

Every Vote Is a Yes For Capitalism



Five years of worsening living conditions and another General Election is upon us. We now get our "democratic right" to vote supposedly for "the government of our choice". If only that were true! Seven years after the explosion of the financial system the sovereign debt of the UK has increased from £167 billion to £1.5 trillion. The Con-Dem Coalition has bailed out the banks and are now drowning the working class in cuts to services and benefits all round, supposedly to bring down the deficit. Despite 1 million people having to resort to food banks, record suicide rates in the face of benefit sanctions and the continued rise of zero hour contracts, the books won't balance. The IMF now says that the UK deficit will continue throughout the whole of the next parliament. And, as if this failure of capitalism was our fault, Osborne has already "promised" us £12 billion more in welfare cuts year on year. And don't look for anything different from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. As the *Independent* put it "*all parties will make deeper cuts after the election as the only way to tackle the deficit*". Labour has repeatedly said it will accept the current budget restraints to prove its reliability to the financial controllers of the capitalist system. What this means is that the election will produce only more cutbacks whoever wins.

But voting is worse than pointless. It is against our own class interests. Even if you vote for the Greens (who having no hope of power say they will abandon austerity, a promise as convincing as Syriza's of "standing up to the Troika" in Greece) or one of the small so-called left parties, you are still legitimising the system. The more that we take part the more they can claim that they have a mandate to rule. The people have spoken! In fact it's more like the Murdoch press has spoken since no government since 1974 has been elected without endorsement by the Sun. Those that control the means of production also control the means of reproduction of ideas and swamp us daily with their message.

The Real Power Is Not in Parliament

Some people still argue that we should "use our vote" since our ancestors fought for it. But we don't live in Chartist times any more. Today capitalism has lost its progressive role. The working class cannot push back the attacks of an entire system in crisis by putting a piece of paper in a ballot box. Winning "the battle for democracy" in the nineteenth century was different in an age when the capitalist press could not reach the working class and the state did not have other media at its disposal. It's no accident that the vote was only granted to all workers (1918) **after** the Russian Revolution struck fear into the hearts of our capitalist rulers and when a "popular" press had already

been established. Far from universal suffrage being a stepping stone to the working class seizing power, 'defending democracy' has become the biggest weapon for keeping workers loyal to a parliamentary façade which disguises the real rule of capital. Under capitalist democracy some (owners and controllers of the means of production) are freer than others. And if – as in 1923 – capital was not happy with the result: Well, it could just print lies to reverse the issue like the fake Zinoviev letter printed in the Daily Mail showed a year later. In fact, though, they need not have worried about the Labour Party which long ago showed it was only interested in the parliamentary game and has never had any intention of going against the interests of British capital... And they wonder why workers are so apathetic about elections!

In the final resort Parliament is just window dressing for capitalist rule. It is not the state itself. The real power lies in the network behind the scenes which sets the agenda for the ruling class. MPs have little power in relation to the monopoly capitalists with their lobbies who dictate the real agenda and get the legislation they want. When the press focus on parliamentary corruption in affairs like the "cash for questions" scandal the ones they expose are the MPs. Less attention is paid to the companies who are paying this or that lobbyist to do the corrupting. Parliament is a circus and voting a smokescreen behind which the ruling class gets on with the job whoever is elected. This is why there can be no parliamentary road to power for the working class. It is the exact opposite of what our struggle needs.

The Left Nationalist Illusion

Many people seemed to grasp this in the years after the end of the postwar boom when the old capitalist cyclical crisis returned at the start of the 1970s. 85% of the electorate had voted in 1950 but from 1970 on this figure began to fall steadily. In 2001 only 59.3% voted. Even in 2010 when no effort was spared to get people to vote (through all kinds of media mechanisms) the figure only reached 65%. The press was full of worried leaders agonising about the declining legitimacy of the system.

The Scottish referendum last year changed all that. It was only a referendum and not an election therefore the question was more direct (even if the outcome would have made little material difference to anyone) but 85% voted. Since then the pro-independence groupings largely on the left of the capitalist spectrum (which includes the SNP) have seen a surge in membership which promises to bring greater participation in the General Election (at least in Scotland). This is based on the illusion that it will make the slightest bit of difference to the outcome at Westminster. Even if they had any worthwhile policies the crisis we face is global. There is no national solution either in Scotland or in the UK in general. There is no solution within the rules of the capitalist game. Some might get pleasure at voting for their favourite protest party but it will not make any difference.

The Alternative ...

So what is the alternative? There is no short answer to that question since it depends on the working class waking up and recognising that these attacks will not end. We are in a class war and currently we are losing. At the moment resistance is scattered and episodic even if anti-capitalist ideas are rising. They have not yet been translated into an anti-capitalist movement for a whole variety of reasons. One main reason is the glaring absence of an alternative. Even the word 'communism' is discredited and the idea that the working class holds the key to a civilised future in place of capitalist barbarism will never be peddled in the media. So instead, workers turn a blind eye and deaf ear to news of wars, and economic crisis throughout the wider world and content themselves that "things could be worse" whilst hoping that the crisis will soon go away so that austerity will be a thing of the past. Even amongst its greatest victims some fear to fight. Others are waiting for someone else to lead the way but even amongst the resistance to austerity we are divided up between those fighting this battle and those fighting that. In fact it is all the same fight but most have yet to grasp the big picture. This cannot go on for ever. The contradictions of capitalism don't go away. They are gradually becoming more extreme. Eventually there will come a trigger when workers can no longer carry on

living in the same old way. Those who have followed our argument this far have got to prepare for that time.

Organise Collectively

We internationalist communists therefore, start by saying to workers: don't vote, reject this fraud. This, however, is not an invitation to passivity, or resignation. On the contrary, workers must respond to the continuous worsening of their conditions. But it's no good turning to the union rep you may never see, who is paid a salary out of your union dues to ensure that any fight is kept within increasingly narrow legal boundaries. Whether it is in fighting evictions, cuts in healthcare or worsening working conditions we need to adopt our own forms of organisation by forming strike and struggle committees, holding meetings in the workplace and in the community. In order that everyone has a say and keeps involved we need to introduce our own democracy – a much more direct one than the capitalist system of representation. It is one where all delegates are immediately recallable by those who vote for them (not once in 5 years). No decisions to be taken by paid or self-appointed 'representatives' behind closed doors. When we do strike we must aim to have a real impact instead of token protests with a few placards for a few hours or a day here or there.

Organise Politically

The fact is that the fight against declining living standards is only possible through a determined fight against the system that breeds it. Even the most militant struggles can only hope for short-term success since the capitalists will regroup and take back the concessions they have made. Those who see this have a political duty to explain the vital goal and the steps workers need to take in the struggle to get there. This cannot be done in a vacuum, outside of a revival of the class struggle. But neither can the working class struggle achieve what is, at the end of the day, the **political** goal of overthrowing the existing state without its own political organisation or without a clear programme of how to get there.

If we want to avoid the barbarism which capitalism is moving closer towards day by day, then we will need to have a radical, revolutionary transformation, led by the working class. This has nothing to do with elections to parliament. The communist goal is simply that the people who work need to take collective control of the means to exist and manage them sensibly, democratically, to safeguard the health and wellbeing of humanity and the natural environment. This has nothing to do with the old Labour schemes of nationalisation of industry. Only in this way can we escape the capitalist logic of production geared above all else to making profits for a small minority and which only incidentally addresses human needs. Only then will we get rid of exploitation of one human being by another. To implement this transformation we have to overthrow the existing institutions and the proletariat must seize political power. In short we are saying that humanity needs a communist revolution, which – and we want to make this clear – has nothing to do with the state capitalist regimes in the USSR, China, Cuba, etc. Socialism can only be built from below by those who understand what exploitation means.

In conclusion we can only echo the words of our Italian comrades:

We internationalists are active in the working class and in its communities to develop this revolutionary programme, we work with other sections of the Internationalist Communist Tendency to build and strengthen an international party of the proletariat, able in the future to act as a rallying point for the working class, to push it and direct it toward the revolutionary transformation of society. Without the political organisation of revolutionary forces – in a word the party – even the most widespread movement of rebellion is destined to be reabsorbed by the system, or will be crushed without hope of victory. We invite you to visit our website, to get in touch with us, and – perhaps – to start to give us a hand.

We have a world to win.

