

# THE NEWSLETTER

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## LABOUR PARTY MEMBERS PROTEST AT CLAUSE 4 RETREAT

By R. PENNINGTON

'I'm with you on this,' said Frank Cousins, general secretary of the 1,300,000 strong Transport and General Workers' Union, to pickets lobbying Wednesday's meeting of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. The pickets, including members of the Socialist Labour League, delegates from trade union branches, representatives of Labour Parties and members of Victory for Socialism, were demanding of the Executive that it stands firm on Clause 4.

Bill Jones, London busman and member of the TGWU general executive council, also assured delegates that his union would oppose all attempts to amend Clause 4.

As members of the National Executive arrived for the meeting they were greeted at Transport House by lobbyists carrying posters which read: 'Brinham is committed to NFBTO Policy', 'Boyd must be loyal to the policy of the Confederation', 'Bessie doesn't speak for Liverpool Labour' and 'Leeds Labour rejected Gaitskell on Clause 4'.

Many members of the NEC, such as Anthony Greenwood, Tom Driberg, Harold Wilson, Jennie Lee and Barbara Castle assured delegates that they would defend Clause 4.

A number of members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union officially representing their branches, attempted to see Boyd, the AEU member on the committee. Brother Lewis, secretary of the Paddington IPE branch, and members from Battersea, Dagenham, Wembley and East Acton AEU branches were refused an interview by Boyd.

John Disley of Gillmoss (Liverpool) Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers' branch, and Peter Hendrie of Brixton Labourers' branch, were also refused an audience by Labour Party chairman and building trade union representative Brinham.

A number of Labour Party members demanded to see Gaitskell and other right-wing leaders, but their request was rejected. Twenty of these, however, reached the door of the NEC but were unable to gain admittance.

Councillor Brian Crookes, former Parliamentary candidate for Garston present at the lobby on behalf of the Garston constituency Labour Party, said that his party had set up 'a Clause 4 Defence Committee which had been sponsored by a number of Labour Parties including two of the Coventry constituencies'. Cllr. Crookes said: 'This was an issue on which the left of the Labour Party and the trade unions must unite to defeat the attempts of the right wing to remove nationalization from the programme of the Labour Party.'

### SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

Marxism in 1960

Four Lectures and Discussions

Sunday Evenings at 7.30, at 186 Clapham High Street,  
S.W.4

March 20: **BRITISH ECONOMY TODAY.**

J. Archer.

March 27: **THE CLASS-CONFLICTS IN BRITISH INDUSTRY.**

R. Pennington.

April 3: **THE LABOUR PARTY AND 'CLAUSE 4'.**

G. Healy.

April 10: **MARXISM AND INTERNATIONALISM.**

M. Banda.

A collection to defray expenses will be taken at each meeting.

## From MacDonald to Gaitskell

By ALASDAIR MacINTYRE

*He who fights and runs away*

*Lives to fight another day.*

Nursery Rhyme.

It looks as if Mr. Gaitskell has had second thoughts. Clause 4 is not to be omitted from the Constitution; it is merely to be added to. But only those who are taken in by Mr. Gaitskell's tactical changes of emphasis will rejoice. For what Mr. Gaitskell has been doing ever since Mr. Jay's famous article is seeing how far he can go and in what direction.

There are various ways in which socialism can be evicted from the Labour Party, and if Clause 4 is not omitted it can always be reinterpreted. The interpretation which is contained in Mr. Gaitskell's proposals to the National Executive Committee, and which in the main have been accepted, is essentially a re-writing of Clause 4 and a restriction of public ownership to little more than its present extent.

Thus Mr. Gaitskell's change is not a retreat. But he has managed to give the appearance of one who has retreated. This could assist him in two ways. It is liable to disarm the Left and delude them into thinking that they have won a victory when they have in fact been defeated. And it could help to build up an image of Mr. Gaitskell as a reasonable man who is willing to compromise, unlike those rabid fellows on the Left.

### The origin of Clause 4

Why is it so easy for Clause 4 to be reinterpreted? Because ever since it was included in the Labour Party constitution it has been continually understood in different ways. The phrase 'common ownership' has been assigned no unambiguous meaning and the phrases 'the most equitable . . . that may be possible' and 'the best obtainable' leave everything open. This is no accident. The clause was included in the constitution in 1918 (and amended in 1929). The original draft was by Sidney Webb and Arthur Henderson and, then as now, the aim was to produce a formula wide enough to embrace radically different tendencies.

The Labour Party had been formally constituted in 1906;

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**A SOCIALIST PRINCIPLE**

THE essence of socialist principles is that they strengthen the working class as a class in its fight against the capitalist class. Divisions of opinion in the Labour movement can only produce fruitful results when those who hold them constantly strive to oppose the main class enemy and at the same time test out their different opinions in practice. The struggle against witch-hunts which set out to destroy this possibility is an extremely important principle for socialists.

Since the early days of the struggle against Stalinism in the Soviet Union, the Marxist movement (Trotskyists) has insisted that despite its sharp and fundamental differences with Stalinism it is necessary to defend the Stalinist movement against the attack of the capitalist class. Such a defence does not carry with it the qualification that it must be reciprocated by the Stalinists; we know only too well how they persecuted the Marxists and in many cases denounced them to the capitalist enemy, especially during World War II. If the main enemy can be defeated in struggle against a witch-hunt then conditions favourable for struggle against Stalinism will arise, because the strengthening of the working class in action tends more and more to weaken the bureaucratic base upon which Stalinism rests.

In the years when fascism was gaining ground in Germany the Marxists constantly defended the democratic rights of both the Stalinists and the right-wing social democrats against fascist attack. The problems and differences of the Labour movement can never be resolved by the opposing class and its political institutions.

Recently, the witch-hunt has taken the form of the film 'The Angry Silence'. This film has earned the praise of right-wing trade union and Labour leaders who rely upon the capitalist witch-hunter to strengthen and maintain their positions in their organizations in a period when they are losing support.

The press informs us that the story was based in part on the series of articles by Roy Nash in the News Chronicle on the so-called 'Red Club'. It will be recalled that Mr. Nash referred in these articles to certain leading members of the Socialist Labour League. The film is directed against the Socialist Labour League and at the same time it manages to attack the Communist Party.

Readers of The Newsletter will recall that Mr. Roy Nash's 'Red Club' articles sparked off a witch-hunt in the Labour Party. The right-wing at Transport House endeavoured to use his concoctions in an effort to denounce the Marxists in the Labour Party as a conspiracy. We, on the other hand, requested Transport House to allow us similar facilities to those afforded to the Fabian Society, that is, the right to organize as Marxists inside the Labour Party under the banner of the Socialist Labour League.

If we were forced to work in the Labour Party for a long period without an open organization it was because of the bans and proscriptions imposed in that party by the police minds at the top.

The formation of the Socialist Labour League was, therefore, an effective answer to those who would place us in the same stupid category as the opponents of film star scab Dickie Attenborough in 'The Angry Silence'. Transport House refused us the right to organize in the Socialist Labour League and a number of people were expelled. It is a principle, therefore, for all those who claim to be Marxists and sincere socialists to defend the right of the Socialist Labour League to have the same organizational facilities as the Fabian Society and Victory for Socialism in the Labour Party. Those who refuse to do this violate an important socialist principle. This is especially true of people who claim that they stand against bans and proscriptions inside the Labour Party. If they do not oppose the proscription of the Socialist Labour League then all their claims to be against bans amount to nothing.

There are two main groups who fall into this category. Firstly, there are the Communist Party leaders who try to avoid defending the democratic rights to which the League is entitled by constantly posing vague resolutions which talk about the need to end all bans and proscriptions, but which carefully ignore the real ban which is placed upon the Socialist Labour League. Like all revisionists and opportunists, the King Street leaders are opposed to all bans but the ban on their opponents.

The second group of people, a much smaller one of course, live in the city of Liverpool and produce a duplicated paper called 'Socialist Fight'. Last summer, during the discussion on the Liverpool Trades Council on a motion to oppose the proscription of the Socialist Labour League, they voted with Mr. John Braddock, the extreme right-wing member of that council, against this proposal and submitted instead the formula of the Communist Party about being opposed to bans and proscriptions in general. Representatives of this tendency have publicly declared that they are embarrassed by the Socialist Labour League. At the same time their actions make it clear that they are not embarrassed by association with right-wingers such as Mr. Braddock. Here we have an example of what queer bedfellows one acquires when principles are thrown overboard.

Another tendency, a splinter break-away from the 'Socialist Fight' group produces a duplicated monthly bulletin known as 'Socialist Current'. The people who write in this paper declare that it is permissible to unite with the right wing inside the Electrical Trades Union against the Stalinists. There is nothing permissible about this at all. The right wing in the ETU are sponsored by the most reactionary forces, whereas the Stalinists have still the support of the best militants in that union. To permit the rank and file of the union to manage its own affairs and deal with Haxell and Foulkes if they want to, it is necessary to oppose the right-wing witch-hunters. Unless this principle is maintained no real struggle can be waged against Stalinism. Unity with the right would allow the Stalinists to masquerade as lefts and drive all the best elements towards them. A defeat for the right wing of the ETU, under conditions where the Marxists resolutely opposed witch-hunting, would weaken the bureaucratic base upon which Haxell and Foulkes rest.

The Newsletter will continue to fight for this point

of view, irrespective of what reactionary alignments may arise inside the Labour movement. All those who avoid the defence of the right of the Socialist Labour League to be an organization of Marxists inside the Labour Party willy-nilly surrender to the pressure of the witch-hunters. That goes for the Liverpool 'lefts' no less than for the leadership of the Communist Party.

## INDUSTRY

### YORKS SWEET FACTORY STRIKE VICTORY

By Cliff Slaughter

After a week's strike, 400 girls employed by Dunhill's Licorice Works (Pontefract, Yorks.) return to work on Monday with a resounding victory in their pockets. They had forced the employers to accept a 44-hour week as against the old hours of 46½, they had rejected contemptuously his threat to take them back without their leaders, and they had shown an attitude of confident defiance that must have struck the fear of God into the hearts of local employers.

This is a strike whose lessons need consideration by socialists, for it was a strike of that younger generation of which so many socialists are all too ready to despair. More fashionable 'New Left' socialists cover this pessimism with a gloss of sociological rubbish about the coffee cult and the terrible effects of commercialized culture. But here were girls who were just as keen as any others on rock and roll and the pops. Yet without any rank-and-file or political leadership they forced an employer to cave in.

### Young girls supply militant leadership

Every morning the factory was picketed by young girls in jeans and curling-pins. Blacklegs got home to find their houses decorated with paintings of shapely legs in long black stockings. Foremen left the factory at night to an accompaniment of boos and hisses that sent them scuttling home. On the last day of the strike the 400 girls marched through the town in a body, banners flying, to collect their wages; they returned to demonstrate solidly for two hours while the union officials negotiated with the manager, displaying their banners and singing improvised strike songs which gladdened the hearts of socialists—and made it difficult for any negotiator to emerge with anything but a good settlement!

The managing director, Godson, had announced on the first Monday of the strike that he would agree to a 44-hour week, and would take back the workers 'with a very few exceptions, those exceptions being of persons who are not acceptable to the Management. Upon a return to work it is understood that there will be no victimization on either side'(!) The girls voted to stay out. On the Thursday, they all received a letter from the Managing Director, in which he said:

'The experiences of the past few days have convinced the Company that very satisfactory output figures can be maintained with far fewer employees than we were maintaining at the time of the stoppage. It is therefore apparent that we shall not need anything like so many people as we had last week. . . . It is therefore in your own interest that you re-apply for consideration quickly. In view of the foregoing, this offer cannot stay open indefinitely'.

The girls I spoke to made it plain that Godson had only confirmed the resolution of the strikers, who were contemptuous of the letter's attitude and dismissed its claim as straightforward lying.

The banners they carried showed the character of their determination and the lesson they had learned in a week's struggle. 'We go back only with shop stewards', 'Blacklegs, send 'em to Coventry', 'Living Pay for an 8-hour day', 'Shorter

Week: Longer Life'; and then two directed at the Victorian attitude of the boss: 'Please, sir, may I leave the room' and 'Your whipcracking days are over'.

And right in the middle, stretched across this parade of young girls dressed in modern teenage fashions in the middle of an old mining town 'More Nationalization, Less Compensation'!

Where some 'modern' socialists get their ideas of the youth from we don't quite know, but the television screen and West End coffee-houses are not the best places. This strike in Pontefract showed how hundreds of quite typical working-class girls, in an industry poorly organized, without any sort of rank-and-file political leadership, knew how to struggle, defeat the employer and advance offensive slogans right in line with the current needs of the working class. There is no need for a continued decline in Labour's vote among the younger generation, if only the new Labour youth organizations can tap the great source of energy that class issues have within them.

### APPRENTICES SOLID FOR WAGE CLAIM

By our Industrial Correspondent

Over 400 apprentice delegates turned out at a meeting called by the Clyde District Committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. The purpose of the meeting was to damp down the militancy of the apprentices who recently held an unofficial stoppage in support of their claim, and who are well organized through their unofficial apprentice committees.

The apprentices carried a resolution urging the union leaders to push ahead with their claim and stating they are prepared to take strike action if necessary.

The meeting was addressed by Gray of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and Catholic Actionist Byrne, secretary of the Clyde District Committee. Byrne got an extremely rough time. He read out a leaflet issued to the apprentices by Alex McLarty, secretary of the Clydeside Assembly of Labour, which was headed 'Some 64-dollar questions to ask the trade union officials'. This leaflet asked such questions as: 'Would the officials recognize the apprentice committees?' and 'Why the delay in the wage claim?' It contrasted the attitude of the trade union leaders in pushing up their own salaries as compared to their slowness with the apprentices' claim.

Byrne was booed repeatedly as he attempted to answer these points. It was made clear that the officials would not recognize the apprentices' committees, even though these have organized the apprentices in a few weeks—something the official committee have not done in their years of existence.

The apprentices are pressing ahead with their unofficial Scottish conference of March 20. They are not gulled by the smooth promises of the officials, but are determined to strengthen their own organization as a necessary means of pressure upon both the employers and the trade union bureaucrats. What is certain is that unless the employers cough up the wage increase quickly, they will be faced with a strike.

### ABBEY WOOD

Five hundred workers at the Abbey Wood building site have been on strike since March 10 over the victimization of two workers, one of whom, Brother Evans, was a shop steward.

The site comprises one of the largest new housing sites in London and the Unit Construction Company responsible for the strike is working for the Labour-controlled London County Council. Thus the company is responsible for interfering with the housing programme of a Labour council.

There is considerable feeling on the site that work such as this should be done by direct labour and that private firms should not be allowed to interfere with trade union organization on jobs where the money is being found by a Labour council. An immediate inquiry by the Labour movement into the conduct of such firms is now of high priority.

**FROM MacDONALD . . . (Continued from front page)** but it was only in 1918 that it adopted what is substantially its present constitution. In 1918 three main steps were taken. First, the foundation of constituency Labour Parties, with individual members, began the effective destruction of the power of the ILP inside the Labour Party. Till then one could only join the Labour Party by joining an affiliated organization, and the ILP provided the only counterweight to the power of the trade unions. Since the ILP provided the essential **political** organization within the party, its views and members had to be respected. When the Labour Party built its own political organization in the form of the constituency parties, this was no longer necessary.

Secondly, the trade union representation at both local and national levels was weighted so as to secure trade union control of the NEC.

Thirdly, the Labour leadership, divided into pacifist and pro-war factions during the war, reunited. It was not until 1922 that James Ramsay MacDonald was re-elected to Parliament and became leader of the party again. But MacDonald's position in the party was assured from 1918 onwards. Because of the Tory attacks on him he won the partial support of the 'Left'; for his policies he had the support of the Right.

In the Labour Party as it existed in 1918 and after, we can discern three separate interpretations of Clause 4, so far as 'common ownership' is concerned. There is first of all the most Leftward of these views, that of some of the members of the ILP who were to a limited extent influenced by Marx as well as by Keir Hardie. On this view it is industry as a whole that is to be taken over by the State. Production for use is to replace production for profit. The enemy is the capitalist system. The agency of change is to be Parliament. What the forms of common ownership are to be remains vague.

#### Ramsay MacDonald and Clause 4

The most Rightward of the three views had been expressed in MacDonald's book 'Socialism and Government', published in 1909. On MacDonald's view in 1909 it might be the case that the Labour Party would be rendered unnecessary, since either the Liberals or the Tories (and probably the Liberals) might take its aims for their own. Thus for MacDonald common ownership was an idea with no particular class affiliation. Central to MacDonald's thought is the conception of a national interest, which is more important than class or party interest. Common ownership is commended only insofar as it can be defended in terms of such a national interest. The national interest is, of course, the interest of capitalists as well as of workers and so in effect MacDonald was prepared to commend common ownership only if it could be made acceptable to the capitalist class.

What divided MacDonald from the ILP 'Lefts' and what united them? What divided them was that the ILP 'Lefts' did see political issues as class issues, whereas MacDonald did not. The ILP 'Lefts' saw common ownership as a taking away of industry from the capitalists and giving it to the people as a whole. But the agency which would do this was the bourgeois State and, in particular, Parliament.

In their acceptance of the British State the ILP 'Lefts' were at one with MacDonald. It is quite wrong to call MacDonald a Fabian. The class-struggle, even although misunderstood, is still central to 'Fabian Essays'. Where the ILP 'Lefts', MacDonald and the Fabians were at one was in their supposing that bourgeois democracy, plus the enlightened activity of the more rational members of the upper class and the middle class could secure common ownership. The State will bring in common ownership for the workers, to whom the Parliamentary Labour Party is to stand much as the Victorian philanthropists stood to 'the poor'.

#### A source of confusion

One source of confusion here was the fact that very often such municipally-owned enterprises as gas and water were taken to be small-scale models of socialist common ownership.

Since such enterprises had often been taken over from private enterprise by Tory or Liberal local authorities, it looked as though the capitalist class could be convinced by rational argument. These enterprises priced their products only at the cost of production, and were in this sense non-profit-making, so they appeared both to be cases of production that was no longer for profit and to be cheaper and more efficient than comparable private enterprises. (It was at this point in the argument that **cheapness** as a principal argument for nationalization came into the picture.)

The error here is seen as soon as we ask: **for whom** did the local authorities provide these cheap and efficient services? The answer is that they were provided largely for private industry and that their cheapness was thus essentially a source of profit for such industry. The workers in municipal enterprises do not cease to be exploited; it is merely that the surplus value which is extracted from them appears not on the balance sheets of the municipality but on those of the capitalist enterprises which get subsidized gas or water or whatever it is. Thus there is no difficulty in understanding why Tories accept such enterprises. Far from being a victory against capital, they are its cheap handmaidens.



This erroneous worship of the dustbin as the symbol of socialism was shared by the third view which existed in the Labour Party alongside that of MacDonald and that of the ILP 'Lefts'. This was the view that although common ownership in the interests of the 'workers by hand and brain' was the eventual goal, it was to be approached gradually by the nationalization of particular enterprises. The profit from these enterprises would be taken away from the capitalist class and they would be further impoverished by taxation upon unearned income and heavy death duties. This taxation would gradually wear down the economic power of the capitalist class.

The public enterprises would be cheaper and more efficient and would thus discredit private ownership in the eyes of all rational men. They would be State monopolies with government-appointed Boards of Directors. Once again Parliament would be the means whereby they were brought into being and the capitalist State was accepted as the framework inside which they could exist. They would be 'oases of socialism'. This was Herbert Morrison's view in 1934; it is advanced by some members of the 'New (!) Left' in 1960. It dominated the Labour Party in the 1930s, and it largely underlay the Labour programme of 1945, 'Let Us Face The Future'.

#### Syndicalism and Clause 4

We cannot however pass on to 1945 without noticing another important influence on Labour's view of common ownership. In the period when MacDonald formulated and worked out his views the gulf between the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Trade Union militants was as wide as it has ever been. Many militants were influenced by the syndicalist movement, then at its peak. For the syndicalists, ownership meant ownership by the workers in each particular industry with the State power pushed on one side. Ownership would be **taken** by the workers, not given to them. Syndicalism worked itself out in the industrial struggles immediately after 1918 and the defeat of the General Strike marked the handing over of the trade union movement to a leadership which drew the sharpest of lines between political and industrial action.

Thus the trade union representatives on the NEC have always been the element most anxious to see public ownership as a series of limited measures enacted by Parliament and to condemn any action by the workers against the employers which sought to change the ownership of industry. The rise to power on the political side of the Labour Party of the protagonists of a right-wing interpretation of 'common ownership' has usually been the outcome of the pressure of the trade union leaders. Hugh Gaitskill, for example, is Arthur

Deakin's legacy to the Labour movement. Without Deakin Gaitskell would be merely a testimonial to what an education at Winchester can do for you.

Already in the 1930s public ownership had been argued for on other grounds. Some industries, severely hit by the depression, could only recover with extended government subsidy. Public ownership, it was argued, would allow the government to subsidize these industries more efficiently and would provide a means for making them more efficient. For it would rescue them from the dangers of competition. The industries for which such proposals were made included some which the Labour Party afterwards nationalized, and some which it did not, such as cotton.

By 1945, two deep inconsistencies were embedded in the Labour Party's doctrines about common ownership. For the Labour Party proposed to take over profitable enterprises and use the profit for the community, to provide social services, for example. But it also proposed that such public enterprises should produce cheaply in the way in which municipal enterprises do, and we have seen that municipal enterprises are cheap because they do not make a profit for themselves. Thus, if such enterprises were both to produce a sufficient profit and to be models of cheapness in their pricing policies, they were going to have to be profitable on a really enormous scale. But here the second inconsistency appears: the principal industries which it was proposed to nationalize, coal-mining and railways, were scarcely profitable at all. The mines and the railways were both in desperate need of re-equipment and so of investment. On the other hand, gas and electricity had operated and were to continue to operate typical municipal enterprise pricing policies, so that there was no surplus produced from them.

### The nationalization policy of the 1945 Labour Government

About the nationalization of the Labour government of 1945 three main points need to be made.

1. What was nationalized? Was the vast capital wealth of the industrialists handed over? The answer is, No. The compensation payments meant that the capital was largely turned into money and handed over to the private owners in the case of the mines. The mines then had to be refinanced, as did the railways. The money came partly from budget surpluses, but more and more has had to be borrowed on the open market.

The development of the electricity and gas undertakings have been similarly financed. The repayment of loans raised in this way has been a first charge on the industries in question, so that the profits in the form of interest payments have been handed over, whether the industries made a surplus or not. Where you have had successful development, as in gas and electricity, the increases in efficiency have been used to keep down prices, and so have helped to subsidize private industry. Artificially low pricing for industry, both in coal and on the railways, has produced an even more unjustified subsidy for private capitalism.

What has effectively happened is that the labour force in the nationalized industries has been made available to the employing class in forms in which the maximum of profit could be extracted from their labour. This is not to say that there have not been important improvements in wages and welfare for both miners and dockers since 1945 (although these are now seriously threatened); but if there had not been such improvements it is doubtful whether capitalism could have maintained an adequate labour force in these industries under boom conditions. Had these industries been left in private hands, the labour force would have been very unprofitable for capitalism. So that a Hull docker went to the heart of the matter when he said recently, 'What was nationalized was the labour force'.

2. The expansion and contraction of the nationalized industries is governed by the needs of private capitalism, and the policy-decisions in the nationalized industries are taken by the agents of private capitalism. The key positions in

nationalized industries are almost entirely held by men who have close links to private capitalism and the Tory government has added numbers of part-time directors to the boards, who retain their posts as directors of private companies as well.

3. The nationalized industries therefore make sense only on the assumption that they perform a function inside a capitalist economy. They mark a use of the British State by the capitalist class for its own economic purposes; they mark also the ability of that class to utilize Labour Party politicians for its purposes. They are a sign of the strength, not of the weakness, of the British capitalists.

It was therefore not a fundamental break with the past when 'Industry and Society' proposed State share-buying in private industry. The utilization of profit for social services was part of Morrison's concept of public ownership. The investment in private capitalism goes well with the Labour Party's actual measures of nationalization. Gaitskell represents a strain out of the Labour Party's past, just as much as Barbara Castle does.

### The socialist attitude towards Clause 4

The political task at the moment therefore, is not just that of defending the place of Clause 4 in the constitution. We have also to give it socialist content. There are at least three tasks here.

First, we have to make it clear that any transitional programme of nationalization should be designed to hit the capitalist system where it hurts—at the point of profit. We want not investment in profitable private capitalist industry, but the ownership of such industry. Moreover, any programme for the ownership of specific industries must have in mind the aim of securing as quickly as possible the ownership of all industry. Unless every gain is utilized immediately for further inroads on the capitalist system, we shall face the strongest economic counter-attack and not be able to meet it. We have to own the industrial system as a whole, to plan it not for profit, but for use.

Secondly, common ownership cannot be divorced from workers' control. This has implications both for our future objectives and for our immediate programme. We must press now for the workers to refuse to be passive objects of administrative command in the nationalized industries. The Coal Board must open its books to the miners, and the miners must demand a share in the making of key decisions, for example.



Thirdly, Clause 4 must be defended in such a way that the issues are clearly defined. Gaitskell will, if he cannot eliminate socialism from the constitution, seek to keep it out of the programme. The struggle over Clause 4 could make this much more difficult for him in future, for it would make Labour Party members and trade unionists much more conscious of the issues. What they need above all to be conscious of is that the British State is not a politically neutral administrative machine which can be used to change ownership. The British State, with all its Parliamentary institutions, is the political expression of private ownership. Achieving common ownership means smashing the State power and creating a new kind of State. Failure to see this has hitherto been the common element in Fabianism, MacDonaldism and the views of the old 'Lefts'.

The time has come when the Labour Party must be made to face this issue. It may mean that Gaitskell will follow MacDonald out of the party. If he does, we must certainly see that as few as possible follow him. But we must equally not allow it to happen, as it happened in 1931, that a man is counted a socialist just for not leaving the party. Morrison, Attlee and others got a quite spurious credit for this. And one result was that Morrison's thinking on nationalization was able to bridge the gap between MacDonald's betrayal in the '20s and Gaitskell's in the '50s.

# Liverpool Workers Discuss Clause 4

By OUR POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

**THERE was one outstanding feature of the Merseyside Assembly last Sunday. The audience which listened attentively to Gerry Healy's opening statement, and then got down to the job of discussing how to carry forward the fight for socialist policies, was almost entirely one of industrial workers.**

The majority of those who spoke—active trade unionists and members of the Labour Party—brought into the meeting the experience of struggle on the river, on the docks, on the building sites, in engineering factories, in mines and on the railway.

Right at the beginning, the chairman Peter Kerrigan discussed the proposed expansion of the motor industry into Merseyside in the light of conditions with which he was familiar on the docks.

'Employers have tried to use Liverpool as a cheap port with wages and conditions below London. The trade union movement on Merseyside must plan now to prevent the same thing happening in the motor industry.'

'Contact must be made with the motor stewards in the Midlands and London so that when Fords, Standards and Vauxhalls come here the conditions won by militant action in the South are protected.'

Gerry Healy, national secretary of the Socialist Labour League, hammered home the lessons of recent events.

'When Gaitskell attacks Clause 4 he is carrying through in the political field the same policies of retreat before the Tory government and big monopolies as the right-wing trade union leaders on the industrial field', he declared.

Dealing with the fight in the Labour Party around Clause 4 and the proposed lobby of the National Executive Committee meeting on March 16, he said:

## Unions committed to Clause 4

'The Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions has a plan for engineering which calls for the nationalization of parts of the industry. On March 16, engineers should let Boyd, AEU leader and member of the NEC, know that he speaks neither for them nor for their union when he supports Mr. Gaitskell.'

'Building workers, whose National Federation is on record for nationalization of their industry, should go to London and demand that George Brinham puts forward the policy of his members.'

'Miners should tell Sam Watson that he has no mandate to back those who want to remove Clause 4, and members of the Labour Party in Liverpool should be down in London on March 16 to let Mrs. Bessie Braddock know that in supporting Gaitskell she is not speaking for the Liverpool Trades Council and Borough Labour Party.'

Those who spoke from the floor were concerned with finding a way to fight for socialist policies, to build rank-and-file leadership in industry, to fight bans and proscriptions and to bring working-class militancy into the Labour Party in order to strengthen the fight against the right wing. In other words they wanted to discuss how to struggle and how to organize, to further militant socialist policies.

## Queer bedfellows

With one exception!

'You're forgetting the boom,' said Keith Dickinson; 'the mass of workers believe they "never had it so good".'

What should we do? he asked, and answered: 'The left wing of the party must educate themselves' and 'must see capitalism as it really is.'

He followed this with a rhetorical question: 'Who are we to predict which way the Labour Party will go?'

The speaker was neither so vague nor indefinite, however, in his declarations on the Socialist Labour League. The League was a new party and an 'embarrassment'.

He defended the action of himself and his friends, supporters of 'Socialist Fight' in the Liverpool Trades Council. A few months ago, supported by the right wing, they put for-

ward an amendment to a clear resolution of protest against the proscription of the Socialist Labour League.

Gerry Healy remarked in his reply: 'Isn't it significant that while you can say the League is an embarrassment you found it no embarrassment to stand with Jack Braddock and the right wing on the Liverpool Trades Council?'

Joe Cubbin, a Liverpool docker, took up the point about 'never having it so good'.

'It reminds me of another well repeated slogan: The mint with a hole in,' he said. 'Both slogans are selling sweet nothing.'

'There is a growing feeling for struggle on the docks,' he continued, 'it is not dockers who are apathetic but their leaders. They judge the Labour Party by the trade union officials they see along the dock road.'

## Strengthen Clause 4

A railwayman declared that, even if the Guillebaud report was implemented immediately, the majority of railway workers covered by it would still be on low pay.

Increases in pay are linked to 'reorganization' which means redundancy. There is pressure from capitalist businessmen and a section of the Tory Party for the profitable assets of British Railways to be handed back to private ownership.

Gaitskell's retreat on nationalization comes at the same time as this attack on an already nationalized industry.

Miner Stan Boyd spoke of the need for solidarity between workers. This was an absolute necessity for miners at the present time.

He was followed by a Labour councillor; a bricklayer—who made the important point that in the struggle against the H-bomb and against racialism the decisive force was the working class—and by a dredgerman and an engineer.

The conference ended by endorsing the four points carried by the National Assembly last November. It carried a resolution (moved by a colonial brother) for freedom and complete political and national independence for the British Guianese people whose leaders are now in this country.

It passed a vigorous protest against the witch-hunt of the ETU. It called for the retention and strengthening of Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution and called for the fullest support from trade union branches and Labour Parties for the lobby of the NEC on March 16.

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## Constant Reader Old Acquaintance

The following quotation from James P. Cannon's 'History of American Trotskyism' (1944) is offered as comment on Peter Cadogan's letter in The Listener of March 10. Cannon is describing the American Trotskyist movement in the early 1930s.

'Many people came to us who had revolted against the Communist Party not for its bad sides, but for its good sides; that is, the discipline of the party, the subordination of the individual to the decisions of the party in current work. A lot of dilettantish petty-bourgeois minded people who couldn't stand any kind of discipline, who had either left the CP or been expelled from it, wanted, or rather thought they wanted, to become Trotskyists. Some of them joined the New York branch and brought with them that same prejudice against discipline in our organization. Many of the newcomers made a fetish of democracy. They were repelled so much by the bureaucratism of the Communist Party that they desired an organization without any discipline or centralization whatever.'

### Coy Connexion

The reference in last week's news item about the merger of the three Fascist organizations to the relationship between these people and certain elements in the Tory Party reminded me of a little-known fact about Henry Brooke, the Minister for Housing.

Between 1936 and 1939, while he was deputy director of the Conservative Research Department, Brooke was also chairman of 'Truth' Publishing Company. This fact he does not see fit to mention in his entry in 'Who's Who'. The reason may be that the weekly magazine 'Truth', founded in 1877 by the radical Henry Labouchere to expose scandals without fear or favour, possessed in the 1930s the reputation of specializing in a rather significant way in those scandals with which persons with Jewish names happened to be connected.

Careful people who like to know the sources of statements like this may like to note that Mr. Brooke's association with 'Truth' was mentioned in a letter by Horace B. Samuel to 'Time and Tide' for November 22, 1941, and this was reproduced in Claud Cockburn's newsletter 'The Week' for January 21, 1943.

### Anti-Fascism, 1914?

John Gollan, general secretary of Britain's Communist Party, told the Daily Worker rally at the Albert Hall that 'our rally takes place when, for the third time in history, we are faced with the menace of German militarism'.

When Khrushchev and Bulganin laid their wreath on the Cenotaph four years ago, with its tag referring to 'two wars against German aggression', a slight whirring noise was heard, possibly caused by a film camera or something. It gave an excuse, however, for one bright young man from the Foreign Office to remark to another: 'That's the vile German agent and defeatist Lenin turning in his grave'.

What gives a special flavour of cynicism to these retrospective whitewashings of the 1914-1918 war is that the Stalinists concerned get angry when other people do the same thing 'out of turn', so to speak, i.e., otherwise than in accordance with the current needs of Soviet diplomacy. Thus, in the January number of 'World Marxist Review', a Bulgarian Stalinist blames the Yugoslav 'revisionists' for having organized in 1958 a commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Allied break-through on the Salonika front, when imperial Germany's ally Bulgaria was defeated!

The John Gollan mentioned here is, by the way, the same as the young Communist of that name who was sent to jail in Edinburgh in 1931 for giving soldiers leaflets attacking British militarism.

### Rome and Moscow Again

Just because the Stalinist and Catholic Action 'machines' are at daggers drawn in the British trade union movement today one should not suppose that this must be so always and everywhere—at any rate so far as the Stalinists are concerned.

In the February number of 'World Marxist Review' an article on the preparations for the Italian Communist Party's national congress contains the following phrases:

'As to the Catholic movement, the draft theses point out that the main Catholic forces, as clearly revealed by the last congress of the Christian Democratic Party, are veering to new positions, insisting on decisive struggle against the monopolies and for far-reaching social changes. . . .

'The soundness of the traditional policy of our Party for agreement with the Catholic world is reaffirmed by the facts. . . . And since the victory of socialism in Italy will depend on the formation of a much broader alignment of forces than the alliance of the workers with the poor peasant strata, actions for agreement with the Catholic world must be envisaged as a component of the Italian way to socialism, as a long-term perspective of joint struggle and of alliances not only with the Catholic followers, but also with their organizations.'

BRIAN PEARCE

The following is reproduced from The Listener, March 10. A comment will be found in this week's Constant Reader column.

### Communism and British Intellectuals

Sir,—Mr. Alasdair MacIntyre's treatment of the subject of 'Communism and British Intellectuals' (The Listener, January 7) was, I thought, excellent. Three comments occur to me.

In the first place, most communists just did not know the truth about their own party. They never got near enough to the real leadership—concentrated in London—to find out what was really going on. So it was that for many years a high proportion of the best and most active socialists in Britain permitted themselves to be cut off from the main stream of socialism in this country which runs, of course, through the Labour Party. And for this happy release from militancy within their own ranks the leaders of the Labour Party were profoundly grateful to King Street, the Communist Party centre. Nevertheless, **no body of people in Britain** did more to keep the flag of socialism flying, albeit in a sectarian way, than the rank and file of the Communist Party, including the 'intellectuals'.

In the second place Mr. MacIntyre himself, to some extent, falls victim to Stalinist ideas in the very use of the word 'intellectual'. This term is incapable of definition. It was born and bred under Stalin as part of a theory of an élite required by the circumstances of a revolution betrayed. Marx himself, in the Communist Manifesto, wrote about the 'bourgeois intelligentsia'. The important thing about that label is that it identifies the class position of the people it describes.

Finally, it is quite wrong to give the impression that those who left the Communist Party found, and find, the answer in the Socialist Labour League. It did, at one stage, seem that this might be the case but Mr. MacIntyre knows perfectly well that a revolt has taken place in the S.L.L. just because that organization has demonstrated features identical to those of the Communist Party, and that a whole number of people like Peter Fryer and myself have either been expelled or quit in disgust.

Yours, etc.,

Cambridge.

PETER CADOGAN.

**CINEMA****The Angry Silence****False, Contemptuous, Insulting, says Benita Teper**

Never before have I been driven to loud protest from the secure anonymity of a cinema seat. Whatever the intentions of this production team (and the press, not especially well-qualified as moral arbiters, have been lauding their self-sacrifice, integrity and objectivity), they have created a film false, contemptuous and insulting.

Lest it be thought that being partisan can blind a Marxist to the artistic merits of this film, let us summarise the plot. Bespectacled professional agitator Travers makes sinister appearance in factory town. Though lean and hungry, does not partake of meal he buys shop-steward, Connolly. They're the villains. Together they plan their dirty deeds. Travers gives the line. Connolly clicks into action. Workers click into action. Works manager, ex-shop floor, is a reasonable fellow. So is the boss, in a capitalist sort of way. Production is of national importance, something to do with Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles. But workers are unreasonable sorts of fellows. Decide to strike. No one knows why. But Tom Curtis, he's the hero, he refuses to strike. Hero's motives? Well, his wife's pregnant, third time; pity, 'cause he wanted to buy a car. And then, suddenly, he wants to be different. What's the point of living if you can't be DIFFERENT? And anyway, the strike's about trivial issues, lavatory paper, and a closed shop, and it's unofficial, a wild cat. Well, he and a few other scabs cross the picket line. The police are around, but no horses or batons are visible. Then the 'teddy-boys'—they're a mean lot!—get rough with the scabs. Travers gets instructions from London by telephone. Conveys this to Connolly. Accept management's terms and go back. This is just a ruse—they're planning to bring the men out again. Then hero is persecuted, so is his family. Finally, he is assaulted by the 'teddy-boys' and loses an eye. His pal Joe, who had gone with the crowd, sees the light. He addresses the bellowing workers, who are refusing to listen to the union representative brought down in desperation by the boss. They don't know why they're screaming, just gibberish, or perhaps something about refusing to work with a scab. He makes them ashamed of what they've done to Curtis. Click, they're penitent. Travers makes sinister departure. The end.

**Witch-hunters' propaganda**

In the course of this melodrama, every banality about the sanctity of home life, every gimmick of the purity of children, and every sentimentality about the beautiful devoted wife, is excreted to win audience sympathy. But when we are shown the terrified boy in the lavatory, tarred by his school-friends because his father is a black-leg, this is a deplorable abuse of emotion. That critics, whose aesthetic sensibilities usually provide them with a scalpel, can fawn over this film and praise its mediocrity and crudity as artistic realism, is proof, if more is needed, that this film is propaganda. Small wonder that the falsifications have been lauded by the right-wing press—but why the equivocal approbation of Tribune?

Cardboard figures against a lurid backdrop, the workers as a class are depicted as vacuous, passive sheep, malleable in the hands of 'agitators'. When they do act, it is in the form of blind destruction. This woeful ignorance of the working-class in action, and of the role of a political organization's participation, verifies the New Chronicle's boast that their exposure of the awful truth was the inspiration of this film. Little wonder, either, that the film had the blessing of the unions.

The fallacy which this film assumes is that nonconformity is an absolute virtue. Betrayal can be the raw material of tragedy—think only of Arthur Miller's *The View From The Bridge*. But here in *The Angry Silence* we are asked to

accept scabbing not only as something to be understood, but as heroic. The refusal to designate scabbing as treachery is the quintessence of false humanism, and is a translation of Charles Taylor's assertion in 'Is Marxism a Humanism?': 'For this reason a political morality which contains the utter repudiation from human fellowship of the blackleg or scab . . . is not a socialist morality.'

But for us to be humanistic to the outsider in this context is to be inhuman to the majority, to the class. In capitalist society, abstract humanism results in a vicious circle as long as it is devoid of class content.

BENITA TEPER.

**LETTER****BOYCOTT WITCH-HUNTING PROPAGANDA**

So the class struggle is obsolete is it, Mr. Macmillan? Why, then, is every propaganda weapon of the capitalist class being turned at once against one target—the trades unions? Day in, day out, the Tory and Liberal press keeps up its barrage. Lately, television joined in with the Panorama 'investigation' into the ETU elections. Now we have those two bright hopes of the screen, the Boulting Brothers going into the attack with their new film, *The Angry Silence*. The object of this effort is to arouse sympathy for a blackleg worker sent to Coventry by his workmates for refusing to join in an unofficial strike.

One Tory newspaper calls it the Boulting Bros.' 'second anti-trade union film'; the first, of course, was *I'm All Right, Jack*. Judging by the reviews, no trick in the propaganda game has been missed in this second picture. The blackleg is shown as an honest, upright chap being persecuted for conscience sake; the strikers as unthinking morons, voting to stop work on some frivolous, half-understood pretext.

What happens when an attempt is made to attack capitalist institutions by similar means? We were shown that, in the swift assassination of *The World of Paul Slickey*, John Osborne's brave assault on the popular capitalist press. The critics ganged up to murder it by calling it poor, dull stuff. A similar campaign was launched at the start against *Look Back in Anger*—only the whole thing was ruined by a distinguished critic of Left-wing sympathies hailing it as the dramatic event of the decade.

It's quite a different story when the Boulting Twins bring out one of their knocks at trades unions. All the technique of a high-pressure advertising campaign is used to sell the picture to the public. First we get a chorus of rave notices from the critics. Thereafter it is puffed and boosted by stories of its glittering success as a money-spinner. We are told how everybody, but absolutely everybody, is flocking to the cinema to see it.

Surely both sides in the class struggle can play at this game? The working class lacks the propaganda weapons of press, television, theatre and cinema; but they have in their ranks the great mass of the customers. They pay the piper; they can call the tune. Let trade unionists show the Boulting Bros. in no uncertain terms that they are not amused by attacks on their institutions. Why not send *The Angry Silence* to Coventry along with its scab hero?

We can stop this kind of political propaganda dead in its tracks by showing it to be a financial flop.

SYBIL CRIMP.