

“Time For Action” - LRC National Committee Statement to Conference

Our message is simple. We can fight back and there is an alternative.

The deep and continuing systemic crisis of capitalism provides both the reason and the excuse for the Coalition Government’s drive to sweep away the gains achieved by the Labour and trade union movement over generations. Attempts to stabilise the system have failed. Each failure prompts the demand for more bail outs, paid for by more cuts. This provides the perfect excuse for the Tories to eradicate the welfare state they detested from its inception.

Many initially underestimated the ruthlessness and ambition of the Coalition Government but people have begun to wake up to the scale of the onslaught on their jobs, services, welfare benefits and pensions. All that they had come to rely upon to provide a basic sense of security in our society is now at risk. Increasingly people are coming to realise that nothing is safe from cuts or privatisation.

If the Coalition gets its way little will be left of the welfare state created by the Attlee Government, already eroded by New Labour. We will live in a society divided by even greater extremes of wealth and poverty, harsh and brutish in its treatment of anyone who can’t compete or who won’t conform, and scarred by the deprivation, hopelessness, division and social problems that stem from mass unemployment. Within our class, these cuts will disproportionately affect women, BME communities, those with disabilities and service provision to LGBT communities. We must also counter any attempt to scapegoat migrant communities, and confront the divisive arguments and street mobilisations of the far right.

This Government is vulnerable and we can prevent this wholesale attack on our class by mass action. We need to inject a sense of urgency into the current debate over the strategy to combat the Coalition’s cuts and to overcome any sense of defeatist, fatalism that the cuts are inevitable.

Immediately this means the LRC supporting the campaigns, industrial action and direct action against the cuts and using every mechanism within the Labour Party and trade union structures to bring the party and the unions into this struggle, urging the national party to oppose the cuts and wherever the party holds office to refuse to implement cuts, while building a movement of communities, campaigns and councillors to sustain opposition. At the same time we must work to bring the struggles and activists of the anti-cuts movements into the Party.

Already organisations have come together to help co-ordinate resistance to the Coalition’s policies including the Coalition of Resistance and the Right to Work campaign. The LRC has a responsibility to do all in its power to make these national initiatives succeed and to strengthen local alliances, such as trades councils and other anti-cuts networks and campaigns.

It is important in this period that unions co-ordinate action, and the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group has a vital role to play in this regard. We must also fight for affiliated unions to exert pressure on the Party through the trade union link – and fight to defend that link. The LRC must work with unions to defend trade union rights, which may come under further attack from the Coalition Government.

Promoting an alternative analysis of the crisis and an alternative concrete policy agenda both within the emerging anti cuts coalition and within the trade union movement and the Labour Party will be a vital role for the LRC to play. This means bringing together rank and file activists and policy experts in each area of policy on the LEAP model to discuss in detail the various elements of our analysis, developing our ideas for promotion in the wider movement and within the revised policy review process of the Labour Party, including working with others on the democratisation of the party and with LRC MPs to use Parliament as a platform for our views and to broadcast our struggles.

Whilst the cuts are implemented, the war in Afghanistan and the occupation of Iraq continues with immense human suffering, nuclear weapons are being replaced, and the environmental crisis continues. By fighting for environmental justice and peace we are fighting for a just future. The LRC will ensure that an essential part of our campaigning will be to integrate these key struggles for international and environmental justice into the wider movement, and into our message that ‘There is an Alternative’.

