respect Marxist-Leninists have to challenge the logic of various governments that expenditures on social programmes give rise to indebtedness and deficits, and point out that it is an indictment of the modern capitalist system that it creates people who have no recourse to a livelihood but to demand welfare from the government. The Marxist-Leninists must also highlight that a really humane society has to accept as a principle the claims of all who, through no fault of their own, cannot look after themselves. A humane society honours them and provides a livelihood for them. We should show,the speaker declared, that not only will the parties solve the problems but that they are calling for the most humane system. Our ideological struggle should be geared against all those who just want to complain about the present system.

Hardial Bains went on to elaborate the attitude of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) towards the capitalist system. "It is a system of modern-day slave-drivers," he said. "It is a system which is a blight on human honour and it must be erased from the face of the earth." He went on, "Only in this way, in this period, can modern definitions be given the aim a communist party has to set for itself." It can be proven with the precision of science, Hardial Bains continued, that both the industrial proletariat and the technical-scientific side of the modern productive forces are demanding a new and advanced society, otherwise both will suffer devastation at the hands of the old system. What the capitalist representatives have in store for the people is aggression and war internationally and immiseration of the people and their enslavement in political terms nationally. CPC(ML), he said, will elaborate that all those who want to escape this maelstrom of capitalism should come forward and rally round the industrial prole-

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Hardial Bains Speaks at Launch of Quarterly Review *Discussion*

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tariat. "As a principle, as a way of life, we negate the capitalist system." The speaker emphasised, "This evil system must go. We have a theoretical consideration in this respect, which is that the productive forces cannot be released, whether in the sense of human productive forces or in the sense of the scientific-technical revolution, unless capitalism is overthrown."

Hardial Bains then dwelt on the conception of liberalism promoted by the bourgeoisie and world reaction. He pointed out that such attributes of the ethos of society as the provision of the broadest possible public education are now being withdrawn through their reforms. If they say liberal society is the best in the world, why are such things being withdrawn? Liberalism without social obligations is not liberalism but medievalism. The bourgeoisie speaks of the end of history. Today, not only are human beings not in full control of nature, but the content of relations between human beings is in need of being humanised. Will liberal society humanise nature and humanise the content of such relationships? It will not do so. But without this humanisation there can be no escape from all the problems of the world. We must speak loudly and clearly that we do not want this capitalist system. In so doing, we must avoid dogmatism. We cannot say that the capitalist system should be overthrown by merely repeating what Marx said. Marxism should be used as a guide to action.

Developing this point, Hardial Bains explained how the modern definition of a mass communist party comes into the picture. Objective action taking place spontaneously within the system at this time is working for counter-revolution. But the ebb of the revolution will be reversed, because action is determined by the objective class contradictions. Communist parties must prepare for the sharpening of the class contradictions, having a plan so that when things change, a mass communist party can be given rise to. A communist party must be an inseparable part of the working class, the industrial proletariat, as well as its vanguard. When the party speaks, this is the class speaking. And when the class is acting, the vanguard provides it with its consciousness. The various governments of the last 30 or 40 years have made every effort to separate the communist parties from the class. They have circulated dogmatism to ensure that ideological struggle has been waged up in the air while the world carries on irrespective.

Today, Hardial Bains continued, the present-day communists and the working class are having to pay for all the sins of the revisionists and opportunists of the past. But those who have committed the sins must be condemned, not on the basis of revanchism but on the basis of class action, that is by creating the conditions for a new society. We should not ourselves feel guilty for these sins, since we have not been the sinners. There is no need to wage ideological or polemical struggle on what has happened in the past, but rather to wage ideological and theoretical struggle at the present. In this respect, he said, the programme of RCPB(ML) to involve everyone irrespective of what their past has been is very important, he said. So, too, CPC(ML) is laying down now the foundation for a mass communist party. It is not possible to have revolution without parties of this kind. Without eliminating the fragmentation of the class through the work of developing modern definitions, it is not possible to have a revolutionary movement, Hardial Bains said.

"In our view," he continued, "these problems are not the concern just of the communists. They belong to the whole of society, and not just to the working class." He went on to explain how dogmatism and fundamentalism are being used to close people's minds and make them go to sleep. Ideological struggle in its modern definition has to be waged by encompassing everyone. "The more people are in action on the basis of dealing with the problems of real life, the more possibilities there are to smash the dogma which is stopping them from opening their eyes", he said. He forcefully pointed out that now is the time to start this work.

Hardial Bains concluded by remarking that *Discussion* includes articles from India and from Britain, which both speak against Westminster-type democracy. Furthermore, the destiny of Canada is also linked with that of Britain, as well as with Ireland and France. All the more reason, he said, to celebrate the unity between us. "In the end," Comrade Bains addressed the gathering, "I would like to wish you success in this work. I am absolutely certain that the programme you have charted out for yourself will succeed."

TO CONTACT

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New government in South Africa

THE elections in South Africa have brought to power a new government headed by the African National Congress (ANC). On Monday, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the new President. Britain's interest in the future of South Africa was shown by the presence of the Duke of Edinburgh, representing the Queen, at the swearing-in ceremony.

The elections in South Africa, held on the basis of the universal franchise, are an important milestone in the struggle of the Azanian people. The question remains of what form the struggle of the Azanian people will take in the new conditions in which the universal franchise has been achieved but the form of state power and the economic system remain unchanged.

The bourgeoisie in Britain has thrown itself fully behind the changes in South Africa. This of itself raises many questions? Why is the bourgeoisie, which was such a firm supporter of the apartheid regime for so long, now in favour of the changes in South Africa? The principal reason is that it is very much in favour so long as the superprofits gained by the multinationals and financial institutions which were so influential in the South African economy are maintained.

Commenting on the government changeover, *The Times* wrote on April 26 that South Africa "is far better placed to thrive in a new climate. It has a tradition – however distorted to date – of parliamentary government. The Burkean merits of this tradition should not be underestimated. Allied to the coherence of an elected legislature is the country's judiciary. Steeped in the Roman-Dutch method of legal positivism, and admirably independent, it is a potent force for the rule of law. The classically liberal constitution now in force will only augment its role and put its skill to healthier use." Further on, the article referred to the country's "hard-working business community, a force for both change and moderation" being "well placed to exploit the country's traditional trading and investment links now that international markets are open."

What the British bourgeoisie and others are celebrating is the fact that they consider the changes in South Africa to have been brought about in such a way that the potential for superprofits has actually increased. Efforts are under way to ensure that the South African economy is made dependent on the IMF and World Bank. The United States is to double its $180 million aid package whilst the IMF advanced $850 million last year and huge loans form their World Bank are under discussion. These loans, as always, will no doubt be geared to changes to the economy which cut back public spending and hold down wages.

The changes in South Africa have taken place in such a way that the parliamentary and state institutions and the economy remain essentially unchanged. The forms of representative democracy as it exists in Britain, the United States and other countries act to ensure that the people are effectively disenfranchised and unable to influence the course of events or their future, whilst the economy, being run in the interests of big business and the foreign investors, means that necessarily it is not run in the interests of the people. Those who slaughtered the Azanian people and brutally exploited them, who robbed their land, not only are to escape punishment on the basis of establishing "national unity" but will remain in positions of power.

The struggle of the Azanian people has been a long and heroic one. It is their struggle which has brought about the establishment of the universal franchise in South Africa. Their struggle for an end to the barbaric apartheid system and for genuine democracy will naturally lead them to continue their struggle in the new conditions to bring about a truly democratic state based on modern definitions, in which the people are sovereign, and an economy which has the needs of the people at the centre.

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June 25 and 26, 1994

Opening Session: June 25, 9:00 a.m.

Closing Session: June 26, 5:00 p.m.

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) is organising a **National Consultative Conference** on June 25-26, 1994, in order to discuss the draft document released for discussion at the rally on March 19, 1994, celebrating the 15th anniversary of its founding.

The aim of this conference is to involve all the forces which are concerned about the present state of affairs in Britain and the world in elaborating the draft document **There Is a Way Out of the Crisis** and to begin planned work to build a practical programme on this basis.

All activists in various struggles, other Communist Parties, their leadership and rank-and-file and broad masses of the people are warmly invited to attend the conference where discussion will take place on a topic-by-topic basis in which individuals will contribute their comments by turn. A number of papers prepared by the Central Committee of RCPB(ML) will be presented in order to facilitate the discussion.

Anyone who would like to intervene on the basis of a prepared paper must contact RCPB(ML) at least two weeks before the National Consultative Conference takes place.

Hardial Bains, national leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), has been invited to open this conference and participate in the discussion. Various other Communist Parties and organisations from across the five continents have also been invited to attend, along with progressive and democratic personalities.

The National Consultative Conference is the most important forum which has been organised by RCPB(ML) in order to promote discussion on the questions of vital interest for the working class and people of Britain and internationally. Everyone is welcome. A registration fee of £25 (students and unwaged £10) is required to meet the conference expenses. Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided during the proceedings.

The conference proceedings will also be made available in print and video form.

For further details contact RCPB(ML), 170 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LA. Tel: 071-627 0599

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