Along the British Road

by Eric Trevett

Some people within the labour Movement argue that the Labour Party is not a party of the working class but a bourgeois party that is part of the capitalist state machine and that revolutionaries should oppose it in elections.

We in the New Communist Party believe that these arguments are wrong and an example of good people getting frustrated at the right-wing policies of the Labour Government and anti-working class policies that pave the way for the return of a much more anti-working class government.

We believe that automatically writing off the whole institution of the Labour Party as a result of the policies of the government arises from a subjective analysis and runs contrary to the efforts to promote working class unity in the day-to-day struggles and in the more profound struggles for revolution and socialism.

Before the Labour Party was formed the skilled working class tended to give its allegiance to the Liberal Party. When it became obvious that party would not defend the interests of the trade union movement there was a struggle to establish the working class party.

The socialist parties in those days joined with the trade union leaderships and founded the Labour Party to represent the working class interests in Parliament.

Most trade union members pay the political levy and are therefore affiliate members of the Labour Party irrespective of whether they are communists or socialists.

The right wing was also involved in that struggle and from that day to this has been in the ascendancy for most of the time in both the Labour Party and trade union organisations.

But with all its weaknesses the Labour Party has, from time to time and under pressure from the trade union movement, achieved a number of reforms beneficial to the working class.

After the First World War in 1919 Clause Four was written into the Labour Party constitution – calling for the working class to take control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

And after the Second World War the Labour government was swept into office and launched a massive council house building programme. The railways and the coal and steel industries were nationalised. And the National Health Service was introduced.

What the Labour government did not do was to carry through a socialist revolution and give the working class state power.

And its foreign policy served the interests of imperialism, was strictly anti-Soviet and supported the spread of nuclear weapons.

Historically the labour movement (the Labour Party and the trade unions) has had a reformist leadership whose priority has been to perpetuate capitalism.

The trade unions are the Labour Party’s main source of finance. Most of the trade unions and the Co-Operative party are affiliated to the Labour Party. This is the basis of why we say the Labour Party is a working class party.
The labour movement organisationally is not divided into warring trade union groups, as in Europe where the labour movement has been formed by different elements: socialists, Catholics and communists and this has hindered the struggle for unity. The unity of the movement in Britain is very important to maintain; it is an asset we should be proud of.

It is true that with the introduction of individual membership it has been easy for petty bourgeois elements to penetrate the party and advance their personal careers and this has reinforced the position of the right wing in the Labour Party and trade union movement.

But the way to counter this is to promote working class unity around working class policies. It is not for organisations to contest the Labour Party’s position in national and local elections. In truth we have seen in recent years that such efforts are futile. Both the Socialist Alliance and George Galloway’s Respect Party have collapsed and so has Arthur Scargill’s Socialist Labour Party. The tragedy of that is that Arthur Scargill has isolated himself from the movement in which he was widely respected.

From its inception the Communist Party of Great Britain has tried to affiliate to the Labour Party; this aim was abandoned only in 1975. One of the reasons why the CPGB failed to win affiliation with the Labour Party was that it stood candidates in elections against Labour and the broad labour movement.

In hindsight we believe this policy to have been wrong even in the days when the party’s vote was high and Gallagher, Saklatvala and Phil Piratin were elected to Parliament.

Since then and in the post-war period the bankruptcy of standing against Labour was plain to see. Since the Second World War the emphasis on campaigning in elections in the localities has gained priority over the industrial work of the party. At one time factory branches were being closed in an effort to involve more party members in electioneering.

This weakened the capability of the trade unions to exert pressure on the government of the day.

Our declared aim is to work to strengthen the working class and its political consciousness and fight for the right to affiliate to the Labour Party ourselves as communists.

That is the way we believe and demonstrate that we are genuinely concerned to participate in the struggles for full employment, peace and socialism in a manner that unites the working class and its allies, especially student bodies.

It would be wrong for us to stand candidates in national elections because it would be seen to be weakening the fight against the Tories and reaction. This has not led to any watering down of our party’s critique of the right wing in the Labour Party.

Experience has shown that communists do best in industry and at the places of work because they are a genuine, integral part of the working class and are regarded as such. It is there that we often get communists elected to leading union positions out of respect for their militancy, profound wisdom and practical understanding in the unending struggles with the employers.

In today’s struggle against the cuts and for nuclear disarmament we can see rising levels of struggle in the localities and we must remember that most class battles are won in the field of struggle and not in parliamentary debate.

No one knows exactly how the socialist revolution will come about in this country but the struggle outside of Parliament, which is a bourgeois institution, will be far more decisive that the struggle inside Parliament.

If and when our party succeeds in affiliating to the Labour Party it will bring the struggle for fundamental change and socialism to a new height.

We therefore ask those people who view the Labour Party as anti-working class to re-evaluate their positions and support the struggle as we have outlined.

Long live Marxism-Leninism.

Long live the struggle for working class unity in Britain and throughout the world!
We are the New Communist Party
This is what we stand for:

We stand for Peace: An end to our armies invading other countries like Afghanistan and Iraq; an end to wasting £billions on nuclear weapons like Trident.

We stand for socialism: The western world is governed by the rich and powerful – the giant banks and businesses and landowners. We say it should be governed by the workers – the masses who spend their lives creating wealth for others but receive so little of it in return.

We stand for revolution: The rich and powerful are not going to hand over their power and wealth easily. Elections are not enough to dislodge them; we need to change the whole system from top to bottom. Our class must defeat theirs and bring about a true working class democracy. Capitalism is a crazy system that worships money and oppresses millions of workers. It is unstable and threatens the future of humanity. It must be brought down.

We stand for working class unity: The ruling class has many weapons but we have the power of vast numbers on our side. And when we stop doing their bidding, when we go on strike, suddenly they have very little. We must unite. We must educate, agitate and above all organise and work within the labour movement structure to build unity and confidence for the fight ahead. We must not be divided by racism, sexism or any other prejudice and we must stand by those who all workers face prejudice and discrimination. An injury to one is an injury to all!

We fight for higher wages: Wages should be big enough to support each worker and their dependants in a decent standard of living without having to go into the misery of debt or exhausting overtime.

We fight for freedom from debt: Personal debt – mortgages, credit cards, banks loans and so on – are a source of misery, stress and mental illness, forcing people to work long, long hours, to neglect themselves and their families just to feed bank profits.

We fight for a shorter working week: Modern technology and machinery allows enormous amounts of work to be done quickly. Workers should benefit from this by not having to work so long. Workers who are relaxed and refreshed perform better. We are all entitled to rest, leisure and a little fun.

We fight for decent pensions: People who have worked hard all their lives are entitled to a comfortable, stress-free retirement. They should not be pressured by money worries into working long into their old age.

We fight for decent housing: When we have worked hard for our wages we do not want to be handing half of them over week after week to a landlord who has done nothing to deserve them. We fight against private landlordism and demand decent, secure council housing for all who need it. Homelessness and fear of homelessness are evils that have no place in a civilised society.

We fight for decent education: Our society should treasure all its children and young people. They need to be taught that they are valued; to value and respect themselves and others. Schools should have enough well trained teachers to stretch children’s abilities so they learn to overcome problems and enjoy being in the world. Children need more time and attention from adults: their parents, grandparents, schoolteachers, youth workers and so on.
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