

# Their Europe and ours



**CAUSE FOR GLEE:** the Tories are deeply split over Europe. Our glee could be purer if the left had something clear and worthwhile to say on Europe. It has not.

From 1961, when Britain first abortively applied to join the European Community, up to the early 1980s, most trade-union leaders, and the mainstream left of the Labour Party, were against British entry into the EC, then for withdrawal. They felt cosy in Britain's circles of power, and feared that they would get fewer sops from the remote bureaucrats of Europe.

Margaret Thatcher's assault on the trade unions changed that. Now the GMBU general union, for example, campaigns for full employment by appealing for support for the economic plans of outgoing EU chief Jacques Delors.

The Labour Party front bench cautiously echo the more "pro-European" Tories.

And the various Marxist groups? All initially responded, in the early 1960s, by saying that workers should back neither "pro-European" nor "anti-European" bosses. As agitation increased, almost all swung behind the mainstream left's call for "Britain Out!", marking themselves off only by being more vehement and "revolutionary" about it.

Over the last ten or fifteen years they have subsided into silence. Some groups made a brief outcry when they thought they had a bandwagon going against the Maastricht Treaty, but even then they no longer dared call for "Britain Out!"

British big business has long been mostly "pro-European". In a recent poll of 100 finance directors from big companies for BBC TV's *Money Programme*, 60 per cent said that a single European currency would be "good" for their companies, and only

12% that it would be "bad" (*Financial Times*, 13 February).

A *Financial Times* survey (17 February) of 21 leading bosses found six enthusiastic about rapid moves to a single Euro-money and a few hostile ("it might involve a layer of bureaucracy which would be stultifying"). The majority favoured a single Euro-money in principle, but said that going for it "in a hurry" would probably fail or produce a botched, unstable system.

"Euro-sceptic" Tories like Portillo, Thatcher, and Tebbit thus reflect a sizeable minority of the capitalist class. They are not against the EU root-and-branch, but they are suspicious of closer integration. To them, schemes like a single Euro-money look too much like bureaucratic utopia-mongering, with heavy adjustment costs.

The left should oppose both Tory factions — by extending to the European arena the same battle for workers' rights, improved conditions, and democracy that we wage within nation-states. These are some guidelines:

- Against the Euro-bosses' blueprint for a capitalist, racist, and imperialist Western Europe.
- Against the nationalist alternatives, of frontiers tightly policed behind higher barriers.
- For a Republican United States of Europe! For an immediate fight for democracy in the EU — full control by the elected EU parliament over all EU affairs.
- For workers' unity across the EU and across Europe! For common campaigns for a legal 35 hour week, and for levelling-up of workers' rights and conditions across Europe so that every country is brought up to the best standard. For

Europe-wide shop stewards' committees in all the big multinationals, and all major industries.

- For a Europe-wide programme of public works, and public ownership with workers' control of the big multinationals, to steer production towards need and to guarantee every worker the right to a decent job.
- For Europe-wide public ownership of all the big banks, and democratic control of credit and monetary policy.
- For a European Women's Charter, based on levelling-up women's rights and conditions across Europe.
- For the replacement of the Common Agricultural Policy with a plan worked out by workers' and small farmers' organisations, based on public ownership of land, conversion of big farms into public enterprises, aid for small farmers to develop cooperatives and food production geared to the needs of the world's hungry people.
- For the abolition of VAT and the financing of all EU budgets by progressive direct taxation.
- For a Europe open to the world! Free movement of people into the EU; free access for Third World exports to EU markets; a big EU aid programme, without strings, to Third World countries.
- For the right to vote of all residents of EU countries. (In some EU countries, even long-settled immigrant workers have no right to vote).
- Against the development of any "EU army", and for the replacement of all the EU states' existing military hierarchies by people's militias. For a Europe free of nuclear weapons!
- For a Workers' United States of Europe! ☐