

Workers' Weekly

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The National Consultative Conference

THE Party's National Consultative Conference, "On the Draft Programme for the Working Class", is to take place this coming weekend, November 26-27 (see back page for details).

The Central Committee has asked *Workers' Weekly* to take this opportunity to call on the activists, supporters and friends of the Party to come and participate fully in the discussions and help make the Conference a big success.

It is already possible to say that some advances have been made since the previous Consultative Conference in terms of the implementation of the tasks of mobilising new forces to participate in dis-

cussion groups and working out plans for the work of the local organisations in the light of the Party's analysis in its Draft Document *There Is a Way Out of the Crisis*. Further work has been done to disseminate this analysis and to call on various sections to seriously discuss on this basis. What is required to advance this practical work and fulfil a vital need for the movement of the working class and people in Britain is a programme for the class. The work

which the Central Committee has done on formulating such a draft programme on the basis of the Party's general line is what the National Consultative Conference will address.

Specific preparations for the Conference have been going ahead since the publication some weeks ago of the **Report of the Proceedings of the June Consultative Conference**, in that, since the focus of that Conference was the need for a Draft Programme for the working class, some of the considerations raised in the Report have been talked about in the discussion groups. Recent weeks have

seen the programme of mobilising for the Conference stepped up, with leaflets being distributed, and posters appearing in various cities around the country. Other practical preparations are also under way, including ensuring that as many concerned people as possible are informed.

A practical programme for the working class to lead society out of the crisis and to open up the path for socialism is a crucial necessity of the times. Everyone is encouraged to give serious thought to these questions, and to come along and become involved in the discussions on the Draft Programme.

The Criminal Justice Act

THE Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which received the royal assent on November 3, has given rise to much angry opposition and protest

over the last few months, particularly from the youth, leading in some instances to violent clashes with the police. In fact, not since the demonstrations

against the poll tax has opposition to parliamentary legislation led to such angry manifestations. The passing of the Act has underlined the political power of the government to make such laws irrespective of the wishes of the people, and without reference to any constitutional yardstick or fundamental law on rights.

The 172 sections which make up the Act are, through their extension of the powers of the police

and courts and their attacks on people's rights, being widely condemned as undemocratic and retrogressive. A sizeable proportion of the Act's provisions are clearly aimed primarily at the youth, while a number also have profound implications for the working class and other sections of the people. Having created new offences by singling out certain aspects of cultural life style such as raves (sections

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THE PARTY AND ITS WORK**Some considerations in formulating a Draft Programme**

In a recent discussion attended by Party activists from the West Country, the question was gone into of what are some of the factors which have to be taken into account in formulating a draft programme for the working class – the task which the Central Committee of the Party is at present addressing and a summation of which work will be given at the National Consultative Conference on November 26/27.

It was raised by a Central Committee member that in formulating the draft programme account must be taken of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism, that is to say, the basic principles which hold good in all periods, those fundamentals concerning the basis of change and motion in society, and in capitalist society in particular. There can be no wavering on these principles. These principles, however, are not what provides the theoretical underpinning of the practical programme, the immediate programme of the class which will open the way for progress towards the strategic aim of the class,

the achievement of socialism and communism. What provides the theoretical underpinning of the draft programme are what can be termed theoretical considerations, that is, those considerations which are drawn from the already existing theory in the light of the present conditions. Such a consideration would be, for instance, that this is a period of the retreat of revolution within the overall epoch of imperialism and the eve of the proletarian revolution. Clearly this is drawn from existing theory but is also clearly not good for all time. But it is such considerations which will inform the immediate pro-

gramme. If this is a period of the retreat or ebb of revolution then it would be incorrect to call for an immediate all-out offensive of the working class. Rather it is the time for the working class to make preparations, to find a space to manoeuvre, so as to be in a position to take advantage of the situation when ebb changes into flow. If a mistake is made on such considerations, clearly the draft programme will not be taken up by the working class and will not open up the path to progress.

It was raised that there are also ideological considerations which must inform the programme. For instance, the working class will not achieve its own independent programme if it has any illusions that some other force outside itself, or even a vanguard section of its own class, can solve its problems. Only the

working class acting as a class can lead society out of its present predicament. The draft programme must also take such considerations into account.

It was also raised in the discussion that while this draft programme will be specifically a programme for the working class, and it is the working class which must take up and develop such a programme, it must be a programme which will win the support of the widest possible sections of the society and isolate to the maximum those key enemies of the working class which are blocking the path to progress. In other words, there can be no vacillation on the principle of the working class leading, but at the same time the programme must be as broad and flexible as possible, and must oppose all narrowness and sectarianism.

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To contact RCPB(ML)
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WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

Working class must stand for an economy which puts the needs of the people at the centre

SPEAKING after the Cabinet meeting to discuss next year's spending round, Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke said that "we took £15 billion out of public spending last year without threatening our priorities". The obvious implication from his statement was that in the coming year the government would take even more out of the economy.

By taking money out of the economy, Kenneth Clarke means quite simply spending less on education, health, benefits, pensions and social spending. What he did not openly state is the priorities of the government which were not threatened by taking billions out of the economy. He means that the government is to continue further with its policy of meeting the demands of the banks and domestic and international creditors for repayment of debt whilst ignoring the demands of the people for an adequate level of social spending.

Speaking to the CBI conference, the Chancellor also made it clear that the Treasury would insist on more and more capital projects being handed over directly to the private sector and for private capital to be brought into more and more areas of the state. Under the "private finance proposals", companies are to design, build and finance facilities which will be leased to the public sector, or they will supply the public sector with services under contract. This means,

for example, that new Underground trains will be leased to London Underground, whilst the new National Insurance computer system will be developed and operated by private capital.

The government claims that what it is doing is cutting back on wasteful expenditure by the state. In reality, what is occurring is the shifting of state expenditure away from social spending and towards handing treasury funds directly over to big business. People will be forced to pay increasingly for their own health and education. Government policy, which is described as "non-interventionist", is in reality extremely interventionist – intervening directly in the economy to ensure the maximum profits for big business. In the conditions of extremely sharp inter-monopoly competition on the world scale and with the threat to profitability from this, the monopolies are demanding that the state be used to directly shore up their profits.

Government policy is a retreat from the conception

of the state guaranteeing people's claims upon society toward the medieval notion of leaving each to fend for themselves. People will not only be forced to pay exorbitant taxes to the state which are used to further the interests of business profitability, but they will then be forced to pay for those essential needs which must be the responsibility of the state in a modern society.

The question which this raises for the working class is the stand it should take on the economy and how it should be organised. Government policy, far from solving the problems of jobless growth, is bringing about a deepening of the crisis. The aim of the working class is to show how its programme can lead the whole society out of the crisis. As the *Draft Document* from March 19 pointed out, the policy of the working class has to be

to reject that of the government on every front and chart a course which puts the well-being of the people at the centre.

In formulating a programme for the working class all these questions have to be taken into account. What sort of an economy is needed? It has to be one which puts the needs of the people at the centre, which ensures that the right of the people to a livelihood is met, that all have equal access to health, education and welfare up to the maximum level that society can make available, that investments in people's needs rather than the needs of business are put at the centre. What should be the principles of such an economy and what immediate demands should be made? These are amongst the questions to be considered at the Party's National Consultative Conference.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Student demonstration on November 9

ON November 9, 1994, an estimated 30,000 students, the largest demonstration of students in Britain for over a decade, marched through the streets of London to protest against cuts in their grants and attacks on their rights.

The demonstration started at Battersea Park at around 1.00 pm and followed a route to Hyde Park. It was attended by students from almost every university in the country as well as from many colleges and other Further and Higher Education institutions. Despite the rainy and cold day, the students marched enthusiastically through the streets and displayed an admirable degree of unity. The procession of students stretched for miles, attracting supporters and well-wishers along the way. The leaflet "Students' Claims on Society" produced by student supporters of the Party (see opposite) was distributed widely amongst the participants.

The march arrived at Hyde Park at around 3.00 pm where it was addressed by various speakers from the Labour Party, from the lecturers' union and others, from the National Union of Students and by students themselves. In response to the Labour Party, it was thought by some students that such occasions should not be handed over to politicians to peddle their own agenda. When students were asked, "Do you think that such occasions should be handed over to politicians to promote party politics?" the answer was an emphatic, "No!". Furthermore, as one student said, too much of this kind of politics "clouds the issues". The demonstra-

tion "was supposed to be about grants and not about the Labour or Conservative parties". Some students thought that the demonstration should have been more diverse, it should have included workers, single mothers with children and any other sympathisers, and it would have been better then if they had spoken instead of the politicians.

After the Labour Party speaker and others, a student came to the platform and raised the issues about which students had been demonstrating. She addressed the other students in a manner they understood, bringing cheers and lifting their spirits, saying that "there are only two groups in society that are denied social security benefits: criminals and students!" and asking, "Is being a student a criminal offence?" This brought roars of ironic laughter and applause from the students. She went on to say that students should be granted every assistance to pursue their studies, and that their rights should be respected by the government. She exhorted her listeners not to stop campaigning on these issues.

The President of the National Union of Students spoke last. After he led the students in a chant, he went on to say that "what we want is a fair system of grants". He commented how disgraceful it was that the chief of the company

granting student loans had been awarded a CBE. He ended on an ironic note, which seemed to indicate that very little would come out of this demonstration, saying that he hoped the next demonstration would be a bigger one, and hoped to see everyone here again.

When students were asked after the demonstration what they thought would come out of it, a typical reply was that it might encourage publicity and raise public awareness, and perhaps it might even change the government's mind. However, on the early evening news, it was reported that the education minister Tim Boswell said that "there is no evidence of student hardship", that he was accusing the students of scare-mongering, and that by taking student loans into account government support for students had "risen by 40%".

Students are aware that with the grants set to decrease by 10% a year over the next three years it will effectively end the hopes of many, especially women or those from working class or national minority backgrounds, of receiving a college or university education. Although they feel very strongly that this state of affairs must be changed, they are at present unclear how this can be brought about.

*Student supporter of
RCPB(ML)*

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LEAFLET PRODUCED BY STUDENT SUPPORTERS OF RCPB(ML)

STUDENTS' CLAIMS ON SOCIETY

On November 9, 1994, when students need to be studying to deal with difficult exams ahead, they are instead taking to the London streets to protest against the cuts in their grants and attacks on their rights. **Without any consultation at all with students to determine how this would affect them**, a cut of 10% has been levied against them by the government. This has impacted very heavily on the majority of students at colleges and universities around the country, creating a great deal of hardship and driving many to exist below the poverty line. To fund the shortfall from the grant, students are forced to take out loans which places them in a situation of massive indebtedness. According to official figures, half of all graduates who have taken out student loans are too poor to make the necessary repayments.

The recession has created many difficulties in society. Increasingly public services are being sold or cut and the costs transferred onto the backs of ordinary people. The justification coming from the big political parties has been that it is necessary to decrease public spending. **Nevertheless, the government has poured massive amounts of taxpayers' money into helping private industry maximise profits**, under the pretext that stimulating the economy will create jobs and a better standard of living ("trickle-down" theory). However, the recent upturn in the economy has had the character of being a "jobless recovery", meaning that more jobs are lost than are being created. Meanwhile, hardship is facing ever-increasing sections of society, students included. The jobless recovery does not bode well, either, for students once they have graduated, with the likelihood that few will find employment within their first year of leaving, and fewer still find jobs within their chosen profession.

One of the questions at this time which the big political parties are talking about is the future of public services in society. They have been advocating taking away the universality of benefits and public services, placing the burden on the backs of ordinary people. **In this way, the government as the representative of the state has been denying that it has responsibility for the well-being of its citizens.** It is impossible not to recognise

the effect of the cuts in the health service, leading to a deterioration in hospital services, on the one hand, and the generation of a private health industry for those who can afford to pay on the other. The costs for meeting many of these services are now having to be met by ordinary people. In the same way, the cost of higher education is increasingly being placed on the shoulders of parents and students. In other words, people are being told they must fend for themselves, while the government continues to take in taxpayers' money.

On the very important question of the future of public services, it seems that any government official elected or un-elected (Quango) can say what should be done and the voices of ordinary people are never heard on these matters. Discussion on the issue of the obligation of society to its members and the direction that society should take is being denied to the people, and important decisions are being taken behind closed doors which increasingly conflict with the interests of the majority of citizens. If the goal of government is to serve the public, how can it be doing so by cutting back on services that so many are dependent upon? Why does a government that claims to be accountable to the people care more about the future of business and attracting rich bankers and financiers with multi-million pound grants at the expense of nursery and all other levels of education for the children of the country? **Should not education be seen as an investment in the future of society, a right for all, not as a drain on society's resources?** Students are increasingly becoming aware of the need to discuss such matters, and concern themselves with the political affairs of the country. They see the need to develop plans that are in their interests and the interests of the general population. We need to break with the common assumption that politics is for politicians, and take our destiny in our own hands to play our part in changing society in the interests of all its members.

We encourage all students to take up all these points for discussion. We are prepared to discuss these issues with anyone who is interested in them. You can contact us at the address or telephone below, or we can come to your university to discuss with you at your request.

In memory of a veteran Canadian communist

With great sadness *Workers' Weekly* informs its readers that Anne Boylan, a veteran of the communist movement since 1941 and an activist of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) for more than 20 years, passed away in Ottawa on November 8.

In its message of condolence to the Central Committee of CPC(ML), the Central Committee of RCPB(ML) said that Comrade Anne "held a special place in the hearts of our comrades", many of whom had known her well over many years. It said that "we shall always remember the pride and militancy with which she opened the Sixth Congress of CPC(ML) and, even in failing health, participated in the 16th Consultative Conference. We shall feel her loss very deeply. We are sure you will turn grief into strength in carrying out the work in the great cause to which she devoted over 50 years of her life."

A statement released by the Central Committee of CPC(ML) on November 11 stated: "Comrade Anne was one of the many millions in this world who, born in the twentieth century, lived and worked for revolution and socialism. She was born in Ottawa on August 27, 1918, the youngest daughter of parents who hailed from Riga, the present capital of the Republic of Latvia. Her life subsequently took her to the US as one of six sisters who struggled together for the well-being of their family and of society. At the age of 17, she came in contact with communism in the US and, in the course of her activities, joined the CPUSA. She was married in 1941 to another communist who was to be her companion until his death in 1991. Comrade Anne and her family moved back to Canada in 1947. She joined the communist movement in Canada and, during the 1973-74 period, she entered CPC(ML). She remained an activist of CPC(ML) to the day she died.

"The period from the time of her birth to that of her death, a period of 76 years, has been one of the most important in the movement against medievalism which is the main content of this century. Comrade Anne went through this period as an activist and a fighter. Thus, during the 1936-38 period she was an active organizer for the anti-fascist United Front in support of the Popular Government of the Spanish Republic. She assisted her comrade in life to unionize river-boat seamen on the Ohio-Mississippi River and actively fought to promote the anti-fascist cause during the Second World War. Following the war, as was the case for all communists, she fell victim to political persecution which she defied without flinching. Besides other things, during the early 1950s she engaged in activities against the US war of aggression against Korea. She was also fired from her job for helping striking steel workers where she worked. Similarly, during the 1960s she vigorously opposed the US aggression against Vietnam and, in 1968, she took a strong principled stand against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia."

The statement also says: "During the period since the Chertsey Conference in August, 1989, until 1994, years during which she was in her seventies, Comrade Anne became even more active in CPC(ML) politics than ever before. She knew instinctively and consciously that these are the days which count the most. Anyone can be brave after the fact, after all the dangers have been overcome, but only a few are there to confront the situation in broad daylight. This acute sense of personal worth and involvement puts Comrade Anne in the category of the most trusted activists of CPC(ML), for which she was given the honour of opening the Sixth

Congress of CPC(ML) in October, 1993."

The statement ends: "Comrade Anne has departed from us, but her contribution will always remain. It is work which is transforming, which revolutionizes everything and she did a lot of it. She will not only be remembered for this but, as the work of CPC(ML) advances, her spirit, the spirit associated with her name, will be immortalized. Comrade Anne has left CPC(ML) and the working class behind. Her passing away is a great loss to CPC(ML) and to the working class in the immediate sense, but it is also a loss to her family, especially to her children and their wives and her grandchildren, as well as her surviving sisters and all her sisters' families, all of whom she cared for very much, putting neither ideological nor political differences as an obstacle. We deeply mourn her death. We will continue to turn our grief into strength and immortalize her fine spirit by continuing the work for the victory of the cause for which she lived and worked."

The funeral service for Anne Boylan took place in Ottawa on November 12. A moving eulogy from her closest comrade and friend Sandra Smith ended with these words: "Farewell, dear comrade, dear enlightened friend. As autumn slowly yields to winter and the spring will come, we will always remember you. How lucky you are, for you have joined the millions who have fought for a society fit for human beings, never a black mark to your name. As the twinkle in your eye and the mischief in your smile comes to our minds eye, we bid you farewell, dear Comrade Anne, the possessor of that purity, that fidelity which is a beauty to behold.

"Farewell, Comrade Anne, the possessor of that purity, that beauty. Farewell, farewell forever!"

The Criminal Justice Act

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63 to 67), squatting (sections 72 to 76), camping and travelling (sections 77 to 80, and also sections 61 and 62), and even congregating in groups (sections 70 and 71), all of which are in the main activities of the youth, Parts II to IV of the Act alter bail conditions, "improve" court procedures, remove the defendant's right to silence during questioning and trial by allowing a court to "draw inferences" from an accused's silence or inability to account for him/herself, and extend police powers to make intimate body searches and take intimate samples. Sections 68 and 69 of the Act, creating an offence of "aggravated trespass" (which could be used against hunt saboteurs), are so drafted as to be usable against demonstrations and pickets. Section 60 raises the spectre of the old "sus" laws, giving the police powers of stop and search "in anticipation of violence", while Section 81, under the heading of "Prevention of Terrorism", gives the police stop and search powers "whether or not [the police have] any grounds for suspecting that the vehicle or person is carrying articles [which could be used for acts of terrorism]". So as to ensure that these newly created "criminals" receive due punishment, the Act legislates for an improved and streamlined prison service, including the creation of **secure**

training centres for 12-14 year olds.

It is not difficult to see why the bourgeoisie deems it necessary to act against the youth. The youth have consistently shown a marked reluctance to accept the values being thrust upon them, whether these values are economic, political or cultural. The anarchy and violence of modern capitalism, the wasted, impoverished and aimless lives that it gives rise to, the ecological and environmental disasters which it is imposing on the people, are an anathema to all, but especially to the youth, who are coming to realise that their whole future is at stake; i.e. that these values are blighting not only their present lives, but threaten every aspect of their future too, and are in fact a block to progress which cannot be dealt with merely by side-stepping them. So their reluctance, harmless to the bourgeoisie when manifested merely by "dropping out", is now taking on a more militant character and the youth are becoming more concerned about the political life of the country. This being the case, it can be seen why the opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill was portrayed in the press as being *confined* to the youth; the sole concern of the youth – and of course "anarchic and mindless" youth at that – and no-one else. Experience shows that when the youth go beyond the confines of their own condi-

tion and take up the problems of the society, and especially of the working class, as their own, they not only become a more formidable force in their own right but the whole society benefits. So dividing the polity, marginalising and suppressing one or another section, such as the youth, is the bourgeoisie's favoured "solution" to this problem!

In fact, through the jurisdiction the Criminal Justice Act will give the state over how people choose to live their lives, it will mean not just the maintenance of the status quo but a return to medievalism, when propertyless people were prevented from free movement about the country, when any infringement of the private property of others was a felony and where even the right of conscience was physically suppressed. Far from providing real solutions to the problems of the modern world, solutions worked

on, arrived at, and for the welfare of the members of the society itself, the Act will further strengthen the hand of a privileged minority while criminalising and depriving of their rights even wider sections of the people.

While such retrogressive and anti-democratic political legislation is bound to give rise to widescale protest from most sections of the society as well as the youth, protest which may even bear limited and temporary fruit, it further raises the necessity for a political system which is actually in the service of the people. For example, there is no written constitution in Britain, and cabinet government means that a Bill such as the Criminal Justice Act can be passed without reference to any constitutionally inviolable rights and without the electorate's approval. The Act can, for example, arbitrarily legislate away the historically established right of an

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Referendum fails in Albania

With slightly over eighty percent of eligible people voting in the Referendum in Albania on November 6, more than fifty three percent rejected the proposals for a new constitution, plunging Albania into further constitutional and political crisis. The Referendum had been held in violation of the existing constitution, which calls for a commission of parliament to draft the constitution and submit only those clauses which parliament may not be able to pass with a two-thirds majority to the voters in a referendum.

Sali Berisha, President of the Republic of Albania, is now planning another referendum before the end of the year. He is also proposing to have "foreign experts" sit on the body which is to draft proposals for a new constitution, before these are put to a vote in the form of the referendum. The Socialist Party of Albania, on the other hand, is vehemently opposed to another referen-

dum, and has repeatedly appealed to the European Commission to intervene. It is, however, in full support of changing the constitution to make it acceptable to the monopolists of Europe and elsewhere.

The deepening of this constitutional and political crisis in Albania also reflects what is going on in the ex-"socialist" countries of eastern Europe, as well as the

Russian Federation. With the restoration of capitalism, these countries have entered a period of anarchy and crisis in the economic, political and social spheres, showing once again that the bourgeoisie is unfit to rule.

Only the working class can lead people out of the crisis on the basis of modern definitions, as an inte-

gral part of the struggle between capitalism and socialism in each country and on the world scale. Only Marxism-Leninism can be the guide which ensures that the necessary theoretical and ideological bases, the modern definitions, are present for the deep-going transformations which are now the order of the day.

The Criminal Justice Act

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accused to silence. Thus the passage of the Act, like that of previous similar Acts, underlines the absolute necessity for the democratic renewal of the British state based on modern definitions and with a modern constitution. Modern society has an obligation to all its members, not just a handful,

and all members of society have inviolable rights by dint of being human. Mechanisms must be developed whereby these principles can be achieved so that sovereignty rests in the hands of the citizens, not the monarch or parliament, and the basis for such anti-democratic Acts as the Criminal Justice Act is eliminated.

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