
**REPORT OF THE
PROCEEDINGS OF THE
NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE
CONFERENCE**

June 25-26, 1994

**REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY OF
BRITAIN (MARXIST-LENINIST)**

Report of the Proceedings of the National Consultative Conference of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), June 25-26, 1994,
contains an edited report of the whole proceedings of the Conference. It is released by decision of the Central Committee of RCPB(M-L).

National Consultative Conference of RCPB(M-L)

SATURDAY, JUNE 25, FIRST SESSION

Contribution 1: The speaker presenting the main paper on behalf of the CC began by saying that having come this far in the work of popularising and discussing the draft document, **There is a Way Out of the Crisis**, released at the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), the question that naturally arises is where the Party should go from here. Should it continue on its two-point programme of dissemination and elaboration of the draft document or should it add some new elements to its programme? This, in the opinion of the Central Committee of RCPB(ML), he said, is the main item on which this Consultative Conference must deliberate and give its judgment. "In other words, all the contributions to the conference must keep the cutting edge of where the Party should go from here firmly in mind."

Strengthening Discussion

He said March 19 was a brilliant day for RCPB(M-L). "This was because it opened the path for the progress of the Party's work within the present conditions. The Party judges March 19 so highly because it proved that communism is capable of tackling the problems it faces, no matter how difficult and complex they may be. March 19 also showed that the Party has the resilience to be in step with the times." He said that RCPB(M-L) went through an extremely difficult time in 1993 but, in spite of all the difficulties, the Party made an advance, took concrete measures to establish the technical base for the modernisation of *Workers' Weekly*, and also paid successful attention to developing its content. The Party was able to face the task of

confronting the problems at this level of strengthening itself as the vanguard of the working class, he said.

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

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

stroke all the cobwebs which had gathered and open the path for the advance of our Party.”

Necessity to Formulate a Programme

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

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

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

The speaker said that in the opinion of the Central Committee of RCPB(M-L), what the British working class needs is its own independent programme behind which it rallies its own ranks and the broad masses of the people. Under the present circumstances, when there are so many pressures, there is always a tendency to reduce the task of working out the independent programme for the working class to merely some phrases that the British working class must smash capitalism, he said. “Yes, our Party fully

agrees with smashing capitalism and building a new society based on socialism but the point is that the Party is actually serious when it demands that this must be done in real life. This task must not be reduced to the mere repetition of phrases and the expression of intent but it must shine in the working class as the source around which the class is organised.”

Summing Up the Experience of the International Movement

The speaker said the task of formulating a programme must be transformed into a conscious plan, a step-wise action, a work which RCPB(M-L) takes up in the closest co-operation with other fraternal Communist Parties, especially CPC(ML). “It is very true that our Party must do its own thinking and this is what it has been known to do since it was founded 15 years ago but our Party recognises another truth as well. Thinking cannot be done in isolation from all those who are fighting for the same cause.” He said the pre-condition for the formulation of a draft programme for the working class is the summation of the experience of all the communist parties taken as a whole and of the international working class movement and of the national liberation movement. He said it is not wise to keep out the experience of those who are taking up causes which may only have limited aims. “This means that our Party must take into consideration the developments in the objective and subjective sphere not only nationally but internationally as well, in the course of working out its draft programme and before it is approved as its fighting programme for this period.”

He then turned to the presentation of Comrade Hardial Bains, national leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist). The speaker said Comrade Bains spoke about some extremely important questions, but there is one which concerns all communists. “He spoke about the need for developing discussion about contemporary communism by taking into consideration the experiences of all countries by fully detaching ourselves from eurocentrism and all theories of exceptionalism.” Why is it

necessary to do this at the present time, The speaker asked. Is the demand that RCPB(ML) should give up being a European party? Should it forget that it is the vanguard of the British working class? "No, what is being demanded is the opposite. Our Party must anchor its theoretical and ideological considerations in the historical experience of the democratic revolution in general and the demands of the proletarian revolution in particular. The demand is that our Party must begin from the present by giving up all the old prejudices, the prejudices which are passed on by the bourgeoisie to the working class, the prejudices about political and economic systems." The speaker said eurocentrism forbids having an open mind and looking at the world, at realising there is a greater experience which comes out of the summation of the movement as a whole taken in its profundity than by just looking at the part and exaggerating it in order to make it look like the whole. He said there is a greater experience than just that of the British political and economic institutions. There is a greater experience than just that of European or North American political, economic and other institutions. There is a greater experience than just that of the working class in Europe and North America. "Comrade Bains was merely stressing that all communists, all Communist Parties must pay attention to the experience of the whole. This, in my opinion, is the most important thing which the Party must pay attention to."

In the work of RCPB(M-L), said the speaker, "we have learnt that there is a pressure to abandon theory by just being empirical." This is tantamount to putting a part in control of the whole. There is a tendency to look at one's own experience at the cost of all others or the experience of one's own organisation or one's own party or one's own class or one's own country and so on. "We must pay first-rate attention to this danger. Comrade Bains stated in his presentation that while no one should underestimate the role of theory, we must begin from the present and not from the past. Finally, he emphasised that the aim is to emancipate entire humanity, not just that part of it."

It is very crucial, the speaker said, that RCPB(ML) pay first-rate attention to these considerations.

The speaker said that in drafting his own speech, he had discussion on various matters of mutual concern with Comrade Bains. "What stands out from these exchanges," he said, "is that discussions cannot sort out the problems which the Party faces but they do, more often than not, provide clues to how the problems must be sorted out." He said that in terms of the entire work of RCPB(M-L), it has been proven over and over again that "We are our own models" and that there can be no foreign models to emulate. "In this respect, it must be clearly understood that being our own models does not mean that the Party does not applaud the models of others. It would be absurd to do otherwise as the models of the world proletariat do not fall from the skies, he said. They are born on earth under definite conditions and bring forth that imprint within the overall conditions of imperialism and proletarian revolution which belong to all. He said the Party should appreciate the value of discussions which provide clues, and build a whole network of these discussions on the basis of a plan.

Vanguard Positions

The speaker said the kind of discussions he has in mind necessarily presupposes beginning from a vanguard position. It is futile to begin by asserting that "we do not know," he said. There is a world and it is reflected in our brains, which is objective, and also in the brains of others, which are also part of the objective world. "The fact that our Party exists presents us with a most important instrument of the working class and the fact that it exists means that the discussions must stem from the problems the working class is facing in consolidating this vanguard," he said. More often than not, a serious blunder is made by which the working class is left out from the task of consolidating the vanguard, the speaker said. On the contrary, a feeling is created that it is the vanguard in isolation from the working class which will consolidate itself. "How is it possible, comrades,

that the vanguard has no mother which can nurture it, provide it with strength and with more offspring when they are needed?" he asked. The speaker said the Party must, as the starting point of its work right after the Consultative Conference finishes its deliberations, develop the discussion in the working class about how the vanguard is to be strengthened and consolidated. This, he said, is one of the tasks which must be added to the two-point programme.

He reminded the conference that the Party has repeated so many times that the same discussion should be taken to all sections of the society. "Should the Party not work out a programme to develop discussion amongst the professionals and intelligentsia, amongst youth and women, that they too must consolidate the vanguard of the working class?" he asked. "Should we not involve everyone in this important task which is crucial, as our theoretical consideration tells us, for the winning of victory over the bourgeoisie and carrying forward the proletarian revolution? Finally, should we not raise the calibre of discussion inside the Party, both from top to bottom and bottom to top, without disregarding our principle of democratic centralism and the method of collective work and individual responsibility?" The speaker said the principle of organisation on which RCPB(ML) is based must be used in order to promote vigorous discussion inside the party in the course of executing the plan set for this period.

After everything is taken into consideration, he noted, discussion can develop in the party and the class and amongst the broad masses of the people only when there is a vanguard position. This is the basis on which everything else rests. Not only must the Party be strengthened and consolidated without let-up, he pointed out, but it must be done on the basis of vanguard positions. For instance, "in the course of the work for the success of March 19, the Party genuinely informed all other communists and their organisations about its programme. It was our sincere wish that they should know what we are up to at this time. In the opinion of our Party, this is the vanguard position, a position which has the aim of restoring the unity

of the communists in Britain and on the world-scale." He said that when the CC insists on its role as the sole leader of the Party in between Congresses, this is to ensure that the edifice of the party is not shaken by anyone. It is to ensure that RCPB(ML) can play its role. This too is a vanguard position, he said.

Banner of Democratic Struggle

The speaker said it would be wrong for the Central Committee to fail to underline that the entire work of the Party is being carried out at this time on the basis of modern definitions. The way problems present themselves for solution, he said, has to have their relief in the conditions as they prevail at this time. They will require modern definitions. "When John Major was shrieking like a maniac against "beggars" during the election campaign for the European parliament, he was telling the world that he, as the representative of the bourgeoisie, is withdrawing from the position that society has responsibility for all its members." In other words, said the speaker, he was giving notice that bourgeoisie has thrown the banner of democratic struggle into the mud. "How should our Party take up this banner? Should it merely repeat, on the basis of old definitions, that John Major is being diversionary or should it actually look into the matter in the profundity which it demands?" He said that just as the objective developments of capitalism are showing again and again that the scientific and technical revolution will not benefit society, "the outpourings of John Major prove that the bourgeoisie does not care about what happens to human beings." He said it wants a society which only guarantees its supremacy but not a society which acknowledges and fulfils the claims of all individuals comprising it. "Should our Party not conclude from this that objective conditions are ripe for the overthrow of the capitalist system by revolution, that its development is not for the benefit of society?" he asked. Being at its last stage, being parasitic and moribund, any development of capitalism only serves to further disintegrate the capitalist system, creating ever more chaos and anarchy in society and

destroying the productive forces on an ever increasing scale. The speaker said the Party should pay attention to these facts in accordance with the requirements of the movement for emanci-

pation. One of the key requirements, he said, is that the facts must be examined on the basis of modern definitions.

Part II: Review of the International and National Situation

Continuing Disequilibrium

Turning next to a broad review of the international situation, the speaker said the disequilibrium that has characterised international affairs since the collapse of the bi-polar division of the world has dramatically deepened in the three months following the Party's March meeting.

Fresh conflicts have broken out in Rwanda and Yemen and the bloody fighting in Angola, Bosnia and Afghanistan carries on unabated as various big powers continue their policies of intervention and brinkmanship, he said. He also noted that in South Asia, the Kashmir crisis is far from resolution and Indo-Pakistani relations are at a new low.

In Europe, the speaker observed, most of the former Warsaw Pact countries and many of the former republics of the Soviet Union have signed NATO's Partnership for Peace plan. But Germany continues to push for speedy membership for the Visegrad countries – Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic – while the US is hesitant. He noted that Russia, which at first insisted on being granted special status under the Partnership for Peace, now appears to have dropped its demand and has said it is willing to sign on like the others.

With regard to South Africa, he said that while hailing the end of apartheid, the CPB(M-L) has pointed out that the old state and its economic base have come through this transfer of power virtually intact. "We expressed our view that the struggle of the South African people had entered a new phase and that their future would rest on how they would deal with new conditions."

The speaker said the establishment of Palestinian authority over the Gaza-Jericho territories in Occupied Palestine is another historic development. He said this development – de-

spite bearing the imprimatur of the US – is nevertheless a sign of Washington's weakness and the strength of the Palestinian popular movement. "Our Party will continue to closely study the situation and we wish every success to the Palestinian people in using this space to press for the complete liberation of their homeland."

Turning to the question of Ireland, he said that, since the Party's last meeting, the Anglo-Irish initiative has continued to go nowhere. There has instead been an escalation of sectarian violence by loyalist gangs, acting, no doubt, as part of a plan to derail the peace process. John Major is still insisting on laying down preconditions, the speaker said, even though the overwhelming sentiment in Britain and Ireland favours the start of unconditional talks aimed at a final resolution of the problem based on the inalienable right of the Irish people to self-determination.

He observed that the US was caught by surprise at last December's initiative by John Major and Albert Reynolds. Washington's main complaint was about being left in the dark, he said. Overriding strong objections by the British government, the US granted a visa to Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams to visit New York as a way of gently hinting to John Major it "wanted in" on the peace process. Noting that the US has not been happy at the British government's apparent eagerness to anchor itself to a distinctly European (as opposed to Atlantic) centre of gravity and the two countries have been exchanging harsh words over Bosnia for some time now, he said the failure of the US and Britain to see eye-to-eye on the Irish question is also a matter of great salience. "If Anglo-American unity was one of the certitudes of the bi-polar division, the partial fracturing that has occurred is proof of the disequilibrium that has been ushered in by the end of bipolarity," he said.

US Illusions and World Reality

The speaker said it was important to dwell momentarily on what this disequilibrium is all about. He noted that, like the present period, the bi-polar division of the world also saw a great deal of conflict and violence. "The equilibrium which existed was that of two super-powers agreeing to determine the fate of other peoples and who held the entire world hostage to the threat of a devastating thermo-nuclear war." Despite that equilibrium, there was contention, he said, extremely fierce contention at times, but the destruction of the Soviet Union created a vacuum that the US is now discovering to be far more uncertain and portentous than the "Cold War" ever was. "The US still wants to determine the fate of other countries and uses nuclear blackmail as its ultimate weapon but it now has to contend with the growing assertiveness of China, Japan and Germany as well as Britain, France and even Italy, India and others." Moreover, as events in Bosnia, the Ukraine and elsewhere convincingly demonstrate, the speaker said, Moscow can no longer be written off as a potential threat to the US "interests" either.

Noting that the "Cold War" certainties are over and that no stable balance of power has emerged as yet, nor is it likely to in the near future either, the speaker said what makes the prevailing instability so dangerous is that the US thinks and acts as if the world is unipolar even though events continuously reveal its inability to definitively set the agenda any more. Either other big powers stand in the way, he noted, or else countries which the US wants to target remain defiant, such as Cuba and North Korea. Moreover, the emergence of middle-level powers like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Brazil, Mexico and others - who have aspirations of their own - has meant the growing contestation of United States' hegemony both regionally and globally. He said the United States failed to emerge as the decisive player in the Yugoslav conflict last year and its attempts at brokering accords in Somalia, Kashmir and elsewhere have ended in ignominious failure.

Just last month, the whole of Asia was up in arms at US attempts to link trade with "human rights and democracy" and Bill Clinton was forced into an embarrassing climb-down over the renewal of China's Most-Favoured Nation trading status.

The speaker said another sign of the times is the struggle of the people of Kashmir. "Kashmir is a nation that has been partitioned between India and Pakistan. Both countries deny the Kashmiris the right of self-determination and refuse to settle their dispute democratically, on the basis of ascertaining the wishes of the Kashmiri people themselves." He noted that the US has tried its level best to use the Kashmir situation for its own ends. It has repeatedly offered itself as an "honest broker," and has raised the issue of human rights violations by India in order to gain leverage for itself. Pakistan has solicited the assistance of the United States but when Benazir Bhutto approached China for help in December last year, she was rebuffed. Since then, China has made it clear it considers the Kashmir dispute a bilateral issue and teamed up with Iran in order to put pressure on Pakistan to withdraw a motion censuring India's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva earlier this year.

He said India's relations with the United States continue to be rocky despite the visit to Washington of Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. "The Indian ruling classes have ambitions to become a big power themselves and they balk at the American suggestion that India forswear nuclear weapons and sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty." Furthermore, he noted, there is increasing talk of an "Asian Trading Bloc" with China, India and Iran as its initial nucleus and should such a formation eventually emerge, it is bound to be a source of intense competition and conflict globally and regionally, as is already the case with other economic blocs.

Fissures Among Big Powers

The speaker stressed that while there is a certain harmony of interests which exists among the most powerful states, this is con-

stantly being undercut by economic, geopolitical and military rivalries arising from the uneven and anarchic development of world capitalism. He said this affects the internal dynamism of the big powers, on the one hand, as well as their ability to successfully perforate various areas of the world economy, on the other. The United States for example, simply does not have the capital to effectively compete with Germany for domination of the whole of eastern Europe, while its attempts to fully insert itself in the Asia-Pacific region are not going so smoothly either.

He said the increasingly adversarial economic situation is also being aggravated by the fact that the size of the international economy is itself shrinking. At the forefront of this shrinkage is the growing frequency and duration of economic recessions as well as their spectacular contagiousness, the speaker said. "With the immense volume of speculative capital coursing around the world in search of the highest return, the interconnectedness of exchange rates, trade deficits and interest rates of all the advanced capitalist countries has become another serious bone of contention between them." It is not uncommon, for example, to hear the economic crisis in Britain being blamed on the Bundesbank's policy of high interest rates. Every year at the G-7 summit, ritualistic calls are made for a "co-ordinated" economic policy to kick-start individual economies but as soon as the heads of state return to their respective capitals, the policy of furthering their individual "national interests" continues as before, he noted.

Strategic Importance of Asia

The emergence of China and the rest of Asia as a major economic centre in the present period has to be profoundly appreciated, the speaker said, observing that great disputes are in the making over the markets and resources of the region. He said the US and Europe have been unable to break into the intra-Asian trade networks which have emerged in the past few years and Washington's attempts to convert the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum

into a trading bloc under its own control have not so far yielded any fruit.

Closely reflecting the rise of Asia as a major economic region is the growing importance accorded to South East and North Asia in the US strategic and military doctrine, he said. The "Win-Win" doctrine adopted in order to give the US military the opportunity to simultaneously fight two geographically distinct conflicts at full strength was drawn up specifically with the Middle East and East Asia (i.e. Korea) in mind. Given the turbulent international situation, Pentagon chiefs said the alternative strategy of "Win-Hold-Win" – involving a smaller defence budget – would leave the US military impotent in the face of an attack on "American interests."

With the closing of its naval base at Subic Bay in the Philippines, the speaker said the US is doing everything possible to ensure it retains a strong military presence in East Asia. "The peaceful reunification of Korea or even the signing of a peace treaty between North Korea on the one hand, and the US and the United Nations on the other, would remove any possible justification for the presence of American troops in Korea and Japan. This is at least one reason why the United States has continued to provoke tension on the Korean peninsula," he said.

In any event, the speaker said, the United States appears to have been once again checkmated in Korea. It was forced to abandon its call for sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea because of the North Korean government's steadfastness and because of the insistence of China and many other countries such as India and Indonesia, that the US agree to North Korea's long-standing and just demand for a negotiated end to the dispute between them, he said.

The speaker stressed that if the Korean War of 1950-1953 was the first military defeat suffered by Washington in the twentieth century, "the resolute stand of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea today shows the Korean peninsula is still the Waterloo of the United States."

Jobless Growth and Medievalism

With respect to economic trends, the speaker said one of the most salient aspects of world capitalism at the present time is the deepening of the phenomena of joblessness and "jobless growth." He noted that while profits in most of the major capitalist economies may have recovered to their pre-recession levels, employment has lagged way behind. Even where some new jobs have been created, these are invariably part-time, low-wage jobs which do not come with significant pension or health benefits for the workers.

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

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

He stressed that, as far as the field of rights is considered, the bourgeoisie is bent on

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

Retrogression in International Norms

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

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

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

In this regard, the United Nations' and

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

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

The speaker said it has long been a cardinal principle of international law that intervention by an outside power in a civil war in another country is illegal. In 1950, the United States tried to skirt around this question by getting the United Nations Security Council to describe the Korean civil war as an act of aggression by North Korea against a "sovereign" South Korea. Today, he said, even this fig leaf is not maintained. Chapter VII of the UN Charter - which is explicitly intended for breaches of international peace - is being frequently invoked to mandate outside intervention in internal conflicts. The US-led intervention in Somalia was one example of this, while the interference of NATO in the Bosnian civil war is another, while most recently, there is France's intervention in Rwanda.

NPT and US Search for Nuclear Monopoly

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

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

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

In this context, he also pointed out that the refusal of China to go along with President Clinton's non-binding moratorium on nuclear testing and President Mitterrand's statement last month that France would never place its nuclear weapons under NATO command show that the nuclear weapons states themselves are struggling to achieve or maintain parity with each other, a struggle which does not augur well for

the future. News of the new nuclear postures of Russia and the United States – wherein both have essentially dropped their no-first-use pledge against non-nuclear states – provides yet more proof that the end of the “Cold War” has not brought with it any lessening of tensions, he said.

Need for Democratisation of International Relations

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

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

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

ternational questions is also carried far and wide.”

Overview of Situation in Britain

Turning to Britain, the speaker said that unemployment, poverty, social disintegration and a number of other ills resulting from the crisis “continue to be a blight on the lives of the working people.” At the same time, he said, it should not be assumed that the present retreat of revolution will go on for a long time. He said there was a space opening up for the working class and the communists to operate within, to enable them to avert the dangers facing the people, “to prepare conditions so that when the situation changes, to be able to resolve the crisis in favour of the working people and to open up a path to a new society, a socialist society.”

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

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

istics are gathered omits many people who are unemployed.

Logic of Cutbacks

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

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

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

The aim of the bourgeoisie, said the speaker, is to maintain a capitalist base with large-scale social production, but "to turn the clock back to a medieval superstructure where the state has no responsibility for the welfare of the citizens." But how is it possible that families can provide for the well-being of their members by themselves, he asked. Referring to Hardial Bains speech earlier in the day, he said that when there was a subsistence economy, this

is how people's needs were met - through the family. "But now, in modern society, in a complex, integrated society, with large-scale social production, how can the family provide for the education, for the health, the welfare needs of its members? Only a society can provide this." The speaker said it is the responsibility of those in power to make this provision. If the system is such that the state cannot or will not take this responsibility to provide for the well-being of the working people, this system will have to change, he said.

Deepening of Consciousness

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

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

With regard to the political sphere, the speaker said, there is a situation where the people have no part in the decisions which affect their lives. He pointed out that all the major

parties are resisting fundamental change on this front. The Tory Party flatly rejects any change in the political process, while the Labour Party, he said, even if it calls, as it does, for a change in the Upper House, for a Bill of Rights or for a referendum on proportional representation, at the same time makes no move towards a fundamental change in what denies the people in Britain sovereignty - the right to govern and take part in political decision-making.

Need for Fundamental Changes

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

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

words, he said, the space is opening around the question of the demand for a modern society which meets the requirements of the modern age.

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

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

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

SATURDAY, JUNE 25, SECOND SESSION

Contribution 2: A member of the Central Committee began his presentation by saying that what direction the workers' movement should take is one of the most crucial questions facing the Marxist-Leninists. Events today, the increasing attacks on rights and welfare provision of the state, the increasing exploitation of person by person, he said, show that with the working class placed on the sidelines without influence no other social force can rescue society from the disasters that capitalism is heaping on it. "Such events reaffirm that the working class is the only thoroughly revolutionary class and social force which can rally all the other revolutionary forces around itself. The alternative for which the working class fights is the alternative to capitalism, which is socialism. But if the working class is to liberate itself and to unite the democratic and progressive forces around itself, it has to provide itself with the most enlightened, revolutionary and modern definitions of democracy, human rights and politics."

Today, he said, the working class faces the situation that the communist and workers' movement is in retreat and that the bourgeoisie is on the offensive internationally and nationally. The return to medievalism in the superstructure of society in developed capitalist countries like Britain, he said, is the hallmark of this retrogression being imposed on the working class and people. "In Britain all the achievements of the working class in the previous period are being wiped out one by one. So profound and shocking is this retrogression in Britain that thousands of young people can be seen begging on the streets of major cities, thousands

are imprisoned and thousands taking to a life of drugs and crime." He said that this is something which is on a scale not seen before.

He said that the significance of this retreat of revolution for the working class and the offensive of the bourgeoisie is that whilst the path to socialism has been temporarily blocked the way out of the crisis has not. "If the communist and working class movement provides society with its modern definitions on all the major problems of the day," he said, "it can occupy a space which will increasingly place it in a leading role in society so that when the situation changes and the time comes to advance further socialism can be achieved."

It is important, he said, to take into account what direction the working class movement is taking at the present time under the conditions of retreat of revolution. "The working class is being asked to submit to the political, economic and social policy of privatisation and domination of market forces. The Labour Party presents as its alternative a modified version of this same policy." However, he went on, the Labour Party goes much further on European integration which is a policy which is not in the interest of the working class of Europe or any other country but that of the interests of the monopolies and oligopolies. Only modern definitions of the unique class aims and programme of the working class and its revolutionary theory, he said, can expose and destroy the bankrupt political and economic theories of the bourgeoisie.

He said that the programme that the bourgeoisie hopes to impose on the working class is that it should remain on the sidelines of

society and passive on all the problems of the day. Both the "classless" society of John Major and the "modern just society" of the Labour Party are a vision of society with the working class sidelined, he emphasised. "In economic terms the working class is being asked to sacrifice its collective and individual interests, its human happiness to that of business winning as the only way out of the crisis. High profits, low inflation, low interest rates, more investment in private business and justifying mass levels of unemployment are the arguments it is asked to accept as success for the economy by not only the Conservative Party but also in almost identical terms by the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats. What is not presented is for the working class to adopt its own economic programme which bases the success of the economy on how it puts the well-being of the people at the centre of economic development."

In the political sphere, he said, the working class is being asked to accept the sovereignty of Parliament, cabinet rule and the monopolisation of Parliament by parties. Yet the interests of the majority in society demand renewal of the political process with sovereignty in the hands of the electorate to select candidates and initiate legislation. There are demands for change in the relationship between Westminster and Scotland and Wales, demands for withdrawal from Ireland and for constitutional rights for all citizens in Britain. He then pointed out that what is not presented is an independent political programme based on these immediate aims of the working class and its desire to come to the head of this movement for renewal of the political process and renewal of the state ending the domination of Westminster. What also is being denied is the long-term aim of the working class for political power and the transformation of capitalism to socialism. What this shows at this time of retreat of revolution, he said, is that the need of the working class has never been greater for its communist party, which can provide such modern political consciousness.

The speaker noted that the most advanced political traditions of the working class

can be traced back to the Chartists. Just as today the working class must aim its political attack against the capitalist market system which is at the heart of the retrogression of society and against the Westminster parliamentary system which is at its head, he said, the Chartists in their day aimed their attack against this same free competition and this same Westminster parliamentary system which exploited and starved the working class and denied them any political rights.

Today, he said, the various trade union leaders talk about the labour and trade union movement as if it describes a movement that has developed from the time of the Chartists and the early trade union movement, things which were significant achievements for the early proletarians. "But the labour and trade union movement today cannot be described as a movement led by the proletariat. It has no independent political or social policy, it is not a class-led movement and its programme is not independent of the liberal conservative policy. John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC, giving his views on the future of this movement in an article in January, said, I want the TUC to play a major part in the nation's affairs as they affect the world of work, economic development and social justice. Besides admitting no political role for the TUC members the policy is to meet and do business with the government and important interest groups. The TUC does not speak and act as a centre of resistance of the working class with its own independent programme, but it adopts Labour Party policy as its own and often at the expense of its own Conference decisions. It also speaks on behalf of the sectional interests of the major players amongst the trade unions."

However, the speaker said, today this policy is no longer meeting with the same response from the government or the employers. This much, he said, was admitted by John Monks when Monks said, "I don't detect the Government or the CBI looking for deals, but it would do us no harm to suggest some." This, the speaker said, has since led to the TUC adopting a policy to present itself to the Conserva-

tive Party, and the Liberal Democrats, as potential allies. In March, he said, it was forced to hold a "relaunch of the TUC for a new era". He pointed out that every time it revamps its policy it quickly becomes discredited, a fact that John Monks seemed conscious of when he said, "time is not on our side". In other words, the speaker said, the TUC policy is going nowhere, however they dress it up and increasingly this programme of the TUC is becoming exposed to the working class.

The speaker went on to say that what is considered the most radical wing of the labour and trade union movement criticises the TUC policy not principally for its aims but for its lack of action. The position is given, he said, that the only thing wrong with the labour and trade union movement is that these TUC and Labour Party leaders don't fight and the issue that is presented is that the workers should step up their actions and drive the Tories from office and force their own leaders to act in their interest. But, he asked, what are the workers to force them to do, other than what they are doing already, if there is no need for the working class to look at its aims and its programme? The call for action, he said, is turned into a programme for the movement itself, and it becomes an aim in itself. "The workers continue to take action in defence of their interests regardless of who calls for action or not. This can be seen today in the actions of the railway workers, who are taking action in defence of their interests and not because somebody has called on them to do so. The issue is to make the workers conscious of their line of march through a programme of the working class so that their struggles take on the character of a movement of the proletariat that is leading society out of the crisis. The working class should take the lead in society and not leave itself at the mercy of the present labour leaders."

The speaker said that one of the most positive characteristics about the working class of Britain, the class which embraces workers of England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and many other nationalities, is its solidity and class identity. This is why the government policy today is

directly aimed at dividing the working class to keep it sidelined in society. He said that they are concentrating their attack particularly on key industrial sectors, creating divisions on the Irish question and following a policy of ghettoisation of society.

In this respect, he said, the greatest danger posed to the working class is the ideological position of the apologists of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement. For example, he said, the unity of the workers involved in the generation of power has constantly been undermined by these leaders. Workers are lined up behind the particular union sector they work for against the interest of the workers and society as a whole. He pointed out that this is why the Government was able to play the oil, nuclear and gas cards in attacking the miners and destroying their influence and power. The bourgeoisie, he said, has never forgiven the miners for using this power with great effect against their interests many times.

The speaker then mentioned the shipyards. In this sector, he said, trade union leaders have recently set the workers against each other in competition for warship orders for their different yards when all of them are members of the same confederation of trade unions. At the same time, he said, these leaders, by using the issue of jobs, line the workers up behind Britain's ambitions as a world power. "Just as they are prepared to divide workers at home in order to secure some concessions for some, they also throw to the wind the unity of the international working class regardless of the huge dangers this poses workers everywhere."

Today, the speaker said, after over a century of trade union organisation, whole sectors of the working class are left outside of what is called the labour and trade union movement. Key transport workers are not fully organised, which has major consequences for the unity of the class. He said that, for example, during the 1984-5 miners' strike, this was a factor in the defeat of the miners. He went on to point out that the unemployed and other oppressed masses are not even considered for full union membership as the unions compete with each other for

union subscriptions, giving the class enemy a whole field in which to organise divisions and splits. Those unemployed that have, against all the odds, organised themselves on a class basis are treated as second class union members within this labour and trade union movement, he said.

The policy followed by the trade unions on the Irish question, which is one of the most important questions on which the working class should take a lead, he said, allows the bourgeoisie to use this question to divide society. Regardless of the views of the union members at almost every union conference and the stand they take for ending British occupation of part of Ireland or highlighting the brutal occupation, these policies are never implemented. He said that the labour and trade union movement follows the same bilateral policy with the Conservatives that the Labour Party does on this question. He pointed out that those trade unions that have members in the north of Ireland link this question to maintenance of the union of Britain and northern Ireland. They play and have played, he said, a major role in maintaining the occupation. "It is not surprising therefore that, with the Downing Street Declaration and the recognition by the British Government of the right of the Irish people to self determination, this has brought forward no demand from the TUC and trade unions for the British Government to carry this out and withdraw from Ireland."

The speaker then pointed out that one of the main dangers to the unity of the working class and other sections of society is the policy of ghettoisation. In society, he said, all individuals have rights by dint of being human, workers have rights by being producers of the wealth and women have rights over and above these by their position in the reproduction of society.

But, he said, instead of these rights being recognised by the state, society is divided up into "communities", and interest groups all with their own particular demands which do not and are not allowed to conflict with the interests of capital and government policy. For example, he said, trade unions are granted

"immunities" from prosecution for disrupting the free trade of the capitalists when they go on strike. The trade unions were one of the first to be ghettoised in this way. Recent trade union Acts, which have aroused the opposition of the workers, he went on, have made it extremely hard for workers to qualify for this immunity. What is not recognised by the state is that workers have rights by being workers because they produce the wealth in society. "What the workers should put forward is not a demand for restoration of immunities from prosecution when they go on strike as a special interest group but a recognition of a modern definition of rights."

The speaker pointed out that "positive discrimination" and "proportionality", terms which are used in the labour and trade union movement, put in favour of this or that special interest group are the policy which is championed by the labour and trade union movement in society on the questions of racism, women and many other questions. This policy divides the polity and is contributing to this ghettoisation of society. He said that it is also ghettoising the trade unions into special interest groups. Instead of having one union conference to decide policy, several are held. Whereas before different sectors of the economy would hold their own individual conferences within one union, now other special interest groups based on gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc., increasingly hold their own conferences. Far from creating more democracy for the members, the decisions are more and more concentrated in fewer hands, he said. "What the working class needs its own programme which recognises the claims that all people have on society."

The present road of the working class is blocked, the speaker said, on every question of importance and it is the work of the communists which holds the key to removing this block and providing a direction. This is why the bourgeoisie directs its main blow against communism. It spares nothing to present to the workers "proof" that communism is finished and to present and promote communism as mere sects on the extreme left of society. Whilst the bourgeoisie encourages those that hark back to the

past, he said, great pressure is put on the working class to accept the bourgeois system and to ignore the work of the communists to provide society with modern definitions on a way out of the crisis. He said that the Labour Party and the TUC and trade union leaders provide the main ally of the bourgeoisie in this. They try to "modernise" social democracy which has become so discredited because they are finding it hard to maintain the lie that the Labour Party provides an alternative to the open capitalist government of the Conservatives.

Over the recent period, the speaker went on, whilst the militants of the Party have remained in the forefront of the resistance movement of the working class and other sections of society, there has been a new departure for the work of the Party. Over the last three months since the anniversary rally of the Party, he said, where the consultative document of the CC was released, **There is a Way Out of the Crisis**, there has been a marked development in the work of the Party.

During this period, he pointed out, the Party has presented and elaborated on a draft general political line for the working class, in discussion in Party circles, at workplaces, and in communities, in the circulation of the new review *Discussion, Workers' Weekly* and the document of the CC. "This work has marked a significant advance for the Party. It has activated the Party around its political line as well as being taken to activists in society. The question which has to be answered is how to advance the work of the Party; whether to continue to elaborate this general political line or to advance to a new stage. What the analysis of the present direction of the working class movement in Britain shows is that the crucial question is what is this programme around which the working class should unite? It is this which will provide the answer to what direction the working class should take."

The speaker said that such a programme should provide the working class with modern class consciousness, both on its immediate and its long-term aims, and spur the working class on to taking up its leading role in soci-

ety. "This work will start to heal the divisions in the class created by the bourgeoisie and labour aristocracy, politicise the working class and increase the influence of communism and most importantly it will move the work of the Party to the next stage."

Contribution 3: A member of the CC spoke on the topic of theory pointing a way out of the crisis.

The speaker began by saying that the Party has its preoccupations at any time. It is at present concerned with the elaboration of the programme that there is a way out of the crisis in the context of deciding what the Party's next stage is to be. "What does our theory tell us in this regard," he asked. "What is predicted by it and what conclusions can be drawn?" He said that this is the key problem of theory that the Party is addressing at this time. It is necessary for it to continue to carry out broad theoretical work as well, to continue to underpin its analysis and deepen it. The Party's conclusions and its programme must be consistent with its theory, he said, or else these would either have to be rejected or its theoretical considerations reconsidered. In this way, theory becomes a guide to action, theoretical questions are burning questions for the Party and for the communist and workers' movement.

Taking a broad view, he said, it can be said that the body of theory that the Party is addressing is that which deals with the motion of society and that is able to discover and formulate the laws which govern this motion, and from which the theoretical considerations are drawn which inform the programme of action that any party of the working class must set. Thus, he said, the attitude of the working class to theory is of prime importance. "Theory cannot be considered as developing hair-splitting arguments over political concepts from the classic writers of Marxism-Leninism nor of analysing tactics from the 1920s or 1930s, for example. On the other hand, neither can our attitude to theory be what is the traditional attitude of the British working class and labour move-

ment to theory, a disregard for it, a pragmatic and practicalist view. Our attitude must be to oppose empiricism, scepticism, and so on in theory. The theory of today must be drawn from the experience of today." In this way, the speaker argued, theory is enriched, becomes modern theory, not negating past theory. This theory emerges from the experience of the workers and communist movement as a whole taken within the conditions of the collapse of the bi-polar division of the world and of the struggle against the capitalist system in these conditions and the theories the bourgeoisie puts forward to justify this system and its intensifying exploitation of the working people. The experience summed up and generalised becomes the guide to action, he said, providing the theoretical considerations for a programme for the Party and the class, pointing to the way out of the crisis, with the perspective of the emancipation of entire humanity.

The speaker went on to say that Marx had pointed out that in society (leaving aside pre-history) people first and foremost have to provide themselves with food, clothing and shelter. They enter into production in order to do this in definite relationships, forming definite classes. This division into classes and struggle between them in the course of production, he said, provides the mainspring for the motion of society.

This theory is not the property of any one class, he said, nor does it address concerns of interest only to communists or to academics. It is a concern of the whole of society, a matter of science, a matter of solving these theoretical issues in determining the motion of society. "The theoretical issues the Party takes up as its key concerns are those which will advance its work and advance the revolutionary movement. It poses and takes up those problems the solution of which will contribute to developing the next stage of its work, which takes pride of place."

In terms of the theory of capitalist society, the speaker said, the motion and struggle within capitalist society centres around a fundamental contradiction. This contradiction, he said, is that those whose labour produces the

wealth of society do not control the products of their labour. Not only that, but production itself is social, co-operative, increasingly large-scale, in character, while those who control the appropriated wealth do so on a private, individual, competitive basis. This fundamental contradiction in society expresses itself in a divide in society, he continued, in the struggle between two irreconcilable classes: a small minority comprising the exploiters on the one side, and the vast majority of exploited on the other. At the head of the exploiters stands the capitalist class and at the head of the exploited stands the working class.

The essential relationship between these two forces, he said, is one of the exploitation of the one by the other. "Marx's theories explain and hard facts have confirmed the validity ever since, that the basic mode of capitalist production rests on the appropriation of the unpaid labour of the workers in the form of surplus value. The theory explains that the capitalist extracts more value from the labour power of the worker than was paid for it. Capital is accumulated in the hands of the classes which own the means of production by the constant extraction of value and retention of the surplus value produced by the workers. The development of modern industry, the concentration of capital, requires and brings into being, the modern proletariat, not scattered workers, but organised and concentrated in production, whose interests as a class are in direct opposition to those of the capitalist class, the working class who produce the material blessings of society, and are in no need of the class which exploits them. With the advance of modern industry, the proletariat, its special product, develops, with the task of organising itself consciously as a class and eliminating exploitation. What the bourgeoisie has therefore created, above all, is its own gravediggers."

The speaker argued that theory therefore shows that the fall of the capitalist system is inevitable, and that it is the working class, he said, which will deal the blow that fells it. Any programme of the working class must be based on this conclusion, must be geared towards this

end, and towards removing the obstacles standing in the way of the working class realising this historic role.

Theory shows, he said, and the experience of capitalist development confirms, that the emancipation of all working people from exploitation cannot come about without there being a particular class in whose interest it is to open up the path to this emancipation. And it is in the interests of the proletariat, the working class, he said, to be this class, to open up this path to progress, to the overthrow of capitalist society, putting an end to the exploitation of one by another. This path is therefore in the interests of the society as a whole, to the vast majority, in eliminating the conditions of their exploitation.

The speaker went on to say that history shows that ascendant classes will rebel against the conditions which hem in and block their advance, and that this results in a trial of strength with the old forces and an overthrow of the old, moribund social conditions.

The struggle against and the overthrow of feudalism was led by the capitalist class, he said, leading to the overthrow of medievalism, of absolutism, and to the removal of the block on the development of the new, capitalist, productive forces. In turn, he went on, the working class, the ascendant class today, must take this struggle to its logical conclusion, and overthrow in its turn the capitalist system to begin the building of socialism. "In opposition to this, the bourgeoisie today is trying to turn back the wheel of history, reversing the gains over medievalism, adopting medievalist traits of thought, entrenching the absolutism behind which stand the monopolies and oligopolies. All this is putting a block on the development of the productive forces."

In its present stage of monopoly capitalism, the speaker continued, the whole motive of production has become the making of the maximum capitalist profit. The state is run and government policies are formulated and carried out so as to ensure the greatest profitability for the capitalist class. When profitability is high, then the policies of successive governments

have been to find ways to push them even higher, and when profits begin to fall, the policies are to reverse this and increase them once more, he said. "The call of John Major for the success of business is a call for policies facilitating this maximum capitalist profit. But the mechanism of capitalist production itself, as the theory of surplus value shows, ensures that the pushing of profits to the highest level is at the same time a pushing of wages and living conditions to the lowest level, an intensification of the exploitation of the working people, a mechanism for the ruin of society and cutting of public expenditure. This is the programme of the bourgeoisie, to maximise profits to the utmost and together with and in direct relationship with it to increasingly intensify exploitation. The making of maximum profit is the motive of production in this programme. The monopolies, in pursuit of their maximum profit and for the success of their business, cause the ruin of the workers, for instance, throwing them onto the streets in their plans for rationalisation. The anarchy based on the private ownership of the means of production leads to the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer, to unemployment and all the other features of the crisis." As the draft document points out, he said, successive governments have made this cutting of public expenditure the main plank of their policy. He noted that when it was profitable to do so, the bourgeoisie even spoke of public guarantees, as was the case in the 19th century. It even went so far as to erect a welfare state in this century in order to lure people away from socialism and to provide for itself the means for making maximum profit. These days, he went on, sensing no danger coming from world socialism and communism, the bourgeoisie is finding it profitable to withdraw such public guarantees. The private ownership of the means of production and virtually absolute rule by the executive is the basis of the economic and political crisis.

In terms of the development of the economic base of capitalism, the speaker asked if this can be developed further, if there can be an advance in the development of the productive forces under capitalism?

The speaker said that here again theory comes into play by showing that, as capitalism in this century has reached the stage of imperialism, of monopoly capitalism, of concentration of production, with the growth of the modern proletariat, all the objective conditions are there for a new, socialist, social system, all the objective preparations are in place for the overthrow of the capitalist system. In fact, he said, objectively, this overthrow is long overdue. "Imperialism represents the domination by finance capital, of parasitism and decay of capitalism, of profits made through money-lending and speculation. The bourgeoisie, unwilling and incapable of sanctioning the forward step towards socialism, is presiding over a moribund, parasitic and atrophying capitalist system."

The speaker raised the point touched on earlier that the means of production themselves under monopoly capitalism have become socialised, while ownership is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. This is giving rise to crisis, he said, a brake on any development of the productive forces, whereby the productive forces themselves are being destroyed on a massive scale. On a world scale, he said, this has led to the devastation of famine and war. And this is all being carried out with the motive of controlling markets and maximising profit. The scientific-technical revolution itself, he went on, far from being used for the benefit of society, has become one of the greatest factors for the destruction of the productive forces. Any development now of capitalism seems to further disintegrate and destroy these productive forces.

The conclusion drawn from the Leninist theory of imperialism and from its historical development in this century shows, the speaker argued, that the social system is crying out to be transformed by revolution to socialism, and that there can be no intermediate stage, no transitional social system, between advanced capitalism and socialism. In other words, he said, the time for the destruction of this mode of production has appeared in history. "There can be no progress in history without the destruction of this mode of production. Even theoreticians of capitalism themselves have to admit that it

has nothing more to offer but continue on such a destructive path."

The speaker said that theory therefore confirms that this era remains the epoch of imperialism, even when the period is one of retreat, of the ebb of revolution. He pointed out that this affects the tactics of the proletarian party, for instance by utilising a period of retreat of revolution to develop modern definitions, to develop its theory commensurate with the times. However, he said, theory amply demonstrates that this is a period of ebb within an overall epoch of imperialism, which, as Lenin points out and as theory shows, remains the eve of the proletarian revolution. He said that it follows that the working class must provide itself with the necessary consciousness and organisation to bring about this proletarian revolution, and make the necessary preparations for revolutionary upsurge.

The speaker stated that the working class movement in Britain is one of the oldest in the world. It has continued against all the obstacles placed in its way to fight for its emancipation and for a socialist society. "Today its consciousness is growing about the necessity of challenging the type of society that exists in Britain. It stands on the threshold of providing itself with modern class consciousness, which is to say the necessary consciousness to lead society out of the crisis, to develop its independent programme, to be conscious of its independent and leading role."

In this regard, the speaker said, the necessary instrument for the working class providing itself with such consciousness and organisation is the proletarian party, the party of a new type, the Marxist-Leninist party. This arises from the theory of such a party which shows its place as the most conscious, the most organised and the vanguard detachment of the working class. Therefore, he said, without such a party there can be no working class movement aimed at the overthrow of the capitalist system which is long overdue.

At the same time, he went on, theory also shows that it is the working class itself which must go into action, which must provide

itself with the consciousness and organisation to organise itself as a class, to be conscious of itself as a class.

Modern large-scale industry, modern capitalist society, he said, which has in words paid tribute to the rights and liberties, has given rise to an educated proletariat. This proletariat must provide itself with the independent programme of action and necessary theory to act as an independent class.

The speaker argued that the working class has reached the stage of maturity of being able to emancipate itself, and its theory has to rise to this. Against this stand the moribund, bankrupt theories of the bourgeoisie, he said, reflecting the moribund nature of their system, and which have to be the target of the proletariat in this period.

The speaker drew the conclusion that it is the working class who must emancipate itself, and its emancipation cannot be the act of other classes or only of a detachment of the

class. The modern proletariat is capable of such an act of emancipation, he said. Taking this together with the conclusion of the necessity of the proletarian party, it follows that it is up to the working class to participate to build its own vanguard party. He said that the working class has to be involved in consolidating its vanguard. Any programme of the class and the party must have at its base that the foundations for such a party must be laid. At the same time, one can point to a conclusion that a programme of the party and the class, starting from present conditions, must open the path out of the crisis towards the socialist system.

Finally, the speaker said, this movement of the working class to lead society out of the crisis, against medievalism, for the overthrow of capitalism, and the establishment of socialism cannot take shape without the theory from which the considerations which inform the programme are drawn. "There is clearly an immediate necessity for such a programme."

SUNDAY, JUNE 26, FIRST SESSION

Contribution 4: A member of the Central Committee said that the Party has made major advances in its work this year. After the Seminar in Coventry in January, he said, the Party began to unfold work to build a Party capable of acting as a vanguard of the working class in these new conditions. The draft general line presented at the March 19 Rally and the work on the two-point programme over the past three months are the concrete manifestations of this.

He said that discussions amongst activists of the Party at study groups in his area have shown very strong support for this draft general line from the Rally and it has also received a very positive reception amongst activists in different struggles in the local area. The work on this two-point programme, he said, has both increased our grasp of the general line in a detailed fashion, whilst also developing new ties with different sections of the people in struggle. "It shows the importance of this work which clearly must be continued. But the question which has been raised is: should we go further to develop a draft programme for the class?" he asked. "From the work that we have done it is quite clear to me that this is what is needed, but also that those sections in struggle actually want us to carry this work forward. In my view it is a necessity."

The speaker then said that he would like to say a few words about some ideological considerations arising out of the work over the previous period which affect this decision.

Firstly, he said, it is important that the

working class reject the notion that workers and trade unions should stick to economic/industrial affairs, whilst leaving politics to politicians and, in particular, leaving politics to the Labour Party. At the turn of the century, he pointed out, the establishment of the Labour Party was a big advance for the workers, a recognition of the fact that its interests were not served by any of the parties in parliament and that they had to establish their own party, but over the period since then, the link between the Labour Party and the trade unions has turned into a millstone around the necks of the workers, turned into something which is preventing them actually taking up politics themselves.

He said that, as the draft document points out, workers are leaving the Labour Party in big numbers, for example, 20 years ago, Trotskyites in the Labour Party used to boast that their party, meaning the Labour Party, had 8 million members, by which they meant the affiliates from the trade unions to the Labour Party. Now, he said, it is noticeable that in the current leadership election, the Labour Party is talking about some 4 million taking part in its decision-making process. But the actual number to vote, because they actually vote as individuals, will clearly be far, far smaller than this. "This decline in the Labour Party membership reflects the breaking down of the alliance between the financial oligarchy and the labour aristocracy, which the Labour Party itself is also speeding up with measures such as its One Member One Vote proposals, distancing itself from the trade unions, but it is also through this weakening the link which helps

to keep the workers from politics.”

The speaker gave the view that the breaking down of the alliance between the financial oligarchy and the labour aristocracy, the rejection of the Labour Party by workers and their disillusion with trade union leaders, is opening the way for workers to become political themselves and take up a modern class consciousness, a consciousness of the need to take the lead in building a new society. “All this is creating a space for the working class and for the Party. The question is, how can this space be filled and how can advances be made on the basis of modern definitions?” he asked.

Secondly, the speaker went on, we can see at present that there is widespread discontent with the state of affairs in the country, not only against John Major’s government but much wider than this, against politicians, against growing poverty, against cutbacks in services and so on. He said that this discontent erupted nationally into a major struggle over the poll tax, erupted nationally over the plans to make 30,000 miners redundant and close the majority of pits. But, he asked, what was actually achieved in this? At the end of the day, the government brought in the Council tax to replace the poll tax, whilst it made a tactical retreat over pit closures and has then proceeded to close even more than originally proposed.

He said that we can see from these struggles that they were only opposition to what the bourgeoisie was doing – they were a fight *against* something, and not a fight *for* something. He referred to what the draft document had said that the movement cannot be based on discontent alone and went on to point out that if the movement is to lead to the deep going changes that are needed, then it must have an objective class basis. What does this mean, he asked? “Objectively these changes can only be brought about if society is to be brought out of crisis. And this means that the working class must lead. And how should it lead? It should lead on the basis of its own programme and win the support of the broad masses of the people for it. Then all this discontent can be trans-

formed into a material force for change.”

The speaker reminded the Conference that the previous day speakers had pointed out how the bourgeoisie is taking society back to feudalism in the superstructure to protect its profits, leaving each individual to fend for themselves. He said that another example this week was Virginia Bottomley’s claim that new technology will lead to the loss of 50,000 hospital beds over the next few years. He said that what this means is that new technology can be used as a justification for taking away essential services and leaving individuals without the level of care required. All the contemporary facts, he went on, confirm the truth of the analysis in March 19 document that the struggle in society is between those who want to drive society back to feudalism and those who want to carry it forwards to the creation of a new system. “A huge gulf is opening up between these two paths and the two sides in the conflicts, at the root of which is the struggle between capitalism and socialism. The working class has to reject all those who want to narrow this gulf down by suggesting that capitalism can in some way be reformed, such as Tony Blair’s dynamic market economy with social justice, or that the problems can be resolved by such methods as rewriting the trade union laws.”

The speaker said that this, as well as the other points raised, essentially means is that the working class must lead. But how is it to lead, he asked? It needs to formulate its long-term and short-term aims, its agenda, he said. Then it can fight for this and win the support of the broad masses of people for it. And the Party, as the vanguard of the class, must take up this as its aim. He said that in his view this proposal to begin work to formulate the long-term and short-term aims of the movement should be taken up.

The speaker then emphasised the need for ideological struggle to be waged, not up in the air, but for the achievement of the Party’s tasks, which, he said, means drawing as many

people as possible into this work. "This means opposing those who try to narrow down the tasks of the working class with dogma or sectarianism. It means taking away the roadblocks to the working class taking up this task itself. For example, in the rail strike, the trade unions are saying that the problem in the strike is government interference in pay bargaining. Leaving aside the question of whether the government should interfere or not, the question is why do they want to narrow the struggle down to that. By their own admission more than one hundred thousand rail workers have lost their jobs in the last few years. Many more job losses are expected with privatisation, which will also cause further line closures, higher prices and so on. So why not take up the question of privatisation and the disasters this causes for the broad masses as well as for the rail workers? But also, why not take up the question of how the working class can begin to change the situation, which is what its independent class programme is about?"

The speaker finished by saying that his view was that the Party should continue its work around the two-point programme, but it should also go beyond this to the preparation of the draft programme for the working class.

Contribution 5: A speaker representing a study group from the African and Caribbean communities thanked the Party for the opportunity to present a couple of points which had arisen from their study group. He said that the study group has been looking at the draft document from the point of view of how to elaborate it as a basis of work in the African and Caribbean communities.

He began by saying that what is commonly referred to as the Black community in Britain comprises nearly 1 million people and nearly 2% of the entire population of Britain. It includes people of both African and Caribbean origin, and is now predominantly a British born population situated throughout the country, but

mainly concentrated in particular areas of London, making up about 8% of the capital's total population, although in a few boroughs comprising over 20% of the total. He said that it is an extremely diverse population including newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees from Africa as well as those whose families have lived in Britain for generations.

The speaker said that these communities' historical development exactly coincides with the development of capitalism in Britain and more particularly with the start of the exploitation of Africa and the enslavement of its human resources in the 16th century. In Britain, he said, Elizabethan Poor Laws coincided with the first deportation of Africans from this country, who at that time, the late 16th century, were seen as a drain on the country's resources. Thus, he said, Britain's Black population exists solely as a result of modern capitalism and imperialism.

He then asked the question what is the way forward for this section of the population? Official statistics, he said, show that it suffers from disadvantage and discrimination in many aspects of life, even when compared to other citizens. "The racism that developed as a justification for the exploitation of Africa and the Caribbean still exists and is officially promulgated in laws such as the Nationality Act and the Asylum Act. Such laws and other means have been used by successive governments to attempt to establish first and second class citizenship, and not only create exploitable differences amongst people, leading to physical and verbal attacks and even murders; but also help to maintain a pool of cheap labour from some residents, as well as from recent migrants, many of whom exist without any rights at all."

The speaker pointed out that although Britain's Black population is relatively small, its significance has become much greater than its numbers, especially in recent years. Racism and discrimination and the resulting marginalisation in many areas of life, he said, have produced, to some extent, common attitudes, a general feeling of alienation, which have accompanied a tradition of struggle.

The speaker said that in the African and Caribbean communities there is a widespread alienation from the political process. People, he said, feel powerless to make changes and totally unrepresented. They have no faith in the organs of the state especially the police, the judiciary, and so on. There is enormous concern over education and also over employment. He pointed out that official figures show that unemployment amongst the Black population is 2.5 times higher than amongst the general population. And in the age group of 16-24 year olds, 1 in 4 black young women are unemployed and 2 in 5 of all black men. However, he said, too often these problems are seen only in a narrow way, not as a general problem of society that can be solved through wider collective action. In this way, he pointed out, many initiatives that are taken in the communities, such as the provision of supplementary education, for example, remain marginal and only offer partial and short term solutions.

He then raised the question: is there a way out of this general crisis for our communities; how is the Black population to fight for and maintain equal human rights will all other citizens; how is it to be empowered; where do its interests lie; can it provide its own solutions to these problems?

The speaker then argued that although often thought of as a minority, most of this population is clearly part of the majority – that is, part of the working class and working people. Significant numbers are employed in the NHS, in engineering, and transport and communications, and so on. It is vitally important, he said, that there is recognition of this fact, amongst all workers. Efforts must be made to make people conscious of their common interests, and that a society must be and can be created where the interests of all are of equal concern. He said that the communities must understand that there is a way out of the crisis, that they are not alone, and that their struggles are part of a wider struggle for progress and must be oriented accordingly. “The demands of our communities for an end to discrimination, for equal rights and respect in all aspects

of life must be seen as part of the struggles of all working people to move society forward.”

But he emphasised that, at the same time, the Black population must concern itself with the politics of the working class and must see that its own progress can only be ensured by struggling to create a new society, which has the well-being and empowerment of all people as its main aim. For its advancement, he continued, it must frame its own demands in this light. At the same time the working class as a whole must take up the concerns of the Black population as part of its own concerns. “Can the working class advance its own interests; can there be any kind of progress for society if one section is left behind or singled out for discrimination?” he asked.

The speaker said that it is vitally important that the interests of those of African and Caribbean origin are not marginalised, that the alienation that he had mentioned before does not become a general alienation, that is to say, an alienation from the class and its concerns, and become disbelief in the possibility of any change for the better in Britain. In this regard, he said, there is much work to be done, but the fact that so many people in the communities are disillusioned means that they are also seeking an alternative. He stressed that the communities must be made aware of the actual source of their problems and where their true interests lie. They have nothing to gain from the present system, he said, and everything to gain from the creation of a new type of society, which fully recognises their rights, has their needs as its central concern, and which empowers them to determine their own futures. “We must demand such a society where all our human rights are guaranteed,” he said.

The speaker went on to say that the suppression of the cultures and traditions of Africa and the Caribbean in Britain, the historical denial of the humanity of Africans, racism and chauvinism in many aspects of cultural and social life in Britain, remain important and unresolved issues. He said that these are legitimate concerns which significantly affect people’s lives and are also an important

cause of the general alienation which exists in the communities. There is great anger, he said, over what is commonly seen as a lack of respect both for individuals and their cultures and traditions. In fact, many people consider that such issues should be the major issues of concern for the communities. However, he pointed out, by viewing these issues in isolation many people are hindered from understanding the source of their problems and also prevented from fully taking part in their solution.

The speaker concluded by saying that the working class and progressive people have a responsibility to find solutions to these problems. "There is a need for mutual respect for all traditions and cultures. There is a need to educate all members of society and to provide more scientific and enlightened views about the entire world, and its people's struggles, histories and cultures. Such questions should not be seen as of only sectional interest but should be of general concern, seen as part of the struggle for human rights and the progress of society. The many existing cultures and traditions which originate outside of Britain enrich the country and contribute to the diversity of the working class in Britain. These traditions and the development of mutual respect, and so on, also provide the basis for strengthening internationalism, for building links between the workers and people in Britain and those of other countries," he said.

Contribution 6: A speaker put forward some views which she said were based on the experience of analysing the discussion document. She raised the question of how do we take forward the two-point programme.

The speaker said that she thought the two-point programme has provided a very positive basis for strengthening the Party and for broadening the base with other people in the society. Regarding the two-point programme, she gave the view that the plan of discussions should continue, the groups that had been established should continue and be strengthened. But she said she felt that what is needed now

is to look to the future, to what sort of space is being created in society at the moment, where the bourgeoisie's weaknesses are. She said that one of the strongest areas in the Party's positions at the moment is the call for democratisation, strengthening democratic principles working through society. She said that she was aware of quite a few organisations that were concerned about the democratic process in Britain and raised the question of how links could be developed with such organisations.

The speaker said that her experience with students seemed to show that amongst the students there is widespread disillusion with the different political groups on the so-called "left". She thought there may be a basis there for building discussion and study groups with students, and perhaps even holding a conference in one of the universities to make a focus for students, intellectuals, and so on.

Contribution 7: A member of the Central Committee presented a paper on the theoretical considerations which would have to be taken into account when working out a draft programme for the working class.

The speaker said that on March 19, the Party put its draft document forward for discussion. In calling this Consultative Conference, he said, the purpose, in further elaborating the document, was to begin the planned work to build a practical programme through which the working class can lead the other social forces out of the crisis and open up the path to a new socialist future.

He said that he would be presenting some of the key theoretical considerations that arise from the draft document, considerations which stem from the present objective conditions.

The speaker began by talking about the concept that this is a period of the retreat of revolution. He said that this period had been described by many as that of the death of socialism and communism, the demise of the

working class as a class, and even the end of history. He said that, as the draft document elaborates, these concepts are wrong and that this retreat is in fact a temporary phenomenon within the continuing epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution. He emphasised that this must be a key factor directing our analysis and working on a programme.

He said that, since 1917, no major world event has taken place without the working class being centre-stage. The modern working class, he said, is itself the product of the capitalist mode of production and will continue as the main productive force and will continue to organise for its emancipation from the yoke of capital.

Such setbacks as have occurred before this century, have happened, he pointed out, for example in the period prior to 1917 in Russia. In fact, he said, the experience of the counter-revolution following 1905 was to give rise to a new generation of revolutionaries and a programme that resulted in the victory of 1917. The ebb of revolution should not be confused with the tide of history. "It is incumbent on all who desire to open the path to progress to use the space created by the end of the bi-polar division of the world to prepare for this ebb to turn to flow. In fact, this preparation has to be seen as an active process. There can be no lull in the work. Neither the class nor the Party bears any resemblance to a becalmed ship waiting for the wind to change. Nature abhors a vacuum, and the forces of reaction are actively seeking themselves to fill the space through which they intend to cripple the working class, turn it into a reserve of the bourgeoisie and strive to return it to conditions of medievalism. So the cutting edge of our work must continue to be to address the problems of the working class and its re-establishment in its rightful place at the centre of events, and the programme must be implemented in order for that to be brought about," he said.

The speaker pointed out that the retreat of revolution has caused some confusion in the class, theoretical as well as ideological.

The confusion around this retreat, he

said, has been compounded by those so-called communists and spokesmen for the class who have betrayed and deserted or have gone over to social democracy. This type of activity results in clouding over the class lines and preventing the class from developing a self-view as an independent entity. Deprived of its own outlook, he said, its own aims and programme, the working class in retreat must be prey to the bourgeois pressure to become merely its appendage.

He said that this is a further theoretical consideration. "The working class has to view the retreat of revolution from its own class standpoint and no other. Any other standpoint will result in a disorderly retreat with a loss of bearings with the class being prey to every diversion and eventual political enslavement."

The speaker emphasised that the bourgeoisie never ceases to strive to turn the working class into its appendage, and that the aim of the bourgeoisie at this time is to drive the whole society backwards, to impose a medieval superstructure in which the state has no obligations to its members, who are at the complete mercy of the financial oligarchy. This being the case, he said, we must strive to ensure that the class maintains its class consciousness and is vigilant against all forms and sources of confusion that undermine this. The programme has to be prepared with this in mind.

A further consideration stemming from the retreat of revolution, the speaker said, is the attitude of the working class to the middle sections which are also being driven backwards. Because of their position in society, these are doubly prey to confusion and the success of the working class in stemming the retreat will be severely hampered if these sections do not throw in their lot with the working class. He said that these sections include other working people, women, students, etc., and all those being marginalised and ghettoised, deprived of their livelihoods, their basic rights and freedoms and driven backwards. In preparing its programme the working class must work out the ways and means to unite these sections

behind it. The same can be said of the class itself, in the sense that it is not homogeneous and there are different collective interests within it.

The speaker said that in 1994 everything points to the fact that in terms of further developing the productive forces, capitalism is at an impasse, virtually at a dead end. In its quest for maximum profits, the bourgeoisie has shattered the industrial base, and destroyed the productive forces, both human and technical, on a vast scale. It has thrown millions of highly skilled and other workers on the scrap heap, and is using the public purse to keep them idle.

To maximise these profits, he said, the bourgeoisie is absolving itself of all responsibility to the members of the society – Thatcher going so far as to say “there is no such thing as society” – and attempting to turn the clock back to the days before production was socialised. But, he emphasised, production is now socialised, and in an industrial society every individual born into it should be, by dint of his or her birth, a member of that society. This consideration must inform our programme, he said. In a modern society the relationship between the individual and the collective, whether that collective be the whole society or a part, cannot be ignored or side-tracked. To absolve society of its responsibilities to its members, he argued, to promote that the individual must fend for himself, is to negate society and return to medievalism. In setting its programme, he said, the working class has to work to the definition of society as it is actually constituted – that is with socialised production at the base.

The speaker said that the draft document elaborates that in any area involving the welfare of the working people – whether it be employment, housing, education, health, etc. – the cutbacks being imposed mean further hardship and immiseration. Fiscal restraint and the expropriation of the public wealth for the benefit of the moneylenders, he said, is the “solution” to the crisis presented by all the capitalist political parties. “Basing itself on this negation of the needs of society, the bourgeoisie is cutting back any investment in the wel-

fare of the people under the guise that this is a waste of resources. Any resources that are not returned to the moneylenders, invested in business or in the arms industry are treated as wasted resources. This crime against the producers of these resources is all the more shocking because it is in fact the capitalist system that is squandering resources on a mass scale, with millions of jobless workers and others forced to eke out a living on diminishing welfare benefits – truly a waste of resources on a mammoth scale. The issue of whose interests the resources of the country should serve, and how its resources should be invested, is of prime concern to the working class and must be addressed in preparing its programme.”

He pointed out that work itself is being redefined as a consumer product and outside human control, prey purely and simply to “market forces” – so if millions are unemployed or part time, this can be explained away as “under capacity utilisation”, and the misery of those dependent on the inability of the capitalist system to use the productive forces, is explained away in similar terms. For example, he said, Tony Blair, in an election address for the leadership of the Labour Party, put it like this: “The world of work has been revolutionised. Almost half the workforce are women. Many choose to work part time. People change jobs several times in their lives...” The speaker said that this sounds almost idyllic and that Blair had gone on to add that now is the opportunity for labour to: “... intervene to equip and advance the individual’s ability to prosper within this new economy...” i.e. the Labour Party’s solution is to prettify the decaying capitalist economy and try to fit the worker into it. Once again, he said, the state is absolved of all responsibility for the welfare of the people, who are being forced to more and more fend for themselves.

The speaker then asked what should be deduced from this situation? What is its significance in terms of the aims of the working class and therefore of the practical programme that must be developed, he asked? He said that a modern humane society can only develop

harmoniously if its social product is reinvested in the development of the productive forces and the well-being of the citizens of that society. The point here, he said, is that for the working class it cannot be a question of tinkering or reform. "Capitalism demonstrably cannot maintain the harmonious and uninterrupted development of the productive forces. On the contrary it is plundering and squandering the country's resources on a huge scale. The working class has NO FUTURE WHATSOEVER under the capitalist system. The theoretical consideration of the capitalist class is how to wring the last drop of blood out of the workers – how to wring them dry. The capitalist system came into being through violence, it has maintained its rule through violence, and its continued existence today depends on aggression, war, immiseration and political enslavement. There is no area of bourgeois political policy offering a future which excludes these ingredients. The theoretical consideration for the working class is that its future can be secured only through the overthrow of such a system. The working class must take the lead in building a modern democratic and crisis-free society in which the paramount consideration will be the harmonious and uninterrupted development of the productive forces."

The speaker said that a further question thrown up by theory, and by modern conditions, is the relationship of the working class with its vanguard party, as well as its role in society. There are two points for elaboration here, he said – first it is the working class itself that must build its vanguard, the Marxist-Leninist party; second it is not the Party that must come to power, but the working class itself at the head of the people, to establish the broadest possible democracy. These points, he said, are closely interwoven.

The first point, he said, presupposes the question of "what sort of party". He said that, basing itself on the experience of the Soviet Union and other countries, and to meet modern needs, the draft document says the Party must not substitute itself for the working

class, but must comprise its best elements. The qualities that these elements will bring to the Party are single-mindedness – the working class being the special product of capitalism, the only consistent revolutionary class, with nothing to lose but its chains, and experience in struggle; resistance to the assaults of capitalism is its daily activity. In building its vanguard party, the speaker said, the working class will enhance its own theory through its own practice, and this theory and practice can and will be passed on directly into the wider sections of the class. Our view is that this will not only enhance the class character of the Party, but will also go a long way to preventing a party dictatorship being substituted for a class dictatorship. It will also serve to block the movement being diverted or distracted by "theoreticians" divorced from the class, he said.

The speaker explained that the second aspect of this question is that it is the working class at the head of the people, and not the Party, that must come to power. This consideration, he said, stems from experience – in the former socialist countries the problem of empowering the people was not solved. But it stems mainly from our modern requirements. "The present system of party politics and representative democracy was devised to exclude the people from power and to prevent them participating in the political process in anything but the most superficial way. This has to be brought to an end, and the people of the country must be able to determine their own destinies. This is a fundamental requirement of a modern democratic society. People are born into a modern socialised society, and they have fundamental rights by dint of this fact itself. The same must be true of all citizens of this society, and the programme of the working class will have to give this full recognition. The working class is broad in composition. Equal rights cover all, and so it is self-evident that the right of self-determination extends to peoples of other nations, and to other nations themselves, and these issues have to be elaborated in developing the programme."

The speaker finished by saying that the draft document has presented the Party's analysis that there is a way out of the crisis. This lies, he explained, in mobilising the working class to combat the retrogressive moves to medievalism, and to fight for a modern, fully democratic society, free from all forms of exploitation and providing for the well-being of all its citizens on the basis of equal rights. The speaker ended by giving the opinion that the formulation of a Draft Programme should be uppermost on the Party's agenda and that these theoretical considerations were important in this.

Contribution 8: The speaker dealt in particular with the issue of ghettoisation and marginalisation.

He said that we are facing a very experienced bourgeoisie which over this last century or so, or longer, has perfected its system of rule which has divided our class in myriads of ways, fragmented it, created hundreds and thousands of pressure groups which divide the workers from each other, from factory to factory, from national origin to national origin, from age to age, but in many, many ways. British workers and British people of Indian origin, he said, have experienced it in terms of attacks on their cultural heritage, in which it is said the youth should not follow the Indian heritage, yet they are told they are not part of the English heritage either. Thus, he said, they have this racism, they have produced this culture-less multiculturalism. They claim, he said, that you have, for example, an Indian interest, and should do Indian work, and you Indians should be concerned with that, as opposed to

the main central concerns of the British working class, in order to isolate us and say all our work should be amongst Indian workers.

The speaker said that the Party has addressed this issue very strongly, and we have to further develop this work. He raised the question what is the role of the Party in terms of dealing with marginalisation, what is the role of the Party in dealing with these issues of multiculturalism and all the backward ideas the bourgeoisie throws against us to divide us? The Party needs, he emphasised, to develop a programme which says very firmly that the workers are one, and we need to build the unity of the class, and oppose all this racist diatribe which says, for example, that if you are murdered and you are a white person, that is a murder, but if you are murdered and you are a person of Indian origin, that is a racist murder, in other words it does not have the same status, it is something separate. He said that if you are a worker and your comprehension of English and your delivery of English is very good and you can speak English very well, then you are competent to address things and to lead organisations, and you are competent to become a union leader or whatever. Otherwise you have a different role – you should be working in community relations organisations or you should be working in Indian organisations or you should be working in African organisations, or similarly as they say with women's organisations or youth organisations. The speaker said that it is very important that the Party has a very definite line on this, because in his opinion this is one of the fundamental ways in which the British bourgeoisie divides the people and has maintained its rule.

SUNDAY, JUNE 26, SECOND SESSION

Contribution 9: A member of the Central Committee gave a paper on the direction of the democratic movement. He began by saying that as well as working to deepen the grasp and propagating the theoretical and ideological thinking behind the draft general line of the Party which was made public on March 19, the issue arises of what should be the next firm step that the Party needs to take towards contributing to the establishment of one general line for the working class movement to follow? In other words, he said, what problem is presenting itself to the Party to deal with in the course of making some headway in the two-point programme since March 19?

The speaker said that in making the analysis of the present situation and tasks facing the communist, workers' and progressive movement in Britain, it has concluded that there is a way out of the crisis! In that analysis the view was given that despite the conditions of retreat of revolution, there are very important positive factors which are creating space for the progressive and communist forces to work to expand. He said that the broadening of and a growing consciousness within the democratic movement is a most important field where such space exists. He then raised the questions:

What is the scope of this movement, what does it mean to open the path for progress? Which sections and strata of the society need to interest themselves in the progress of the democratic movement, what are the problems in this movement at this time, such as ghettoisation and pressure from the bourgeoisie to make it as narrow as possible and to make it a non-issue in Britain? What must be the position of the work-

ing class within this movement and towards the other sections?

The speaker said that these are some of the key questions that need to be elaborated by the Party and presented in concretised form of guiding principles which encapsulate what should be the stand of the vanguard party of the working class on the democratic movement in Britain at this time.

He pointed out that numerous obstacles need to be overcome if the democratic movement is to make headway in Britain. One of the first obstacles, he said, is the recognition that the struggle for democracy, or, more precisely, the need for a modern definition of democracy, needs to be established in Britain. He said that this problem of democracy is a non-issue in Britain as far as the bourgeoisie is concerned, and this view, along with elaborate theoretical arguments, as well as established institutions and mechanisms which daily tell everybody that Britain is the most democratic country in the world, has left its mark in the minds of the movement of the workers and the broad masses of the people. Nevertheless, he said, the democratic movement objectively exists and it reflects itself today, for example, in the growing sentiment amongst the people for empowerment, the sentiment that is consciously raising the question: what kind of society? In other words, he said, the definition of democracy according to the British bourgeoisie as a society where there is universal suffrage based on a multi-party parliamentary system along with formal recognition of freedom of speech, assembly, press, and so on, no longer satisfies the present stage of development of British society. It is an old definition. "What is

needed is not a new interpretation of this old definition but a modern definition which would serve to open the path to progress of the society, and this definition must be based on the essence of democracy, which is the exercising of the will of the majority over the minority. Democracy cannot be based on a social system where the minority exercises its will over the majority, neither can it be the majority exercising its will through the political parties which serve the minority.”

It is often said, the speaker pointed out, that the democratic movement in Britain is the sum of the protestations against violations of people’s rights presently recognised within the society at this stage, within the present framework, which is achievable under the capitalist system. Can this really be said to be the direction which the democratic movement needs to take, he asked? This idea, he said, far from opening the path for progress of society, actually serves as a block on its path because it leaves the movement open for manipulation by the bourgeoisie, who may grant some concessions, and on this basis continue to create illusions in the minds of the people about the “democratic” nature of capitalist society. In other words, he said, to take this path is a safety valve for the bourgeoisie. “The main issue on this question is not whether or not the various rights and demands are achievable within a given society. The issue is whether the struggle helps to open the path for progress of the society, whether it helps to move modern human society forward. So, the democratic movement should not be narrowed down or truncated but needs to be broadened and constantly raised to higher levels.”

The speaker then raised the question: in whose interest is it to take up for solution the problem of the modernisation of democracy? He went on to say that the British working class, the most productive force in the society, is the most interested in opening the path of progress for the society. The Marxist-Leninist theory and history have proven that there are other sections of modern society interested in the advancement of the democratic movement whom the working

class forges alliances with. But the working class, he said, must be the leader of this movement and at each stage of the struggle present its programme that facilitates this alliance, for the maximum political mobilisation around the movement.

He argued that the working class cannot say that its main interest is to “fight for socialism” whilst among other strata, also oppressed by the bourgeoisie, their main interest is to “fight on the democratic questions”. Furthermore, he said, under the pretext that revolution is in retreat, it, the working class, so the argument goes, forgets about socialism, becomes a tail of the democratic movement or participates “as a tactic” only to raise the slogan for socialism “when the time is right” within this democratic movement. To follow this viewpoint, the speaker said, amongst other things, it would leave the working class prey to the trap set by the bourgeoisie to separate socialism from democracy, to separate the working class from its allies.

“An advance in the struggle for democracy, an important factor in the movement to open the path for progress of the society, is an advance towards the emancipation of the whole society of which socialism is the next stage. The retreat of revolution is a reality but present developments have given rise to greater demands for a real advance in democracy. Within this movement, the working class must occupy the central position in order to advance the movement. This democratic movement for the renewal of British society needs to reflect itself in the laid-down political line of the Party at this stage,” he said.

Contribution 10: The General Secretary of Indian Workers Association (GB) thanked the CC of the Party for the invitation to the Conference and brought greetings.

He began by addressing the question of racism. He spoke of double oppression, first, on account of being black, second on account of being workers. He asked what is the way out? He pointed out that IWA, which is a broad front

organisation, it is not a communist organisation, and there are people of all shades, considers that racism is a class question. He said that it has been used umpteen times by the ruling classes; it is a diversionary ploy used time and again to divide the people. They have been doing it for some time quite successfully, he said. They devise so many methods, they encourage racist discrimination, they give money to the religious organisations, they set people of one religion against another. In the last few years, he went on, they have developed a grant culture; they pacify the youth, giving them grants. Whenever they see some people, especially youth or black people or workers, resisting, they try to find ways to pacify them, divide them.

The speaker made the point that alienation and marginalisation happen every day. In some cases, he said, people get alienated from themselves. That is the extent. They tend to be oppressed so much they become passive, frustrated, worn out.

The speaker said that he strongly believed that the joint task, the task of the Party is to see that this marginalisation does not take place. The answer he said is to resist marginalisation. How do we do this, he asked? He said that we must work together. Without working together and using the theory of our class approach, we will be groping in the dark, we will not know the cause. The ruling class set Asian against Africans, they set North American and South American against Africans. He gave as an example the reporting of the World Cup. The speaker made the point that the ruling class always keep people in different categories. Their machinery of government and institutions always try to tell us that you come from Africa, you come from Asia, you are no good, your culture is no good, your language is no good. Every ploy is used. He said that we must see that we work together to educate the people and we should see that our struggle against racism is part of the class question, because it is a class question. "To us," he said, "there is no illusion that the Labour Party is better than the Tories. The history of the immigration control Acts shows clearly that whatever the Tories said

when they were in opposition, Labour made laws about." There should be no illusion about the political character of the Labour Party, he said. He pointed out that the national minorities and immigrant workers have got no alternative when the time comes after five years in so-called democratic elections, where the minority rules over the majority and there is no accountability on the part of the MPs.

The speaker said that people are the greatest power, they can move mountains. But, he said, they must be politicalised on the right lines. That is our task. That is the task of the Party.

He congratulated the Party on the historic conference, pointing out that the path is long and tortuous, and that we must prepare ourselves. He gave an example from an all-candidates meeting in Coventry at the time of the elections to the European Parliament, where a candidate had claims that racism was a problem of relationships between people. He said that the crisis was a crisis of the ruling class and its system. He said that we must get prepared to challenge them and defeat them. We must work and fight together, he said.

Contribution 11: The speaker said that she considered the importance of the draft document is that maybe for the first time it gives a very concrete analysis of the current situation and the class forces. Particularly it has pin-pointed the main contradictions that there are in terms of the class struggle going on, looking at the actual struggle that is going on in front of us and what is actually happening and how to take that forward. She said that the main message that comes out of the draft document for her is the question of putting the concerns of the people at the heart of the entire society, their economic rights, their political rights. She said that that brings together lots of the other issues which are obviously raised as well in the document, in terms of international affairs, democratic rights, human rights and so on.

She said that the document very much reflects her own experience and the experience

of people in the middle strata, many of whom have in the past been quite political, were very involved in various political actions when the retreat of revolution was not at the extent it is now, people who were active in the anti-racist struggle, were active in supporting the miners, and various other issues in the '70s and '80s. She said that to some extent, you can see that obviously the retreat of revolution has affected them, because they are no longer so politically active; that strata are not talking about straight politics to the extent that they used to. A phenomenon, she said, is that those people are very concerned about community affairs, about how society treats individuals, about the role of the state in providing for health care, the rights of particular sections of the community, and so on. That is something which fits in very much with the Party's analysis in the sense that that is where the main struggle in society is being focused. She said that the questions raised are: What sort of society have we got? What sort of society should we have? In what way should it treat its members?

The speaker said that her opinion was that what is needed now is a concrete programme the Party needs to devise based on that analysis, based on that particular focus. There are many issues which face society, she said, but it seemed to her that that one is the crucial issue which will move society forward and something which will unite all sections as well.

She went on to mention that Comrade Bains mentioned in his speech the previous morning about backlash. It is noticeable, she said, that in the Isle of Dogs, newspapers such as the Guardian say there was supposedly a surge of right-wing interest which elected a fascist candidate. But subsequently, she said, what has been happening is that there is an issue of health care, they are going to close down all the local surgeries in that area, which has united all sections of the people, including fascists apparently, to oppose that and say that they need health care, and they are not going to put up with the cuts that are going on. That backlash which pushed the fascists onto the local authority for a very short time was, she said, in her opinion

people's concern about the situation they face in that area, which is very real and concrete, their day to day experience of extremely poor housing conditions, homelessness, appalling health care. What is needed, she said, is to be able to galvanise this backlash, give it some direction. In order to do that, she said, the next stage for us is to be able to develop a programme that formulates concrete demands on the basis of the analysis, that key part of the analysis in the document.

The speaker argued that in terms of the forms of struggle, the methods of organisation that we and other individuals in organisations might use, that is something which will come out of the struggle. She said that we need to take our general analysis further into particular demands that people can unite around, demands which will push the bourgeoisie onto the defensive and will give people an inspiration that they have got something they can fight for, rather than always having to fight against something.

She said that the need for democratic renewal should be seen as linked with that, rather than seen as something which is a very separate issue. In other words, she said, when people are involved in struggling for particular demands, what they immediately come up against is the fact that they have no power. What generally happens is that they call their local councillors or their MPs to voice their concerns, and they find they have no voice at all. It seems to me, she said, that in that struggle, people come across the political barriers that they are not empowered. "It will open up that whole issue of what kind of political system do we need, and how do we empower people. People in struggle will develop their own forms, obviously with our leadership and assistance, but they will think for themselves what kinds of forms that a democratic system should take that would enable them to empower themselves."

Finally, the speaker made the point that the Party has small forces. She said that she felt very strongly that the Party needs to focus its work. She said her opinion was that the focus of the work should be the focus of the draft document, which raises the question of what kind of society, the responsibility of the state to look

after the needs of its individual members. She said that she thought the Party should develop a draft programme.

Contribution 12: The speaker referred to the situation of health workers. She said that the bourgeoisie have been trying to win over health workers to their side by suggesting that health care is a luxury, that health workers actually have to collaborate in saying how the health service can be cut further. She said that health workers have actually been told that to have a wage rise, services are going to have to be cut. So they have been trying to pit the needs of the health workers against the needs of society in general, trying to divide health workers from the working class in general and divide health workers against each other. In most areas, hospitals are being forced to compete against each other for ever decreasing funds, she said. Even within hospitals, they have departments competing. She said that they are actually managing to draw health workers into that by saying that this is OK as long as we consult with you and ask your views on what cuts should be made. They say that this rationalisation is OK. [...]

The speaker said that the general line put forward on March 19 that there is a way out of the crisis, smashes the idea that health care for all members of society is a luxury and cannot be afforded during the recession. The line has, she said, been taken to many health workers, and there is much agreement on the view on the way forward for society. She said that in her opinion we should go on to formulate a concrete programme that will draw health workers and all workers as part of the working class together, and seeing that in fact it is they that hold the answer, to empower them to find the answer.

Contribution 13: The speaker elaborated on the question of health workers. She said that in this country, we have had a health service, supposedly known throughout the world as providing health care for people, irrespective of how much money they have. But the speed at which the rights which do exist, related to health care, are being removed is quite amazing, she said.

The speaker said that it was mentioned in an earlier contribution about the extent to which Virginia Bottomley now wants to cut hospital beds within the next few years by 40%, with the justification of new techniques of surgery. That illustrates, she said, the way the government works on all these things, which is that they do not base their plans on any investigation or knowledge. They take an idea and make a statement, and then change the service to fit that uninvestigated concept, whereas even government bodies are saying, for example, the Welsh Office, that the government's figures for how many people could be looked after at home is totally unrealistic. Similarly, she said, the Department of Health said that we have £70m too much spent on health care. Of course, everybody experiences the hospital cuts. But then the Health Service Think Tank said that £200m more needs to be spent on health care in London, because of the nature of the amount of illness.

The speaker said that the health service is one of the biggest employers in Britain. People who work in the health service have a personal and professional commitment to the values of providing health care for the people, irrespective of where they are, or what nationality they are. She said that the government is very well aware of that. In the reorganisation of the health service, they introduce organisational measures to try and disempower the health service professionals as much as possible. So they split the people who actually receive the money and decide how it is spent from the people who in the health profession provide the care.

The speaker gave an example in her own experience of the extent of intervention in clinical decisions. She said that there was a study into physiotherapy and occupational therapy centres, and how cost effective and treatment effective they were. One of the things they came up with is that people with acute back pains should not get physiotherapy, it was not cost-effective. What they said was that it was not them that control the money.

The speaker said that the need for people who are health workers and communists, who are trying to get people to actually look at

the issues is that it becomes very clear that this question of empowerment, they are disempowering the people who are involved in providing health care, they are also disempowering people who receive it from any decisions on the quantity of health care and the quantity of resources spent on health care. She said that health workers are being told by managers that, yes, they can debate about how the money is spent, they can have their views. But as to the actual amount of money spent on the health service, this is completely outside discussion, health workers cannot control it. Whatever happens it is going to be cut. The speaker said that it is this we have to break through, because it is the idea that, yes, you can be consulted about how the money is spent, but as to the actual political issue, of what are the values of society, and therefore what resources should be invested in the well-being of the people, that is not our business.

She said that the Party needs to develop its programme as to how we can actually have an impact with the ideas of the draft document.

Contribution 14: A speaker made the point that it was necessary to work out how to take advantage on a practical level of the space spoken about.

Contribution 15: The speaker said that developing a practical programme was an important question.

Contribution 16: The speaker said that she felt very strongly that we do have to go on and elaborate this programme and build a programme amongst the people. She said it is extremely important that that programme has to be amongst people now at this stage. She said that workers and people in Britain are actually struggling to find solutions at the moment. The main kind of confusion is, she said, how to make the discontent into a movement, because the discontent is widespread, and people feel that there is maybe nothing they can do.

The speaker then gave illustrations from her own experience to show that people are

looking for solutions, but the perspective is not clear to them.

She made the point that while the kind of discussion which had been going on since March 19 should carry on, the Party should organise forums on a creative basis to take the ideas into different and broader circles.

Finally, the speaker made the point that the problem of strengthening the basic organisations and other organisational questions would be solved in the course of a concrete programme of work.

Contribution 17: The speaker said that he considered the draft document as being a comprehensive general analysis of the present situation in Britain and world wide, and which in his view sets out a number of themes which are relevant to this planning of development of our line and programme in general. The document, he said, in his opinion constitutes a firm basis from which our Party programme and plan of action can be developed as the next phase of our immediate programme, and he looked forward to participating in the further development of this document and programme in the working class.

Contribution 18: The speaker said that he thought the issues which we are discussing today are extremely important for the future of the class and of the country. He said that the document actually puts its finger on some of the key points. He said that his opinion was that the central issue of putting people at the centre of the whole life of the society is an approach, a perspective, which from his experience meets the needs of the times, meets the needs of the many people that he knew and came into contact with in his daily life.

He said that the next question which really comes up and has been raised already in the meeting is, how do we take the next step? What is the next step forward? How do we actually move from this position of good clarity about what needs to be done in terms of how to actually do it? The speaker said that one of the important points which has been made a number

of times is that the Party, its programmes, has to set itself the target of being centre stage of the society, that we have to develop in a way that we are no longer seen as on the fringes of society, on the "extreme left" or something of the sort, but we see ourselves, and are seen by hundreds of thousands and eventually millions of people as being at the very centre of issues that concern society today. He said that this is a complicated process and that it will be very difficult, but in his opinion, with such a target of actually moving the Party and this whole politics of putting people at the centre of the actual political debate in Britain, that the political debate must go on around these issues.

The speaker recalled that about two or three months ago, there was a local school in Hackney. They had enormous problems in the school. The school had dismal educational results, and so on. In the course of this discussion, the speaker said that he made the point, how is it that here we are, with severe problems that we are having for the children's future, and it is not discussed? It is not in the local press, no politician has anything to say about it. How can this be? He said that people could relate to that, people could see, why isn't this the case, why isn't it that our concerns are, say, the first thing on the news, are the issues which all the politicians have to address. Why is it that politicians can talk about everything else apart from the problems that we are facing. The speaker said that the issue then is of, how do we move forward. He said that the point has already been made that there is fertile ground. "People are looking for an alternative, people are seeing that something is fundamentally wrong, but there is no perspective as to how to escape. There is no perspective that says, let's go this way and there will be a way out. I think if we could start by taking this outlook, this perspective to workers, to the class, saying, look, we should have a discussion about how much money is invested in health care, why should we not have discussion. It is happening to all of us who work in the public services. You cannot discuss whether there should be cuts or not. You can only discuss how to implement them. Why? Why should not

we have a discussion and say, well, should the moneylenders get their 17 billion or should the 17 billion be used for something else? I think if the issue was put in that way to working people, they haven't got a problem with it. I think we could actually build something on that basis, of going to people and saying, look, not only should we fight about 5%, whether we should get 3% or 5%, but we should also discuss everything else, that we should not accept that the politicians should decide and then we should work out how to implement the decisions of the politicians."

The speaker said that in his opinion, this is one of the main areas of work that should come up in the future, actually devising a plan as to how to take this perspective to the class, to the people. He said that some ideas have already been mentioned, and also he was sure that everyone who is working in their own sphere of life, their own sphere of activity, will be able to think of ways of how to actually bring these ideas to the ordinary people for them to be discussed, for them to be acted upon.

He went on to say that connected to that is that doing this will actually assist the Party to move to the centre of the stage, will move it away from the fringes of society. "Because if the Party is the only force which is actually coming forward with solutions for the problems of the people, by that very definition if it works in way that people can see that, it will more and more move to the centre stage."

The speaker said that the other issue he wanted to touch on, which is connected, is the question of the unity of communists in Britain and how we can try to realise this. From his experience, he said this is a very, very difficult problem. He said he considered this problem is even more difficult than the other problem of bringing this perspective to the class. From his experience, he said, there are lots of different ideological orientations within Britain, different people wearing the label of communists, who when you get close to them you find out they have not got much in common. Nevertheless he said if we can reach out to the various communists who are around in different organisations and try to interest them in this work, not so much

on polemical discussions about the past, but on the central issues now of, should the people be put at the centre of the life of the society, and if so, how should we do it. He thought that in such a plan of trying to get people interested in that work, people involved in that work, we might be able to develop more unity among the communists. Because without this communist unity and without communist leadership, he said, he didn't think it will be possible to achieve the ultimate goals that we are striving for. The other thing he said he had been thinking about is the question of establishing a vehicle for the empowerment of people themselves. He said the Chartist movement was mentioned the previous day. He said that people who are students of history will know the role the Chartists played, and that the Chartists did come out with openly political demands. "It might have been in the last century," he said, "but I don't see any particular reason why we should not strive to recreate something like that now. The Chartists demanded universal franchise, and so on. From our standpoint in 1994 we can see that that has not been enough. So what I was thinking is – maybe this is more medium-term than short-term – we also need to set ourselves a target of establishing some kind of vehicle for the empowerment of the people themselves which has, as its central goal, this issue of empowerment, that the people should be empowered."

Finally, he spoke of what this term empowerment means for us and for our own work and how we work with each other. He said he thought it would be impossible to build a society in which people exercise political power, without bringing about a psychology of people who self-confidently express their opinions on every issue and demand to know on every question. "I think that in the work that we are developing, we have to pay serious attention to this. This format today is quite important where people come forward and give their views and express their opinions. This is a very positive development. I think the issuing of the draft document for discussion, for people's feed-back, is a very, very positive development. But I think that we need to deepen the analysis of this in terms of how do we

build a political movement which has as its objective the empowerment of people, and at the same time as building that movement develop a whole culture of the empowerment of individuals so that people might come into that movement, not necessarily confident, not necessarily able and willing to express their views openly, but after some time in that movement they should develop those features," he said.

The speaker said that he hoped out of it all of us together will be able to take concrete steps to actually push this development forward.

Contribution 19: The speaker spoke about the need to bring new blood into the Party. In this context he spoke of the importance of not ignoring the middle strata.

Contribution 20: The speaker said that many comrades have spoken about the political marginalisation of the people in this country and have pointed out the various ethnic groups and peoples of different origins, and also the differences between women and men, and old people, and so on. He said that these marginalisations are what the ruling class loves. They want to perpetuate this. This is something we have to take up and deal with.

He then raised what the causes of this marginalisation are. He said that one of the causes is the political marginalisation of the working class itself, because the working class has to solve these problems. No other class in society can solve these problems.

The speaker gave the opinion that the causes are confusion of political ideas among the working class and people. This confusion, he said, is very broad and deep, and is something the ruling class loves because it weakens the working class. He broke the confusion into three different types. First of all, he said, confusion is caused by liberal ideas, which do not address the rights of the people, the problems here. Secondly, you have social democratic ideas, which do not address the needs of the working class. Thirdly, you have revisionist ideas, historically, which have historically disintegrated and dis-

persed the communists in our society. This has happened, of course, he said, in other parts of the world as well.

He went on to say that we communists must, by defining in a modern way, reverse the process and hurt the ruling class.

He said that we come into contact with social democratic ideas in the working class movement and its organisations – the trade unions, tradés councils – or we come into contact with people who are either not political or in the Labour Party, who are attached to the working class movement. These social democratic ideas are designed to de-politicise the working class. We oppose this process and call for the empowerment of the workers.

He said that we come into contact with communists, with potential communist groups and organisations, in our work. “We must destroy confusion and counter this dispersion and disintegration of these groups and organisations and clear the way with modern definitions to bring about the destruction of the remainder of the revisionist ideas among communists. The marginalisation of society is a product of the political marginalisation of the working class, and this is something we must address” he said.

Contribution 21: The speaker began by raising the question of the way forward for the Party. He said that it seemed to him that the process which the Party has begun with the issuing of the draft document, that this in itself points the way forward. The fact, he said, that it is being stressed that people should be at the centre of all the political activity, this in itself points the way forward. The process which has gone on, particularly the process of discussion, of taking the views of the Party out into the community, amongst the workers, is engaging people, saying to people, OK, what is the solution to these problems, is in itself part of empowering the people, of encouraging people to look at the problems which face them and to think about how these could be solved, rather than the Party or some other organisation always coming and putting forward solutions. This process is in itself – it may not be the entire solution, but at

least it points the way forward. He said that his opinion was that if work is developed on that basis it will in itself point the further way forward, that from the people, from the communities, from the different sections of the class, solutions, ideas, the will will be found to actually solve these problems. “If you only look at it in terms of how we in this room solve these problems, we are not going to get very far, with all due respect to everybody here in this room, that the solutions are actually out there. My own experience is that the people actually have the solutions, people already in struggle, people already searching for solutions, that together with the analysis which the Party has, with the experience people have from their everyday life, that the combination of these two things can provide the way forward. That may be a simplistic way of looking at it, but it seems to me that there is much room for development in that type of work,” he said.

The second point the speaker made was on the question of imperialism, which he said was an issue which came up in his study group. He said that one of the main issues that came up was the importance of establishing an analysis, not just of imperialism in general, but in particular of British imperialism, and the role which it plays in the world, and the character of which imperialism has on the struggles of developing society in Britain. He said that some people felt that this was something that was not developed sufficiently in the draft document. Those in the national minority communities had, to some extent, first hand experience of British imperialism, he said, and the very fact that these people are in this country is a result of not just Britain’s imperial past but imperial present. Also, of course, he pointed out, for the working class as a whole, imperialism is extremely important from the point of view of support of the bourgeoisie, in the sense that they are not only affected by what goes on in Britain, by the class struggle as it unfolds in Britain, but as a reserve, as a support outside the country on which they can depend, on which they are able to manoeuvre, a mechanism by which capital is switched about, and so on. He said in his opinion looking

at the question from this point of view is extremely important. The other issue, he said, is the role which imperialism has played, not only as a basis of the racism which people have mentioned, but also from the point of view of the corruption of the class, or certainly sections of the class. He mentioned the trade union leadership, the Labour Party, and so on, and the bribery and corruption which have been made possible through imperialism. For that reason, he said, he thought it is extremely important that this issue is looked at. He went on to say that the other questions which you could say the working class has responsibility for are, obviously, the continuing links, both of an economic and political nature which have continued—the links not only with the old empire, but the new types of exploitation which British imperialism has been able to effect. Just from the point of view of continuing things, he said, the issue of the Commonwealth, the whole question of so-called “aid” and so on, the political ties which still exist between Britain and numbers of former colonies, some colonies, some neo-colonies, which are actually bound up with the whole question of how Britain is ruled, the nature of the state, and so on. He said these issues were considered very important in the study group, that they had an international perspective, but also an impact on how things develop in Britain. “From the point of view of the education of the class, an enlightened class, again we think these issues are very important. From the question of internationalism and strengthening the links between the struggles of the British workers and the struggles of the workers in other countries, we think that the whole question of alliances is very important. If this issue is not raised, it cuts off the class from international allies,” he said.

Contribution 22: The speaker said he would like to speak on the class basis of the Party. He said that his opinion was that because the workers are not yet in masses, hundreds of thousands, taking up communist politics, does not mean that we should not go to the working class as Marxist-Leninists. Certainly, he said, the period

tells us that the working class, the industrial proletariat, is the force which is going to build a new society. He said we must be very clear on that. He went on to say that within the Indian community one could see the effects on Indian politics of workers of Indian origin in this country, with new entrants to the working class, with the origin of small farmholders, a property interest, which is still there, and it reflects in the outlook of Indian workers of recent origin. He said that it is very important to have this class interest very clear in our minds, in terms of analysing the forces and analysing our own forces. Where do we come from, where are we going? he said were important questions. He went on to say that these things are not just theoretical points which are there for thinking about and writing essays and theses, but they have practical consequences. He mentioned that Marx talked about the vacillation of the petty bourgeoisie, and said that one can see that when the revolutionary movement is in flow, things are going forward, they are very optimistic, will fight with great vigour and great enthusiasm. But as a communist, he said, one has to be aware of the class positions of that class, that it does not have the same needs, the same exploitation, the same demand, the same inhumane treatment as the worker has. There is not that basis, he said. We have to be very conscious of where people come from, he said, and different professions and different people in society. We have also within our own ranks, to be conscious of this, he said, where our various influences come from, so we don't get smashed. Certainly in our work, he said, in the last 18 years or so, say, among the Indian workers, or workers generally, there is that experience that the petty bourgeois elements will come in with very great enthusiasm and then liquidate things. We as communists have to be aware of these things, he said. “That does not mean that they are not our allies, all these sections. The movement for enlightenment in this period is a very important issue. As communists we have very big perspectives, the establishment of state power by the proletariat. I think we have to be very clear,” he concluded.

RESOLUTION

Chris Coleman, speaking to a resolution put to the meeting

Chris Coleman explained that when the conference began, the question was raised, where does the Party go from here. The question was raised, he said, do we carry on with the two-point programme, the elaboration of the draft document and the dissemination of the draft document. Or do we, he continued, as well as carrying on with that programme, take a new step forward. "The new step forward is that of beginning work to draft a programme for the working class in Britain," he said. "By a programme, meaning the setting of objectives, the aims, both immediate and long-term, for the working class in Britain."

"In my opinion," he said, "it should be stressed that when it is put forward that this new step should be added to the two-point programme, that there is much work still to be done on the two-point programme." There have been a number of proposals made this morning, he said, about ways in which discussion can be developed amongst students, amongst teachers, amongst all our different circles. These seemed to him very positive. So when it is said that the two-point programme should carry on, he explained, there are many untapped sources, there is much discussion to be carried. His opinion was that it is a fact that the Party's programme has generated some momentum, and that momentum should even increase. He explained that there is much work still to be done on the two-point programme of the dissemination, the discussion, the elaboration of the draft document. He expressed his view that at the same time it is most important, as has been pointed out by other speakers, that the Party take this next step at this immediate time. So when the Party speaks, he explained, of beginning the work to prepare a draft programme for the working class, this is a very large question, because it has to go into very complex issues. He went on, "It has to take into consideration theoretical questions, it has to look into more deeply than we have before the objective conditions, it has to stick to some

very definite principles, such as, only the working class can lead the struggle, can lead the emancipation of the whole of society. At the same time, it has to be on the most broad basis, which will bring into the struggle the maximum circles of the sections of society, and isolate the key enemies who are blocking the progress and advance of society. It has also, of course, to consider the experience of the International Communist Movement and the experience of struggles of parties and liberation movements in other countries. And of course Comrade Bains spoke at length on this yesterday in a most profound way about combating Eurocentrism. So in order to draft a programme, these things have to be taken into account, historical and present experience of all the other struggles in the world, and in this country as well, the experience of all the sections of the people in struggle has to be taken into account." At the same time, he said, in order for our Party to play its role as the vanguard, it has to take the vanguard positions. So in formulating the draft programme for the working class, he said, the Party has to take a lead in this, and also the vanguard position as well has to be taken into account, that it is the CC which leads the Party in between the Congresses. He stressed the point that this is a very major and great work which has to be done. But, in his opinion, this was the key thing, and the work has to start immediately.

"So considering all those things," Chris Coleman said, "I would like to put the following Resolution to this Conference." The Resolution read as follows:

This Conference recommends to the Central Committee of RCPB(ML) that it begin work immediately on formulating a Draft Programme for the working class, and to present a summation of this work at the next National Consultative Conference to be held in November.

After discussion, the Resolution was carried unanimously.

MESSAGES FROM FRATERNAL PARTIES AND ORGANISATIONS

Remarks by Anna di Carlo

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist)

Comrades,

On behalf of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), I would like to extend revolutionary greetings from all our Party members to this important National Consultative Conference of the RCPB(ML). We are extremely happy to see the great strides made by your Party, especially since January and March, with the issuing of the draft statement, **There is a Way Out of the Crisis**, and the two-point programme that has been carried since that time. We are confident that this national conference will mark a further step forward in this work. We have found the presentations that have been delivered here, the first paper delivered by Comrade Chris Coleman and the others by the members of the Central Committee, as well as the many interventions that have been made from the floor, to be extremely interesting, and we will ensure that the deliberations of your Party on these important questions of how to advance your work, will be taken into consideration and studied by all our Party members.

Comrades, I would just like to use this occasion to inform you about one of the key questions our Party has taken up in the development of its work to prepare the subjective conditions for revolution, particularly in the period since the convening of our Sixth Congress in October 1993. This is the necessity for the professionalisation and specialisation in our work. This has borne particularly strong results in the field of the Party and non-Party mass press, as well as in other areas, such as the technical base of our Party and the organising work of our Party, where branches have taken up very, very specialised work to deal with the particu-

lar questions in each of these fields, and as well in the Groups of Writers and Disseminators. The issue that is of importance is that as the Party has developed its political positions and strengthened these through the elaboration of modern definitions and the theoretical and ideological considerations at the foundation of these positions, the need for professionalisation and specialisation assumed a very important character, it assumed a character of being a key link in our work, without which we could not have made further development.

One of the questions on the ML parties is that they should be ghettoised and pushed to the sidelines and deprived of their very lifeblood, that is, their participation in the class struggle. For example, the basic organisations of the Party without participating in class struggle will remain devoid of any life. In the past few months, we have made very important advances, and I would just like to speak about the groups of writers and disseminators in this regard, who have taken up the aim of developing amongst the working class the political journalists who will develop the organisation and consciousness of the class, and take the line of the Party to all sections of society in the forms which are best suited to the conditions they are working in. They have taken up the task of writing about the conditions of the working class, and the actual political discussion about the working class movement. It is premised on the theoretical consideration that the working class itself must emancipate itself. Our Party, as an integral part of that class, analysed that the groups of writers and disseminators would fill that important need for the class to have its own spokesper-

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sons and its own instruments to present the advanced positions of the class, which requires, among other things, that there is professionalisation and specialisation for this purpose. In this regard, those of you, I am sure, who read *The Marxist-Leninist* have seen developments, the articles by the May First Group which was one of the first groups to take the initiative after the Party issued the call for the formation of these groups. It has been able to assist greatly in terms of analysing what is taking place, for example on the issue of the ghettoisation of society on the basis of life-style, of race, of sex, and so on. One of the issues that came up was on the question of same-sex spousal benefits for homosexual couples. I think that the May First Group showed that these things could be objectively analysed to show what is the bourgeoisie up to when it is pushing these things, as well as presenting the democratic positions that will open the path in order for the further ghettoisation not to take place, and for the people to be able to deal with these

questions, particularly amongst the working class. Similarly, with its intervention in the Canadian Labour Congress, one of the largest convenings of the trade union movement. It presented an analysis which showed that without the working class having its own independent programme based on the need to create the conditions for its own emancipation, that there was a block in the way of the trade union movement or any other organisations of the working class making headway.

So I would like just to present those two things, the importance in our work of specialisation and professionalisation, and we think that this is going to assist us greatly in making further headway.

So in that vein I would just like to thank the comrades for giving us a few minutes to make these comments, and I convey again our great hope that your national conference will be a great success in developing the work here in Britain.

Thank you.

Remarks by Cathy Chandler
United States Marxist-Leninist Organisation

Comrades,

It is our great pleasure to be here among you on this important occasion for your Party. We are especially inspired to see that in this difficult and complex period of retreat of revolution, your Party is organising to raise the quality of its theoretical work. We consider this a vital task of all communists at this time, and we highly evaluate the contribution of your draft document in addressing key theoretical questions facing society today. In particular, we commend the focus on the necessity for modern definitions, and for giving modern content to the problem of human rights and bringing to the fore the issue of whether or not the state has responsibility for ensuring the continuous raising of the well-being of the people.

The apologists for capitalism worldwide are pushing the medieval and inhuman view that individuals born to society should fend for themselves when it comes to such vital issues as jobs, education and health care. Both your draft document and the discussion which has begun here today are serving to oppose these apologists and advance the theoretical and ideo-

logical work on these matters. In so doing, it is providing important weapons in the struggle of the working class to lead society out of the crisis and forward to socialism.

We are also heartened to see that the Party is linking its theoretical work with a practical effort to ensure that these issues are discussed broadly in the workers and communist movement, and the task of building and strengthening the Party is not left to chance. We are keen to hear the further elaboration of both your theoretical and your practical work, and particularly the issues concerning the needs for changes in the political sphere, to empower the people, and the proposal now before you to develop a draft programme for the working class.

We are quite certain that this conference will mark an important step forward for your work, and wish you every success in this regard.

Speaking briefly about some of the conditions in the United States. We consider the emphasis given to the issues of the responsibility of society to its members as a key theoretical and practical problem to be faced, where

the communists need to provide an alternative, both in theory and in practice. In the US today – a couple of examples – the ruling class is acting to more openly and brutally push society backward. The issue of health care, for example, is currently being debated. This is a problem where the US has long lagged behind other industrial countries in terms of what it provides for the people, and especially of health care for women and children.

Instead of addressing the problem, the bourgeoisie is using this debate to viciously attack the women, and in fact to pass various laws in various states against women, as was raised, unwed mothers, for example, and also women on welfare, are all being penalised for facing the situation that they do, rather than the fact that society should be providing for them. The current debate in Congress on health care – there are numerous plans being debated – all of them take as their starting point that the government has no responsibility whatsoever to provide for the health care of the people. Despite numerous debates on other issues, this is really a critical question. It is presented with the view that none of the social institutions – not the government, not the insurance companies, not the hospitals, not the corporations – have any responsibility to provide for the health of the people of any given community or any given city. We think that the utilisation of this legislation, to impose the conception on society, that the government has no responsibility to provide for the people, will be a step backwards. That is, all the individuals are being called on simply to provide for themselves, they have to go out and find the health care. This is a serious issue faced by the people, and presents this question from a theoretical point of view, of which way should society go, and what responsibility does society have to its members.

As another example in this period of disequilibrium, the US is stepping up its efforts to interfere and dictate on a world scale. We condemn the provocations, the interference and the threats of war against Korea and Cuba, and the on-going efforts to suppress the people of Iraq and Somalia, and the interference in vari-

ous other areas. In addition to the US openly calling for invasion in Haiti, recently the US government made the proposal that the current military leaders should be bought off and given a nice life somewhere else. It is not surprising that the US government, which is known for its military massacres on a world scale, known for its massacres of the native American peoples, the Puerto Ricans, the Vietnamese and others, that they would reward their Haitian officers for murdering and suppressing the people of Haiti. But what is new in this situation is that they would openly propose it as government policy, and that they would do publicly what they have always done in secret. This is a reflection of the degree to which the ruling class thinks it has succeeded in dehumanising society and eliminating human values of integrity, of standing up for principle, of valuing human life and human rights. It is not an accident that on the same day that this proposal was made for Haiti, several large corporations in the US made the proposals that gang-leaders in the cities should be rewarded for their violence and drug-dealing by being given high-paid positions within the corporations. This is just one more example of how human rights are viewed by the bourgeoisie, that these criminals at the top are going to take care of their own and the vast majority of the youth and people have to fend for themselves. These examples show that these problems of theoretical and ideological issues which confront you are also ones we must tackle.

As well in our movement, there is increasing demand among the workers and activists for greater political unity and for strengthening the revolutionary and progressive forces. There is an increasing recognition of the need to seek an alternative to the present conditions, and there is a positive space for the communists to come forward and provide that alternative. We feel that there is great urgency for succeeding in our task of uniting the communists into one Marxist-Leninist party. And we also consider that the conditions are positive for a significant advance in this regard. We think it is an urgent problem, and that there is no room for complacency on this question.

It is also our view that advancing the struggle for democratic renewal and for finding practical solutions for the necessity to empower the people will play a key role in building the political unity of the people in the US, and we are interested to hear further on how you will elaborate this problem in Britain.

In concluding, we take this opportunity once again to salute your Party, and to emphasise the importance we consider of taking up these theoretical issues and also developing the practice alongside of it, and to ensure that these things go together. We greatly cherish our unity and friendship with your Party and look forward to its continuation for many years to come.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite all of you to the International Semi-

nar to be held in Chicago on October 8 and 9. This Seminar will be the work of a number of parties together – from Ireland, Britain, India, US groups, and Trinidad and Tobago and Canada. It will feature papers from the Communist Ghadar Party of India, and will take up especially this issue of combating Euro-centrism, and also provide a direction for the working class. We think it will be a very important contribution of all the work of the parties together on these issues which face us all, and will advance it to a significant degree. It is an event which you do not want to miss, so we invite all of you to be sure to come and to participate in that discussion.

Thank you.

Remarks by Mike Thorburn Workers' Party of the United States

On behalf of the Workers' Party of the United States, I would very much like to thank the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) for inviting us and giving us the opportunity to participate in this National Consultative Conference. I would also like to especially congratulate the Party on the important work that it is taking up both in this conference and in the period of preparing for it.

At this time, when the capitalist class throughout the world is continuing to say that communism is dead, is continuing not only to bar the path of progress and attempt to strip away all the gains of the working class and broad masses of people have made in the 20th century, trying to tell the working people that there is no way out, that they have to resign themselves to retrogression, it seems to me that your Party is not only upholding the banner of socialism, of communism, but through its concrete work is taking up the decisive question of leading the way out of the situation. Through the elaboration of the draft document, through taking up the question of a draft programme for the working class, through equipping yourself with theory and modern definitions that deal with the concrete situation, and especially

through strengthening the Party itself, RCPB(ML) is taking up the question of leadership, is taking up the question of playing a vanguard role.

In the United States our Party, the Workers Party, is also trying to meet the demands of the time. In the year and a half since our Party was founded in December 1992, the main preoccupation of our Party has been elaborating and popularising its general analysis and general programme for the present period. In general terms we have taken up and put forward a programme of economic rights, which like the orientation of your Party places the demand that the well-being of the people be at the centre of the life of society, we have taken up the issue of developing both inside the Party and outside the Party a general discussion on the question of democratic renewal, and also the question of trying to open space in the United States for a genuinely democratic foreign policy. In any event, just a little bit about the experience of our Party in this work:

One thing is that what we found is that on the one hand there is tremendous pressure from the bourgeoisie against the workers to narrow their vision, to say that in these condi-

tions the most you can look after is individual survival, tremendous pressure to increase competition amongst workers in many ways, tremendous pressure that the most the worker can be concerned with is some immediate issue. The experience of our Party is that it is absolutely necessary in these conditions that the independent vision and programme of the working class for a way out of the crisis be put forward, and that the workers themselves respond very well to the fact that our Party is trying to take this up, that a definite section of the people see the need to take a broad view of things at this time, to look into the fundamental causes of problems and to look into the question of genuine solutions.

Another point from our experience, is that we find that the working class and broad masses of the people are very happy with the fact that our Party, with the assistance of the International Marxist-Leninist Movement, because we are trying to equip ourselves with modern definitions, that we are able to go against all sectarianism and dogmatism and actually discuss on the basis of real life real solutions with people. People have tremendous hatred for the sectarianism and dogmatism that characterised various political groups and so-called communist, left-wing groups in the past, and are

continually surprised that our Party tries to discuss real life and real solutions. In general it can be said from our work that what we find is that there constantly are, coming into perspective, many objective openings where the challenge is for the Marxist-Leninists to help develop the independent role, the independent space of the working class. The immediate thing that faces our Party is trying to further concretise its programme in this period. In order to do that, the decisive issue which we are taking up at this time is the consolidation and extension of the Party itself, that is that every organisation of the Party, the basic units and other organisations, not only fully take up the breadth and depth of the line of the Party but take up the question of putting themselves in the centre of the life of the people in terms of a leading political situation followed.

The last thing I want to say is that all our comrades in the United States in the Workers Party want all the comrades here to know that the analysis, the work, the struggle of your Party is not only an inspiration but is a tremendous concrete assistance to us. Again I would like to thank you for the real honour of being able to participate and wish you every success in the work that you are doing.