

The Blair Necessities

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“Through its well-publicised stands against sleaze and corruption (Labour) will hope to head off disillusion, even though its reputation for corruption in particular in municipal councils is notorious” (Organise! 46)

Our comments on the Labour victory have been overtaken by recent events. Labour’s long-standing reputation for corruption has been highlighted by the ‘money for influence’ revelations concerning Formula One and Sainsbury’s. Labour’s attempts to restore confidence in democracy through its anti-corruption campaigns and postures have been severely damaged by these lightning revelations. In fact, these events have increased the growing cynicism and disillusion with parliamentary democracy, in particular among the young. Whether these trends translate into growing apathy, or a reinforcement of direct action and do-it-yourself organising remains to be seen. What is apparent is the need for revolutionary anarchists to help this reinforcement come about through sustained activity and propaganda. Labour has been more successful in some of the constitutional reforms it promised. It delivered the goods on Scottish and Welsh devolution, in the short term heading off any immediate hopes by nationalists for the break-up of the United Kingdom. It still has the support of much of the media and sections of the boss class. It has forged what is in effect a National Government, with the Liberal Democrats as junior partners and Tories like Heseltine and Mellor incorporated into its committees on the Millennium ‘celebrations’ and sport. At least in the short term it has succeeded in marginalising the Tories and increased the chances of pro-Tory splits. Labour was also very concerned about the threat posed to the monarchy by an ever-mounting popular hostility. Whilst various Labour ‘lefts’ might describe themselves as republicans, Blair and his immediate clique have fallen over themselves to show how much they admire the Royal Family as an institution and as individuals. Far from being an attempt to undermine the monarchy, as various commentators in the media believed, Blair’s intervention in the aftermath of Princess Diana’s death was in fact an attempt to save it. By forcing the Royal Family to issue a statement and to return to London to meet the crowd of mourners, Blair was forcing them to streamline and to become more ‘accessible’. He knew that only this would save them. His determination to preserve the monarchy was further underlined by the Golden Wedding Anniversary celebrations, with the unprecedented visit by the Royals to No. 10.

SUN WORSHIP

The Blair leadership is determined to forge as much ruling class unity as possible. Alongside the above manoeuvres to include Liberal Democrats and Tories, it invited Steve Hilton, who thought up the ‘demon-eyes’ campaign, to its last party conference, as well as a gang of former advisers to Tory ministers. Also attending the conference was the editor of the Sun, who then devoted five pages in his rag praising Blair. Why does the Labour government seek this unity? It wishes to firstly put over the illusion of consensus, to return, in rhetoric only, to the so-called society of class peace championed by old-style Tories like Heath and MacMillan, and the old Labour governments of Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan. Indeed some of the Blair government’s tactics are based on a close study of Wilson’s tactics whilst in power. Will Hutton in his book *The State We’re In* spelt this out; “Agreement with the Lib Dems is part of the construction of a wider coalition of interests. Labour has broken away from its old role as the standard bearer of the organised working class (Shurely shome mistake?-ed.). The best in the English liberal

tradition- reformist, fair-minded, tolerant, even 'stakeholder' - is being reawakened. A new political consensus is developing; it extends from stakeholder, pro-European companies through the liberal professions to partnership-minded trade unions, incorporates the public sector, and has near-universal support from the Christian churches and other religious traditions. This is a new formulation of Middle England". Will Hutton is a standard bearer of the need to streamline both Britain's political institutions and British capitalism, so that it can be more competitive in the world market. Secondly, the Blair government knows that divisions in the boss class have been highly destructive. It knows that sooner or later social unrest will erupt and it intends to create as much prior solidarity in the ruling class as possible.

TOUGH CHOICES-TOUGHER LIVES-TOUGH!

The Labour conference sent out a message to the people it intends to attack, you and me, the mass of the working class. In a carefully choreographed speech Blair warned what he planned was: "A compassionate society, but it is compassion with a hard edge. A strong society cannot be built on soft choices. It means fundamental reform of our welfare state". What this means is that the Labour government will attack welfare benefits and services in a way in which the Tories could only dream of. First of all single mothers would be attacked, their benefits scrapped and their compulsory forcing into low paid jobs under 're-education' schemes. State pensions will be the next target after this, with their complete abolition and compulsory private pensions replacing them. Similarly unemployment benefit will be scrapped, to be replaced by a work-for-dole scenario. The National Health Service will be most likely up for the chop, if Labour think they can get away with it. But some bourgeois commentators are getting edgy. They are warning that social unrest may well loom up on the horizon. Andrew Marr, writing in the Independent (30.9.97) warned; "But at the point when 'tough choices' become tougher lives for people who are already barely coping, then this government will begin to experience at least some of the populist anger against the first and second Thatcher administration. Further, that anger will find political expression. I don't know how, or where, or who will lead it. But in every advanced society there is a leftist, oppositionist opinion which finds a way to be heard". As we noted in the last Organise! our class is in a state of retreat and defeat. This may continue for some time. At the moment there is little sign of serious resistance. But this situation may not last for ever. Let us hope Marr's predictions are proved correct and that British revolutionary anarchism will prove itself capable of organising itself and of strongly influencing any future struggles.

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