

THE NEWSLETTER

Weekly Journal of the Socialist Labour League

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Threepence

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SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE says:

Full Support for Railmen

For the first time since 1919 the National Union of Railwaymen, representing almost 400,000 workers, has decided to take single-handed strike action. Here is a most courageous decision and even though we cannot exclude that some last-minute concessions from the Tory government may prevent the strike from taking place, nevertheless, it does show that when rank and file trade unionists decide to fight, the leaders can be forced into action.

The employing class is alarmed. The Daily Telegraph of February 5 revealed the fear which exists in these circles when it wrote:

'In this atmosphere it is hardly surprising that the London busmen should be demanding from their leaders the power to come out in sympathy. When unions themselves take to wildcat behaviour, the disease is catching.'

So it is, gentlemen of the ruling class. Your memories go back a long way. The industrial correspondent of the Daily Mail, that 'refined' organ of Tory culture, recalls the struggle of 1919. In the issue of February 1 he says:

'On the first day of the strike I went to Unity House and saw Mr. J. H. Thomas, the NUR secretary. "The whole country will be starving in a fortnight," predicted Mr. Thomas.'

'He was wrong,' says the Daily Mail industrial correspondent. Yes, indeed. **The ruling class found they had taken on so powerful and united a foe that they surrendered after nine days.**

The Railmen's claim is just

The railwaymen are moving into action as a vigilant body of industrial fighters with right on their side; that is their great advantage.

Nobody disputes the validity of their claim. The Financial

Times, organ of city big business, says in its issue of February 1: 'There is a great deal of public sympathy for the railwaymen'. And its issue of February 6 remarks: 'The railwaymen and particularly the key men, are in general underpaid, and it is right that they should be paid more'.

The News Chronicle of January 30 says: 'Nobody denies that railworkers deserve more money'.

Very well, then, why aren't they getting it? Why is the Tory government provoking a showdown? 'You've never had it so good', was the Conservatives' election cry. Does this apply to the railway signalman who wrote in the Daily Telegraph of February 8: 'My wage,' he says, 'and I am one of the higher-paid railwaymen, is £9 6s. 6d. for a 44-hour week'? Of course it doesn't. That is why even the most diehard Conservative papers shamefacedly admit that the wages on the railways are at starvation level.

The big lie

To divert the attention of the public from the real issue of the poorly-paid railway workers, the propaganda organs of the Tory Party are busily spreading the rumour that the strike decision of the NUR arises from an inter-union conflict. Of course this is nonsense. The Right-wing leaders of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association and the Association of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen have decided to wait until the Guillebaud report is made known. The NUR want the money now—and for a good reason. There is

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LIVERPOOL DOCKERS STRIKE FOR PRINCIPLE

By WILLIAM HUNTER

When 16 Liverpool dockers began a two-day suspension last Monday, 1,500 of their mates in No. 5 Area refused to turn in to work in protest.

The men had decided on a two-day strike because they considered that the suspension of the 16 by the local Dock Labour Board was an attempt to undermine their right to struggle for better conditions.

These 16 dockers were punished by the Board for a half-day stoppage on December 30th, when they demanded extra payment for abnormal cargo. (See Newsletter, January 16.)

The men were given an increase, but the employer made a complaint against them for not fulfilling the terms of the Dock Labour Scheme.

Dockers who stopped work on Monday and Tuesday, con-

trast the treatment given to these men, with the attitude of the Board to employers who break the Scheme.

A leaflet issued by the rank and file committee in No. 5 control and entitled 'Box 5 defends the right to Strike' declared that the stevedoring firm of Scruttons Ltd., caused the loss of 'thousands of hours' last November, when the men in another Liverpool control had to stop work because it broke the Dock Labour Scheme.

'An employer like Scruttons breaks the Scheme and the Board does nothing' said the leaflet. 'But 16 dockers fight for their rights and they are sentenced to suspension. And they weren't even given a chance to represent themselves before the Board when it handed out the sentence.'

The leaflet ended by informing dockers in other areas:

'Box 5 decided to show their solidarity and give due warn-

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THE NEWSLETTER
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 Telephone Macaulay 7029
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ON THE EVE

WITH less than four days to go the position in the rail dispute seems unchanged. The National Union of Railwaymen quite rightly demand a definite cash settlement. Sir Brian Robertson hides behind the TSSA and ASLEF, and the Tory government hides behind Sir Brian Robertson. This is an old strategy and it all boils down to one thing—the Tories are preparing for a big struggle against the trade unions.

There must be no retreat now, otherwise we face a second 'Black Friday'. Already the decision of the Amalgamated Engineering Union right-wing to accept the 42-hour week shows that these gentlemen are engaged on a full-scale retreat. Unless the united strength of the Labour movement is used to force back the Tories, then the working class will run the risk of a most dangerous defeat.

The most despicable role of all has been played by the right wing of the Labour Party. The Daily Telegraph of February 11 writes: 'It was plain in the Commons yesterday that the Labour Party is against the NUR's strike threat'. They quoted Mr. Robens who declared that it would be a great pity, if public good will were dissipated by a catastrophic action such as is contemplated on February 15'. This is the language of a traitor to the working class. Here is the real reason why the right wing are unable to defeat the Tories. So steeped are they in rotten Fabianism that

they concentrate their time in dampening down the class struggle and, as in the case of Mr. Robens, acting as professional advisers to the big industrial concerns.

The struggle of the engineers and the railwaymen is a part of the clean-up in the Labour Party. The emergence of a powerful left wing is inseparable from the development of a rank-and-file movement in industry. The urgent task of the hour is the preparation of a new leadership inside the Labour movement, pledged to war to the end against Toryism.

LIVERPOOL DOCKERS—Continued from page 47

ing to the Board and the employers. Owing to the short time for organizing it was not possible to go out for support from other areas.

'But we ask you to meet, to endorse our action and to decide that if, in future, any men are charged for taking part in an industrial dispute in any part of the port, your control will stop work on the day of the Board and will seek to get other controls out in support. We are putting this to all controls.'

However, when speakers from the rank-and-file committee put the case on Monday to a meeting of 300 dockers from No. 3 Control they decided immediately to join the protest strike.

By Wednesday afternoon only a few gangs of men were working on the docks in the north end of Liverpool. Eight thousand dockers are employed here normally.

Over in Birkenhead another 1,000 dockers joined the strike.

Joe Cubbin, chairman of 'Box 5 Committee', expressed the feelings which led these thousands of dockers to give such a united reply to the sentences of the Board:

'We fought against Order 1305, when the Government tried to take away our right to strike. We won that fight. We're not allowing the Board now to take away the only real weapon we've got—the right to withdraw the labour of our hands.'

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF LABOUR CAMPAIGN: AREA ASSEMBLIES

**book
these
dates
now!**

LONDON: March 6	Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W.1. . 10.30 a.m.—5 p.m.
LIVERPOOL: March 6	Walker Art Gallery, William Brown Street. 10.30 a.m.—4.30 p.m.
GLASGOW: March 20	Central Halls, Bath Street. 10 a.m.
LEEDS: March 27	Leeds Museum. 3.0 p.m.
MANCHESTER: March 27	Registrar's Office, All Saints. 2.30 p.m.
BIRMINGHAM: April 24	Typographical Hall, Bath Street, Birmingham.

FINANCE URGENTLY NEEDED

Ever since it was formed in May, 1957, the Newsletter has been at the service of workers in struggle.

Not one strike has gone by without receiving the support of our paper. Every fight of working people, be it over rents in St. Pancras, against apartheid in South Africa or against imperialist intervention in Lebanon, has been backed by the Newsletter.

Not that we consider anything unusual in such a record for a Marxist paper; after all, that is what we are in business for. However, such fighting and campaigning costs money. Right now we are needing cash to develop our local Assembly campaigns.

In London we shall be circularizing hundreds of trade union branches, shop stewards' committees and other working class organizations for the Assembly on March 6. Postage for that alone will cost well over £10. Then there will be the

cost of leaflets, advertising, hiring of the hall and all the other necessary items of expenditure.

We need the help of you readers to do that. Most of you get your paper on Friday, which is pay-day; why not send off a donation when you get your pay-packet? Better still, take a collection amongst your workmates. For those of you who have the paper brought to the door each week, how about giving an extra 'tanner' or a shilling to the seller?

Every donation, large or small, helps and if our work is to go forward then you must give your help.

Amongst fresh support for the London Assembly that has come in since our last issue is the decision of Highbury No. 1 branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union to sponsor the Assembly. They have already elected a delegate. Camden Town Electrical Trade Union branch are also sponsoring the Assembly.

Imperialism in Africa

THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF ARTICLES BY JAMES BAKER

Give the devil his due! Macmillan has shown himself in a number of situations the most astute and the most unscrupulous political boss that the capitalist class has had for many years.

His performance in Africa was masterly. He was able to derive the maximum of political advantage by taking decisions to which he was driven by sheer necessity.

His African **safari**, with its climax in the Cape Town speech on February 3 in which he condemned **apartheid**, took most people by surprise.

He has confused his opponents and consolidated his own position by taking the only course which may possibly make Africa safe for Imperialism for a few more years.

Apart from a few old die-hards, his own party will welcome his statement although only the big capitalists among them will understand its significance. The opposition, who have insisted on treating Africa as a 'moral issue', will be surprised and gratified to find that Mac is on their side. 'Mr. Macmillan is a great learner', writes *The New Statesman*; his speech is 'all the more welcome' (for being a 'surprise') writes *The Spectator*. *The Daily Worker* is, of course, permanently off-balance, and they thought that Macmillan's speech would have 'as much force as a bladder filled with sawdust in the hands of a five-year-old child'. If only Mac had the 'courage of his words' he would support the boycott of South African goods. What naiveté to imagine that Macmillan's words meant anything of the kind! The Afrikaner Nationalists were not so slow in the uptake: 'We are being thrown to the wolves', *Die Burger*, the Government paper wrote, quoting the comments of many Nationalist politicians. If we are to understand these developments we must examine them in the context of events in other parts of the African continent and of the world generally.

A revolutionary situation

There exists in Africa at the present time a revolutionary situation. From the Cape of Good Hope to the Mediterranean 130 million people have shown that they are no longer willing to live under the conditions imposed on them by the old forms of society. This does not mean that the population will break out in open revolt everywhere, as it has done already in some areas. But it does mean that there is a possibility that it will do so. The outbreak of civil war in Central Africa or in the Union of South Africa would threaten the whole precarious structure of capitalist society in Africa, and indirectly in the rest of the world. World Imperialism is now facing the problem of its own internal re-organisation; it must try to re-establish in Africa systems of government which are more than mere terror. Totalitarian dictatorship in the form of fascism is not a possible solution at present; throughout the world there is a sharp contradiction between the actual structure of present-day society and the needs of world capitalism. This contradiction takes on its sharpest forms in Africa. In order to save capitalism it is probably necessary to deprive the white settlers of some of their privileges. This was a hard decision to make, but now that it has been decided Macmillan and Macleod are determined to go ahead in spite of the squalid band. This is a similar decision to that which De Gaulle has taken in Algeria and the Belgians in the Congo. And it will not be long before the Portuguese come up against the same problem in Mozambique and Angola. The eyes of the world are on Africa; no one wants the responsibility of starting a second Algeria.

This is what Frankel meant in his letter to *The Times* of December 8 when he wrote 'millions of the people in Africa

are in imminent danger of being sacrificed to the ravages of political and economic chaos should the fragile bastions of modern institutions and government be destroyed'.

In these articles I shall try to do three things: to examine the broad outlines of the present situation in Africa as between the African peoples and the European powers which still rule them (especially Britain); to study in more detail the situation in a number of key areas of Africa; and, finally, to assess the significance of these facts for Marxist theory and political action.

Imperialism in Africa

The African continent is the last great area of the world to be freed from direct colonial rule. It is of some importance to examine the reasons why the colonial revolution which liberated the countries of Asia did not occur in Africa before now, and why, having established itself in Africa, the states of so-called 'Black' Africa have achieved independence first. The surge of revolution which has swept through the whole continent in the last five years is an indication of the forces which have been at work for a considerable period.

Imperialism has subjected the peoples of Africa to the most ruthless forms of exploitation; in the 19th century scramble for Africa the European powers: Britain, France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Germany carved out colonies for themselves with a total disregard for the national and cultural boundaries of the African peoples. Having done so they proceeded to enrich themselves in the quickest way possible from their labour. All were subjected alike to the pulverising processes of imperialism, so that the political and economic systems of the past were completely destroyed. The imperialists maintained their power partly by military force and partly by stimulating artificial rivalries between so-called 'tribes'. They did so also by maintaining the peoples in a state of economic and cultural backwardness. The wealth of the country was exported; whatever rudimentary forms of education existed were in the hands of missionaries. These were responsible for the inculcation among the African peoples of a lively sense of their own inferiority and of the total worthlessness of their past. With the help of unscrupulous anthropologists they were able to develop the myth of the 'special' nature of African society, of a people obsessed with witchcraft, fetish worship, magic, ritual murder and other forms of barbarism. The white rulers adopted these myths with enthusiasm since they corresponded with their own prejudices.

Nationalism in 'Black' Africa

West Africa was unsuitable climatically for European settlement and the main form of exploitation was through the development of peasant agriculture for such crops were sold in the world markets by government boards which paid the peasant producers only a proportion of the world market price. Large urban populations grew up round the ports through which the primary products were exported. These ports attracted peasants from the interior to seek employment as unskilled workers. In none of these territories, however, do wage earners make up more than 5 per cent. of the total population, and in some it is much less. The majority are small peasant farmers. These commercial activities led to the development of an African middle-class made up of rich farmers, traders, lawyers, doctors, clerks, government servants and intellectuals generally. This middle-class has provided the leadership for the various national movements in these territories. The slogan of 'one man, one vote' was the means by which this embryonic bourgeoisie achieved power for itself. It was unable to develop fully within colonial society, and it was able to canalise the discontents of the peasants and the working class and direct them against the colonial rulers. After some initial hesitation the colonial powers realised that

they had no alternative but to hand over power to this nascent bourgeoisie.

They handed over to them also a legacy of malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, undeveloped communications and a population which looked forward confidently to a rapid improvement in their circumstances. So far these expectations have not been entirely disappointed. Owing to the demand for the primary products of these countries from the booming economies of the West, stable government has been maintained; and a certain amount of private capitalist investment has occurred. Large investments are needed, however, to develop the agriculture and the industrial resources of these countries;

Dr. Noel Browne T.D. on Socialism and the Church

There are 147 deputies in Leinster House. There are numerous senators, there are many county councillors and members of corporations. I know of two declared socialists in the Dail, there is one senator and I don't know of any councillors or corporators. That should give you some idea of our numerical size.

The great propaganda and brain-washing machines of the schools and universities are controlled by the church, all of which are hostile to socialism. That takes care of the young minds.

As for the adults, the ultra-conservative, right-wing, anti-socialist party line is preached directly day in and day out. Socialist speakers are banned and boycotted wherever there are large aggregations of young people or workers in debating societies or discussion groups. Reports of speeches on socialism are slanted or censored altogether.

Owen Skeffington received a letter on Wednesday last cancelling his talk to the students of Galway University the following Saturday, on the orders of the authorities. He has also been banned from University College, Dublin, as well as from at least one, to his knowledge, technical students' debating society. The really sad inference to be drawn from this is the pitiable spinelessness of the students who accept this kind of thing.

The Civil Liberties Association is particularly discriminating in the battles for liberty which it chooses to fight. In addition to this, nearly a million of the best of our people have had to get out of the country. This means that in positions of authority only the 'cute hawks' are left. As for the people themselves, they are skilfully outwitted. Unemployment payments are approximately two guineas for a married man and family, with 19s. for a bachelor. This forces any unemployed man worthy of the name to get out to Britain. The alternative is to starve and watch the children go hungry. Those of us who are socialists here are deprived of the militants. Economic sanctions, some subtle and some obvious enough, keep the worker in order. The union leaders, with a few exceptions, are tamed by an 8 to 10 per cent. unemployment rate.

It is only when he is on his way up the gangway to Britain that the average Irishman finds out how he has been betrayed by the leaders and teachers whom he has trusted.

At the same time there is a gradual awakening. There are men and women who are beginning to read more. They see the British welfare society, they hear from their emigrant relatives of the free health service. They notice that many of them who use that service as Catholics in England have not been 'turned into a canary' for their sin. Many are beginning to see that a government can plan against unemployment and protect its citizens from preventable hardship. They want that kind of protection and protection from want here.

We work under great difficulties. We have no funds. We need to publicise our socialist ideals and explain our objectives for a united socialist republic. We need to print pamphlets and handbills to leave behind us after public meetings. We want to keep our small stencilled paper going. In sum, then, we will go on fighting for socialism in Ireland no matter what the opposition. It would greatly help us in that job

and so far there is no sign that capital is available on anything like the scale necessary. Moreover, their dependence on the sale of their primary products makes their economies extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in the world market.

The success of this experiment in West Africa has, however, encouraged the imperialists to believe that a similar solution might be found in the other areas of Africa. If it was possible to contain the African revolution within a bourgeois framework in West Africa, why should it not be possible in Central Africa, Kenya or even the Union of South Africa?

if we had just enough money to pay for these necessities.

We remember that we, in Dublin in particular, are heirs to a great and proud socialist tradition. We are not conscious of carrying any burden, far from it. Ours is the great honour to walk with Connolly, Mellows, Lator and Davitt. That is reward enough. We cherish the company and only hope we'll prove worthy of it.

THE CHURCH

It is possible to go to extremes on the question of the hierarchy, possible to be hag-ridden by fear or foolishly indifferent to their great power. To get some kind of perspective, think of the difference between Catholic social teaching and practice in Spain or Portugal on the one hand or Poland or Hungary on the other. To those of us nearer home it is simpler to examine the discrepancy between the decision of the hierarchy that a 'free-no-means-test health service' in Dublin is all wrong and one in Co. Down all right.

This schizophrenic decision applying to two parts of the one country is particularly well shown by the position of the Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh himself. He lives in the north where if he gets ill he will be treated, if he wishes (certainly this is true of all his flock), under a free health service. Yet when asked to consider such a service for his flock in the south of Ireland he condemned it as immoral.

From all this it would appear to me that it is very difficult but not impossible to have progressive social legislation in a country where the Catholic church is powerful. If Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Irish experience means anything, progress towards a social just order appears to tally directly with the degree of power which they enjoy in any society.

Having watched the evolution of the welfare society in the north of Ireland in spite of the activities of the Protestant churches' leaders' efforts to prevent it, as well as the same developments in Britain, the wealthy Irish capitalist Catholic, as always, is joined by the wealthy Protestant capitalist in recognizing that their best defence and bulwark against the onset of progressive social legislation in Ireland is the Catholic hierarchy.

We are confident that we will one day see a socialist Republic and united Ireland in spite of any obstacles.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Fianna Fail is the present ruling party. It first held office in 1932 and was led by De Valera.

Originally Fianna Fail emerged as a party based on the support of workers, small farmers, and the native industrialists. It aimed to end partition and its programme included the development of industrialization and such progressive legislation as the introduction of insurance acts.

Its programme now is indistinguishable from the most Right-wing party, Fine Gael.

Fine Gael represents big ranchers and the most reactionary bankers. This is the second largest party.

Cumann Gael is the party which consisted of those who agreed to the treaty of 1921 agreeing to partition. Later it was absorbed in Fine Gael.

**'SUPPORT LOCAL ASSEMBLIES',
SAYS ENGINEERS' CONVENOR, JOHN WALLS,
Convenor of Shop Stewards at George Mann's Engineering,
Leeds**

Unless the British Transport Commission makes big concessions—or the TUC fixes a sell-out—the railwaymen's demand for an immediate wage increase could well spark off the biggest industrial struggle seen in Britain since 1926.

At the same time engineers are demanding a £1 per week increase and a 40-hour week. Miners are constantly battling against closures, sharper discipline, and attempts to cut job rates. Other sections of the working class—like firemen (demanding a 48-hour week and a substantial increase in pay)—are campaigning for decent working conditions.

The government and the employers would like to deal with these workers, section by section. Above all else, they fear the possibility of these workers uniting in common struggle.

As an Engineering Convenor, I say that a victory for the railwaymen would tremendously strengthen our hand in our fight against the engineering employers.

The employers would like engineers to think that the railwaymen's struggle had nothing to do with them. They would like to deal with the railwaymen first, and our turn would come later.

This should not be allowed to happen. Every section of the working class with a wage claim pending should demand joint action with the railway workers. The employers wouldn't have a leg to stand on.

But simply to talk about this sort of thing isn't enough. How can we start now to build a united movement between workers in different industries?

The Socialist Labour League is calling a series of local Assemblies of Labour in all the industrial centres of Britain. These will bring together workers from different industries, many of whom face industrial struggles in the near future.

This is important because just at the time when thousands of workers are facing the employers and the Tories on the industrial front, the traitors at the head of the Labour Party are trying to assist those employers by removing all traces of socialism from the party's constitution, and by witch-hunting the left wing.

It is no coincidence that the people who are hounded by the employers in the factories are the same people who come under attack from Labour's Right Wing.

A unity between industrial militants and the Left in the Labour Party can shake both the Right Wing and the Tories.

Those who try to hold back the workers on the industrial front, and those who try to water down Labour's constitution (the same people!) are really helping the Tories to stay in office.

Without their support, the Tories could not hang on for five months, let alone five years.

The purpose of the Assemblies of Labour is to break the chains that are holding back the Labour movement, by bringing together precisely those people who the Tories and the Right Wing want so desperately to keep apart.

Workers from all sections of industry, left-wing members of the Labour Party, rank and file Communist Party members, people who are fighting against the H-bomb, or colonialism, or anti-semitism; the Assemblies will bring these people together.

The old slogan 'Unity is Strength' is still true.

Camden Town Branch E.T.U. pledges its support to the St. Pancras Borough Council tenants in their struggle against rent increases, and in the event of any attempts at eviction being made, calls upon its members to engage in mass picketing at the time and place where it is to be attempted.

**VFS CONFERENCE WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT
By our Political Correspondent**

The annual conference of Victory for Socialism held recently was a disappointment to Labour's left. At no time since the end of the war has there been a more favourable opportunity for building a socialist left wing in the Labour Party than now, yet the meeting was poorly attended, the platform dominated by Members of Parliament, and practically no preparation was made for a serious discussion on policy.

One can understand the difficulties of MPs and lefts who previously followed Aneurin Bevan. They feel isolated and as a result hesitate in challenging the right. What is most regrettable is that they have learned nothing from Bevan's defection at Brighton in 1957.

How to end isolation

A change in the Labour Party can only take place when the Left have worked out a socialist policy that they are prepared to fight on. Once this is done the rank and file, no less than Members of Parliament, will have to work together in the struggle. This is the only way that the isolation can be ended.

The more we examine the hesitancy of MPs the more we are afraid that this is a political question. Middle-of-the-road centrist policies is an old evil in the British Labour movement. People such as Sidney Silverman have spent far too long in such circles. Today their hesitancy may well strangle VFS before it gets started. Despite all his short comings, Bevan demonstrated one characteristic which Victory for Socialism has forgotten. He was not afraid to fight on occasions when he felt that a fight would assist his purpose. The left must retain this spirit but fuse it with a socialist programme that will stand out in contrast to the political bankruptcy of the right.

Mr. Silverman's splits

The platform succeeded in defeating a resolution calling for the proscription of the Socialist Labour League to be lifted, by 55 votes to 34. Mr. Silverman talked at length about the splits in the Socialist Labour League. Of course he is completely ignorant about the League and relies on press gossip for his information. In any case, one can hardly call the Labour Party a united party; it is split into so many groups that if someone asked for statistics they would have to employ the services of an electronic computer to provide them.

Here is the great weakness of people such as Silverman and those who follow him. They talk left, to a point, then surrender to the right wing. Why shouldn't the Socialist Labour League have the same right inside the Labour Party as the Fabian Society? Let us have an answer to this question instead of the dreary repetition of unfounded gossip. Those who cannot fight for the right of the Socialist Labour League to be part of the Labour Party today will certainly gain no victories over the right wing.

Turn to industry

If Victory for Socialism is to provide the core of a new socialist left in the Labour Party, then the rank and file must play a more important part in its affairs, both politically and organizationally. New branches should be started in all parts of the country and closely related to the industrial struggles in their localities. Proper policy discussions should take place at regular intervals throughout the year, and MPs who are members of VFS should be asked to give an accounting of how they fought in the Labour Party and in Parliament for these policies. Above all, the fight against the proscription of the Socialist Labour League, despite the recent decision of conference, must be pressed home by the rank and file in the coming months.

Constant Reader | The 1919 Rail Strike

'A notable feature was a revolt of the compositors and printers' assistants, who threatened to strike and stop the newspapers altogether unless the railwaymen were allowed to present their case and unless abusive posters were abandoned.' This fact, recorded by the Webbs in the 1920 edition of their 'History of Trade Unionism' was typical of the great railway strike of 1919. It was the other side of the famous publicity campaign organized on behalf of the NUR by the Labour Research Department. Such solidarity by all other sections of the working class with a section on strike had not been seen before in this country and was not to be seen again until 1926. C. F. G. Masterman, a Liberal politician, noted in a newspaper article at the time that 'before the strike ended the railwaymen had rallied nine-tenths of the industrial workers to their side' and 'were increasing sympathizers from the middle classes by hundreds of thousands a day'.

Wartime rationing was still in force in 1919, and the Government intended to withdraw ration cards from strikers and their families; but the co-operative movement foiled that scheme by publicly agreeing to honour in their shops any vouchers issued by local strike committees.

The soldiers, sent to guard railway stations, in some cases fraternized with the pickets, and had to be withdrawn to barracks. In contrast to what it had done in the railway strike before the 1914 war, the Government announced that it would not try to use troops to run the trains; and everyone knew that this announcement had been forced from them by the mood in the ranks.

The railwaymen won their battle in 1919, and inflicted such a fright on the employers and their Government that a general offensive against the working class was held off until 1921, when the post-war slump was well under way and mass unemployment hampered the workers' resistance. Unfortunately, the time so gained was not fully used by the Labour movement, or the capitalists could have been deprived for good of their power to do harm.

In the crisis on the railways the NUR leaders were careful **not** to call on the miners' and transport workers' unions to fulfil their obligations under the 'Triple Alliance' concluded during the war. (The Webbs' record that the miners' and transport workers' officials had difficulty in 'restraining their own members from impetuous action in support of the railwaymen'). Nothing was done to foster and develop the sympathy spontaneously expressed by soldiers. Lord Northcliffe, founder of the Daily Mail and leading Press Lord of the day, expressed the gratitude of the ruling class in characteristically dramatic terms: 'Without labour unions our strike last week would have been a civil war. It was the control of the men by their leaders which made it a peaceful struggle' (quoted in K. G. J. C. Knowles' 'Strikes, 1911-1947', [1952]).

The railway strike of 1919 was a great and inspiring victory. Compared with what could have been won for the whole working class at that time by a really single-minded and determined militant leadership it must be seen, however, in a different light—as an occasion when British labour 'missed the bus' and allowed capitalism a fresh lease of life in this country.

Constant Reader Unpersoned

Alasdair MacIntyre's radio talk on 'Communism and British Intellectuals' has provoked a most interesting correspondence in *The Listener*. In the issue of February 4, E. P. Thompson, one of the board of *New Left Review* takes MacIntyre to task for adding 'his own original mite to mis-history' by suggesting that some of those who took part in the revolt in the Communist Party in 1956 have joined the Socialist Labour

League. 'Not one of those who were actively associated with John Saville and myself in *The Reasoner* episode has done this', writes Thompson.

Not one? Yet, it cannot be news to Thompson that the 'Joseph Redman' who wrote the first of the *Reasoner* pamphlets was the present writer of this column; who also, as 'Leonard Hussey', contributed the article 'Mr. Rothstein and the Soviet Union' to the first issue of the *New Reasoner*. The use of pseudonyms was strongly urged on me by John Saville in order to safeguard my then position on the Communist Party History Commission. Correspondence with Saville which I have kept shows that I associated myself pretty 'actively' with *The Reasoner* itself in such respects as helping with articles, supplying addresses, providing money, and so on—even if, doubtless, on a smaller scale than some others. Those who accuse us of possessing Stalinist traits often themselves reveal horrible survivals of their Stalinist miseducation, and this is another example of that sad fact.

Because Brian Pearce is now with the Socialist Labour League, his association with Thompson and Saville at an earlier stage must be suppressed. To use Orwell's felicitous word, he becomes an 'unperson'—and is struck out of the history of the 'Reasoner episode'.

Having got that off my chest, may I take this opportunity of recommending to students of the history of the British working class movement the study by Thompson entitled 'Homage to Tom Maguire', in the 'Essays on Labour History in honour of G. D. H. Cole' (Macmillan, 42s.), published this week under the editorship of Asa Briggs and John Saville?

Readers of Thompson's great book on William Morris will remember the interesting material on Maguire given there. The story of this neglected pioneer of independent working-class politics in Yorkshire is much more fully developed in this new work.

Freedom Fighters

Some readers may like to have chapter and verse for the fact, mentioned here recently by Gerry Healy, that the Socialist Leader, the weekly which now gives hospitality to Cadogan and rebukes the Socialist Labour League for its tyrannical procedures supported, the banning of our predecessor, Socialist Outlook, by Transport House.

It was in the Socialist Leader for August 21, 1954, that the editorial, devoted to this ban, justified it in these words: 'No political party worthy of the name can allow a dissident group of its members to publish papers, manifestos or proclamations directed against the authority of the party as expressed in its constitution, and against the general interests'.

A correspondent in the following issue of the Socialist Leader pointed out that Tribune, the New Statesman, Forward, Peace News and Labour's Northern Voice had all protested against the ban. The Daily Worker had kept silent. Only the Socialist Leader had openly supported the ban.

BRIAN PEARCE

A LABOUR 'STATESMAN'

'Throughout this dispute [the 1919 rail strike] all manner of pressure was brought to bear upon me with the object of extending the scope of the strike. Offers of assistance came in from all quarters. I set myself resolutely against any proposed extension of the strike. . . .'

J. H. Thomas, then General Secretary, NUR, foreword to G. W. Alcock, 'Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism' (1922).

INDUSTRY

NOTTS MINERS TAKE ACTION

By Granville Stone, Calverton Pit

Last Sunday, Nottinghamshire miners formed a rank-and-file miners' 'action committee' to campaign within the National Union of Mineworkers for a militant struggle against the National Coal Board.

The committee was formed at a meeting called by local miners in conjunction with the rank-and-file paper 'The Miner'. Ted Woolley, of Sandhole Pit, Lancashire, spoke on behalf of the paper. He gave a summary of the national crisis with pit closures, wage cuts, excessive discipline and finings by the NCB. Brother Woolley explained how miners are more exploited today than ever before, and said only the rank and file can stop the attacks of the NCB, the Tory government and the entire boss class.

In the general discussion miners told of a pit where £600 was collected in 12 months by the NCB fining miners, and of how many miners were allowing the NCB to get away with many things because they live in tied houses.

Nottingham miners are preparing

All were agreed that the union leaders in Nottingham, and nationally, were not going to fight, so when Brothers Jack Fenner, chairman of the meeting, and Granville Stone suggested the formation of a rank-and-file 'action committee' it was eagerly agreed to, and miners from all the local pits represented were elected to the committee.

The committee intends to increase the sales of 'The Miner' in Nottinghamshire as part of its struggle against wage cuts, fines, etc., and to fight in the NUM for a militant policy on the wages, hours and conditions of all miners.

Fifty miners attended the meeting and many more would have been present but for the fact that special meetings were called at Rufford and Blidworth pits to protest at the latest Coal Board attacks on miners. Should anyone scab he will be hauled up before the branch to give an account of himself and await the men's decision on action against him.

These three meetings show that Nottingham's miners are moving in preparation for a big struggle against the Coal Board.

APPRENTICE JOCKEY STRIKE

By our Industrial Correspondent

Seventy striking apprentice jockeys have forced their 12 Newmarket trainers to shut down their barrack-like, Jockey Club owned hostel.

The boys had been camped out in quarters with bare wooden floors, uncovered, unswept staircases, chipped iron bedsteads—some with broken springs and straw mattresses.

Captain Ryan Jarvis, well-known trainer and chairman of the hostel committee attempted to pooh-pooh the boys' complaints by saying: 'I have lived in worse conditions—at a public school'. This may of course explain some of the peculiar results achieved by our public schools, but it failed to satisfy the apprentices.

Strike spreads

Encouraged by the apprentices' stand and victory, stablemen are now taking strike action for better wages, more time off—they work seven days a week for £8 13s. a week—and a clothing allowance.

This decision will certainly cause consternation amongst the 'sporting bloods'. A strike now, of even four or five days could well and truly 'nobble' the start of the flat racing season.

The expensive, pampered thoroughbreds, in their centrally heated, spotlessly clean, super stables must feel quite put out by all this militancy on the Heath.

SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETS

By our Political Correspondent

The full National Committee of the Socialist Labour League recently held a two-day session in London. There was an extensive discussion on the preparations from the local Assemblies of Labour and the tasks of the League in the coming industrial struggles. The committee expressed satisfaction with the preparations in the localities for the holding of the Assemblies. It calls upon all members of the League to make these real tribunals of working-class discussion.

The Committee heard a report on developments inside the Labour Party since the Blackpool conference. Important steps were taken to strengthen the political work of League members inside the Labour Party and prevent members and supporters of the League from being witch-hunted by the Right-wing. It was decided to organize a national campaign against the proscription of the Socialist Labour League and the ban on its paper, The Newsletter.

National Conference preparations

Arrangements were discussed for the second annual conference which will be held at Whitsun, June 4, 5 and 6, 1960. These included the setting up of two commissions; the first will concern itself with an investigation into the economic situation and the problems arising. It will confer with leading industrial militants in different parts on their experiences, particularly in relation to the introduction of new techniques and processes. A special article on the present economic situation has been prepared for the February/March issue of Labour Review.

The second commission will deal with the political situation. This will be done in two parts: the completion of a resolution on the international situation and an examination of the tasks in 1960 for the development of the Socialist Labour League.

Discussion took place on youth work and it was decided to alert the organization to the new possibilities now opening up in this field.

The Committee endorsed the appointment to two new organizers, one in Yorkshire and an additional one in Scotland.

The Committee concluded its deliberations with an extremely interesting discussion on the problems of the construction of a revolutionary party in Britain and it was unanimously decided that this discussion should continue throughout the pre-conference period.

After hearing reports from various districts the National Committee were particularly pleased with the very promising way in which the League is developing and with the high standards of work of rank-and-file members in the localities.

JUST FANCY THAT

Rumour has it that the right-wing weekly Forward gives away most of its copies. Everyone who has sold a Left-wing paper outside meetings is used to seeing desperate attempts being made by officials to sell the paper inside the hall—with little success.

Now Forward has received a serious set-back to its campaign to get the dirty word nationalization removed from the policy of the Labour Party. Britain's largest trade union, the Transport and General Workers' Union, has recently cancelled its bulk order for the paper. So now the despatch department at the Forward office will have even more time on its hands. And perhaps Forward's sponsors will withdraw their financial support if the paper can't do its job of witch-hunting socialists and their papers with success.

We hope that other unions will follow the TGWU's lead.

Rank-and-File Railmen Are Ready

Brother A. Turton, who is secretary of Leeds No. 4 branch, NUR, told a Newsletter reporter 'We were given a 3 per cent. increase in 1958, but they have slowly taken it off us in cuts of one type and another. We must take strike action, not only to recover the lost 3 per cent., but also for a further increase to make up for the rise in the cost of living. Our wages are very low indeed.'

Brother Turton is a higher grade passenger guard whose wage for a 44-hour week is £9 0s. 5d.

Keith Harding is an Installer (Class 3) who gets a gross wage of £8 4s. 6d. for a 40-hour week.

'Let some of these types who will be busy condemning the railwaymen for striking, try to build a home for a wife and two kids on that', he said. 'Some of them spend more in the Queen's in one night.'

The Queen's Hotel is the de luxe hotel attached to Leeds City Station.

Brother Harding pointed out that basic pay is so low on the railways, that some men were worried that if they got a wage increase, they might lose their Sunday overtime. Railwaymen are absolutely dependent on overtime and rest-day working to keep body and soul together. 'We should aim at getting a basic wage that allows a man to live without having to work all the hours on the clock', he said. 'And if the three Unions acted together in a determined way, we could get it.'

FULL SUPPORT . . .—Continued from front page absolutely nothing in the terms of reference of the Guillebaud Committee which says that it will recommend increases in wages. As long ago as June 14, 1959, the Financial Times said:

'Even now it is by no means clear whether the independent (Guillebaud) tribunal undertaking the review will make detailed recommendations for increases for different grades of railway staff, or whether it will content itself with general observations.'

Professor Guillebaud himself declared in an interview with the News Chronicle on February 2: 'We are a fact-finding body . . . it is not our job to make recommendations.'

It is nothing more than an irresponsible quibble on the part of government spokesmen to introduce the red herring about inter-union rivalry when the policy of the NUR declares that its members must have more money now. There is no guarantee that the Guillebaud Committee will recommend any wage increase whatsoever. Why should the poorly-paid railwaymen be forced to wait for the unpredictable report of a committee of well-paid learned gentlemen? Tory stock brokers don't wait for the dividends on their investments when they are due.

What more facts are needed to prove that railwaymen are poorly-paid? Do some of them have to die of starvation? Is there a clause in the so-called inter-union agreement which says that underpaid members of the NUR must continue to suffer until a Tory-appointed committee makes up its mind? Of course not. The NUR is absolutely right to take action now.

The strike is a political action

'The government owns the railways', screams the press. Perfectly correct, therefore a national strike on the railways will be a strike against the government. The Tory government must be held responsible for these hardships. It has no mandate from the electorate to cause them.

Therefore the Labour Party leaders must launch a nationwide campaign to demand the resignation of the Tory government which has decided to inflict such hardship and suffering on large numbers of people. There can be no neutrality in the present fight. The National Council of Labour must declare its full support for the railwaymen. There can be no scabbing. Trade unionists everywhere must rally the widest support in defence of the embattled railmen.

Great play is being made by Fleet Street over the possibility of the NUR losing its resources, but the trade union move-

ment as a whole has immense resources. All the major unions should immediately put as much money as is necessary at the disposal of the NUR to maintain strike pay to all its members. If the NUR members win this claim—and they can win—then the engineers will win. If the NUR men lose then the employers and their government will be strengthened and it will be harder going for the rest of the trade union movement.

Brother Fitch, secretary of the Covent Garden Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen, informs us. 'Members of the Amalgamated Society of Locomen, Firemen and Enginemen on the Bakerloo and Northern Line tubes are promising us full support. 'During the one-day token strike they were all out with us and I know at Golders Green, Edgware, Neasden and other depots their drivers will be out again next Monday.'

'No one can afford a strike', said Joe Phelps, sectional delegate from the Elephant and Castle underground and member of the NUR. 'No one', he went on, 'goes on strike for the love of it, but how else can we get anything. I am hoping that we get something and don't have to strike. But if we don't get anything then we will be out on the streets on the 15th.'

A ticket collector on the Bakerloo line at Waterloo said 'We have posters plastered all over the tubes saying that we get £11 a week. They don't tell you how long you have to work to get it. I work 49 hours a week, including a Sunday, to earn £10. I hope the busmen will put their claim in now. The time is opportune; their best chance is to come out now and win. If they stay out we will only be split like we were during the bus strike. It is my opinion that they will come out and strengthen the fight.'

Rank and file unity now

The busmen are moving in support of the railwaymen. The engineers are calling out their members in the railway workshops. The miners surround the great railway marshalling-yards of Doncaster and Crewe. Let rank-and-file committees be set up immediately covering all transport workers, engineers, miners and railwaymen. These will be a powerful barrier against the possibility of another 1926 betrayal. A powerful alliance between workers with wage claims is now demanded.

The Socialist Labour League declares its full support for the railwaymen. It calls upon all rail workers to organize rank-and-file committees pledged to defeat the employers and their government in the fight for more wages.

- THE TORIES MUST BE FORCED TO RESIGN
- FOR A GENERAL ELECTION AND A MAJORITY LABOUR GOVERNMENT PLEDGED TO FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST POLICY

Executive Committee,
Socialist Labour League, 10/2/1960

I wish to join the Socialist Labour League.

Name (Block Letters Please).....

.....

Address (Block Letters Please)

.....

Trade Union
Fill in this form and send it to Socialist Labour League,
186 Clapham High St., London, S.W.4.