SOCIALIST MOVEMENT TRADE UNION CONFERENCE

Amendments to the Policy Statement Proposed by Workers Power

Amendment 1

Section 1—The Anti-Union Laws, delete paragraph 2 from "Now new realism has" down to "the Dover Seafarers", and insert:

"Under the guise of 'returning the unions to their members' the Tories have implemented a complex battery of vicious anti-union laws, designed to shackle effective trade unionism. The Tories' success in carrying through this attack owes a great deal to the complete capitulation of the TUC and individual union bureaucracies before the laws and the courts. At Wapping, at Dover and on the docks the union leaders have sabotaged strike action and picket lines to keep disputes within the law. Ron Todd's restriction of the dockers' action until three months had been wasted in the courts was a typical example of both the cowardice of the bureaucrats, even those supposedly on the left, and of the damage compliance with the laws can do to working class action and solidarity."

Then continue with original up to paragraph 4 ending "and abolish the closed shop". Then delete the remainder of the section and insert:

"While we must demand a clear commitment from any future Labour government to the complete and unconditional repeal of all Tory anti-union legislation, the return of all assets stolen from the unions by the courts, the restoration of all immunities and the unrestricted right to strike, picket and take solidarity action, the fight against the laws must be taken up in the here and now. The key task facing militants is to fight for actual defiance of the laws every time they are used:

- Defy all injunctions and rulings against action. Strike in defiance of the laws;
- For non-payment of fines and the use of illegal methods to protect assets (dispersal of funds, physical defence of buildings etc.);
- For mass pickets in defiance of the laws in all strikes; for the defence of such pickets against the police by organised squads of workers;
- For the imposition of 100% trade unionism by direct action—expel scabs from the unions;
- For solidarity action with workers in struggle; for strike action, official if possible, unofficial if necessary in defence of unions attacked by the courts; demand the TUC call an indefinite general strike to smash all of the anti-union laws and prevent the imposition of new ones; for the organisation of such general strike action by the rank and file if the TUC refuse to call one when the laws are used against striking workers."

Amendment 2

Delete all of section 2 (The Employers' Offensive) and insert:

"Britain's bosses exploited the impact of the 1979-82 recession and the legislative framework established by the Tories to launch major attacks on several well organised sections of workers. In the absence of any effective challenge to these attacks by the union bureaucracies these sections have been left to fight in isolation and have gone down to defeat (steel, mines, printers, seafarers, dockers, as well as many smaller sections).

At the same time a wider range of attacks have been carried out in the workplaces by the bosses, in a concerted attempt to weaken shop floor trade union organisation and foment divisions within the working class. Attacks on national pay bargaining structures, the implementation of local productivity deals, the introduction of performance and profit related pay deals are all aimed at heighten existing sectional differences inside the workforce. In some instances (Wapping and Dover) the bosses have gone for de-recognition.

In general the bosses have played on the bureaucracy's 'new realism' to get single union and no strike deals. The growth of scab unionism (UDM, EETPU etc) has encouraged these trends. Often employers have sought to weaken shop steward organisation through the victimisation of militants or the introduction of management techniques designed to by-pass elected representatives and instil a sense of 'identity' between the worker and the company. These methods have included quality circles and employee involvement programmes in addition to more complex attempts to break down demarcations and cultivate a multi-skilled core of better paid workers.

While the impact and extent of these new measures is varied they have been accompanied by more extensive 'traditional' attacks such as speed ups, a flexible working offensive, multi-year pay deals etc.

Alongside the offensive in manufacturing the Tories have attacked the public sector workforce and the working class at large through their local government legislation, through privatisation and contracting out, through massive cuts and through the introduction of the poll tax.

The balance sheet of this offensive by the bosses and the Tories is bad from the point of view of the working class. Betrayals by the leaders have led to defeats and to the general weakening of working class militancy. Even in the summer of discontent, despite signs of new confidence, the ability of the bureaucracy to keep action selective (only the dockers were on all out strike), to sell short the demands of the workers or to steer disputes to terrible defeat (the dockers) was evident.

Now, with the Tories in trouble, with Labour committed to maintaining whole chunks of Thatcher's legislation, the official leadership will collaborate with Kinnock in attempting to further undermine militancy and begin a three year slog along the parliamentary road. To counter this rank and file militants need to be armed with a clear programme of action against the bosses offensive and against new realism and 'waiting for labour'. This programme must centre on action and demands that meet working class needs and lay the basis for preventing Kinnock from carrying on where Thatcher leaves off if he gets into office. The key elements of such a programme are:

- Against all forms of participation, share ownership, speed ups, flexible working we need to fight for workers' control of production. This means workers—organised in democratically elected workplace councils—controlling the speed of work, the levels of output and health and safety. It means winning the right to exercise a veto over all management production plans. It means fighting to end the business secrecy that surrounds capitalist production by opening the books, accounts and computer records of the bosses' to inspection by the workers and their own elected specialists.
- For strike action to defend the bargaining rights of the unions. No to single union/strike free deals. Defend national bargaining rights; oppose all divisive local or productivity pay deals. No to individual contracts—for collective agreements between the unions and the bosses.
- Fight privatisation and contracting out with direct action. For the defence of union rates for the job and for the

protection of working conditions through workers' control. We demand that if Labour forms a government it re-nationalise all privatised firms and bring all areas that have contracted out back into the public sector. No compensation should be given to the privateers. All re-nationalised firms must be put under workers' control.

• Against the constant threat of unemployment we must fight for the right to work. Cut the hours not the jobs. For an immediate 35 hour week for all. In government Labour must immediately introduce, as the legal maximum working week, 35 hours. For workers' control of hours worked and the sharing of all available work amongst all employees. For workers' control of hiring and firing. For strikes and occupations against firms threatening closure and redundancy and for their nationalisation under workers' control without compensation to the bosses. Labour must impose this policy if it is elected.

• As well as cutting the hours we must fight for the implementation of a programme of public works to usefully employ, at union rates, the thousands of workers left to rot on the dole. Such a plan must be controlled by the workers and financed by the bosses via the capitalist state.

• In the battle to win such demands the employed and unemployed must be united. Unions must fight now for work or full pay for all workers. Unemployed workers must have the right to join a union of their choice at reduced subs' rates but with full rights of participation. The unemployed must be organised into a mass unemployed workers' movement. It must be democratically controlled by its own members. It must receive a massive, no-strings attached, financial subvention from the trade union movement and have full rights of representation at every level of the labour movement.

• Strike action is decisive in defending the living standards of the working class. The struggles of the 1989 summer of discontent proved this beyond doubt. But to end the curse of low pay and the erosion of wages by inflation we must fight for a guaranteed national minimum wage set at the average industrial wage and a sliding scale of wages—1% rise in pay for every 1% rise in inflation. The cost of living index produced by the government is a sham. It does not reflect real working class expenses. To make a sliding scale effective the rate of inflation must be judged by working class price watch committees elected from the workplaces and communities, drawing in the many working class women who have to organise the family budget.

• For the defence and extension of the welfare state. Stop the cuts, no redundancies and force Labour councils to overspend on budgets to meet working class needs. Cancel all the debts and interest payments to the banks and finance houses. Fight the poll tax through a policy of non-payment, non-compliance by relevant workers and by strike action in support of workers victimised for non-compliance. The poll tax is an attack on the whole working class. We must resist it by mobilising the whole working class in a general strike to smash it. Labour must pledge its repeal immediately if they win the next election and they must pledge to financially compensate all those fined for their opposition to the tax. In addition Labour must repeal all of the Tories' local government legislation and carry through the nationalisation of all the banks and finance houses. In the here and now we must fight for Labour councils to defy the poll tax and take a lead in mobilising the working class in action even where this means breaking the law.

Amendment 3

Amendment to sections 4 and 5: Delete all and insert:

"The Socialist Movement must support the building of a rank and file movement in the unions. Such a movement is essential to oust the treacherous bureaucrats, fight for class struggle policies and transform the unions into democratic militant organisations defending the interests of the working class. The rank and file movement must link up all of the militants within and across the various unions so as to be able to effectively respond to disputes. It must place demands on the existing leaderships but, where they refuse to act, it must be prepared to organise strikes and solidarity action independently as part of a perspective to replace the treacherous leaders with real class fighters.

The rank and file movement's motto must be with the leaders when possible, against them when necessary, fight for a class struggle leadership of the unions. This does not mean the rank and file movement should be an electoral machine, in the manner of various Broad Lefts, but an organisation that fights for a new leadership in the context of the root and branch transformation of the unions around the following key policies:

• For the regular election of all officials and for the right of immediate recall to ensure accountability.

• All officials to be paid the average wage of the workers they represent.

• Down with postal ballots—all key decisions on action to be taken at mass meetings, all elections to take place through votes at revitalised branch meetings, all decisions on national policy to be taken by an annual conference of democratically elected lay delegates for democratically elected and recallable national executives which are bound to implement agreed conference decisions.

• Revitalise workplace democracy—as steps towards workplace councils we support democratically elected shop stewards committees (inter-union where necessary) that produce workplace bulletins (open to contributions from all workers except fascists and open racists) and that regularly report to section and mass meetings and are accountable to those meetings. For workplace branches with the right to meet in work time, a right Labour must pledge to make law if it gets into office.

• Fight scab unionism and bureaucratic mergers. For industrial unions on a class struggle basis.

• Democratise the TUC—all delegates to congress to be lay delegates elected from the ranks. All TUC officials to be elected by congress, recallable to it and paid the average industrial wage.

• Democratise the block vote in the Labour Party. For delegates to conference to be elected from affiliated union branch meetings. For the proportional representation of policy views inside the union. The block vote should not be cast in a unitary fashion but in proportions reflecting the votes cast for policy by annual conferences."

Amendment 4

In section 7 on women delete from "Women must have the right to organise within" (page 7 column 1) and insert:

"The fight to open the unions to women workers is crucial. The bureaucratic sops for women in the unions currently being implemented are totally insufficient. We must fight for:

• Union meetings in work time to allow women full participation; free 24 hour creche facilities funded by the state to allow women the real right to work and be active as trade unionists; maternity (and paternity) leave for six months on full pay; positive action in the unions to guarantee the representation of women in unions at all levels; the right of women to caucus in the unions; fight for a working class women's movement that can unite women across the unions and draw in thousands of non-unionised women in the working class communities.

• For free abortion and contraception on demand—a woman's right to choose. For a trade union campaign including strike action to defeat the planned Tory attack on abor-

on rights."

• For equal pay for work of equal value—determined through workers' control—with part-time workers having guaranteed union rates of pay and full rights within the unions. For positive action in recruitment and training, under workers' control, to ensure that women are taken on.

• For protective legislation to be under workers' control to ensure that the bosses do not use it to discriminate against women.

• For trade union action against sexual harassment at work. For a masive education campaign amongst the membership to combat sexist attitudes.

Amendment 5

In section 8 add at the end:
"In practice this means fighting for:

• The guaranteed right of lesbians and gay men to caucus in the unions.

• For union sponsored education programmes to combat lesbian and gay oppression inside the working class.

• For the right of lesbians and gay men to come out at work free from the fear of harassment and victimisation. No discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. For workers' control of hiring and firing to guarantee this right. For immediate strike action in any cases of discrimination against lesbians and gay men. Labour must make such discrimination illegal.

• Repeal Section 28 and all other anti-lesbian and gay laws. For a trade union campaign against all such laws and their use.

• For labour movement backing for the physical defence of lesbians and gay men against the attacks of bigots and the police.

• For a working class lesbian and gay movement."

Amendment 6

In section 9 add at the end:
"To effectively combat racism the unions must be opened to black workers and must take up the burning questions facing such workers:

• For the right of black workers to caucus inside the unions; for systematic education sponsored by the unions to combat racism amongst white workers; drive the fascists out of the unions, bar open racists from holding union office at any level. For the full and unrestricted right of the black section to exist and be represented inside the Labour Party

• Smash all immigration controls. Labour must be forced to pledge this as policy. Oppose all deportations through strike action and non-co-operation to physically block them.

• For workers' control of hiring and firing, with guaranteed black representation on workers' control committees, to prevent any discrimination in the employment of black workers by the bosses.

• For the right of black self defence against police, fascist and racist attack. For labour movement support for such defence. For the building of workers' defence squads to enact such support and ensure that the fascists are always denied a platform by the labour movement."

Amendment 7

Section 22 on International Solidarity, delete all and insert:
"Internationalism is crucial for the working class of Britain. This internationalism can best express itself through struggles in solidarity with all of those workers fighting imperialism throughout the world. In Britain today the key tests of internationalism are a commitment to:

• Troops out of Ireland now, self determination for the Irish people as a whole. Labour must be forced to end bipartisanship on Ireland with the Tories and must pledge itself to the immediate repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and to immediate withdrawal.

• Support the struggle against apartheid. For working class solidarity to assist the black masses. Fight for workers' sanctions against all South African trade.

• Support the right of the Palestinian people to self determination. No support to the Israeli Zionist state which brutally oppresses the Palestinians. The Labour movement has no interest in supporting oppression in whatever guise it appears. At the same time the labour movement must combat every manifestation of anti-Semitism.

Today international solidarity must be given to the workers struggling against the murderous Stalinist regimes. The bureaucracies that rule these states have shown themselves willing to ruthlessly murder their opponents (China), ban strikes (USSR) and attack demonstrations (East Germany). While we must oppose any attempt at the restoration of capitalism in such states, which means pledging defence of them against imperialism or internal counter-revolution, we must oppose the repression by the bureaucrats. We must support all the struggles against the bureaucracy waged by the working class of these countries. While this does not mean cutting ties to all of the state run unions in these countries it does mean breaking links with those unions that side with the bureaucracy's repression and recognising and assisting those unions that are set up to wage a struggle against the bureaucracy.

In general our policy of internationalism must mean promoting active links between trade unionists of all countries at a rank and file level, through international combines, international solidarity and regular visits and exchanges, as education for the rank and file not holiday perks for the bureaucracy. It must also mean opposition to all nationalist solutions to the capitalist crisis, such as import controls, that tie us to the British bosses' interests."

All amendments proposed by Workers Power supporters in the trade unions

11 and 12 November 1989