

THE FALL OF CALLAGHAN AND THE PERSPECTIVE FOR A SOCIALIST REPUBLIC IN BRITAIN

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07.05.79

The Labour government of Callaghan lost the elections on the 3rd of May this year, but the Labour proletariat feels neither crushed nor defeated. Previous to the elections, it showed its great fighting spirit and resolution by taking on, all at once, government, bosses, big capital and Trade Union leaders - and all these had to concede! This is impressive from every point of view.

The Callaghan government had wanted to freeze all wage rises at 5% but he was forced to retreat. No sooner had he retreated than many workers' categories settled for at least twice as much. This level of struggle must be firmly maintained to keep the gains already won, and prevent more retreats.

No government¹ must be allowed to take back what the workers have won, both in the private sector and in the State one. Under Wilson and Callaghan, a lot of improvements were made in wages, hours, working conditions, social security and pensions.

The only way is to link all the struggles together:

It is not going to be possible to keep these gains without keeping up the fight. And it will not be possible to keep up the fight without linking all the struggles together. It is urgent to join up all the working class' issues, from the question of nationalisations to the simplest demands. This is the way of the future. All the demands will have to be linked together.

¹ The government at this point was the Conservative one of Margaret Thatcher. Edit.

The present combative spirit must be kept as high as it is today to guarantee the continuation of the Trade Union, social and economic rights that were won in the last few years. Callaghan did not always comply with the capitalists because the Labour base kept stopping him. He had to drop the 5%. In this as in other things he was defeated. Now, capitalism is going to fight tooth and nail to claw back everything that Labour granted.

With the present level of programme and fighting spirit in the masses, it is possible to have a great discussion in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions. This will interest and attract the petit bourgeoisie. In the TUC, the workplaces and the workers' meetings, it is possible to elaborate a consistent plan of advance on all fronts, ranging from nationalisations and state-planning to a programme for the extension of the political and economic conquests already won.

Why not pose, for example, the need to have the wages raised at the same time as a shorter working week? Why not pose the need for people to have control over the environment and the food they eat? Why not denounce the wholesale adulteration of, and the tampering with the food that is going on?

Take the 35 hours working week for instance. As a demand, it makes the link between maintaining the gains that the workers have made so far, and opening a front for new ones. It links matters of salary with matters of working conditions, like the need to get rid of pollution. If the Trade Unions and the Labour Party were to discuss these problems in public, they get an immense support, and their leaders would have to show their commitment.

It isn't enough to win a wage rise. Such a victory can only be kept with the conquest of other rights. Experience shows that

every wage rise is soon negated by price rises and/or the cheapening of food and goods. In this respect, a struggle that remains strictly at the level of wages has no effect.

The defeat of Labour in this election is circumstantial:

The left in the Trade Unions will eventually have to link the need for more money and better conditions with the issue of workers' control. It is only the workers, in the end, who can have the ideas and the power to change this situation. The road towards healthy food and the elimination of pollution passes through nationalisations, State-planning and workers' control. In this matter, there is no alternative. The left in the Labour Party will eventually have to speak in this way, because there is no other way.

In the world, the struggles of the masses intensify without big retreats. The defeat of Labour in this election is circumstantial. You must put it at the door of a Labour culture so limited as to produce a Callaghan. This is an electoral defeat but the masses have not been defeated. The Labour and Trade Union leaders will have no option, in the end, but to respond to the necessity of the working class. They will have no choice but to deal with the process as it is, and to seek to understand it.

The British masses have lost nothing through the experience they have made. They feel strong because they advanced a lot under Labour. Be sure that the demand for a Republic - a *Socialist Republic* - is going to be raised, at some stage.

A *Socialist Republic* cannot be constructed in Britain just now, but what can be done already is to agitate and propagandise for the elimination of the present power structure.

It is completely appropriate to speak in favour of the

Democratic Socialist Republic in Britain.

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