



An Action Programme for Working Class Power in Sri Lanka

Socialist Party of Sri Lanka Fri, 14/08/2015 - 09:06

Socialist Party of Sri Lanka

The parliamentary election on August 17th is intended to be the last move in a political strategy to change the direction of Sri Lankan politics not only at home but internationally. For 10 years, Mahinda Rajapaksa was able to use the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, founded as a supposedly left wing alternative to the United National Party, as a means of enriching his own family and cronies. Having torn up the ceasefire agreement with the LTTE, he used all out war against the Tamil community to justify an ever more authoritarian regime.

For far too long, that regime guaranteed impunity for the ruling family, but in the longer term it also guaranteed enemies both at home and abroad. At home, the traditional elites, represented by the UNP and TNA, found themselves increasingly denied the advantages and privileges to which they thought they were entitled. Abroad, the barbarity of the war against the Tamils and the repression of human rights across society made Sri Lanka an embarrassing ally for the USA at a time when it was trying to present itself as the global defender of oppressed peoples.

As western support evaporated, so the rising imperialist power, China, stepped in to fill the vacuum with both arms and finance. This, too, reinforced the Rajapaksas' rule for several years but inevitably it guaranteed a counter-attack and an alliance of enemies at home and abroad.

All of this was predictable, and predicted; in 2012, when this Action Programme was first published, we wrote 'For all the apparent stability of his regime, Rajapakse is not the master of his own fate. Quite apart from the inevitable revival of his political rivals as they gain support from the capitalists who are excluded from the ruling family's plundering of the country's wealth, he cannot control the dynamics of the world economy and the policies of the Great Powers.'

In preparation for the Presidential election, those political rivals and foreign powers agreed a strategy to remove Rajapaksa and his family from power by bringing forward just one 'common candidate' Maithripala Sirisena. Of course, to remove them through an election meant that they had to appeal to the great mass of the people, promising not only an end to repression but economic progress.

Nobody should be fooled by the success of their strategy into thinking that now those promises will be delivered. Economic growth, which has averaged 7.5 percent officially for the last five years, was down to 6.4 percent in the first quarter of 2015 and external observers, such as the IMF, do not accept the Finance Ministry's projection of 7.4 percent for the year as a whole. While the official inflation rate is low, at 1.7 percent, this is largely the result of low global oil prices and they cannot be guaranteed. Any slowdown in exports, for example to Europe, would have an immediate impact on the domestic economy here.

Politically, the tensions within the governing alliance are plain to see. What Washington wanted was not only a change of government but the removal of the threat of any return of a pro-China regime. That meant splitting the SLFP between those willing to side with Sirisena and those loyal to Rajapaksa. Although a formal organisational split has been avoided for the time being, a victory for the UNP and its allies on August 17th would have the potential to reduce Sirisena to a figurehead while Rajapaksa consolidates his own followers around a programme of extreme Sinhalese chauvinism.

On August 17th, there will be no party, no candidate, standing for the interests of the Sri Lankan working class, the small farmers or the fisherfolk. The election is, however, a time of increased interest in politics and an opportunity for the great mass of the population to discuss the state of Sri Lankan society and their own needs.

Several small socialist groups will stand candidates but, to date, none has presented a political programme that charts a way forward from the urgent needs of the workers and the youth of society to the only fundamental solution; the overthrow of capitalism and the building of a socialist society. That is why the Socialist Party of Sri Lanka presents its Action Programme as a contribution to the necessary debate within the socialist and workers' movement over the way forward, whatever the outcome of the parliamentary election.

Democratic and Transitional Demands

The Socialist Party of Sri Lanka is committed to the achievement of full and equal democratic rights for all those who live and work in Sri Lanka, irrespective of ethnicity, place of birth, gender or religion. We demand the immediate repeal of all the Emergency Laws and repressive measures introduced during the thirty years of the civil war, an end to all censorship and the release of all those imprisoned under such laws. However, history has shown that equality can never be full or permanent under capitalism. Nor is it possible to achieve social equality if we limit ourselves to the empty political rituals of the parliamentary system.

We believe that, as Marx and Trotsky argued, there must be an uninterrupted development of struggles within the present capitalist society into a struggle against it; for its overthrow. Such a struggle cannot remain for long within national boundaries; we must link our forces to those waging the same struggle in India and neighbouring countries, indeed, right around the world. In short, there cannot be either an entire historic period of sustained capitalist development under a democratic regime or a stable socialist economy separated from the world economy (the Stalinist utopia of 'socialism in one country?'). What is necessary is what Marx and Trotsky called the Permanent Revolution.

Basing ourselves on this strategy, we seek to combine the struggle for democratic rights with the struggle against capitalism. We raise not only those demands which can, in principle, be granted within existing, capitalist society but also those that are vital to the well-being of the masses but call into question capitalist ownership and pose the need to seize capitalist property.

Likewise, we believe it is necessary to use the revolutionary methods of working class political struggle; mass mobilisations, mass and general strikes, even to achieve immediate and democratic demands. At the high point of struggle, it is necessary to create working-class political institutions such as workers' councils and factory committees. It also means the formation of the means to defend such bodies and to implement their decisions through workers' defence units and, in time, a workers' militia. Our goal must be a workers' and small farmers' government and a fully socialised and planned economy that can meet the needs of the masses.

This goal can only be achieved under the leadership of a mass revolutionary working-class party and we offer this draft programme as the basis for building such a party.

Self-determination for the Tamils

The most urgent task facing Sri Lankan society is to recognise the right of national self-determination of the Tamil people, and to support their decades-long struggle for national liberation. It was the systematic denial of equal rights, discrimination against their language and culture and brutal pogroms that drove them down the path of armed struggle and de facto separation. The re-conquest of their territory will not end their aspirations for freedom, rather it will create a bitter and smouldering resentment whose flames will burst forth again at the earliest opportunity. Until the national oppression of the Tamil community is ended, there can be neither peace nor progress in Sri Lanka.

The LTTE's historic defeat - bitter and bloody as it was - was a defeat for their strategy of guerrilla warfare and individual terrorism, not for the Tamil people's struggle for freedom. As the war went on, the LTTE increasingly exercised a dictatorship over their own people, crushing all political rivals. For this reason, revolutionary socialists have

always argued for a different political strategy from that of the LTTE. For all the courage of their fighters, their methods left the mass of the people on the sidelines, condemned their potential allies amongst the Sinhalese working class to isolation and made the mass of Tamils victims of the struggle rather than its protagonists.

All progressive forces in the majority community, above all the workers and poor peasants who need maximum unity in their struggle against poverty and exploitation, should immediately - whatever the repression and difficulties - begin a campaign against all forms of anti-Tamil chauvinism, for defence of isolated minorities against pogroms and for the legal establishment of their democratic rights. This means the right of the Tamils in the majority Tamil areas to determine their own future. This is impossible as long as the entire region is under direct military rule. We demand the withdrawal of the military occupation forces and a transfer of public administration to democratically elected people's councils. Then the Tamil population in the north and east can express their desires freely, either for complete separation or for autonomy within a federal Sri Lanka.

If the Tamil majority decide they wish an independent state, then the working class must support and aid them to achieve this by mass action. However, a capitalist state in such a small and impoverished area would be extremely unlikely to be able meet the needs of its population. That is why we fight for the Tamil working class to come to the head of the liberation movement and establish a workers' state, aiming immediately at a federation with their class brothers and sisters in the rest of the island and across South Asia, too.

However, a separate state would not solve the problems of discrimination and national oppression for the majority of Tamils in Sri Lanka because they are not concentrated in a compact territory. Trying to separate intermixed populations would virtually ensure a repetition of the pogroms and inter-communal massacres that happened with the Partition of India. Therefore, our programme is for full and equal citizenship and language rights for Tamils all over the island. To overcome the consequences of past oppression, we fight for the restoration of their rights, access to all occupations, including positive discrimination in favour of the employment of Tamils where they are underrepresented, for example, in the public administration, and the right of return to areas from which they have been driven.

Our goal is the integration of the workers and poor peasants of all the national ethnic and religious communities of Sri Lanka into a common struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of working class power. Only the establishment of the common ownership of the land, the factories, the transport infrastructure, in short, of all the means of production, and implementation of the right of all to work, can ensure the provision of the social needs of all and overcome conflict for jobs or scarce resources between the national communities.

For an emergency reconstruction programme!

Rajapakse's war against the LTTE left huge areas in the north and east of the country devastated and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. We demand:

An immediate end to the military occupation of the north and the withdrawal of all government forces.

The transfer of control over camps for displaced persons to elected committees of those living in the camps, abolition of all restrictions on their movements

The release of all political prisoners and prisoners of war

Full and equal citizenship for all who live and work in Sri Lanka, in particular for those Tamils who have in the past been denied full citizenship or who lack the documentation necessary to establish citizenship.

An immediate programme of reconstruction, including housing, hospitals, schools and transport infrastructure under workers' control and paid for by a wealth tax and the diversion of funds previously allocated to the repressive forces.

Rebuild the Labour Movement!

Against the barrage of attacks on the living standards and welfare of the great majority of the population, the working class has, at present, few defences. The LSSP, once a leading section of the Fourth International founded by Trotsky, degenerated long ago into a committed supporter of capitalism. Since the defeat of the general strike of 1980, the trade union movement has splintered and fragmented.

It is urgently necessary for the working-class to rebuild its organisations. Existing trade unions must be won to a campaign of mass recruitment around a programme of militant direct action to defend wages, jobs and conditions. Socialists and militants must take the lead in winning the trade unions, or committing new unions, to a policy of opposition to communalism, organised democratically under the control of their members and with all leaders and officials elected and recallable and paid no more than the workers they represent.

We are for the building of industrial unions that organise all workers in an industry, irrespective of their particular trades, gender or ethnicity, and we support the merger of existing unions where necessary to achieve this. To coordinate the actions and formulate the interests of all organised workers, we are for a confederation of all class struggle unions. Within the enterprises and workplaces, we campaign for the formation of workplace committees with the right to negotiate over local pay, conditions and employment levels.

Outside of the workplace, we call for working-class organisations in every area of life: sport, education, culture but, above all, we are for the formation of working-class women's and youth organisations. Together, women and youth constitute the majority of the working-class yet both suffer systematic social oppression and, as a result, rarely play a leading role in the public life of the working-class. This must be overcome; without their full involvement the working class is fatally weakened. This can only be overcome through the experience of building their own organisations and communists must take the lead in promoting this.

Vital as all these forms of organisation are, they are incapable of organising all of the working-class, let alone leading it to the revolutionary transformation of society. For that, a political party of the working class is necessary. Within all working-class organisations, we raise the need for a new workers' party to be created by, and based upon, the mass organisations of the working-class. Against those who argue for a 'broad party' whose programme is limited to the reform of capitalism, we will argue for the party to be founded on this revolutionary programme of action, with a democratic centralist constitution that allows full debate within the party and disciplined, united implementation of party policy in the class struggle.

For a workers' answer to the crisis of globalisation!

Our goal is the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a socialist society in which production is planned on the basis of social need, not private profit, and is controlled by the workers themselves through the democratically centralised structures of a workers' state. To those who object that the working class, which is not only exploited under capitalism but also denied access to culture and education, would be unable to exercise such control and planning, we reply that the class will transform itself in the course of the struggle against capitalism.

That is why the central, unifying theme of our programme is the struggle to extend workers' control both within the workplace and in the broader society. This will demand the creation of new workers' organisations such as factory committees, defence organisations, local action committees and, at the point of heightened class struggle, workers' councils.

At all times, we propose that such organisations be subject to workers' democracy; the election of delegates by the mass of workers and the right of immediate recall of those delegates by their constituents. Our programme is a transitional programme, that is, it links even the most immediate and partial demands necessary to defend workers' living standards and working conditions to the conscious struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and its state.

Defend and improve the workers' living standards!

The struggle to achieve and maintain an acceptable standard of living for the working-class is a permanent feature of

capitalism. Capitalists, both at home and abroad, are dependent on maximising their profits and all profits represent the unpaid labour of the working-class. There can be no level of wages or length of the working day that represents a "fair" division between the workers and the capitalists. At any particular time and place, wage levels, labour intensity and length of the working day reflect the balance of power between the working-class and the capitalist class. Consequently, while recognising the need to take into account the levels of organisation, consciousness and morale of particular sections of workers, we support all struggles aimed at raising the living standards of the working-class and accept no obligation to be limited by past agreements.

All demands for improvements in pay, labour intensity and length of the working day should be formulated with the involvement of the workers themselves and all decisions over, for example, the conduct of negotiations, disputes and acceptance of settlements must be subject to the agreement of democratic meetings of all workers involved. We oppose all secret negotiations and demand the maximum possible transparency, for example, via recording or broadcasting of negotiations. To compensate for the effects of inflation since the onset of the world recession in 2008, we call for an immediate increase of R8,500 on all wages.

Where the bosses try to devalue wages through inflationary policies, so that workers face the danger of constant mobilisation simply to maintain living standards, we demand a sliding scale of wages based on a working-class cost of living index drawn up by "price-watch" committees which include the working-class women who deal most directly with household budgeting. While such a sliding scale may at first only be achievable by the most advanced sections of the class, we demand its statutory enforcement in order to protect both the living standards of the whole class and its unity.

Similarly, if the claim is made that there is not sufficient work for the existing workforce and jobs must be cut, we demand instead the sharing of all work amongst the available workforce and a proportionate reduction in the length of the working week; cut the hours not the jobs! To oversee this we demand workers' control of hiring and firing and over the distribution of work.

Wherever the bosses plead that they cannot afford to maintain jobs and conditions we demand, first of all, the opening of their books and databases to the workers and their trusted representatives. Let the workers see where the value they have created has gone! Should such inspection reveal that companies are indeed unviable, we demand their immediate nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control.

Under the direction of the IMF, successive Sri Lankan governments have enacted cuts in the public provision of services and the privatisation of previously nationalised assets. We demand the reversal of all such cuts and privatisations under the control of the relevant workers' organisations and without compensation to those who benefited from such policies.

Similarly, we oppose the government's policy of clearing areas of cheap housing, particularly in Colombo, supposedly to allow "development" but actually to line the pockets of real estate developers and property speculators. We call for the formation of neighbourhood organisations to defend those who live in such areas and to prevent such clearances and we demand a construction programme to ensure affordable housing for all.

Although the workforce in the public sector has a relatively higher trade union membership than the private sector it is, nonetheless, weakened by fragmentation into different unions and divided by a huge variety of different contracts. To overcome this, we demand the standardisation of pay rates and grades across the whole of the public sector.

In order to consolidate and coordinate those parts of the economy that have been nationalised, and to ensure they are used to the maximum benefit of the mass of workers and farmers, we demand their subordination to planning under the supervision of the workers' organisations. In order to finance this planning, we demand the nationalisation of all banks and other financial institutions under workers' control. On this basis, we demand a massive programme of public works to provide improved infrastructure, transport links, energy provision, hospital, educational facilities and housing.

Following the policies of his Chinese backers, Rajapakse has encouraged the establishment of Special Economic Zones in which workers are not allowed even the nominal rights recognised elsewhere in the country. At the same time, corporations have unlimited rights to exploit both the labour and resources of the island not only free of taxation but with state subsidies for infrastructure and energy supply. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all such concessions and recognition of the equal civil and trade union rights of all workers in these enclaves.

Workers on the plantations, although not subject to the same legal restrictions as those in the SEZ's, are, if anything, in an even worse predicament. Geographically separated from the main centres of population, their lives are little different now from decades ago; whole families live in single rooms in the 'long huts' built by the British 150 years ago, provision of power and clean water is scanty and sanitation is primitive. The daily income of a worker is as little as R350, rising at most to R550 (less than £3.00) and even this is dependent on working 21 days in the month ? and supervisors can cut their costs simply by not choosing a worker on that many days. As the first steps towards the eradication of these inhuman conditions, we demand a statutory living wage for all plantation workers and a national programme to provide modern housing and services on all plantations.

As a result of oppression, poverty and unemployment, many tens of thousands of Sri Lankan citizens have been forced to seek work abroad, many as domestic servants in the Middle East. These workers are often denied their basic rights with regard to work contracts, working conditions and health insurance yet their remittances are the biggest single contributor to the island's foreign exchange holdings. We demand that the Sri Lankan state accept responsibility to defend these workers' rights and to provide health insurance for them at public expense.

Exploitation of the island's resources by multinational corporations based in the imperialist states is a significant factor in both the disproportionate development of its economic structure and the poverty of its population. Moreover, interest payments on foreign debt constitute a permanent drain on the island's economy. We demand the nationalisation of all foreign-owned enterprises and an immediate cessation of payments on foreign debts.

The natural allies of the Sri Lankan working-class are the workers of the neighbouring countries and all those countries with which she trades and we will appeal to them for solidarity and support in the negotiation of new and equitable trading arrangements.

Liberate women

All class societies have forced women into a subordinate and inferior role. This social oppression is rooted in the family structure which is used to ensure that men control the fertility and reproduction of women. Capitalism has maintained this social oppression of women but also adapted it. Now, women's traditional role in domestic labour is used to ensure the provision of a male workforce that can be exploited by capitalist employers but at no cost to them. Where women are themselves employed this can have the positive effect of overcoming the isolation of the home and participation in collective social organisation but it also means that capitalist exploitation is added to the burden of their domestic duties.

Working-class men, as individuals, can benefit from the social subordination of women. As Friedrich Engels pointed out, within the family, the working-class man plays the role of the bourgeois while the woman is the proletarian. However, as a class, the working-class is weakened by the oppression of women. Within the workplace, women's inferior social position and, very often, limited access to education and training, results in lower wages which are used to undercut the bargaining power of men. At the same time, it divides the ranks of the working-class and, thereby, weakens its fighting ability.

The key to overcoming the social oppression of working-class women is the self-organisation of those women themselves. In all areas of life, we call on women to organise themselves to fight against discrimination and for their full equality. This has to include all aspects of civil rights such as citizenship, the right to vote, equal pay, equal access to education and training, protective legislation regarding maternity rights, control of fertility and reproduction through free contraception and abortion on demand. However, because oppression is rooted in the family and domestic labour,

we also demand measures to alleviate this burden through social provision of childcare, canteen and laundry facilities.

Experience has shown that women need to organise themselves even within the working-class movement. This means, for example, not only encouraging the recruitment of women into trade unions but guaranteeing the right to caucus within trade unions and all other working-class organisations to ensure that women's voices are heard.

An end to the Oppression of Youth

Young people, too, are systematically oppressed within capitalist society. The family unit carries the responsibility for basic socialisation and education and within the family the child has no rights against the parents. As children grow, this subordination is extended to society as a whole and this is especially true of working-class and peasant youth. Their potential for development is permanently limited by lack of provision of good quality education and cultural facilities and, when they are old enough to work, they are denied equal pay and equal employment rights.

For these reasons, youth are often at the forefront in movements that oppose the existing regime. They, more than anyone else, have the greatest interest in the future of society; they are the future of society. Thus, within months of the end of the civil war, it was students who first took to the streets in opposition to Rajapakse's educational policies aimed at the introduction of fees and the potential privatisation of educational provision. We demand the unconditional release of the leaders of those student protests as well as the cancellation of all such policies.

In order to give the youthful spirit of resistance and rebellion both organisation and progressive social goals, we call for the building of an autonomous working-class youth movement within which communist youth should fight for leadership.

We demand a programme of construction of schools and colleges to ensure all children have free access to a modern secular education and to sports and leisure facilities. These should be under the democratic control of those who work and learn within them together with representatives of parents and the local working class movement.

We oppose all restrictions on the rights of young people to develop their own cultural, sexual and political lives and demand free access to contraception and abortion.

We oppose all discrimination against young people in employment, demanding equal wages as well as continued training and education. We fight for the recruitment of all young workers into the appropriate trades unions and call for the right to caucus within all labour movement organisations. To counter high unemployment among graduates, we demand specialised graduate employment schemes and training courses.

Against fomenting religious prejudice and chauvinism

Religion is once again being used by Mahinda Rajapakse to gather support for his attempt to regain political power. In office, he bribed Buddhist monks and leaders to support him, lavishing funds on the building of temples and monasteries to strengthen his regime. We are for a separation of religion from state politics.

We oppose Sinhalese nationalism and politically oppose the fake Marxism of the JVP. They try to confuse workers and youth by claiming to be Marxist but they called on people to support the capitalist government's war against the Tamils. We fight within the trade union movement to win workers' organisations to a progressive political position on the national question and against the JVP and bourgeois trade unions that politically mislead the working class.

Violence from the state and the organised chauvinists plagues our movement. We must organise to defend ourselves. We call on the workers' movement to politically campaign for and begin to organise a workers' defence guard to protect our strikes and meetings and defend our demonstrations.

Agriculture and the protection of the environment

The policies of international institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, have restricted the

development of agriculture in Sri Lanka. Rather than assisting in the modernisation of existing farming practice by, for example, providing public financial assistance, their policies are designed to assist international 'agribusiness'. The impact of such policies can be seen from the declining significance of agriculture in the national economy: while it accounted for some 30% of GDP in 1960, today this figure has dropped to 12 %. Equally, where plantation crops such as coconuts and rubber were once important export commodities, today they have to be imported into the country.

Alongside this, global warming will mean rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions during the monsoon periods. Over the past two decades, Sri Lanka has had one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. In that period, the country lost more than 35 percent of its ancient forest cover. Worse, in the new century, deforestation rates have increased. Erosion and depletion of soils are the inevitable consequence.

Many parts of the island affected by the Tsunami have still not been rebuilt. The government promised money and technical experts to help but very little has come from Colombo. How much worse will it be in the coming years? The rich inhabitants of Colombo do not care; they will leave the country and live off their money before they seriously try to help the ordinary people in Sri Lanka. The government must pass laws to protect the environment and stop pollution in the cities and industry.

Above all the land must be nationalised and genuinely developed in a way that restores, rather than depletes, our natural reserves, with reforestation programmes, the development of a sustainable agriculture aimed at meeting the food needs of the people, not the export priorities of the multinationals or for use as biofuels when people are still hungry. We demand the maintenance of existing subsidies to small farmers, now threatened by IMF conditions, and the provision of the necessary support, such as cheap fertiliser, to prevent any further erosion of their living conditions.

We call on the trade unions and neighbourhood organisations to launch a campaign to combat degradation of both the urban and rural environment. Workers must block environmentally harmful projects and demand the implementation of a programme of measures, under workers' control, paid for by increased taxes on the rich and the big corporations, including the multinationals.

State and Revolution

Sixty years after Independence it is clear that parliamentary democracy in Sri Lanka has served, as it does in all countries, only to mask the reality of how power is exercised. The right to vote every four years, which is itself denied to many Tamils, can never ensure that the island is governed in the interests of the majority. Throughout those decades, political power has alternated between the small traditional urban elites, represented on the whole by the UNP and its allies, and the numerically larger but economically weaker and rurally based Sinhalese bourgeoisie, represented by the SLFP. Both bourgeois forces have at times exploited communal tensions and even resorted to civil war to defend their interests while, at the same time, maintaining the facade of democracy to legitimise their actions.

Under Rajapaksa, however, the logic of using governmental office for factional gain and civil war to manipulate majority support made any kind of supervision or criticism, whether by parliament, the judiciary or the Press increasingly unbearable. The result was an increasingly repressive regime that actually reduced his social base still further. Repression, of course, led to resentment and, ultimately, to resistance. A broad spectrum of campaigns and movements developed, ranging from the professions to students, to fisherfolk, to villagers, to urban communities. In the absence of any consistent working class party that could give leadership and direction to these, however, they were mobilised by Rajapaksa's bourgeois rivals and provided a cosmetic radicalism to Sirisena and Wickremasinghe.

Popular enthusiasm at the downfall of the tyrant should not be mistaken for the main force behind Rajapaksa's removal. This is the error of Vickremabahu Karunaratne of the Fourth International's Sri Lankan section, the NSSP, who has tried to draw parallels between the electoral defeat of Rajapaksa and the violent revolutionary overthrow of the Russian Tsar in February 1917. For him, the existence of popular campaigns is, if not the exact equivalent of the workers' and soldiers' councils of 1917, at least comparable to them.

Although such a comparison is laughable, nonetheless, it does contain a tiny grain of truth; had there been a leadership committed to the revolutionary overthrow of all wings of the bourgeoisie, such campaigns could have developed into new forms of organisation

that were genuinely rooted in the working class and small farmer communities. Did the NSSP and Bahu offer such a leadership? No, they called on those campaigns to support the candidate of the bourgeoisie and they strengthened the position of that candidate by pretending his election was some kind of revolution.

Whatever the outcome of the election, there can be little doubt that, given Sri Lanka's circumstances and the inability of the global economy to recover fully from the crisis of 2008, any new government will continue with the neo-liberal policies of the past. Equally, to enforce those policies it is likely to turn against many of the campaigns that helped bring down Rajapaksa.

Both in the defence of democracy and in the pursuit of the workers' and peasants' interests, we call for the formation of new organisations that are directly accountable to the workers and peasants. Whether these begin as strike committees, local neighbourhood councils, plantation committees or workplace organisations, we call for them to be based on elected and recallable delegates and to take responsibility for the implementation of their own decisions. In this way, these organs can become the basis of a future workers' state.

There can be no doubt that the existing state will act to remove any such organs of working class and peasant power and it will, therefore, be necessary to develop their ability to defend themselves - at first through organised pickets and demonstration stewards and later by permanently organised defence groups and a workers' militia. As the class struggle develops, such councils and militia need to be established throughout the country and to be coordinated both regionally and nationally.

In the context of economic crisis and heightened class struggle, it is inevitable that at some point the conflict will reach a point at which the fundamental issue is posed: which class is to rule? Revolutionaries will answer that the workers and peasants must rule, they will demand a government based precisely on the organisations of struggle, the workers' councils and the militia, and they will call on those organisations to break up and dismantle the institutions of the old state: the police, the army, the civil service, the courts and the prisons so that they can never again impose the rule of the capitalists.

For a workers' and peasants' government

For a democratically planned economy

For a Federation of Workers' States of South Asia

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