

Shape the . . .

future. . .

MANIFESTO of the
MOVEMENT FOR A
SOCIALIST FUTURE
50P

Choose the alternative

We are the only organisation offering you a chance to make a difference at this General Election. By supporting our campaign for an alternative to New Labour you can help shape the future.

New Labour fears that the turnout at the General Election will fall to a record low. Their concerns are justified. In 1997, millions voted against the Tories to elect New Labour. Many believed that their votes would make a difference.

Four years of Tony Blair have dashed people's hopes. New Labour has carried out policies the Tories only dreamt of. And they are just as ridden with sleaze.

They court the rich and famous, helping them with passports for donations to party funds or failed projects like the Dome.

Inequality has grown between the rich and the rest of society.

A handful of people in the City earn fabulous fortunes playing with other people's money while average wage earners cannot afford a decent place to live.

Even though they have another year left in office, New Labour is desperate to hold an election. In fact, Blair is determined to get re-elected before the

international economic crisis joins foot and mouth in sweeping through Britain.

We are, therefore, campaigning AGAINST a vote for New Labour because:

- New Labour favours big business, the rich and powerful
- New Labour has no real policy differences with the Tories
- Tony Blair rules as an unelected 'president' with only a sham reference to parliament or the Cabinet

Society has reached an historic crossroads and the time is ripe for bold action. Those who support our campaign and choose not to vote New Labour will

have a chance to take part in building a popular movement for fundamental social change.

This movement will not rely on parliament for its success but have an independence of its own.

The existing parliamentary system of government is a rubber stamp for those who really take the decisions about our lives – the powerful global economic and financial corporations. Therefore, we also ask you to back our proposals to create a new and democratic political system in society.

Because New Labour and the Tories only have small differences over policy, the vast majority of voters are effectively disenfranchised by the existing parties. That's another good reason to support the Movement for a Socialist Future's campaign.

New Labour's record

Survey after survey shows that a majority of people favour decent public services financed directly out of taxation. They also oppose privatisation.

But New Labour favours 'competition' over everything else and a reduction in the role of the state in providing services. As a result, public spending on services is actually lower than under the Tories. And many services are in a worse state than when Blair took office in 1997:

People want safe, reliable publicly-owned railways. What have they got?

The railways are dangerous, unreliable and run by companies only interested in profit. They are the most expensive trains to travel on in Europe. Yet New Labour has handed Railtrack – a private company – £15 billion in subsidies and rules out renationalisation. Now they plan to privatise air traffic control.

The overwhelming majority support a properly-funded National Health Service. What has New Labour done?

Hospitals are at breaking point while new ones are built by the private sector and then leased to the state at vast extra cost to the taxpayer. Meanwhile, the big drugs companies are allowed to rip the NHS off.

Parents want decent schools for their children. What is the result?

Schools cannot attract teachers because pay is too low and many classes are overcrowded. Teachers are blamed for the failure of the education system. Now Labour plans to destroy comprehensive schools and create a two-tier system. Tuition fees for university students means only the privileged can afford higher education.

Voters want an efficient, safe and cheap Underground system in London. What has happened?

The London Tube is starved of public investment because New Labour wants to privatise it. New Labour expelled Ken Livingstone because he opposes the break-up of the Tube system.

Everyone wants safer food to eat. Has that happened?

Foot-and-mouth has swept the country, made worse by New Labour's policy of shutting local abattoirs, cutting the numbers of vets and giving the

supermarkets the green light to pressure farmers into intensive farming. Lord Sainsbury, Science Minister and Lord Haskins (Asda) give large sums to New Labour.

Everyone needs somewhere decent and affordable to live. That's impossible under New Labour

The number of homes built for rent is at an all-time low. This has led to a rapid rise in homelessness, especially in London where soaring prices have made it impossible for the majority to buy a home.

Many public sector workers are at the bottom of the pay table. What has Blair done?

New Labour has held down wages, preferring instead 'tax credits' that few people understand and fewer claim and a minimum wage that it is impossible to live on. Meanwhile, the jobless and lone parents are deprived of benefits and driven into low-paid work. And the disabled face benefit cuts and means testing.

Losing your liberties

When it comes to our democratic rights, we are undoubtedly worse off than under the Tories. New Labour has given police new powers to stop and search, which are used mainly against black and minority ethnic people.

The state can now check your e-mails and faxes without a warrant. If you protest against the system, you are labelled a 'terrorist'. If you support those who fight oppression, you are also a 'terrorist' and face arrest under new laws.

If you give them your vote, New Labour will curb the right to jury trial and make it possible for people to be tried twice for the same charge. Police will get the right to make a DNA profile of anyone they question.

As society has become more commercialised, more divided and therefore more unstable, crime has soared. New Labour has responded by simply increasing the number of people in jail by 33% in four years.

For asylum seekers, there are no civil liberties. They are deprived of benefits and given humiliating vouchers, while New Labour uses racist language to describe people coming to Britain to escape persecution or to start a new life.

When it comes to foreign policy, New Labour is a US puppet. They bomb civilians in Yugoslavia, starve the population of Iraq and prop up dictators with arms supplies – all without reference to parliament.

Blair is best friends with the Russian president Putin, whose army has destroyed Chechnya, and with Bush, the man who stole the White House and is now launching a new arms race with his Star Wars missile system.

- About 17% of Britons and 30% of British children are below the poverty line in any one year
- One in six lone-parent families is estimated to live in poverty
- The wealthiest 5% of society own 44% of the UK's wealth compared with 36% in 1981
- 17% of us work more than 48 hours a week
- Unpaid carers save the state £30 billion a year
- In 2000, the nation's wealthiest 1,000 people enriched themselves by £31 billion
- Seven out of ten workers in fishing and agriculture earn less than £6 an hour
- Nearly 60% of working adults report work stress
- Unemployment amongst young black women is nearly four times greater than for young white women
- 60% of Bangladeshi and Pakistani Britons are poor, four times the poverty rate among white people
- The average house price in London is £160,000
- There are more than 50,000 homeless households in temporary accommodation in London alone

A blueprint for democratic control

Many people are disillusioned with the Blair government not only because its policies are pro-business and hard to distinguish from those of the discredited Tories. Growing numbers of voters have also seen through the fraud of a political system which is democratic in name only.

That is why we ask you to join a campaign for an alternative, truly democratic political system. One which will give the mass of the people direct control over their lives, workplaces and services.

In today's set-up, voters are treated with contempt. Every four or five years, our 'democracy' invites us to determine who should rule. With the casting of a ballot, this process then comes to an abrupt end – until another election is announced.

Wouldn't it be better if people had a chance to take control of their lives by having a real say all the time?

In the mid-19th century, people struggled and sometimes died for the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Campaigners were driven by the belief that they could curb the powers of the new factory owners and improve the conditions of the working class. Some were prepared to achieve their ends by overthrowing the government.

The right to vote, which was only finally established for all men and women in 1928, is in danger of losing its meaning so long as it is restricted to parliamentary elections.

We now need to extend the right to vote so that it carries weight in new bodies that exercise real power, not the phantom authority of the House of Commons or Downing Street.

Just as workers once founded the Labour Party as an answer to their social problems, we have to found a new movement to go beyond Blair and parliament. Not voting may appear as *negative* but it also has a *positive* side in its rejection of existing parties and institutions. This is what we must build on.



The institutions of the state – parliament, the police, civil service, judiciary and the monarchy – do not serve the people. They stand above us and exist to make sure that the status quo is upheld. Behind a veneer of democracy, the ruling classes exercise the real power.

The existing civil service administers the state in secret and draws up rules and regulations to implement reactionary policies, like vouchers for asylum seekers or cuts in disability benefit.

The monarchy is purely parasitical, serving no useful social function whatsoever.

Behind the government lie the secret spy agencies MI5, MI6 and the Special Branch who spend their time

infiltrating farmers' and environmental groups, trade unions and other 'enemies of the state'. They are responsible to no one.

As for the police, judiciary and prison system, many people can testify how arbitrary and brutal their rule is. The prisons are full of innocent people who could not afford the services of a top class lawyer.

While the state rules at the top and at local level, there is not even a glimmer of democracy when it comes to the workplace or the local community. Whether it is an office, factory, school, university or transport depot – the rule is the same. Those who work are under the thumb of an unelected and uncontrollable elite. The present state exists to make sure this is the way things stay – that big business and finance is not challenged, but is maintained by whatever means necessary, including physical force.

We believe that all these state structures need replacing by new executive bodies which are directly controlled and accountable to the vast majority who today have no power or voice.

The Movement for a Socialist Future favours

- An extension of democratic procedures throughout every area of society, giving power to producers, consumers, older people, women and ethnic minorities, students, teachers, professional people and other groups
- The creation of representative local, regional and national bodies to run society, and be responsible for the economy, the financial system, public services, the legal system and so on
- A system of direct election of delegates from all sections of society who will stay in office for a year. They will get paid at the average wage and be subject to recall by those who put them in office
- Ownership and control of resources by workers and producers in workplaces, who with the help of technical experts, will draft economic plans to submit to local, regional and national bodies
- A reorganisation of production to replace the profit system with co-operation. A socially-owned and controlled economy will use resources carefully and creatively

Making a change

Some people argue that if we could only elect a radical enough government, we could make parliament work for the people and through a series of reforms eventually we would arrive at a fairer, socialist society.

This is an understandable view but more than 100 years of history has proved this approach cannot possibly succeed.

This long and often painful history of the Labour Party shows conclusively that it is not possible to reform capitalism or to achieve lasting change simply through the House of Commons and the parliamentary system.

In 1900 the trade unions and some socialists set up the Labour Party to represent the interests of workers in parliament. After the short-lived 1924 government, a second Labour government collapsed in 1931 in the wake of the Wall Street crash. A section then joined the Tories in a national government.

Under immense pressure from soldiers who had gone from mass unemployment into uniform, the 1945 Labour government enacted some reforms, notably the NHS and a limited welfare state. But Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s were thrown into crisis by international economic forces and began to undermine these very same reforms.

Blair's New Labour completely abandons the old ideas of reforming capitalism which gave birth to the party in the first place. Instead, it directly expresses the economic forces unleashed by globalisation.

All over the world, resistance is growing to the destructive rule of the global corporations and their political puppets. We should harness this energy and direct it into a popular mass movement to achieve the political and economic changes we need, not just in Britain but in every country.

All this may sound difficult to achieve. But invention is born out of necessity! And it certainly is necessary to take a leap forward in history before the present system dooms us to slump, environmental catastrophe and war.

We have to think beyond our immediate experiences, raise our horizons and move forward.

There is undoubtedly a crisis of leadership in society. By joining our campaign for an alternative to New Labour you can make an important contribution to overcoming it.



There are several reasons why the existing parliamentary system of government – including existing parties – is a sham:

- A stranglehold of power over the economy is exercised in secret by powerful corporations and banks without reference to MPs or the government
- Under Blair, as with Thatcher, not even the Cabinet is consulted. Instead, 'president' Blair and a few advisors decide policies
- Functions which were once under parliament's scrutiny have fallen into the hands of unelected 'quangos' and task forces
- Globalisation has forced national parliaments to give up their limited powers to undemocratic bodies like the European Union or the World Trade Organisation
- New Labour treats Commons' procedures with contempt, bypassing them in favour of media spin
- The traditional distinction between a political party and the state machine has virtually disappeared with New Labour, which uses the state for its own ends

Britain and the world today

Britain is part of a global economy which is now dominated by a handful of what are known as transnational corporations (TNCs). These giant organisations control the fate of everyone on the planet.

They decide what we eat, what music we listen to, what TV we watch, what newspapers we read and how much we pay for vital medicines and drugs.

This economic globalisation and commercialisation of every area of culture is driven by one consideration only – maximising profits.

The corporations not only dominate our working lives, they are also responsible for a systematic abuse of nature which threatens our very existence on the planet.

In their quest for profit, the corporations deplete natural resources without consideration for the future. Global warming has reached danger point, where ice caps are already melting.

Scientists are ignored and international agreements to curb harmful emissions are sabotaged by oil companies and other corporations.

As far as these corporations are concerned, the only business of the planet is business itself. So scientific breakthroughs on human DNA – which contain the answers to many diseases – are turned into a new source of profit by patents.

Human reproduction and the human body are merely another source of profit as seen in cloning, surrogate motherhood and the 'auctioning' of babies on the Internet.

Knowledge about the structure of plants is used to produce untested and potentially lethal genetically-modified food and seed in order to dominate the food and agriculture industries. At the same time, much of the food we eat is harmful because of intensive farming.

Companies like Ford, Sony, Monsanto, Microsoft, and GlaxoSmithKline operate across national borders. They fix prices, cut jobs, shut workplaces and move production to areas of cheaper labour to increase profits.

Firms like Nike and Gap turn out the latest clothing in guarded factories in south-east Asia. Women are separated from their husbands, forced to live in compounds and paid a pittance to produce goods which are sold at a vast profit around the world.

Countries like South Africa, however, which urgently needs drugs to fight an Aids epidemic, are prevented from doing so and are even taken to court by the giant pharmaceutical corporations to prevent the government buying the medicines at lower prices from other suppliers.

The main function of governments today is to create the best conditions for the transnational corporations to operate in. They have created such powerful economic and financial forces that governments now have less and less power over their own national economies.

When Vauxhall – which is part of General Motors – closes its Luton plant, New Labour says it cannot and will not intervene. When the steel giant Corus shuts down its operations in South Wales, New Labour throws up its hands in horror. When Shell and Esso turn in record profits – and still put petrol prices up – New Labour says this is how ‘global markets’ work.

Which makes you ask: what is the point of voting for a government that is by its own admission so powerless when it comes to the economy?

World economy...

The global economy is careering towards a slump, which will lead to mass unemployment and social upheaval in every country unless we take action against the power of the global corporations.

- The Japanese economy is in deep depression and its financial system close to collapse
- Stock markets have fallen sharply in every major country
- High-tech companies are sacking thousands
- Companies like BT are drowning in debt which they cannot finance

No country is immune from the effects of a global slump and New Labour will face an overwhelming economic and financial crisis if it wins the election.

New Labour will impose the full burden of the downturn on producers and consumers through unemployment, wage reductions and cuts in public spending.

The greed and chaos of the capitalist system is behind the crisis. Corporations have saturated

the markets with goods they cannot sell. As a result, their profits are falling and they cannot repay mounting debts.

Companies like Intel, Cisco, Motorola, Ericsson and even McDonalds are cutting staff and production.

The Internet 'economic miracle' proved an illusion. Dot.com companies are valued at a fraction of their original worth because they make no profits. Millions of Americans lured into using their savings to get rich quick through share speculation are now in deep debt.

The present economic set-up is unsustainable. The technology and capacity is there to provide enough food, shelter, clothing and a stable, decent standard of life for everyone on the planet.

But leaving all this in the control of a handful of corporations which put profit first is gambling with the planet. We advocate a new economic system based on co-operation – not competition – and community ownership and control.

...in crisis

Is there anyone else to vote for?

A number of groups have entered into a political coalition called the Socialist Alliance. They are standing candidates at the election, and urge people to vote New Labour where they are not.

The basic platform of the SA is for the defence of the welfare state, increased taxes on the rich, renationalisation of the railways, increased funding for the NHS and education and a higher minimum wage.

Unfortunately, the SA's perspective leads us to believe that they are not in fact a real alternative to New Labour and do not merit supporting at the election.

Because the SA does not spell out an alternative other than parliament for implementing their policies, we must conclude that they believe the current political system will somehow deliver the goods.

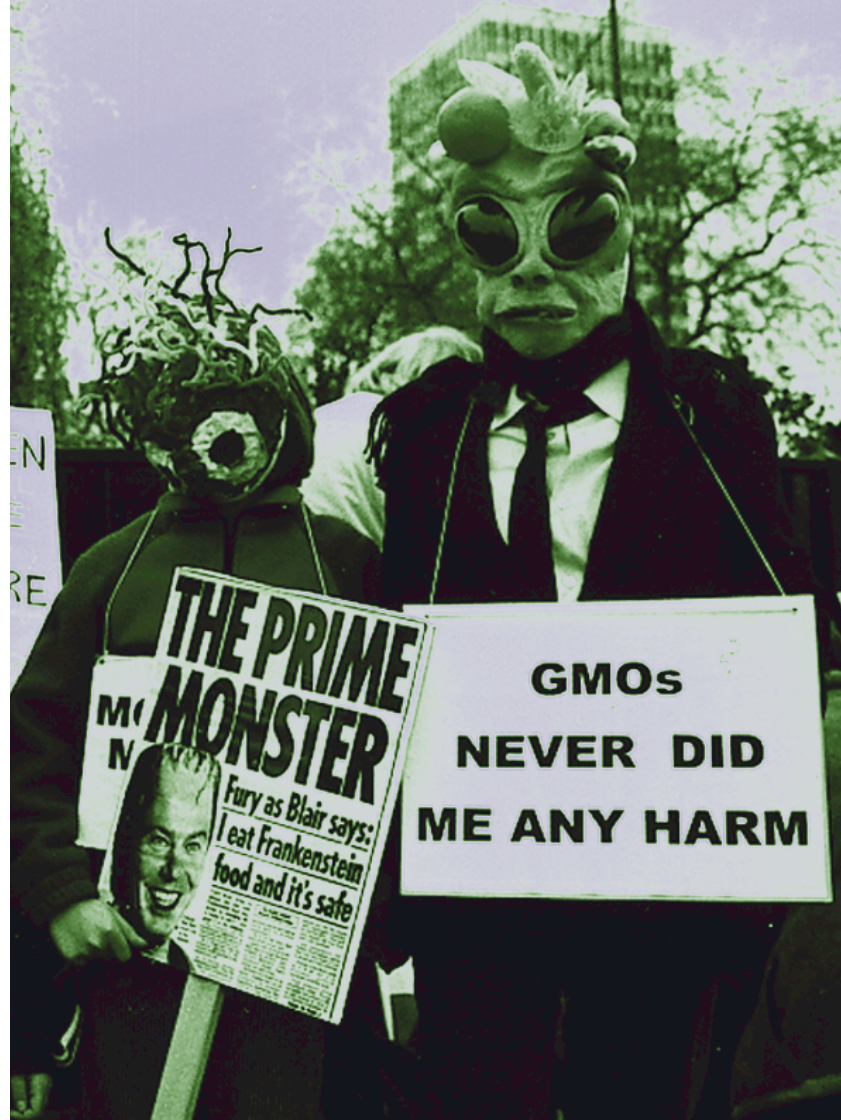
The SA's programme is extremely limited in its ambition. Their policies do not add up to a challenge to the power of the corporations.

In fact, the SA's policies imply a continued expansion of the global economy, when all the signs are pointing the opposite way.

The SA harks back to an imaginary golden age when Old Labour had a radical programme which it promptly abandoned in office. It also hankers for a period before globalisation when it was possible to exact some concessions from the British ruling class.

Just at a point when many people are ready to think about an alternative to New Labour and parliamentary games played at their expense, the SA is urging voters to direct their energies back towards these discredited bodies.

So a vote for the SA is in effect a vote for the status quo, for leaving things much as they are while registering a feeble protest against Blair.



How **you** can help

Support our manifesto and help launch a mass campaign to build an alternative to both New Labour and to argue for new democratic bodies to run the country.

Fill in the form opposite, cut it out and either send it back to us or give it your local MSF contact. If you can, enclose a donation for the campaign fund. After the election, we will invite you to a local conference to discuss how we turn our ideas into a national strategy.

Movement for a Socialist Future
PO Box 942
London SW1V 2AR

I support your Manifesto and am interested
in joining the movement.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____ POSTCODE _____

TELEPHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

I enclose a donation of £_____ for The MSF Campaign Fund

Cheques made out to *Movement for a Socialist Future*

Cut out and return to: Movement for a Socialist Future PO Box 942
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