Workers' Weekly

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Advancing from 1994 into 1995

NINETEEN NINETY-FOUR has been a significant year for RCPB(ML). In this year, the Party has provided itself with indispensable weapons for the class battles with the bourgeoisie. It has projected a line of march and consolidated its unity. And it prepares to enter 1995 with a vitality and revolutionary spirit which is at odds with all the moribund forces in society which see no way to challenge the status quo.

What the times demanded was that the Party equip itself with a general line and a programme for the working class, on the basis of modern definitions. This it did. On the basis of the tasks arising from the International Seminar in Coventry of January 2-3, "On the Retreat of Revolution and the Tasks of the Communist and Workers' Movement", it produced its draft document, "There Is a Way Out of the Crisis". This was released for discussion at the Party's 15th anniversary rally on March 19, and its themes were further elaborated on at the National Consultative Conference of June 25-26. RCPB(ML)'s November 26-27 National Consultative Conference discussed and recommended for publication a Draft Programme for the Working Class. The main content of the Draft Programme is that of preparing the subjective conditions for revolution in Britain, within the conditions of the retreat of revolution on the world scale.

Although this period is one of ebb of revolution, the ebb is a temporary phenomenon. Internationally, it can be said that a new level of discontent is in the making. The euphoria that began to grip the bourgeoisie five years ago with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall has begun to evaporate. It has become clear that the bourgeoisie's all-out campaign against communism has done nothing to sort out the chronic ills of the capitalist system nor bring about the prospect of peace in the world. The opposite is the case. In this situation, the working class in each country has to provide itself with a programme of action as a key element in resolving the situation in its own favour and move towards overthrowing the world capitalist system.

In Britain, as in other capitalist countries, the government has as the focus of its policies the making of maximum capitalist profit by the monopolies and oligopolies. It has made, along with privatisation, the cutting of public spending the main plank of its economic policy. In these circumstances, the battle over the direction of the economy, that it should serve the interests of the people, needs to be joined by the working class. Likewise, in the political sphere, the working class must challenge the profoundly absolutist nature of the parliamentary system

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Organising for January 7

As 1994 ends, the Party is organising to move its work in 1995 onto a new level.

This was the spirit of the initial meeting of the Preparatory Committee set up to organise the January 7 public meeting at Conway Hall. At this public meeting, the Party will launch its Draft Programme for the Working Class (see p8).

The focus of the discussions of the Preparatory Committee was the historic importance of a programme for the class. The bourgeoisie cannot offer the working class and people any future, and the people rightly fear that the crisis will get even worse. The working people have less and less confidence in the politicians and the political process. In these circumstances, for example, the bourgeoisie is promoting the Labour Party with its pseudo-socialism in an attempt to solve this credibility crisis, and to divert the discontent of the people with the present system into channels which do not harm the status quo and allow the bourgeoisie to set the agenda.

Right at this time, RCPB(ML) is launching its Draft Programme for

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The British state – an anachronism in the modern world

JUST over a year ago, John Major and Albert Reynolds signed the Anglo-Irish Declaration in which, for the first time since England first occupied Ireland some 800 years ago, the government recognised the right to self-determination for the Irish people. In August, the IRA declared a cease-fire which has held ever since.

These measures have made a lasting peace a serious possibility. But the fundamental question remaining is whether the British government is prepared to take the decisive step of declaring that it will withdraw from Ireland, whether it will allow the Irish themselves to decide the form of the peace process without outside interference. So far the signs are not encouraging, with the Northern Ireland Office trying to make the "decommissioning" of IRA weapons the crucial step, even though some 20,000 heavily armed British troops continue to be stationed in the north of Ireland.

Unless the self-determination of the Irish people is recognised in real life and action taken based on this, the government's bold words will come to nothing. The Irish people demand nothing less than the realisation of their sovereignty and the removal of the barriers to the reunification of their country in order to build a modern and sovereign Ireland. This is also in the interests of the British working class. But were the British government to declare its willingness to withdraw it would immediately raise the question of the future of the United Kingdom. If it is accepted that the Irish will withdraw from the

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in Britain, which denies the working people the power to govern themselves. These circumstances point to the necessity for the working class to formulate its fighting programme and rally around this programme its own ranks and the people as a whole. Thus for the Party to present its Draft Programme for the working class is for the Party to fulfil its responsibility of taking a vanguard position as regards the working class and is an indispensable step in the march towards the strategic goal of overthrowing capitalism through revolution and building socialism.

The formulation of the Draft Programme marks a victory for the Party and the class. But such a victory only makes the Party more conscious of the need to build on this endeavour, both in terms of continuing to elaborate on the theory and on the theoretical and ideological considerations of the Draft Programme and in terms of the need to popularise it. This work involves further developing the Draft Programme through ongoing discussions amongst the various sections of the people, paying particular attention to how this work is to be carried out in the working class. This means that the line of march set in 1994 will be continued through 1995, with the emphasis on the actual work being carried out through a national programme of disseminating the Draft Programme on a wide scale and all that that entails. The Party will continue to set its objectives to ensure that this work is summed up and continues to advance, learning from the important lessons gained in 1994.

For RCPB(ML), this means standing on its own feet at the same time as learning from the experience of the communist and workers' movement worldwide. In particular, it will mean that all the organisations of the Party will have to pay attention to developing forms of organisation and methods of struggle appropriate to its present goal of organising the working class to take up the Draft Programme as its own.

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The responsibility of society for the well-being of its members

"Welfare" has been defined in different ways at different times, according to the social system, the level and condition of the productive forces and the attitude to human rights.

In feudal times, the serf was at the complete mercy of the lord of the manor and his "welfare" resided in the lord's power of life or death. With the advent of capitalism and the birth and growth of the nation state and of the working class, draconian poor laws, together with other conditions, ensured that this class was kept in a state of abject poverty living at a subsistence level barely sufficient to keep them fit for work. However, by the 19th century a flourishing and competitive capitalist economy needed a modernised infrastructure as well as certain guarantees of public well-being, and a programme of public works such as the building of sewers, water supply, schools and so on was undertaken to carry this out. The concept of the responsibility of the state for the well-being of its members, the welfare of the collective and the issue of human rights was put firmly on the agenda. At the same time, the working class grew in strength, numbers and consciousness, and its struggle for its own independent rights and interests developed. Malthusian ideologues for capitalism advocated "self-help", that is, that the welfare of the workers was their own responsibility and not that of the new capitalists, while others argued that workers were responsible for producing the entire social wealth, and their welfare was therefore the responsibility of the state.

What should be the modern definition of "welfare"? Such has been the development of the productive forces and the means of production that modern production has been socialised. People are born to a society where the process of production is social, and it is a violation of their rights to demand that they must fend for themselves or that they should be at the mercy of "market forces". This is recognised in the very term "social security". Should it not be that the well-being of the people be guaranteed by virtue of the fact that they are human, irrespective of their status, nationality, colour, creed, etc.? The right to a livelihood, food, shelter, education and health must be recognised as basic human rights, and any discussion about welfare and welfare reform must start from here. To present the discussion from the point of view of "business" and the "rate of profit", when business is blatantly looking after its own interests at the expense of everyone else, and in so doing is leading to the further immiseration, impoverishment and degradation of the people, is to ensure that there will be no solution and that the trend for the rich to get richer and the poor poorer will not only continue unabated but will be further aggravated.

The "Welfare State" introduced after the second world war and based on Keynesian economics of deficit financing addressed itself to what were called "the five great evils": want, disease, idleness, squalor and ignorance. Amidst a great fanfare, and for a brief spell of time, universal benefits were introduced, as well as a system of health and education that benefited virtually the whole population. But the welfare state never addressed the problem of the cause of the five evils; it was erected to lure people away from socialism, and to underpin the rebuilding of industry on the basis that the working population was incidental to the success of business. Effective welfare could only come with the "trickle down" effect from successful business – crumbs from the rich man's table. Universal and free benefits were short-lived and the welfare state itself became a source for making maximum profits, as what remains of it still is. And what of these "five evils" in 1994? Deficit financing as a means of maximising profits and ensuring the success of business has been replaced by fiscal restraint, with the same aim, resulting in what we now see with our own eyes: homelessness, hunger, disease and insecurity co-

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Organising for January 7

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the Working Class. This is a programme formulated to chart a way out of the crisis, and for the working class to lead society in opening a path to progress and to a new socialist society. The task of taking this Draft Programme out to the working class and other sections of the people will be a central task of the Party in the coming months. The January 7 meeting will be a key event in launching this work, which will be the basis for the advance of the Party in 1995.

In this respect, as one comrade pointed out, the importance of the meeting to launch the Draft Programme cannot be overstressed. The work to organise ongoing discussion in the working class and amongst all sections of the people on the Draft Programme, a national programme for its widescale dissemination, which the January 7 meeting will initiate, is crucial if the working class is to take up such a programme as its own.

The Russian invasion of Chechnya

CHECHNYA, a small nation of just over one million people in the Caucasus, is being raped by Russian imperialism.

Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, three years after Chechnya declared its independence from Russia in 1991, dispatched armed forces to compel Chechnya to accept the rule of Russia's constitution. He is demanding that Chechnya accept the status of a "subject nation" of Russia in return for economic assistance. The people of Chechnya are putting up a heroic resistance to the invasion. In many interviews reported by the media, Chechens declare that they will continue to fight until the Russian armed forces are driven from their homeland.

Russia claims to be a federation of some 87 nations and autonomous regions. But how can it legitimately be called a federation if the constituent parts are held together by force of arms? A federation implies a union of independent nations and regions which have an inviolable right to secede if they wish. Boris Yeltsin is speaking in the spirit of the old Russian tsars when he demands that the people of Chechnya accept the status of subject. He is demanding that they do precisely what he wants. Are these the actions of a "democrat", hailed by the "west" as having overturned the "totalitarianism" of the Bolsheviks? It should be remembered that the Soviet Constitution of 1936 had granted the right of secession to all.

This is not the first time that Boris Yeltsin has called out the Russian armed forces. Just over a year ago, he deployed tanks against the Congress of People's Deputies and the Constitution. Then on December 11 he gave the order for the troops to enter Chechnya. These actions are laying bare the weakness of the Yeltsin camp. Yegor Gaidar, Yeltsin's former ally and former acting Prime Minister, was among those who participated in Moscow protests against the invasion. The head of the Defence Committee of the Russian Parliament is opposed to the invasion. And the Deputy Defence Minister, Boris Gromov, has bitterly criticised Yeltsin, saying that the government had learned nothing from the disastrous campaign in Afghanistan. In addition, the contradictions in the Russian army have become very sharp. It is reported that the Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev, dismissed the entire top leadership of the North Caucasus army group, who did not want to subdue the people of Chechnya by force of arms, and took control of the operation himself.

The split in the armed forces shows how shaky is the state which Boris Yeltsin established by force of arms. Boris Yeltsin cannot be said to have the army with him, and in addition the struggles of the working class and people have not been crushed. The disastrous economic situation can only be made worse by the military campaign in Chechnya. Yeltsin himself declared in a speech on December 27, "The longer the situation in the Chechen republic goes on, the greater the destructive effect on Russia's stability. It has become one of the main internal threats to our state's stability." The situation is crying out for the working class to take the lead in bringing about revolution in Russia.

The split in Moscow is mirrored also by a split internationally. Bill Clinton declared the invasion of Chechnya to be an "internal affair" of the Russian Federation with a "secessionist" movement, while there has been growing unease in other capitals. A situation where the other big powers look the other way in return for Russia giving its support, for example, to interventions such as that of the US in Haiti is called into question if Boris Yeltsin's "democratic" credentials are damaged too much as the struggle in Chechnya is prolonged and the ferocity of the attacks increases. Even according to Russian sources, the death toll has passed the 1,000 mark and up to 60,000 people have become refugees. A Russian air attack on an oil refinery in the capital Grozny is posing grave dangers to life in the region. The split in the ranks of the bourgeoisie both in Russia and internationally is an indication of the deepening of the political crisis of imperialism and the capitalist world.

Resistance by Chechnya will be used by the foes of Russian imperialism to incite other regions to resist and embroil Russia in expensive wars and weaken it. US imperialism has that interest and so do German imperialism and others. Chechnya, like Bosnia, is becoming another factor in the split in the imperialist camp, as the big powers jockey for position at the cost of the interests of the working people of Chechnya and of the interests of the working class and people of the Russian Federation.

The declaration of independence by Chechnya is significant, as it is directed

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J. V. Stalin: builder of socialism and architect of the victory over fascism

OF all the personalities of the 20th century, J.V. Stalin remains the most hated, reviled, slandered and feared by imperialism, the bourgeoisie and world reaction. Slanders and calumnies continue against his life and work without let up. This is still the case on the 115th anniversary of his birth.

The working class and all justice- and peace-loving people in the world, on the other hand, continue to hail him as the builder of socialism and the architect of the victory over fascism. His contribution in the construction of socialism remains unique, as the USSR was the first country ever where socialism was constructed. He not only constructed socialism, but also defended it from internal and external enemies with the victory over fascism in the Second World War.

J.V. Stalin was born on December 21, 1879, in the town of Gori in Georgia, and died as the most loved leader of the people of the USSR and of the people of the world on March 5, 1953. He is hated by imperialism, the bourgeoisie and world reaction and by revisionism and opportunism precisely because he was the builder of socialism. J.V. Stalin led the laying down of the material and technical base of socialism and the revolutionisation of the relations between people by eliminating all exploiting classes.

In spite of the tons of venom which is spewed out against the life and work of J.V. Stalin, no state has been able to create a system where the productive forces develop harmoniously without any interruption and where there is extended reproduction except by following Stalin. All the states which abandoned socialism are suffering from anarchy and chaos in all spheres of society, from the economy to politics to social and cultural life. Why have all these "democrats" not been able to deal with such ills? The answer is quite simple: they do not want to. They justify this by proclaiming that it is "human nature" to have anarchy and chaos in all spheres in a society.

Stalin predicted that the final victory of socialism is not possible without revolutions in one or more advanced capitalist countries. Instead of marching ahead on the road of revolution and socialism and encouraging the working class in the advanced capitalist countries to stage their own revolutions, Nikita Khrushchev and his coterie made an about-turn. In the sphere of the economy, according to them, the only problem was to perfect the process of production and its management and to make all enterprises profitable in the capitalist sense. In the sphere of politics, too, Khrushchev stated that the only problem was the management of the state. In other words, revolution was thrown out of the window. The consequences for the USSR are known to all.

Stalin also predicted that as long as there is imperialism, there will be the danger of inter-imperialist war. He stated that socialism is a factor for peace. During the period of the bipolar division of the world, wars of aggression and intervention occurred in various parts of the world. However, since the collapse of USSR, the factors for another inter-imperialist war are growing every day. The contradictions between the US and Russia are growing. The imperialist powers have conflicting stands, whether on the question of ending the embargo against Iraq, or on the question of expanding NATO into the countries of former people's democracies, or on the question of Bosnia. These differences and disagreements are a prelude to an inter-imperialist war.

Stalin predicted that the collapse of the USSR would mean a return to medievalism. Such retrogression be-

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The Russian invasion of Chechnya

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against Russian chauvinism's age-old policy of Russification. Resistance by Chechnya will also inspire resistance by other peoples in the Caucasus. It is a big block against Russian imperialism within the present conditions when the big powers are trying to snuff out the people's struggles and make the world safe for domination by the monopolies and oligopolies.

The invasion of Chechnya is not an internal affair of Russia, but an imperialist intrigue to deprive nations of their right to self-determination and secession. The big powers consider the interests of other nations to be nothing, while their own interests are considered to be everything. Whenever one imperialist power serves itself at the cost of others without harming the interests of its rivals, its rivals are quite willing to look the other way. At the same time, the imperialists act together against any revolution and any movement of the peoples against their interests.

The working class and justice- and peace-loving people of the world should support the struggle of the people of Chechnya against Russian imperialism and should vigorously condemn the Russian invasion. They should demand that the armed forces of Russia get out of Chechnya. They should also condemn the US and other imperialists for tacitly approving this rape. For the working class, this is an important contribution they can make to hit at imperialism and its drive against the rights of nations and the obliteration of national boundaries, and as part of the movement of the working class and people for national and social emancipation.

The British state – an anachronism in the modern world

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UK, the Scots and Welsh will quite rightly demand the same for themselves. In Scotland and Wales the demand for self-government continues to grow. The fissures in the Union, which was itself established through conquest and force of arms, are clear from amongst other things the fact that the vast majority of the electorate in Scotland and Wales voted against the present government but have had its rule imposed on them. Throughout Britain the role of the monarchy is increasingly called into question, whilst the establishment political parties are seen as the mainstay of a system which keeps the majority of people away from the exercise of power.

The British state has become an anachronism in the modern world, a state established through suppression at home and colonial plunder and domination abroad, a state which continues to deny the rights of the nations within Britain, to racially discriminate against and oppress the national minorities, as well as continuing its annexation of parts of other countries, which maintains colonial territories at a time when the UN has called for an end to colonialism by the 21st century, and whose head of state remains the head of state of other countries.

Although John Major has been enthusiastic to declare that there will be no change to the status quo with regard to the Union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, meaning that the government will not recognise the right to self-determination of the nations of Scotland and Wales (apart from Ireland), he has been like his predecessors quite willing to compromise sovereignty by Britain's membership of the European Union and the ceding of more and more powers to Brussels.

It is increasingly apparent that, as on other fronts, there will be no way forward for the British state unless the working class leads the way out of the present impasse. As presently constituted, the British state acts as a block to progress, and is alien to modern times and circumstances. It was never constituted on national lines, but rather on the suppression of national rights. The only guarantee of national rights will come with the replacement of this state by the establishment of modern sovereign states for the people of each nation. The working class, if it is to lead the way out of the present national crisis, must propose as a solution the replacement of the archaic British state by modern sovereign states of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, with a voluntary and equal union between them if they so desire.

As part of the international proletariat, the British working class must carry out this work on the basis of its unity with the working class of all other countries. It must likewise demand that Britain withdraw from the European Union and that it relinquish its claims to sovereignty over Gibraltar, Hong Kong, the Malvinas and other territories over which it maintains colonial control. Such a programme would naturally put the working class in the vanguard of progress and enable it to call for support from all other sections of the working people.

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gan during the period of the bipolar division of the world, the period of transforming socialism into pseudo-socialism, but the collapse of pseudo-socialism opened the floodgates. The world bourgeoisie and reaction are openly demanding that society not have responsibility towards anyone and that everyone must fend for themselves.

Stalin, who was a specialist on the question of nationalities, knew that the collapse of the USSR would lead to the rise of unbridled Russian chauvinism and the suppression of all nationalities, and this is evident today. The Russian invasion of Chechnya is just the beginning of the suppression of the nations, which the present constitution of Russian Federation describes as "subjects". Boris Yeltsin is clamouring that Chechnya must be brought back within the jurisdiction of the Russian constitution and restored to the status of subject.

The world bourgeoisie and reaction can forgive anyone but those who overthrow them and their system. Stalin established the most humane and democratic system in human history. The working class and other working people were put at the centre of all development. Socialist industrialisation was carried out within a mere ten years. When Stalin died, the USSR was on the verge of a great historic advance, but this work was cut short by counter-revolution.

In hailing J.V. Stalin, we must remember that Stalin was not a slave of a phrase. He fought this kind of Marxism as opportunist and reactionary. He acted on the basis of the life-experience of his time with Marxism-Leninism as a guide. Today, too, the times are calling for such work under the present conditions. Drawing conclusions from the concrete conditions to prepare the subjective conditions for revolution is the necessity.

RCPB(ML) will continue to hail the life and work of J.V. Stalin. However much abuse the enemies of peace and progress heap against his name and work, it will not pass away. These "democrats" and champions of "human rights", who cannot even provide for the people, cannot write off the work of Stalin just by repeating slanders against him. Problems will be sorted out, and revolution will go from ebb to flow, on the path opened by Stalin. This historical truth is a granite rock on which all the enemies of Stalin will break their heads.

The responsibility of society for the well-being of its members

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existing with blatant profiteering through privatised services built with public resources, such as hospitals, water, transport and so on. Health, education and housing far from being universal rights have become further sources of profit, and the various "benefits" constantly eroded because of the "needs" of business. The Commission for Social Justice, which heralded its proposals as a "modernised" welfare state, itself pointed out that 1 in 4 children grow up in poverty, 1 in 5 are undernourished, 1 in 5 men of working age are unemployed, with all the misery that these conditions give rise to. The abnegation by the state of its responsibility for the welfare of its citizens is summed up in John Major's notorious outburst about beggars.

Within a short space of time, three proposals for reform of the welfare system have appeared. The most grandiose and comprehensive was that from the aforementioned "Commission for Social Justice", set up by the Labour Party. It delivered its report virtually simultaneously with the government's announcement of its proposed "Jobseekers Allowance" and the publishing of "In Place of Fear", a book from the TGWU. They all blame each other for the problems of the welfare system and each presents its own variations on a programme of reform. But the central issue, which is that of the claims on society by its members, the inviolable rights of these members and the absolute responsibility of the state for their well-being, is ignored. The framework for social justice is presented in the context of the paramount need for "jobs and growth" and "getting the nation back to work". In other words, and once again, the well-being of the people is made incidental to and dependent on the well-being of "business". Even though "jobless growth" is the main feature of the economy, with old jobs being lost at a greater rate than new ones are created, and with unemployment and part-time work being accepted as the norm, the people are being exhorted and bullied to "get jobs", as if the problems of the economy were their fault, with withdrawal or reduction of benefits being used as sticks to beat them. The level and quality of education also are geared to "skills" needed by business, while the cost is more and more borne by the student, and their grants are turned into a further source of profit. The issue that the level of education must be raised to combat illiteracy, to raise the whole level of the society and for the benefit of the people themselves, is completely left out of the equation. Similarly with pensions and other benefits that should accrue as basic universal rights; these are manipulated and means-tested with the sole aim of "modernising the economy" in the interests of business. This is exemplified in the phrase of the Commission for Social Justice that a benefit should not be a "hand-out but a hand-up". With housing and health the issue is the same; what are in fact fundamental requirements of any civilised society are turned into "sources of funds" for business. In the health service, the formation of trusts dominated by the purchaser/provider split, with market forces in the form of competitive tendering and performance-related pay, with amalgamations and take-overs, cuts and closures, with quality of care being made subservient to value for money, any last vestige of an illusion that the bourgeoisie has one jot of concern for the well-being of the people or that their system can do anything but take them further into the mire must be rejected.

The programme of the working class must uphold the principle that all people are born to society and that by virtue of that fact all people have the inalienable right to a livelihood, food, shelter, education and health for their entire lives. This is their claim on society and this claim must be met. It must also uphold the principle that society has an obligation to all its members. This must mean that the necessary funds and resources be made available by the state to ensure that the state's obligations to the whole society can be met.

If the system is such that those in power are unable or unwilling to meet these obligations, then the conclusion can only be that it no longer meets modern requirements and must be overthrown and replaced with one that will.

Based on an intervention given at the National Consultative Conference of RCPB(ML), November 26-27, 1994

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THERE IS A WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS

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PUBLIC MEETING

AN INDEPENDENT PROGRAMME FOR THE WORKING CLASS

RCPB(ML) LAUNCHES DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR THE WORKING CLASS

As we go into a new year, working people find themselves increasingly anxious about the situation in the country: about the continuing high levels of unemployment; the insecurity at work; the cuts in social programmes; the attacks on rights; not to mention the increasing conflict and danger of war internationally.

More and more people are trying to or want to become involved in changing the situation. But how? Many are increasingly feeling that matters cannot be left to the politicians and the big political parties, whose aims are seen as self-seeking and not based on the interests of the people. How can the stranglehold of the old politics on participation be broken? How can the people themselves become empowered?

Our Party thinks that the working class itself needs to formulate its own independent programme, a programme broad enough to win the support of all other sections of the working people, a programme which will lead the way out of the present crisis and open up a path to a new socialist society. Following its recent National Consultative Conference it decided upon a Draft Programme as a contribution to the formulation of such an independent programme for the working class. On January 7, it will be launching this Draft Programme for the working class at a Public Meeting in Conway Hall.

Come along and hear what RCPB(ML) has to say about it and about the present situation! There will be ample opportunity for questions and contributions, as well as to discuss how this Draft Programme can be taken out among the working people.

Everyone is welcome!

Conway Hall

Red Lion Square, London WC1

(nearest tube: Holborn)

Saturday, January 7, 1995

2.00 p.m.

Organised by
Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

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