



The reason for this pamphlet

We are open

Very few political parties these days are willing to tell you what they are aiming for and how they are prepared to achieve it. The Socialist Party and our Companion Parties overseas have always done so. Our monthly journal, The Socialist Standard, our web site, all our pamphlets and election addresses carry our Object and Declaration of Principles. These explain what we are working for and how we expect to reach our goal.

We all agree

Everyone who applies for membership, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, colour or age is asked to show that they understand and agree with the Object and Declaration of Principles because they are the basis of our party and the World Socialist Movement it is part of.

Unchanged

The Object and Declaration of Principles were written in 1904 when the party was formed, and they use a lot of the language which had been used by socialists in their struggles against capitalism in the nineteenth century. The language is therefore a bit old-fashioned, but it still explains accurately why we exist, what we are working for, and how we expect capitalism and our opposition to it to develop.

Scientifically founded

Underlying the Object and Declaration of Principles, however, is a great deal of scientific study and understanding of human history and, particularly, the capitalist era which is now lurching towards its end. This basis upon which our movement functions needs further explanation, and this short pamphlet is designed to meet that need. Nevertheless, familiarity with our other literature can

give workers who are interested an even wider understanding of this, perhaps the greatest, struggle in the history of humankind.

Executive Committee, The Socialist Party, 2000.

Contents

[The origin of the Declaration of Principles](#)

[The Object of The Socialist Party](#)

[Clause 1: the basis of capitalism](#)

[Clause 2: the class struggle](#)

[Clause 3: working class emancipation](#)

[Clause 4: ...without distinction of race or sex](#)

[Clause 5: not through leadership](#)

[Clause 6: violent revolution or orderly change?](#)

[Clause 7: opposition to other political parties](#)

[Clause 8: join us to hasten the end of capitalism](#)

The origin of the Declaration of Principles

Ruthless exploitation

From the last years of the eighteenth century, under the pressures of capitalism, workers were continually experimenting with different forms of industrial and political organisation and action. At first, they were hitting back blindly at the oppression of wage labour, factory production methods and the desperately poor conditions in which they were condemned to live. Later, as they learned from experience during the nineteenth century, they began to develop more understanding of the issues involved.

Political infancy

Then workers started to form political parties designed to change their lives of virtual slavery completely. Many of these political parties claimed to be socialist. Each one had its own ideas on policy and tactics. There were, for example, the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Socialist League and the Independent Labour Party. When the Socialist Party was formed in 1904, by men and women breaking away from the SDF, it was able to benefit from knowledge of a long history of errors and failures of previous organisations.

A debt to Marx and others

A great deal of the understanding of working class history and the functioning of the capitalist system had been provided by the enormous amount of work done by the refugee from Germany, Karl Marx. The actual wording of the Object and Declaration of Principles owed a great deal to

earlier programmes of other organisations, including the Socialist League, with which William Morris had been associated.

Capitalism is still the same

In spite of all the technological developments and social changes which have taken place since that period, the actual structure of capitalist society has not fundamentally changed. Capitalists still own all the means of living of modern society; workers still spend their lives producing profit to increase the wealth and power of the capitalist class. Working class organisations, including political parties, have not made any significant advances. Indeed, most political parties created by the working class have turned into supporters for capitalism. Like the Labour Party in Britain, they assist in the exploitation and the oppression of the members who continue to support them, along with the rest of the working class. Their ideas about nationalisation have been shown by experience to have nothing to do with socialism. Nationalisation is not even a very successful way of running capitalism.

Still deceived

All sorts of false ideas still exist about how to bring about the change to a socialist form of society. The idea of massive strikes has lost much of its support, but there is still a great deal of enthusiasm by the 'Far Left' for street demonstrations and the destruction of property, in spite of the fact that these activities accomplish nothing. Some workers still rely on leaders to make the changes. Others insist that campaigning for more and more reforms will bring governments to their knees. All such ideas have been discredited by experience. Even a large membership has been shown to achieve nothing of any value as long as those members do not understand and agree about what it is they are organising and working for--their Object --and how they are to achieve it -- their Principles. The British Labour Party is a pathetic example of this.

No short cuts

There is no gimmick or magic formula that can by-pass the process of building a democratic socialist movement. At present, that process is slow, because workers all over the world still have faith that capitalism can be altered to treat them less harshly. Until they abandon this belief nothing significant will change. But socialist analysis and information must be ready and available as and when they begin to think differently. While this change of attitude is taking place, socialists persistently urge members of the working class, high paid or low paid, to join them in the work of building the growing socialist movement.

The bare bones

Many other points about The Socialist Party and its struggle to bring about a socialist world could have been added to the Declaration, but that would have made the list of principles far too long for practical purposes. In any case, most of these other socialist explanations follow naturally from the eight points. To take just one example, there is nothing said about the socialist attitude to war, but since war means workers of one country killing workers of another country in the interests of the capitalists, The Socialist Party has always opposed wars. For members of a World Socialist Movement this is the only natural attitude to take.

The Object of The Socialist Party

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Definitions

A system of society alludes to the sum total of human relationships and is meant to distinguish us from those who seek to organise cooperative colonies, islands within a sea of capitalism. Socialism is not a colony, not a kibbutz, but a system of society in the sense that capitalism, feudalism and chattel slavery must all be characterised as systems of society.

Previous systems of society that have existed in many parts of the world—such as chattel slavery and feudalism--have given way to capitalism, so that it is now virtually world-wide, and the capitalist system must, in its turn, give way to a socialist set of relationships amongst all human beings.

'Common ownership' does not mean state ownership or 'public' ownership. These are only different ways of running the capitalist system, with the whole class of capitalists in a particular country owning the mines, the railways, etc. instead of individual, competing groups. Common ownership, on the other hand, means ownership by all of society--which is the same as ownership by no-one in particular. Of course, it is not personal property which concerns socialists but those things upon which all society depends, such as the factories and farms and mines and transport fleets and communication systems. These are what will belong to everyone in socialist society.

'Democratic control' is the only way to ensure that these means of production and distribution are operated in the interests of everyone. This is a radical departure from the capitalist pattern.

A moneyless society

A whole spread of consequences follows from these basic changes. When everybody owns and controls the production and distribution of the goods and services they want, there will be no point in charging themselves money for taking or using them. It has long been possible to produce enough for everybody, but capitalism can only operate by creating artificial scarcity.

When this has been stopped, there will be no buying and selling, no prices nor any of the other enormous, wasteful paraphernalia of the money system. Socialist society will operate on the established principle of: 'From each according to ability to each according to need'. This will not have to be regulated by any central authority--only by everyone being free to take what they want from what is produced.

A classless society

The ending of the capitalist regime and the establishment of common ownership will end the division of society into the two classes that exist today: those who own or control capital (the capitalist class) and those who have to work to increase the capitalists' wealth (the working class). There will therefore be no class conflict in socialist society, no trade unions or strikes or wage bargaining because there will be no wages or salaries. We shall work at what we think is important or interesting or fulfilling for us individually, but of course influenced by the needs and the trends in society. Capitalism is now a worldwide social system (unlike previous forms of society). Socialism, therefore, must also be a global human society. This is what 'the whole community' means. It follows that nations and frontiers and governments and armed forces will disappear. Groups of

people may well preserve their languages, customs and traditions, but this will have nothing to do with claiming territorial rights, trade barriers or military dominance over pieces of the world's surface.

They reject it

The British Labour Party and the various left -wing factions used to subscribe to different versions of this Object, but they have all abandoned it. With few exceptions, they have all become 'realistic': they have accepted capitalism. All they have left to offer their fellow workers are various ideas for modifying the way in which capitalism works--most of them completely impracticable.

Reforms don't work

Very many people in Britain and other long-established industrial nations have become disillusioned with politics and the voting system. All the promises of political parties for reducing poverty, unemployment and war have been shown time after time, to be false. Various forms of governmental control have been tried. All have left the great majority of the population, the working class, in exactly the same insecure lives of drudgery that they have always had.

All the features that the capitalist system has exhibited ever since it was set up are still with us today--in spite of all the struggles of trade unions and politicians. It has been proved, over and over again, that this system of society cannot be made to work in the interests of the great majority. This is because it was established by a minority class, the capitalists, to work in their interest. It can only work in this way, exploiting the great majority to increase their wealth and power.

Nothing else--nothing but

This does not mean that it is here forever. Social systems are not like that. They change when the technology changes; when the ideas and attitudes of the broad mass of people change; and when the old social system becomes an intolerable burden on production, restricting progress. Capitalist society is increasingly displaying all these features. In the last analysis, however, it is people who make history. Until a great majority of the world's workers acknowledge that we need to get rid of capitalism, that no other solution exists, we shall go on suffering it --in spite of the fact that we are increasingly capable of producing abundance and freedom for every man, woman and child on the planet.

Clause 1: the basis of capitalism

That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

Previous social systems

There have been social systems in the past: initially based on family relationships, with property owned in common. There have been societies based upon slavery, in which a ruling class owned slaves in much the same way as people today own cattle or horses. There have been societies in which the majority of the population were serfs, bound to the land they were born upon and bound to the lord owning that land. Almost all traces of those earlier social systems have disappeared now.

Capitalism

Today, as for the past three hundred years or so, we have capitalism. In this system, the majority of the population is free—except that they have nothing to live on. The means of producing food, clothing and everything else are owned by a small class, the capitalists.

Workers can only get the food, clothing and shelter they need for themselves and their families by working for one capitalist company or another. All they own is their ability to work, and they are forced to sell this to get the money to live. Because workers produce everything in society by working in capitalists' industries, all the products belong to the owners and none to the producers. The capitalists turn this wealth into profit by selling, on the market, these goods or services produced by the workers.

The wages system

Through the competitive labour market, the capitalist pays workers just enough to keep them going from one week or month to the next, so that they need to keep working all their active lives to earn their livelihood. Capitalists, on the other hand, use their profits to reinvest, to expand their wealth and power. As time goes on, therefore, the dominance of capitalists as a class gets greater and greater.

There are minor exceptions to this main pattern, but they are not important. With small, one-person firms and self-employed people, the 'boss' may work harder than some of his or her employees, and for less money. There are also some rich workers and some poor capitalists but, again, they are the exceptions to the prevailing order of relationships.

Nationalisation

Capitalism does not work well, even for the capitalist class at times. For this reason, many governments, in many countries, even Conservative governments, have tried nationalising certain industries. These are not owned by 'the people' as some Labour politicians and Communists have believed. They are owned by a nation's whole capitalist class together, through the state. It is state capitalism. It offers workers no advantages, no softening of their working or living conditions. It never was any use to us.

Clause 2: the class struggle

That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

A fact of capitalism--not a fact of life

The 'class struggle' is not just something that bloody-minded trade unionists stir up. It exists whether anyone wants it to exist or not. The fact that the whole of society's means of making its living is owned and controlled by a minority of the population condemns the great majority of people in society to an insecure and demeaning life of drudgery: doing work they do not choose, in surroundings they do not like, for purposes they do not necessarily approve of; to make wealth for other people they have probably never met and never will. It is not strictly slavery, but it has many of the features of slavery. Socialists call it 'wage slavery'.

Always fighting

The class struggle inevitably breaks out into open conflict from time to time because the interests of the shareholders and the workers are opposed to one another: the more the one side gains, the less the other side gets. The more wages are paid; the less profit can be taken. The more profit is made; the lower wages (or salaries), are pressed. The living standards of workers are therefore reduced.

The difference is that, in the main, capitalists do not starve when their profits fall: but workers, in many parts of the world including Britain, do starve, when they are thrown out of work, though not always to death. But whether there happens to be a strike going on, called by the workers, or a lockout, imposed by the employers, there is always friction and conflict in the day-to-day running of every capitalist company.

Maintaining or increasing profits is forced upon every firm by the fierce competition of the market. Those factories or cleaning firms or egg-producing farms are driven out of business if they cannot compete successfully with all the others in their field. This pressure always comes down upon the workers--to produce more; to do it faster; to reduce the value in each product or service.

The working day and the working week are often extended unless workers can successfully resist it. Wages are reduced, or simply held at old levels in times of inflation, if workers do not succeed in negotiating rises. The fighting never stops unless one side (usually the workers) is unable to exert enough power and is therefore steadily losing. The expansion of capital on a worldwide scale has meant that firms now move about the world in search of the cheapest wages, the weakest labour protection laws, and the laxest regulations about pollution. Workers--who are unable to move to the other side of the world--are therefore forced into unemployment.

Politicians united

Whatever party they belong to, politicians will always condemn the workers' efforts in the class struggle. Because the politicians actually form the government of the day, or hope to, next time, they must act as the servants of the capitalist class, of their nation state. They therefore inevitably take the side of the capitalists against the workers.

The most effective stand for them to take is to deny that there is a basic class conflict. Any unified efforts workers take to improve, or even maintain, their pay and conditions of work are described as 'mistaken' or 'misguided'.

The politicians attempt to persuade them that there is no conflict between the interests of workers and those of 'management' (always avoiding naming the capitalists). 'If workers and managers would only co-operate', they repeat, conditions would improve for everybody. They ignore all the weeks and years that workers do actually co-operate—and get no benefit from doing so. Politicians are no help at all in the class struggle.

Clause 3: working class emancipation

That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

The dice are loaded

The working class can never win the war against the capitalist class within capitalist society, in spite of winning the occasional battle in a strike. The capitalist system of running society was set up by capitalists, for capitalists. Its laws, its police, its courts, its armies, its intelligence services have all been improved and tested over hundreds of years to make them efficient at controlling working class opposition and undermining working class organisation. As long as the working class accept the capitalist game, they are playing by the capitalist rules, and they are bound to lose.

No reconciliation is possible

The capitalist class have built up their social system so that they can live on the backs of the working class. There is therefore no chance of improvement for the great majority of mankind until the capitalist class are dislodged permanently and all over the world. The only way in which this can be achieved is by establishing another system, a new order of society, in which there are no classes, no private ownership of society's means of living, no exploitation, no oppression; no market competition—in other words, socialism.

A complete change

Socialist society will be very different from capitalist society. This will mainly be because of the things which will no longer exist. Like the other private property systems before it, capitalism is a social system which is designed to make it possible for a minority of people to force the rest of society to work for them and keep them in positions of power.

Their 'ownership' of various types of companies, buildings, tracts of land, and so on, is a form of power--power to prevent anyone else 'trespassing' on their property or using any of it for purposes which they have not agreed to. So, for example, food cannot be produced unless particular capitalists agree to their land being used to grow it. And they do not agree unless they expect to make profit out of such production.

Changed social relationships

Abolishing the capitalist system and all the special privileges of today's ruling class will completely alter the way in which we all behave towards one another. When the land, the seas, the roads and railways, the mines and farms and factories belong to all of us (or none of us, which is the same thing) we shall all have equal power in society.

'Democratic control' is another way of looking at the same situation. Instead of being operated for profit, all of these resources, both natural and those built up by generations of workers, will be used to meet the needs of everyone. Instead of having laws and punishments imposed upon us by a judicial and penal system constructed and financed by a class which rules us, we shall establish our own ways of reducing conflict and misunderstanding to a minimum. They may not be identical in every part of the world, but they will all have the same basis--they will be set up, modified when necessary, and controlled by all the people concerned.

Clause 4:...without distinction of race or sex

That as, in the order of social evolution, the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

Modern in 1904

The rejection of racism and sexism was fairly new in 1904 when these principles were first adopted by The Socialist Party. It is just as important today than it was then. Discrimination and oppression of people who belong to particular sections of society or have different looks or speech from those around them are features of oppressive social systems. Such discrimination and oppression will have no place in socialism, a society set up by the great majority of human beings—in the interest of all human beings.

Discrimination impossible

There is only one human race. Whatever the colour of our skin, the pattern of our hair, or our reproductive function, we can all interbreed with one another. We all came from the same original stock. We are all one species. Discrimination has been used only for the purposes of exploiting and oppressing one section of human beings by another. That will be impossible in a socialist society.

The origins of exploitation and oppression

Human beings lived for tens of thousands of years in small social groups in what has been called 'primitive communism'. This was a social pattern which grew out of forms of family units. There was no exploitation or oppression of one section of these people by another. They all co-operated in the difficult business of getting enough to live on. These people were, in the main, 'hunter-gatherers' living off the area of the world's surface that they roamed in. However, increasing success in planting seeds, instead of gathering them, or herding game animals instead of simply killing them in hunting expeditions, led to more settled occupation of land. This, in turn, developed into private property in cattle or fields. The growth of larger private property groupings, or tribes, led to conflict.

Conflict in battles initially meant killing opponents, but later, as kingdoms and empires grew up, it led to capturing people from other tribes or kingdoms as slaves. This same process brought about the virtual enslavement of women. The possession of private property made it more and more important to pass on that property to ones children. Women had to be guarded, virtually imprisoned, to make sure that the children they bore were definitely the offspring of the dominant male, so that he could keep the property in the patriarchal family.

Protection rackets

Many slave empires grew to enormous size and sophistication but one after another they collapsed or declined or were overthrown. Slavery is not a very efficient way of using either human beings or the land. In many parts of the world, after the empires had gone, peasant farming of various patterns grew up to make a living for people on small patches of land that was still fertile. Again, however, warriors--calling themselves knights or Samurai or other similar titles--began to impose protection rackets upon those who worked the land. These were the origins of feudalism--a sort of Mafia-run social system. Instead of doing any productive work themselves, these oppressors extracted a fraction of the wealth produced by the ordinary people in return for protecting them from other thugs like themselves. It is from long-established families of such gangsters that our own aristocracy is descended.

The new classes

Capitalism broke the ties between peasants and the land, but it left them with nowhere that they could call their own, and no rights. The making of the working class out of all these farm labourers and skilled men and women, with all the flogging and branding and hanging that were used is a vicious history that most people today try to forget.

The new capitalist class achieved its dominance with just the same sort of ruthlessness and cruelty as the feudal barons and the slave owners of past social systems had used. All the complicated social divisions of those societies were swept away. Capitalism, the new, 'free', society reduced everything to two classes: employers and workers.

The last class

Like the previous oppressive social systems, capitalism is now a very inefficient way of producing the things that human beings need and want. Millions starve to death in the world every year, in spite of the fact that we could easily produce the food to feed them. The great majority of the rest of us live in poverty, and often in squalor.

Competition between capitalist national blocs erupts into war all the time, and periodically on a globally destructive and murderous scale, like World War II. The only thing preventing the productivity of our factories and farms being used to produce an abundance for everyone on earth is the capitalist class itself and the social system it has imposed upon society. Its power and its wealth are based upon scarcity. Scarcity is necessary to keep its markets functioning, and poverty is essential to keep the working class working. The capitalist class is the only obstacle to a world of plenty and peace. It is the last oppressor class to be overthrown, and there is only one class left to do this-- the worldwide working class. When the working class decides to remove the power of the capitalist class, that will be the end of class society, the end, in other words, of one section forcing another section of people to work for them.

The classless society

In the society which follows--and we use the word socialism to describe it -- every man, woman and child will be free to take what they want from what is produced. This freedom is what will make oppression or exploitation impossible. It will also be the daily evidence that everyone has equal power, an equal voice in every decision that is taken.

Clause 5: not through leadership

That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself

The urge for freedom

The idea of society without oppression is a working class idea, although, in fact, it goes back to a time before there even was a working class. During the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, John Ball is recorded as saying, from an open air platform, "My friends, things cannot go well in England, nor ever, until everything shall be held in common, when there shall be neither vassal nor lord and all distinctions levelled, when lords shall be no more masters than ourselves."

Gerrard Winstanley

Much later, in 1652, when Cromwell was beginning to turn the English revolution into a dictatorship, Gerrard Winstanley, the Digger, wrote, "if any want food or victuals, they may either

go into the butcher's shop and receive what they want without money or else go to the flocks of sheep or herds of cattle and take and kill what meat is needful for their families without buying or selling."

Julian Harney

In 1850, when working class movements had really begun to form, Julian Harney wrote, in *The Red Republican* of which he was the editor, "It is not any amelioration of the conditions of the most miserable that will satisfy us: it is justice to all that we demand. It is not the mere improvement of the social life of our class that we seek, but the abolition of classes and the destruction of those wicked distinctions which have divided the human race into princes and paupers, landlords and labourers, masters and slaves. It is not any patching and cobbling of the present system we aspire to accomplish, but the annihilation of the system and the substitution, in its stead, of an order of things in which all shall labour and all shall enjoy, and the happiness of each guarantee the welfare of the entire community."

Marx, Engels and Morris

It was from English working-class writers and trade unionists such as Harney, tutored by the grim realities of industrial capitalism, that Frederick Engels and Karl Marx learnt the historical realism which supported their examination of the alienation of human beings in capitalist society from their true nature. And it was from Marx that William Morris, a capitalist, learnt why Victorian society was so ugly and so merciless to the working class, causing Morris, in his fifties, to devote the rest of his life to working for the total transformation of society, even though it would deprive people of his own class of the wealth made from the toil of workers. In *News from Nowhere*, *How We live and How we Might Live* and reams of other writings, Morris painted pictures of the life that is possible once capitalism is done away with.

A majority idea

The desire for a society of common ownership and democratic organisation has therefore repeatedly come from men and women who were themselves oppressed by class regimes—from slaves and peasants and working class people. Exceptions like William Morris stand out because they are so unusual.

In fact, he was sneered at by members of his own class. The historical reasons why the setting up of a socialist society was not possible at the times of any of these men would take too much space to explore here. Other socialist literature deals with this and other specialised questions.

No leaders

The important point to draw from these examples, here and now, is that it is only the working class that has the overriding interest in bringing about the momentous change to a socialist form of society. We cannot trust anyone else to do it for us. We cannot trust even leaders from our own ranks, because they can always be bought off, or eliminated in other ways, by the ruling capitalist class. It has happened countless times around the world already and will no doubt happen again.

The workers have the power

The fact that working class people in the modern world run everything in society from top to bottom means that we are at last in the position to make a world society of equality and free access a reality. Our parents and grandparents and ourselves have developed the means of production to a

colossal degree. This has made it now quite possible to produce plenty of everything that the world needs. We therefore already have the economic basis for a socialist society. Unlike the world as seen by Ball, Winstanley, Harney or Marx, all the conditions are now ripe and ready for the step to the next stage in human social development. Only we, throughout the world, are capable of achieving it.

Clause 6: violent revolution or orderly change?

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

How to do it

This principle goes into some detail because the subject matter it deals with—how the revolutionary change from capitalist to a socialist society will be carried out—has always been one of the main points of disagreement between the different groups who want to overthrow capitalism. Some of them (like William Morris for much of his time) believe that violence is inevitable. Some anarchists even believe that violence is desirable in a revolution. Others who claim to be socialists think that workers' power must be exerted at their actual place of work in order to take over the running of society. Most of them, except The Socialist Party, believe that becoming involved with elections and Parliament, in the case of Britain, is bound to mean getting caught up in the continuation of capitalism.

Knowledge is all-important

It all hinges upon the readiness of the working class for the change that is to take place. If the great majority do not have a clear idea of what needs to be done and a firm resolve to do it, then it does not matter what methods are used—they will fail. The Socialist Party takes a different position from every other party calling itself socialist. Our founder members said that times and conditions have changed. The sort of bloody revolution that introduced capitalism in one country after another is out of date. Four main factors now make it essential to work for a revolution that is peaceful, democratic and which uses the voting system in those countries which have it:

1. Most modern capitalist states are now so well-armed, so well informed and so wealthy and powerful that an armed insurrection trying to overthrow an established state machine would be doomed to failure.
2. When violence has been used to establish a regime, it can only be maintained by violence or the threat of it (like capitalism). A socialist society cannot be built upon such foundations.
3. There is no way of knowing, and showing, that such a violent revolutionary movement represents the wishes of the great majority. Many workers would oppose it simply because it was violent and destructive. Only a vote can prove that the majority insist upon the overthrow of capitalism.
4. A sufficiently massive majority vote makes violence unnecessary because it demonstrates that opposition would be pointless.'

Electing for socialism

The election of a majority of socialist delegates will not be an instruction to them from the whole population to go on running capitalism, as it is to political parties today. It will be an instruction, first, to take control of the armed forces of the state so that they cannot be used against the people.

Secondly, it will be an instruction to enact legislation transferring the ownership and control of all companies producing, distributing and administering society's goods and services into the hands of the whole of society. Once this is done, the job of socialist delegates to parliaments and other democratic assemblies will be complete. Their tasks will be at an end and they will return to ordinary life.

Practical democracy

The organisation and day-to-day running of socialist society will be a completely separate issue. It will have been discussed and planned at great length by everybody before the actual take-over of power takes place.

Although people in different areas of the world may choose different patterns of democracy to implement their wishes, they will all be keen to maintain control over the production and distribution of products and services that affect everyone's life.

As the old regime is abolished, the new, really democratic, social order, discussed and planned for so long beforehand, will come into operation. Everyone will know what to expect and what is expected of them. Objectors will be allowed to state their objections and try to get support for whatever Ideas they have. What they will not be allowed to do is disrupt industrial processes or social arrangements just because they feel like it. What has been decided by democratic majority can only be altered by majority decision.

The armed forces will be disbanded as such, when these changes are complete. The organisations themselves and their logistical equipment might still be used, however, as they sometimes are today, to provide emergency help in different parts of the world, because there may well be a considerable amount of mess to clear up as a legacy from capitalism.

Clause 7: opposition to other political parties

That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

Unreasonable?

This clause often causes surprise amongst people who encounter The Socialist Party for the first time. It prevents the Party or its members from joining or supporting other political parties. It prevents them from speaking on the same platform or the same broadcasts as others, except in opposition. This seems unreasonable to some enquirers. 'Why don't you join forces with other 'left' parties and movements, since you all have the same objectives?' they ask.

Opposition to socialism

They pose questions like this because they do not yet understand the problems that have interfered with the working class struggle towards socialism throughout the past two hundred years. They are not as aware, as members of the Party are, of the reasons that progress has been so slow. One of the main reasons is that the propaganda of capitalism has persistently put up alternative ideas and plans to divert and undermine working class determination and organisation. Millions of working class men and women have been attracted to a range of plausible schemes and quick-fix solutions to their poverty. The solutions have never worked but this has made the task of the revolutionary socialist much harder.

Of course, it is only to be expected that the supporters of capitalism will attempt to divert all efforts to overthrow it. What is more difficult to understand and to make clear is how politically minded members of the working class can end up doing the same thing.

A sorry history

Reading about the development of working class political parties, both here and abroad, we can see that, although many of them started off with the objective of replacing capitalism, nearly all of them have turned into supporters of the very system that oppresses and exploits their members. Their 'socialism' has become a sort of vague sentiment about 'justice' or 'fairness'. Not only have they failed their members and supporters, but they have diverted thousands of workers from the only course of action which can make them free.

Why ask us?

Since nearly all of these parties are younger than the Socialist Party it seems reasonable to ask, 'Why didn't they join us if they wanted socialism?' When their progress is carefully studied it becomes clear that they wanted something else far more than socialism: they wanted a large membership. And they were not particularly fussy about how they got the members. Our membership is not large, and our insistence that every applicant shall subscribe to the Object and Declaration of Principles before they are accepted as members strikes many left-wing workers as off-putting. That may be so, but we are still committed to socialism today while they are now supporting capitalism—in various ways. This is because their large memberships were not, and are not now, socialist,

Making the difference clear

Our chief difficulty, now, is to put a clear space between them and us so that workers are not deceived or confused about who stands for what. We have often been told to 'Get back to Russia', a state capitalist imperial country which has now lost its colonies around it as its system has collapsed. Yet we have explained what was really happening in Russia ever since the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. What we said over the years has all been confirmed by events. But we are still urged to join forces with workers whose mistaken interpretation of capitalism and history led them to call that revolution 'socialist'. We have no choice but to be critical of these misguided Interpretations, and therefore hostile to the parties which offer them to the working class. They hold back working class understanding. They therefore hold back the socialist revolution.

Clause 8: join us to hasten the ending of capitalism

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether allegedly labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

A call to action

This rallying call to our fellow workers in Britain is echoed in each of our companion parties in the countries where they operate. It urges all those who want a complete change in society to join with us in organising a growing socialist movement.

Understanding and unity

The type of action intended is, however, extremely important. The Socialist Party does not offer to accomplish anything, or provide anything, for members of the working class in Britain. It never makes election promises of this sort. All it offers is a rallying point and an organisation which can be used to assist in the accomplishment of a worldwide socialist society.

The only struggle worth pursuing, as far as the Party is concerned, is the struggle to make socialists- and an overwhelming majority of them. This is the only thing necessary for changing society. All the other factors have existed for a long time. Street demonstrations, or fights with police or the destruction of property may relieve some people's feelings of frustration, but they do not add to understanding or to socialist organisation. Socialists do not take part in them. Socialists use the energy of their frustration in more constructive ways.

Learning

Because of all the arguments thrown at socialists, from the Right and the Left; from the press and the broadcast media; from films and books produced by the capitalist studios and publishing houses; because of all the pro-capitalism bias embedded in our education system, socialists need to be fairly well equipped with knowledge to explain where these arguments are wrong.

One of the most usual effects upon those who join the Party is therefore that these new members are eager to learn more about history, anthropology, economics, ecology and many other aspects of human society and our treatment of the planet. They also realise how much there is to learn about the democracy upon which the Party is based and which must form the core of socialist society.

None of this is compulsory, but it does seem to be tied up with the whole process of making socialists and expanding the movement for world socialism. Our message to our fellow workers is therefore:

There is no short cut to socialism.

Nothing else will solve working class problems.

To hasten progress to that objective, socialist understanding and socialist organisation are urgent priorities.