Workers' Weekly

Vol. 21 No. 15 July 2, 1994 20p

National Consultative Conference opens new chapter in Party's line of march

THE Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) convened an important National Consultative Conference on June 25 and 26 in London.

Held barely three months after the Party's 15th Anniversary on March 19, where the release of the Draft Document for discussion, **There is a Way Out of the Crisis**, began the work to establish its general line for the period, the purpose of the Consultative Conference was to further deepen and consolidate the general line and set out the next stage of work. In the intervening period, a two-point programme of dissemination and elaboration of the Draft Document was carried, with study groups and other forms of discussions organised amongst Party members and supporters, as well as activists from other organisations in Britain. As the Conference was about to begin on Saturday morning, with Party activists arriving from across the country, there was a marked atmosphere of excitement and anticipation to see the results of the line of march that led up to it.

Delegations of fraternal parties from Canada and Ireland, as well as organisations from the United States, were also in attendance. Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) national leader Hardial Bains, who was invited to deliver introductory remarks to the Conference, hailed the event as an important advance in the work of RCPB(M-L) and expressed his confidence that it would meet with great success.

To facilitate the work of the Consultative Conference, the Central Committee of RCPB(M-L) prepared six papers elaborating various aspects of the Party's analysis. The main paper, by Chris Coleman, began with a summation of the Party's work over the past year, particularly since the release of the Draft Document. Outlining the problems and difficulties stemming from both the objective developments and the broad anti-communist offensive, The speaker emphasised that the most important advance made by the Party in this period was its defence of democratic centralism and its opposition to the pressures which would have eliminated the Party's leading role and placed it at the tail end of the workers' movement. On March 19, he said, the Central Committee did its duty to the Party by presenting its opinion in the form of the Draft Document and set-

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HIGHLIGHTS OF MAIN PAPER

Where Do We Go From Here?

Chris Coleman, presenting the main paper to the National Consultative Conference on behalf of the Central Committee, began by saying that having come this far in the work of popularising and discussing the draft document, *There is a Way Out of the Crisis*, released at the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), the question that naturally arises is where the Party should go from here. Should it continue on its two-point programme of dissemination and elaboration of the draft document or should it add some new elements to its programme? This, in the opinion of the Central Committee of RCPB(ML), he said, is the main item on which this Consultative Conference must deliberate and give its judgment. "In other words, all the contributions to the conference must keep the cutting edge of where the Party should go from here firmly in mind."

STRENGTHENING DISCUSSION

He said March 19 was a brilliant day for RCPB(M-L). "This was because it opened the path for the progress of the Party's work within the present conditions. The Party judges March 19 so highly because it proved that communism is capable of tackling the problems it faces, no matter how difficult and complex they may

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ting out a plan for its discussion throughout the Party and amongst the working class and broad masses.

In his presentation, the speaker set out the key point of deliberation for the Consultative Conference, posing the question of whether the Party should continue with its two-point programme of dissemination and elaboration or whether the conditions had been prepared for further elements to be added to it. In this regard, he argued that the work over the previous three months had brought the Party to a new chapter in which the key task was to formulate a programme for the working class, continuing on its path of strengthening its leading position and carrying discussions on the positions of the Party both in the working class and amongst the broad sections of women and youth and the middle strata. He emphasised that the key to the success of this work would be the development of the inner-Party life on the basis of democratic centralism and through the method of collective work and individual responsibility. This would provide the foundation for a vigorous discussion inside the Party in the course of implementing its plan for the period.

Chris Coleman presented a detailed analysis of developments in the international situation, showing the deepening of the disequilibrium that resulted from the collapse of the bi-polar division of the world and highlighting the need for the Party to organise the British working class to fulfil its internationalist duty to fight for the democratisation of international relations. His paper also analysed the impact of the world-wide crisis of capitalism, characterised by the "jobless recovery" in all the capitalist countries within which a greater and greater toll is being exacted from the working class and people.

In elaborating the need for the Party to take up the work of formulating a programme for the working class to lead the entire society out of crisis, he emphasised that it must be done on the basis of modern definitions and within the context of summing up the entire experience of the communist and workers' movement as a whole, as well as the national liberation struggles. He counterposed to this internationalist outlook the prejudiced, colonial outlook imposed on the world by the big powers, according to which European development represents the pinnacle of civilisation which must be emulated by all others.

The other papers presented to the Consultative Conference by the Central Committee analysed the direction of the working class and democratic movements in Britain, and elaborated the theory and the theoretical and ideological considerations which form the foundation of the Party's general line. These papers, which were delivered on the afternoon of the first day and carried over to the morning proceedings of June 26, brought out many of the problems facing the movement, stressing that the most critical need at this time is for the working class to have its own programme which shows the way forward for the entire society. For example, the presentations on the direction of the working class movement and the ideological considerations of the Party provided many examples to show that without the working class establishing its long-term and short-term aims on the basis of its position as the most revolutionary and productive force, it is being reduced to the level of a mere protest movement. Within the conditions of the retrogressive pressures of the British ruling circles to push society back to medievalism, it was stressed that the working class must have its own programme which can turn the broad discontent in society into a force for change.

The particularly strong pressure on the working class in Britain to submit to the dictate that "Britain is the most democratic country" in the world was also highlighted in the presentations to show the importance of the Party occupying the space opened by the

Workers' Weekly

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

July 2, 1994 Volume 21, Number 15

Subscription rates (cheques made payable to Workers' Publications Centre):
45p per issue, £1.80 for 4 issues, £11.70 for 26 issues, £23.40 for 52 issues

To contact RCPB(ML)
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National Consultative Conference

broad political discontent and the need for democratic renewal. It was emphasised that the task of organising the working class to lead the movement for democracy must not be viewed as some tactical manoeuvre, but as a part of its strategic aim to create the conditions for its emancipation and the progress of society.

With the conclusion of these presentations by the Central Committee of RCPB(M-L), the discussion continued. Many interventions were made by Party activists who spoke about their experiences during the work to disseminate the Draft Document. There was broad agreement with the need for these discussions to be taken further to all sections of the society, while the Party immediately begins its work of formulating a draft programme for the class. The Indian Workers Association (G.B.) and an Afro-Caribbean Study Group also presented their views to the Conference, particularly emphasising the importance of the work to oppose the ghettoisation of society on the basis of race and colour as an integral part of the struggle of the working class for its unity against capitalist exploitation.

Just before the deliberations on the general line and programme of the Party were about to conclude, a poem commissioned by CPC(M-L) and written in honour of the Consultative Conference was recited. The poem in itself, as well as the prospect of the revitalisation of the close collaboration between RCPB(M-L) and CPC(M-L) in the development of progressive and revolutionary culture, met with an enthusiastic round of applause and seemed to capture the overriding spirit of those present that change is in the making.

The Consultative Conference was marked by a strong spirit of internationalist solidarity amongst the fraternal parties present. The delegations were called upon to make presentations to the Consultative Conference in the course of its proceedings and each spoke about the preoccupations and advances in their own work for the emancipation of the working class. From the United States, the delegations issued an invitation to everyone to participate in an important International Seminar on Communism and the Requirements of Modern Democracy which will be held in Chicago on October 8 - 9, 1994, the preparations for which are the main preoccupation at this time. The Irish delegation spoke about the Downing Street Declaration and the considerations of the Party in formulating a response to it. A member of the Canadian delegation spoke about CPC(M-L)'s work to strengthen itself through specialisation and professionalisation, explaining both the developments in the work of the Party branches, as well as the formation of Groups of Writers and Disseminators to provide the working class with its own consciousness and organisation.

When the interventions by the fraternal delegations were over, the Conference approved a resolution calling on the Central Committee of the Party to immediately begin the work to formulate a programme of the working class, following which Hardial Bains was invited to deliver concluding remarks to the Conference. He expressed his full support for the important decision of the Consultative Conference, assessing it as an important step forward in the work of RCPB(M-L) and gave his enthusiastic wishes for success in the work for the realisation of its plan.

The Consultative Conference concluded with the shouting of slogans and the singing of *The Internationale* in a very warm and spirited atmosphere, following which the participants remained for several hours to discuss various highlights of the proceedings.

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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ANNOUNCEMENT

The work of the Central Committee on formulating a Draft Programme for the working class, and the Party's continuing work of dissemination and elaboration of the Draft Document *There is a Way out of the Crisis*, will be presented for summation at the next National Consultative Conference of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), to be held on November 26 and 27, 1994.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MAIN PAPER

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be. March 19 also showed that the Party has the resilience to be in step with the times." He said that RCPB(M-L) went through an extremely difficult time in 1993 but, in spite of all the difficulties, the Party made an advance, took concrete measures to establish the technical base for the modernisation of *Workers' Weekly*, and also paid successful attention to developing its content. The Party was able to face the task of confronting the problems at this level of strengthening itself as the vanguard of the working class, he said.

The speaker said the New Year ushered in a whole period of vigorous discussion, the framework for which was laid in 1993. "Besides strengthening the level of discussion inside the Party, we made a sincere and honest effort to do the same with all those who call themselves communists, except those who are historical renegades and provocateurs. We approached everyone without any feelings of sectarianism or arrogance and this work went through a qualitative and quantitative change on March 19."

He said everyone must keep in mind that RCPB(M-L) had had its fair share of difficulties from the attitudes and pressures being brought to bear from the anti-communist offensive and objective social developments. In this context, he noted, the difficulties created by the demand that the Central Committee give up its position as the sole leader of the Party were not small. "The demand that first discussion must take place before the CC could present its views and that the CC must subordinate itself and submit to the results of the discussion before it could itself deliberate on any matter, was not a small factor in dissipating the revolutionary energy and confusing and diverting attention from the problems which our Party faced." But on March 19, he said, the Central Committee did its duty to the Party by presenting its opinion in the form of a draft document. "The purpose of presenting the draft was to generate discussion in the entire Party and in the working class and broad masses, to sweep aside in one stroke all the cobwebs which had gathered and open the path for the advance of our Party."

NECESSITY TO FORMULATE A PROGRAMME

Today, the speaker said, the Conference is gathering with a new equation, a new task which is on the same road of March 19 but whose dimension is somewhat different and whose successful execution will create an even more favourable situation for the working class and people.

"Should our Party play its vanguard role to formulate its draft programme and take it to the working class and the masses for discussion," he asked, "or should the Party while away its time deepening its own consciousness and submitting itself to the demand of those who say that the most important task is not the consolidation of our Party by restoring the unity of the communists in Britain but is something else?" The speaker said there were even some who suggest that the Party should wait for the working class to tell the vanguard what to do, "that instead of leading the working class, the revolutionary vanguard should reduce itself to the level of a sociological group which gathers information on a piece-meal and empirical basis".

He said that by taking up the agenda of what should come next and by keeping in mind the significance of carrying on with the two-point programme and the need for working out a draft programme for the working class as its cutting edge, this Consultative Conference "will open a new chapter on the road of March 19 and prove how the vanguard leads and sets the programme for the working class".

The speaker said that in the opinion of the Central Committee of RCPB(M-L), what the British working class needs is its own independent programme behind which it rallies its own ranks and the broad masses of the people. Under the present circumstances, when there are so many pressures, there is always a tendency to reduce the task of working out the independent programme for the working class to merely some phrases that the British working class must smash capitalism, he said. "Yes, our Party fully agrees with smashing capitalism and building a new society based on socialism but the point is that the Party is actually serious when it demands that this must be done in real life. This task must not be reduced to the mere repetition of phrases and the expression of intent but it must shine in the working class as the source around which the class is organised."

SUMMING UP THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT

Chris Coleman said the task of formulating a programme must be transformed into a conscious plan, a step-wise action, a work which RCPB(M-L) takes up in the closest cooperation with other fraternal Communist Parties especially CPC(M-L). "It is very true that our Party must do its own thinking and this is what it has been known to do since it was founded 15 years ago but our Party recognises another truth as well. Thinking cannot be done in isolation from all those who are fighting for the same cause." He said the precondition for the formulation of a draft programme for the working class is the summation of the experience of all the communist parties taken as a whole and of the international working class movement and of the na-

variably part-time, low-wage jobs which do not come with significant pension or health benefits for the workers.

"There is not a single capitalist country where the working family is not under great stress," Chris Coleman said. Poverty and homelessness are on the increase, as are social problems such as violence against women, alcoholism, teenage suicides and so on. All of this makes a mockery of these countries' claims to being democratic, he said.

In order to shore up the profits of the biggest monopolies within this period of recession and sharpening international economic rivalry, he said, the bourgeoisie has turned on the social programmes as a source of funds. He noted that in Britain, the United States, Canada and all major capitalist countries, expenditures on education, health care, unemployment benefit and old-age pensions are being cut back and the most medieval logic is presented in order to justify this. "Whether expressed in the form of John Major's contempt for beggars or Bill Clinton's attack on unwed mothers, what the bourgeoisie is really saying is that people should have no claims on society, that society has no responsibility to guarantee the wherewithal for being human to every man, woman and child." The speaker said the policy of liberalisation, privatisation and economic cutbacks bases itself on the very negation of the Twentieth Century's definition of human rights according to which society has an obligation to guarantee the rights which belong to all individuals by dint of being human.

He stressed that as far as the field of rights is considered, the bourgeoisie is bent on instituting medievalism. He reminded everyone that in 1917 the Great October Revolution abolished the distinction between children born inside or outside of wedlock and proclaimed that henceforth all citizens were equal regardless of the circumstances of their birth, gender, nationality or religion. But seventy seven years later, the President of the United States, Bill Clinton announced that the birth of children out of wedlock was a great social problem and proposed a so-called "welfare reform package" that penalises unwed mothers. "This may be a small example, comrades, but I for one couldn't help being struck by the ugly imprint of backwardness stamped all over Clinton's words, or the words of people like Peter Lilley on the same subject," he said.

RETROGRESSION IN INTERNATIONAL NORMS

The speaker said that just as the bourgeoisie is pushing medievalism on matters of social and economic policy, it is doing the same on issues of international relations, international law and diplomacy.

He said the struggle of North Korea, of Cuba and others in defence of their independence is not a minor matter. He stressed there is a very big principle involved, the principle of the inviolability of sovereignty, the inviolability of the right of a people to choose whatever economic and political system they want, of the sovereign equality of all states, big or small. "How strange that in the twilight of the twentieth century – a century which witnessed the October Revolution, the victory over fascism and the re-emergence of independent states in Asia and Africa – the menacing shadows of Palmerston and Monroe should once again darken the world stage with their gunboat diplomacy and strong-arm tactics," he said.

The speaker said there is an attempt under way to go back to old definitions of international law, back to the medieval notion of "might is right", to do away with the United Nations charter's ban on the use of force, its prohibition of intervention in the internal affairs of member states.

In this regard, the United Nations' and big power interventions in Iraq, Somalia, Yugoslavia and now Rwanda are aimed at establishing precedents justifying the erosion of national sovereignty for the sake of an allegedly "higher goal."

An illegal blockade of Cuba is maintained by the United States despite worldwide condemnation, the speaker said, pointing out that President Clinton speaks quite openly about wanting to bring about the downfall of Cuba's legally constituted government. In the same way, the US and Britain refuse to end the embargo of Iraq, saying the Iraqis must first "improve their human rights record", and Washington speaks openly of invading Haiti in order to allegedly restore democracy.

The speaker said it has long been a cardinal principle of international law that intervention by an outside power in a civil war in another country is illegal. In 1950, the United States tried to skirt around this question by getting the United Nations Security Council to describe the Korean civil war as an act of aggression by North Korea against a "sovereign" South Korea. Today, he said, even this fig leaf is not maintained. Chapter VII of the UN Charter – which is

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explicitly intended for breaches of international peace – is being frequently invoked to mandate outside intervention in internal conflicts. The US-led intervention in Somalia was one example of this, while the interference of NATO in the Bosnian civil war is another, while most recently, there is France's intervention in Rwanda.

NPT AND U.S. SEARCH FOR NUCLEAR MONOPOLY

The United States has made it quite clear that one of its key interests at the present time is to maintain its nuclear superiority, the speaker said. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is coming up for extension in 1995 and one of the preoccupations of the US, as well as of the other nuclear weapons states, is to get all countries to agree to an indefinite extension of the treaty unamended. "This would mean guaranteeing the nuclear monopoly of the 'Big 5' in perpetuity without stipulating any legal compulsion for them to disarm."

A corollary of this project, he said, requires the establishment of an intrusive verification regime either through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) or through the United Nations Special Commission, *a la* Iraq, which would have the right to inspect any site at any time. This, incidentally, is another reason it chose to put pressure on North Korea, the speaker pointed out, hoping to isolate it and force it to yield, thereby establishing a precedent for giving the IAEA even more powers than it presently enjoys.

The United States however got checkmated, he said, and there are a number of reasons for this. He said the most important factor is the maturity and firmness of the North Koreans themselves. Secondly, "there is the opposition of many countries to the US pressure, not least that of China". The third reason, he said, is the US's awareness that any tightening of the NPT will only act as an incentive for non-signatories to stay out and for existing signatories to gradually drop out as well. "When North Korea announced last year – in the face of US threats and aggressive war manoeuvres – that it was pulling out of the NPT, it caused a big crisis for United States' policy." The US said North Korea's withdrawal would "undermine the integrity" of the NPT regime but it knew that so would any attempt to force the issue in the Security Council. After all, if the US pressed for sanctions when a country decides to exercise its sovereignty right to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, a signatory would be condemned to the nuclear blackmail of the United States or any other atomic power till kingdom come, hardly a prospect Germany, Japan, India or other countries would relish, the speaker said.

In this context, he also pointed out that the refusal of China to go along with President Clinton's non-binding moratorium on nuclear testing and President Mitterrand's statement last month that France would never place its nuclear weapons under NATO command show that the nuclear weapons states themselves are struggling to achieve or maintain parity with each other, a struggle which does not augur well for the future. News of the new nuclear postures of Russia and the United States – wherein both have essentially dropped their no-first-use pledge against non-nuclear states – provides yet more proof that the end of the "Cold War" has not brought with it any lessening of tensions, he said.

NEED FOR DEMOCRATISATION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Chris Coleman said the refusal of the big powers to countenance the democratisation of international relations is precisely what is prolonging the present disequilibrium and bringing the world to a dangerous stage. The only equilibrium capable to bring peace on a world-scale is that based on the equality of all countries, big or small, he said. A key step in this regard would be to democratise the functioning of the United Nations, especially its Security Council, by abolishing the veto and enlarging its composition on a geographically equitable basis. In addition, a new, stable and just equilibrium will have to also involve the abolition of international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank in the way they are presently constituted.

He said it is the proletarian internationalist duty of RCPB(M-L) and of the British working class to fight against the retrogression which is being pushed internationally. "Our Party should fight for a modern foreign policy which bases itself on the principles of the sovereign equality of all states, of non-intervention and opposition to all military blocs like NATO and to all trade blocs like the European Union. Britain should withdraw from Ireland and stop intervening in civil wars around the world."

He said the present international disequilibrium is extremely dangerous, pregnant as it is with the threat of conflicts over spheres of influence, markets and sources of raw materials. He stressed that the working class is the only force capable of averting this danger and that the workers in countries like Britain have an especially onerous task to discharge. "The communists have a great responsibility to ensure that discussion on these important international questions is also carried far and wide."

OVERVIEW OF SITUATION IN BRITAIN

Turning to Britain, the speaker said that unemployment, poverty, social disintegration and a number of other ills resulting from the crisis "continue to be a blight on the lives of the working people." At the same time, he said, it should not be assumed that the present retreat

of revolution will go on for a long time. He said there was a space opening up for the working class and the communists to operate within, to enable them to avert the dangers facing the people, "to prepare conditions so that when the situation changes, to be able to resolve the crisis in favour of the working people and to open up a path to a new society, a socialist society".

At the same time, he said, "we must not underestimate the dangers to the lives, to the liberties, to the welfare of the working people". In Britain, the economy shows the same characteristic of "jobless recovery" as in the other countries, as described before. In Britain there is a small recovery in production and there is also a recovery to an extent in profitability, the speaker said, but this recovery is described by commentators as being "hesitant", and even then the hoped-for predictions are not coming about. It was predicted that growth in Britain next year would be 2.5%. Now, the speaker said, statisticians are saying that growth in Britain will only be 2.3%, and that the other European countries will next year overtake Britain's rate of growth.

The speaker said that at the same time as this hesitant growth, there has been, certainly in appearance, a slight fall in unemployment to 9.7%, whereas a year and a half ago it was 10.7%. But he said it has to be borne in mind that these figures are distorted by the fact that a huge amount of the jobs created over the last period have been part-time. Not only that, it should be noted that certain government agencies like the Unemployment Unit have said that in fact the unemployment level in Britain is nearer to 13.5% than 9.7%, because the way statistics are gathered omits many people who are unemployed.

LOGIC OF CUTBACKS

The argument being given by the Tory Party as well as by the Labour Party and TUC, the speaker noted, is that the key to advance in the economy is to "make business competitive". He said their entire economic argument centres around this point: that unless business is competitive, the public services cannot be provided. He said they persist in making this claim despite any scientific analysis, "despite the experience of the people which shows quite clearly that if business is successful, then this can only be on the basis of the ruin of the working people".

The speaker said that since the 1970s, the main plank of government policy in Britain, whether Labour or Conservative, has been the cutting of public expenditure. When he announced the Budget at the end of last year, the words Kenneth Clarke used were that the government should not pour the "nation's savings", i.e. taxpayers' money, into public expenditure. "We should be using the nation's savings for investment in private industry," said Clarke.

The speaker pointed out that this is a policy with the aim of making maximum profit, of robbing the public purse to finance the private sector. "And they justify this policy by the argument that it is not the responsibility of the state to look after the well-being of the people. It is only for the state to look after those most in need, to provide a 'safety net' for the worst off, while it is the responsibility of individuals and their families to provide for their own well-being."

The aim of the bourgeoisie, said the speaker, is to maintain a capitalist base with large-scale social production, but "to turn the clock back to a medieval superstructure where the state has no responsibility for the welfare of the citizens". But how is it possible that families can provide for the well-being of their members by themselves, he asked. Referring to Hardial Bains' speech earlier in the day, he said that when there was a subsistence economy, this is how people's needs were met – through the family. "But now, in modern society, in a complex, integrated society, with large-scale social production, how can the family provide for the education, for the health, the welfare needs of its members? Only a society can provide this." The speaker said it is the responsibility of those in power to make this provision. If the system is such that the state cannot or will not take this responsibility to provide for the well-being of the working people, this system will have to change, he said.

DEEPENING OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In the face of this attack on the public services, said the speaker, there is a growing consciousness on the part of the people, and a growing struggle, not just against the cuts but on the question of what kind of society this is. He said there was not just discontent with John Major but with the whole society. There is a whole move to demand that a new society come into being, he said. "In fact, the fundamental struggle in Britain is around this question, between those who want to go back to medievalism, to rob the taxpayers in order to finance the private sector and the pursuit of maximum profit, and those who not only wish to defend the public services, but to carry the provision for the well-being of the people to its logical conclusion, which is that society should provide for all its members the highest possible benefits for their well-being."

He said this struggle opens up a space for the working class and for communism to operate. As time goes by, he noted, this space has been slowly increasing. "We see, for instance, with the strike of the signalmen, with the strike of the Severn Bridge workers, with the strike of the BBC staff, that the working people are increasingly reluctant to accept this move towards privatisation, the attacks on their livelihoods, the

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Note: *Workers' Weekly* was not published on June 18 and 25.

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withdrawal of public provisions for their well-being."

With regard to the political sphere, the speaker said, there is a situation where the people have no part in the decisions which affect their lives. He pointed out that all the major parties are resisting fundamental change on this front. The Tory Party flatly rejects any change in the political process, while the Labour Party, he said, even if it calls, as it does, for a change in the Upper House, for a Bill of Rights or for a referendum on proportional representation, at the same time makes no move towards a fundamental change in what denies the people in Britain sovereignty – the right to govern and take part in political decision-making.

NEED FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES

Chris Coleman said that as was spelt out in the draft document, **There is a Way Out of the Crisis**, there has not been a fundamental change in the political process in Britain since the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688. Soon after that, he pointed out, the process became consolidated into the present-day system of cabinet government, where the cabinet comprised of the majority party in parliament has virtually absolute power, and the entire political life is dominated by the big parties. The people themselves have no role whatsoever except to vote every five years or so for candidates imposed on them by the big parties. This is leading to increasing disillusionment with politicians and with the political parties, first and foremost, of course, with John Major's government, but increasingly with all the major parties and the whole political system, said the speaker.

In addition, he said there is great concern about such questions as the lack of a constitution, about the miscarriages of justice of recent years, and the fact that no guaranteed rights exist for the people. People are concerned that the laws, the policies of the government are characterised by chauvinism, racism and are completely outmoded. He said this opposition also provides a space for the working class and for the communists to operate on the basis of modern definitions, "a space in which the demand is made for the democratic renewal of the political process and for the establishment of rights which are given to every resident of the country simply by dint of being human". In other words, he said, the space is opening around the question of the demand for a modern society which meets the requirements of the modern age.

At the same time, the speaker pointed out, the space for communism is deepening as consciousness on the national question in Britain increases. There are strong movements in Scotland and also in Wales demanding a change in the relationship with Westminster, demanding an end to the oppressive relation between Westminster and the Scottish and Welsh nations, and for their own parliaments, he said. The demand increases for the renewal of the British state, based on the willing agreement of the freely participating nations.

In conclusion, Chris Coleman said that looking at the overall situation in Britain and internationally, "we see a situation which is pregnant with change, where the majority of people are demanding some major change in the society, demanding a new type of society". In this situation, he said, the working class must come to the forefront of the struggle, and to do so it must have its independent programme behind which it can rally its own ranks, as well as the broad masses of the people. He said that in developing the independent programme of the working class, the Communist Party plays a key role in providing consciousness and organisation.

Chris Coleman said this issue brought the question squarely back to the point which was posed in the beginning of his speech. "Having achieved what we have achieved since March 19, where does the Party go from here?" Should it simply carry on with its same programme and elaborate further and continue the discussions on the draft general line presented in the document, he asked, or should it take a new step forward by carrying on with the two-point programme, while at the same time beginning the work to formulate a draft programme for the working class? Chris Coleman said that, in his opinion, this is what the Consultative Conference has to give its judgment on in order for RCPB(M-L) to march on.

REPORT of the PROCEEDINGS of the NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE of RCPB(ML)

June 25 and 26, 1994

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Printed and published by Workers' Publishing House, 170 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LA. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.