

THE NEWSLETTER

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RIGHT WING THREATENS LABOUR SPLIT Plan to Smash the Party and Keep the Bomb

By G. HEALY

THE Labour Party may well be threatened with a split. The press statement by Sir Thomas Williamson and the decision of his union executive calling for action against Tribune follows on the heels of Woodrow Wyatt's vicious attack on Frank Cousins. Morgan Phillips suggests that the Parliamentary Labour Party should cut loose from conference decisions. And Hugh Gaitskell directs the offensive against the Left from behind the scenes.

This is not a series of ill-tempered rows on the part of leading personalities. Since the special conference last November, the Labour Party has been unable to resolve its internal crisis. The Right-wing want to get rid of the possibility of extending nationalization of the basic industries and continue their support for the Tories' foreign policy. But there is every indication that they will be decisively defeated on the H-bomb issue at the October conference this year.

In his press statement Sir Thomas Williamson clearly indicated that the issue upon which the Right-wing are prepared to split the Labour Party would be based on the unilateral renunciation of the H-bomb. **'The defence and safety of the country is paramount,'** he said, **'and all should realize that it is above party politics.'**

Here we have a brilliant example of how the Right-wing view democracy. In the years when Arthur Deakin and Will Lawther controlled the block vote on their behalf, the Right-wing howled incessantly about the sanctity of democratic decisions, but now that this block vote is swinging against them they are creating a situation that could split the party and the trade unions from top to bottom.

Gaitskell and the Right-wing are the real wreckers of the Labour Party. They are the real disruptors. What they want is not a Labour Party but an electoral machine whose policies are conducted by a professional caucus at the top, headed by Morgan Phillips. In their eyes the Parliamentary Labour Party must not be bound to any decision by the party. They want a type of Liberal Party that is responsible only to a select corps of Right-wing politicians.

The rank and file of the Labour Party and the trade unions must vigorously protest against any attempt to ban Tribune. Michael Foot is absolutely right when he says that the ultimatum of Sir Thomas Williamson should be thrown into the wastepaper basket. The decision to proscribe the Socialist Labour League was a preparation for the Gaitskells and Williamsons to begin an attack on Tribune and the ex-Bevanites.

The weakness on the Left is lack of a socialist policy. Valuable time has been lost since the special conference last November and still Tribune has not produced a policy that can unite and rally the Left against Gaitskell and company. On foreign affairs it supported the disastrous summit talks. Having fallen for the illusion that these talks could resolve the problem of peace, it retreated in confusion.

Labour's Left cannot resolve its problems within the confines of the Labour Party. The urgent task is to build unity with the trade union rank and file, but this can only be done by the adoption of a policy which ensures the extension of nationalization to all basic industries and supports all struggles for the improvement of wages and working conditions.

The struggle inside the Labour Party is a reflection of the class struggle. It can only be resolved by the Left-wing basing itself on the class struggle. Marxism is the theory of the class struggle. The Socialist Labour League as a Marxist organization is, therefore, very much part of the development which is now taking place inside the Labour Party. We shall fight for unity between ourselves and the Left-wing, organized around Tribune and Victory for Socialism. **Such united action is the only way to answer the threat of split from the Right-wing.**

Hoover Workers Strike Against Redundancy

By REG PERRY

The strike of 2,000 workers at Hoovers is a powerful blow in the struggle against sackings. With only 43 votes against they decided at a mass meeting today to stay out until the management agrees to keep all men on the books with full pay until alternative work is found. Bro. Moody, the Shop Stewards' Convenor, speaking on the resolution to stay out said: 'We have a solid strike here, brothers, sooner or later the management has got to weaken.' The men are determined that no worker shall be sacked, despite the attempts of the management to bribe the workers by a promise of a £74 payment this week-end when they are paid off.

Last year Hoovers made £11 million profits and only three weeks ago the management issued a statement to the shop stewards' committee saying there would be no redundancy in the near future. Their decision to sack 140 men at Perivale is, they say, the result of Tory policy. The workers are determined to fight redundancy and claim a part of that £11 million profit.

Contact is now being made by the stewards' committee with Hoover factories at Merthyr Tydfil and Cambuslang and the factory at High Wycombe is meeting this morning to decide whether to take strike action in support of the London men.

Workers at the Abbey Wood and Wandsworth Road works are also out in support.

THE NEWSLETTER

SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1960
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MR. ROBENS

THE appointment of Mr. Alfred Robens as the new chairman of the National Coal Board implements the long-standing decision of the British ruling class summed up in the phrase: 'You train them and we'll buy them.'

The Daily Express of June 14 reports that Labour Members of Parliament are saying about Mr. Macmillan's latest decision: 'first he beats us, then he recruits us.'

Everyone knows that Mr. Robens' appointment is for the purpose of dismantling the nationalized coal industry. Up to the time of writing, Mr. Robens has remained evasive about the appointment itself. Of course he knew in advance that he might be offered this job. He is also well aware that the Tories intend to attack the nationalized coal industry. He is equally aware that his job will be to implement Tory policy. Doesn't Mr. Robens provide the proof, if any is needed, that the present Right-wing in the Labour Party are following in the footsteps of James Ramsay MacDonald?

Recently Sir Hartley Shawcross excelled himself in the field of private enterprise by dropping his membership of the Labour Party and taking on some of the biggest jobs in big business circles. Here is the logic of Right-wing policy, a policy based on making capitalism work.

Since he entered the Labour Party Mr. Robens has been educated on this idea, so he finds no difficulty in transferring his allegiance to a position where he can do something about making capitalism work instead of talking about it.

We are informed that Mr. Gaitskell invited Mr. Robens to one of his luncheon parties which seem to put heart into people like Woodrow Wyatt. The Rt. Hon. Hugh endeavoured to persuade Mr. Robens not to accept the post. We are told that Mr. Robens would not commit himself. In other words, he intends to accept.



Mr. Gaitskell was in the front rank of those Right-wingers who demanded the proscription of the Socialist Labour League and the expulsion of its supporters in the Labour Party. We are confident that Mr. Gaitskell will not demand Mr. Robens' expulsion for undertaking to do the Tories' dirty work.

Is it not perfectly clear that a clean-up is necessary in the Labour Party? The present Right-wingers are no more socialist than Ramsay MacDonald was. Their policies have been proved bankrupt. They are responsible for the electoral defeats and now Mr. Robens' appointment as Coal Board chief can only do further harm to the integrity of the socialist movement.

This year's annual conference of the Labour Party must begin a struggle for a real socialist policy. In the course of this struggle we shall part company for ever with Right-wing careerists such as Alfred Robens.

A GURGLE FROM THE GUTTER

THE News Chronicle has become notorious as the most outstanding red-baiting, witch-hunting newspaper to be produced from Fleet Street. Those who control this newspaper obviously believe that the way to halt a declining circulation is to engage in a continuous smear campaign against members of the Communist Party and the Socialist Labour League. A classical example of this type of gutter journalism appeared in its issue of June 11.

A headline 'Strike Agitators Fight For Power' is followed by an article written by one Norman Lucas. It is a very carefully written article and the laws of libel were obviously taken into account by the author. He carefully avoids mentioning names, either of organizations or people. He speaks about the Trotskyist movement, but qualifies this with the false declaration that there are at least six different groups in that movement.

He speaks about a 'secret document' being examined by Scotland Yard, but he is careful not to quote from such a document. In fact he cannot, because no such document exists.



Of course the Socialist Labour League, which is obviously the organization he is aiming at, has produced many documents on various aspects of its policy. But there is nothing secret about them apart from the fact that some are produced for the information of members only.

We are aware, however, that in the struggle against a falling circulation the News Chronicle is prepared to deal with renegades from our movement to obtain some of our internal documents. This filthy trading is then decked out for readers of the News Chronicle in articles which talk about 'secrets' and 'sinister decisions'.

A more serious aspect of the article in question is that it alleges that two leading members of a Trotskyist organization were beaten up by thugs in an alley. We know of no such incident and we challenge the Chronicle to produce its evidence.

The Marxist movement is opposed in principle to the use of violence inside the Labour movement.

Another allegation concerns so-called threats of blackmail. If the Chronicle would drop its evasive language and name those who it alleges are responsible then steps could be taken to thrash this matter out. Here again the ethics of those who produce this paper can rise no higher than the sewer. We challenge them to produce the names of those responsible for these alleged threats.

'Steps have been taken', says the News Chronicle, 'to prevent frightened rebels from leaving the country.' What laughable rubbish! What steps have been taken and by whom? Of course we are not given any details. All the News Chronicle is concerned with is creating an atmosphere of horror amongst those of its readers who listen to such nonsense. Fortunately the Labour movement is used to this type of technique and will dismiss it with contempt, especially when the News Chronicle claims that the reason for these 'events' arises from the 'ambitions of certain members of the movement to become the supreme dictators of plans

to foment unrest in key industries including the docks, motor car firms, transport undertakings and public services.

The News Chronicle is engaged in a conspiracy to characterize every struggle for wages and conditions as a 'plot' behind which stand sinister Trotskyists, who are now engaged in gang warfare amongst themselves

for the right to create industrial strife. In this way the Chronicle hopes to draw the main attention away from the employers, who are the real cause of strikes and disturbances by engaging in a witch-hunt against militant trade unionists.

Here is the real reason for its smear campaign against British Trotskyists.

CONFERENCE DEBATE CONTINUED

The following is a further selection of some of the main contributions to the debate at the Second Annual Conference of the Socialist Labour League, June 4, 5, and 6. A report of the conference will shortly be produced in pamphlet form.

JACK GALE, from the Leeds branch said: 'We are not really talking about whether we should have an open party or not. We are really talking about the political method that the revolutionary organization needs.

'For the working class to overthrow capitalism it has to be an organized class with a revolutionary Marxist disciplined leadership at its head. We are talking about how you build the connections between this leadership and the working class.

'First of all, when Brian Behan began his very over-simplified, ultra-left idea of a slump was very quickly disproved, both the facts of a slump and also the mechanical idea that a slump automatically led to a radicalization of the class, that this automatically led to a heightening of class-consciousness, that this was automatically good for the revolutionary movement was disproved, not only in this discussion, but in many previous arguments throughout the history of the Marxist movement.

'Nobody really knows now whether he thinks there is going to be a slump or whether he doesn't. What he said was, "There's going to be a slump so we need an open party." So people showed him there wasn't going to be a slump, so he said: "All right, we'll forget that one. We still need an open party." And this was the method that he used.

'Now it is quite clear either that Behan looked around for an argument to justify an open party and found the slump, or that he still thinks there is going to be a slump. In either case from the point of view of political method, Comrade MacIntyre is on the spot, because he **doesn't** think there is going to be a slump.

'So if Brian Behan **does** think there is going to be a slump that means that the two of them agree on a particular political tactic, the open party, from completely different theoretical premises. And this is shown by the way they talk about class consciousness.

'Brian Behan said there is going to be a slump and this will mean the heightening of the consciousness of the class; we need the open party. MacIntyre says: capitalism is able to manoeuvre economically to hold down the consciousness of the class and therefore we need an open party. I am in Brian Behan's faction. This was the method.

'With this kind of method these two people will be unable to build anything between them and will be unable to stay together politically for any length of time. As a matter of fact the only thing that holds them together now is that they both have a common hostility to the revolutionary movement. That is their only real bond.

'Even if Behan has abandoned his original idea of the slump, this still puts Comrade MacIntyre in an embarrassing position around the method. Marxism is a scientific method of work and if you look at the method of work of Comrade Behan you see that what he has done, if he now rejects the slump, he simply looked out for an argument, tried it on for size, it didn't fit, so he threw it away and tried another one.

'And look at the way in which he presented his case for a slump. It consisted of a series of quotations, cut here and there, taking out the quotations from the Financial Times that fitted his case and rejecting those that didn't. That is what he did, and this shows—what? It shows a very irresponsible and slap-happy political method. And this

method is reflected in all sides of the argument; that he has an irresponsible attitude not only to economic perspectives, but to politics, to organization, to discipline and to comrades in the organization.'

CYRIL SMITH, who followed Jack Gale, said that he also wished to take up the question of method.

'What we are discussing here,' he said, 'is what the Marxist movement is really for. Consequently all the political questions and the whole history of the movement are really under review in the arguments we are having with the comrades. For us the role of Marxist organizations is to link together the historical long-term needs of the working class, the tasks that they have to perform in emancipating the human race from class society, with the day-to-day struggles and the experiences of the working class and of the members of that class as they find themselves at a particular period. This link is the job of Marxist theory and Marxist practice.

'The idea of transitional demands is the way in which we do this particular job today. We put forward demands and programmes which will, while starting from the level of consciousness that workers find themselves at today, take them forward to the idea of the need to overthrow capitalist society to take the power as a class, in order to transform society on socialist lines. They need to do that if they are to solve these problems which they recognize today.

'This conception of a link between the historic needs of the working class and the day-to-day struggles in which it takes part has two sides to it. On the one hand we have to take part because of the need to give leadership to the working class in those day-to-day struggles. Only the Marxists can really give this leadership and it is for this reason that we have to participate in mass movements, we have to put forward transitional demands and in particular in Britain at this stage we have to take part in the work of the Labour Party as the political expression of the working class.'

Comrade Smith then told the conference how the Labour Party regional organizer had told him that there would be no quarrel with the Trotskyists if only they would form their own party.

'They want us out of the way for the same reason that we want to be in there,' said Comrade Smith, 'because we think that in the political experience of the working class as it takes place in this important organization, the Labour Party, we have got to have Marxists there to take part and to give leadership in the development of the Left wing. On the other side we have to link together the theory of Marxism. Not only do we in our work in the Labour Party teach something to workers, we also learn something in the course of that work. We learn how to participate in daily struggles, how to take part in political discussion and how to put Marxist arguments over in a way which shows them to be directly relevant to the current problems.

'Related to this question of the link between the theory of Marxism and the day-to-day practice of the working-class movement is this question of leadership. A leadership embodies this unity of theory and practice. It is a collection of people who have been selected historically, who have constantly fought for a particular line of action, who have taken

(Continued on page 190)

MINERS ON THE MOVE

By G. GALE

DAY-SHIFT men at Upton Colliery were on strike again last week over wages. There have now been 51 strikes at this pit in the last 18 months. Two other Yorkshire pits—Allerton Bywater and Wheldale—also struck work last week over similar issues.

Such disputes are breaking out every week. Managements are constantly hacking away at the allowances which miners rely on to bring the out-of-date price lists up to a decent wage.

Huge stock-piles, and the closure of 53 pits last year, are encouraging the NCB to 'discipline' the miners, despite the fact that the mines would have made a profit of £13.1 million over the year, had it not been for nearly £37 million paid out in interest—and despite the fact that productivity over the year reached a record average for all workers of 1,332 tons per shift.

The miners are expected to suffer because of an accumulated deficit of £52 million since nationalization, yet in that time the industry has had to bear interest charges of £258 million gross, and has repaid £54 million of capital.

No wonder that, after 13 years of nationalization, miners are seething with discontent. After the war when industry was being rebuilt and record profits made, coal was in high demand, miners had full employment and contract workers could get relatively high wages in some coalfields.

During this period, the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers could have made a real drive for the seven-hour day, longer holidays, increased pensions for retired miners, and many other improvements in conditions. Instead, they leaned over backwards to co-operate in production drives. They encouraged miners to work long hours, including the Saturday shift. They allowed the Union to be tied to a compulsory arbitration agreement.

Miners were promised a bright future

At no time did they prepare their members for anything but the continued prosperity promised by the Coal Board ('There's a future for YOU in mining'). Just how secure this future was, was shown during the Betteshanger strike early this year. One of the young miners declared redundant there had had his picture circulated shortly before in an appeal to young men to join the industry.

The miners themselves were always suspicious of this 'unending prosperity'. That is why they always fought militantly for their rights, despite press sneers about '£40 per week miners'. And they know now that they are in the forefront of Tory Government's attempt to smash the working class, so that British capitalism can compete on the world market. They know that the government has stocked 50,000,000 tons of coal, in hopes of beating them in a showdown—they are not taken in by Sir James Bowman, NCB Chairman, who says that the stocks were part of a generous government plan to keep miners in work.

Words but no deeds

The miners know what is going on, and they have plenty of fighting spirit. But they lack both leadership and a policy around which to rally. None of the Union leaders—neither Right-wing nor Communist—offers either policy or action. More and more, militant miners are contrasting speeches of Communist Party candidates for union posts, with their lack of action when elected.

This vacuum in leadership is being filled by a militant movement coming from the ranks, and finding an expression in the paper 'The Miner', which is sold at pit tops in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Kent.

At a recent 'New Left' meeting Edward Thompson pooh-pohed the idea of rank and file committees as a way of mobilising workers in struggle against the employing class. There was nothing new in such committees, he said, they sprang up during industrial struggle. But the existence of a group of miners with their own paper and a clear political

line can put a new content into such committees. Then the kind of rank and file strike committee that recently sprang up at Upton (see Newsletter, June 4), need not fall away when the strike is over.

The miners' task

The men around The Miner have produced a pamphlet* 'The Miners' Task', which calls for the setting up of Councils of Action in all the main mining areas. In Yorkshire, for example, such councils—with representatives elected from each branch at pit head meetings—could be centred round Sheffield, Doncaster, Barnsley, Rotherham, Wakefield and Castleford.

Of course, such councils will not be formed overnight. If we could get what we want simply by proclamation, life would be much simpler than it is. It will take consistent hard work for a long time. But 'The Miners' Task'—the result of discussions amongst miners at Brodsworth, Upton and Wheldale collieries in Yorkshire, at Sandhole and Bradford collieries in Lancashire, and other pits in these counties and in the Notts and Derbyshire coalfields—is a good step on the way.

The pamphlet shows how futile it is to appeal to a Tory Government to adopt a Fuel Policy in the interests of the miners. It exposes the failure of the union leaders to lead and links that failure with the fact that these men have soft jobs for life—'Permanency breeds Complacency'.

The miners' biggest victory since the war was the Yorkshire Fillers' strike of 1955 which was continued in spite of official opposition. 'Who was right?' asks the pamphlet, 'The leaders who said "the past is dead" or the miners themselves who said "the leopard doesn't change his spots"?'

The pamphlet calls for class struggle by the union on these lines:

- (1) No permanent officials. Election every three years.
- (2) Immediate ratification of strikes and payment of strike pay, unless satisfactory negotiations are begun. Immediate revoking by the union of the existing negotiation and arbitration machinery.
- (3) Branch authority to settle disputes.
- (4) Disputes in any one colliery to be circularized, first throughout the panel, and then throughout the whole country for solidarity action.
- (5) The union to negotiate a pact of solidarity with the railway and engineering workers in nationalized industries.

But the leaders themselves will never introduce such policies. That is why rank and file councils of action are needed to campaign for the following policy:

- (1) Increased basic wages—£11 a week minimum for underground workers, £10 for surface men. A common fall-back of 60s. per shift for all contract men.
- (2) Seven-hour day underground, becoming six hours by 1962. Eight-hour day and 40-hour week for surface men, and a seven-hour day by 1962.
- (3) Three weeks' holiday with pay in 1960, four weeks by 1962.
- (4) Present bonus wage to be part of basic day wage.
- (5) Nationalization of coal distribution and an end to private contracting.

(6) No sackings.

(7) Retirement pension of £5 per week.

To the inevitable question 'How can we pay for all this?' the pamphlet points to the annual sums of up to £30 million paid in interest on compensation payments and loans, and demands the suspension of these payments. The pamphlet also demands further government aid, and points to the £2,300 million given by the government to private industry between 1951 and 1959.

To the argument that progress must mean the eventual end of coal-mining, 'The Miners' Task' replies: 'The path to that state of affairs must not be built over the bodies of unemployed miners and their families.'

Besides fighting for shorter hours, miners must demand full access to all accounts and plans, whenever the management declares any seam uneconomic. This will show that 'hundreds of people who have never done a day's work in their lives are making a good thing out of an industry that is supposed to belong to the nation.' The union should insist on full pay for all men whose work is stopped, and all transfers should be under the supervision of pit committees.

This pamphlet, written by miners for miners, constantly refers to co-operation with workers in other industries. It is not only an outspoken plan of action for the mining industry, it is a political document: 'You cannot change the "National Fuel Policy" without a change in political power in this country. Any policy for the miners must include a plan for taking the working class towards that power.'

This pamphlet will be sold in thousands in all the coalfields in Britain. There will, no doubt, be people standing on the sidelines who will complain that demands for examining the Coal Board's plans, supervision of transfers, suspension of interest payments, etc., are 'collaboration with the employers', and who will instead go into the coalfields and announce the formation of an 'open revolutionary party'.

We shall see who is most effective.

* Copies of 'The Miners' Task', price 3d., can be obtained from Jim Swan, editor of 'The Miner', 14 Park Avenue, Fails-worth, Manchester.

SHELL WORKERS DEFEND UNION ORGANIZATION ON SOUTH BANK

By Reg Perry

Two hundred carpenters and scaffolders stopped work last week on the Shell Mex site at Waterloo when McAlpines sacked Bro. McIntosh (scaffolders' steward) and Bro. Scaffarty (carpenters' steward).

Once again the building workers were fighting on the South Bank against attacks on their trade union organization. The two stewards were included in a gang of 30 men to be laid off. The carpenters decided to fight for the two stewards to be retained, because they considered this to be a disguised attempt to weaken their trade union organization.

Within one hour of the strike action Durante, McAlpine's labour officer, agreed to reinstate McIntosh, but stubbornly refused to take back Bro. Scaffarty, the chippies' steward.

'Bro. Scaffarty was sacked because he was an active steward and had made a big contribution to the union strength on the job', said Bro. Griffin, chairman of the Stewards' Committee. He went on to describe the long fight to maintain wages and conditions that the Stewards had had over the past few months with McAlpines. 'During that time Bro. Scaffarty has won increases in targets and has improved the conditions of the carpenters in his section, even though he saw McAlpines sack another carpenters' steward only a few weeks ago,' he said.

The strike began on the Friday. On Monday, Kennedy, district organizer for the ASW told a meeting of the strikers that he was contacting the Regional Secretary, who was

away at the Federation conference, for instructions. He said: 'It's quite possible that I shall have to tell you to return to work for negotiations to begin. In the meantime, it's your decision.'

When asked if he would stand by the statement he had made when the stewards were elected at the start of the job that he 'would see that the stewards are protected,' Kennedy replied, 'I don't like catch questions, so I won't answer that.'

Bro. Whiton, plumbers' steward, said that in order to win they needed to bring all McAlpines' workers out, bricklayers and labourers. 'If you can do that then the sub-contractors will stand by you.'

Faced with the statement of Kennedy the strikers decided by a handful of votes to return to work on the Tuesday so that the Stewards could meet the management. Collections are being taken on the site to maintain Bro. Scaffarty until he is reinstated. The stewards are determined that if he is not reinstated then the whole site will take action.

Thanking them for support, Scaffarty said: 'Go in and make more stewards, continue the fight because with McAlpine you never know who's next on the list. Once he succeeds in smashing the union on the job he'll have you working for a handful of rice.'

LTE MAINTENANCE MEN STRIKE

By Our Industrial Correspondent

Forty-five maintenance engineers, members of the AEU, at the Lots Road power station at Chelsea, came out on strike last week in a determined effort to win a £2 wage increase.

In an interview with The Newsletter, Bro. Wallace, chairman of the shop stewards, gave a background of 18 months' exasperating negotiations over their claim.

'We have taken this claim through every stage of negotiating procedure, but have received no offer. The claim was tabled over 18 months ago, and has now reached a dead end. After the remarks of Carron at the AEU conference about werewolves we sent our payslips to the head office of the union for him to do something. They were sent back and our claim referred back to the same negotiating procedure.'

The strikers, 43 of whom are skilled engineers, receive a basic wage of £11 8s. 7d. a week. This is £2 10s. below the wage of workers employed in other departments of the London Transport Executive. Lift and escalator engineers at Chiswick repair sheds which is supplied with electricity by the Lots Road station, get a basic of £13 4s. 7d., while labourers there also get £12.

Bro. Beasleigh (secretary of the strike committee and Convenor) told me: 'Our patience is exhausted. The lads are so solid we don't need pickets. We have told the management that we shall stay out until our wages are brought up to the average earned by the other maintenance workers.'

Lots Road station provides power for part of London underground and for the rolling stock repair sheds of the LTE at Chiswick and Acton. If any of the machines breakdown it will immediately effect these sectors.

The strike at Lots Road is part of the same struggle with which other power stations are faced, and which led to the token stoppages last year. The resistance of the management side has shown the bankruptcy of the negotiating procedure, which has served to hold back the level of wages in the industry. United action with the Lots Road engineers can prepare the way for the power workers' claim now.

SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

Marxism and the 'Theory of Increasing Misery'

On SUNDAY, JUNE 19, 1960, at 7.30 p.m.

186 Clapham High Street, S.W.4

Speaker: JOHN ARCHER

Admission: 6d.

CONFERENCE DEBATE—(Continued from page 187)

part not only in the day-to-day work, but also in the theoretical arguments, the faction fights, the splits, the fusions which make up the history of the Marxist movement.

'I have heard members of the open party faction argue on the basis of "Well, there are some members around and we want to get a few more members", as if that was the job of building a movement. But a movement is first of all its leadership, first of all these ideas and only then does the question of membership come up. The members of the revolutionary movement are not just a collection of bodies, they are people who have taken part in the organizations of the working class and who have been attracted to the movement on the basis of its ideas and who then begin a process of development into leaders. It is this conception of building a movement which is completely opposed to the ideas put forward in favour of the open party, which are based on short-cut, get-rich-quick ideas of where to get a few more bodies to build a movement.'

In opening the second day of the conference **BOB SHAW**, a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Labour League, spoke about Alasdair MacIntyre's argument regarding a bourgeoisified section of the British working class.

'At the time of last year's conference we were treated to an attack by Mr. Moulder, of the hosiery workers' union, because the Socialist Labour League had intervened in a struggle by a very conservative section of workers, the knitters, who raised a struggle against a drop in their wages from £30 to £25 a week. According to MacIntyre's arguments these "bourgeoisified" workers should not have taken up the struggle because they had gone over to support for Toryism.

'But here we had a struggle developing in a section of workers who were well-paid, in an industry which was not in a situation of slump but where the employers were preparing to develop an export drive and therefore wanted an agreement with the trade union to cut wages and bring in new machines to cut costs. The Socialist Labour League was attacked because we intervened in the situation to expose the manoeuvres of the trade union leadership with the employers to bring down wages.

'What we are saying about the whole question of the Labour Party is this: that our task is to raise in the working class demands which relate to the need of the class in a given situation. The demand for suspension of compensation arises from the whole need of the miners and the railwaymen in relation to the struggle which now takes place in the pits, in the railway yards and so on. It arises from the fact that the miner now feels the whole weight of capitalist exploitation in the form of interest payments. He cannot break out of this situation without raising a struggle against interest payments. This must be linked up with the question of control. Control in pits which are due for closure, control by miners demanding in the first place that they investigate the books of the Coal Board and the pit managers, and secondly, that the redundancy of miners and of railwaymen should be

investigated by miners' committees, by railwaymen's committees and that no miner and no railwayman should be sent down the road until there has been a complete investigation, full compensation, maintenance of pay rates, and so on.

'This is a struggle which the miners themselves must raise and relate to the whole development of the struggle of the working class. The miner himself needs to raise the whole question of compensation and say that the payment of interest to the ex-shareholders, to the banks, must be taken off his back.'

ALAN STANLEY, from Leicester, opposed the open party proposal. He said: 'In discussion with members of the minority faction I have been told that they are the Left and we are the Right. I would disagree with that. They are the Right because they start from an opportunist premise. They draw certain sectarian conclusions from this, but the basic premise is that of the spontaneous development of the working class, and the logic of that is not an open party. The logic of that is no party. Because if the working class is going to develop spontaneously, if it is going to become revolutionary spontaneously, then what do you need a party for?'

'This goes right through Behan's thinking. The question that there is a slump and workers become revolutionary, militant; the question that the reformists are exposed at the point of production. I think this reflects Comrade Behan's contempt for political struggle, a contempt for political ideas.'

Comrade Stanley said that this was shown in the attacks on intellectuals, the attacks on people who deal in ideas. If the working class are going to come to socialism spontaneously then an intellectual is something superfluous to the movement.

'How does Comrade Behan arrive at the idea of the open party?' Comrade Stanley continued. 'If the working class develops spontaneously then there is no need to use the slogans of the transitional programme with the struggles of the working class. The party is reduced to a little sectarian group, something which lies like a net and waits there for the workers to become militant.

'When you attack this need to fuse transitional demands with the struggle of the working class, when you look on the programme as something pure, holy and immaculate, as comrades from the minority faction do, this is idealism.

'It is no accident that some members of the minority faction have violated discipline. Democratic centralism is a form of organization for a combat party. It is not a form of organization for no party at all. It is not a form of organization for a sect. If your logic leads you to no party, then you promptly come up against the question of democratic centralism. There is some truth in what some people say about the tyranny in the League, because if you don't want to be a revolutionary and you are a member of a revolutionary organization, then as far as you are concerned, there is a terrible tyranny.'

Constant Reader | Point of Production

'OUR History' is the general title of the series of quarterly pamphlets on questions of British working-class history published by the History Group of the Communist Party. The latest in the series—No. 18, 'Sheffield Shop Stewards, 1916-1918', price 1s. 6d.—contains much information about an important episode in the crisis in the British labour movement out of which the Communist Party itself emerged. District and branch minute books, a rank-and-file paper and the memories of old-timers have been drawn upon to good purpose.

What struck me as particularly significant when I read this pamphlet was the role played by political factors in the

broader sense, as against 'purely economic', point-of-production questions, in the great movement it describes. In the first place, it was the political commitment of the official trade union leadership to the prosecution of the war that prevented them from manoeuvring as they were able to do after 1918, in such a way as to keep the confidence of big sections of the working class (remember the rise in the post-war period of Ernie Bevin, 'the dockers' KC'). This politically-conditioned vacuum was filled by the shop stewards.

Secondly, it was attempts to conscript engineering workers for front-line army service that produced the big response, in the country-wide threat to strike in October-November, 1916, which forced the Government to release the Halifax fitter Leonard Hargreaves from the army. And behind the

'feeling on this matter lay a long period of propaganda against the war carried on by politically-conscious elements. The pamphlet quotes a resolution of the Sheffield District Committee of the ASE passed as early as August, 1915, which called for the quashing of a prison sentence on a local Labour Party activist 'arising out of conversations with wounded soldiers' in a military hospital. And three days before the Hargreaves' case broke, Sheffield ASE No. 12 branch resolved in favour of steps to secure 'a just and lasting peace'.

The February, 1917, revolution in Russia had a deep effect on the Sheffield workers, even before the famous convention held at Leeds in June (to which No. 12 Branch sent two delegates) for the purpose of forming 'workers' and soldiers' councils'. During the strike against dilution, in the spring of 1917, the Sheffield Telegraph commented: 'The Russian revolution has for the moment upset the mental balance of some of these youthful social and industrial reconstructors. . . .'

The history of the Sheffield movement, like that of the earlier movement on the Clyde, deserves careful study by today's militants, for the examples provided of the interweaving of economic, social and political issues—and above all for the tragic demonstration of how the degree of actual achievement of a rank-and-file industrial movement depends on the role played in it by a well-organized political vanguard, free from both opportunism and sectarianism. A good book to start with is J. T. Murphy's 'Preparing for Power' (1934).

Operation rewrite

Alas, when Communist Party spokesmen deal with the period of 'our history' subsequent to about 1925 they lose respect both for truth and for their readers. There is a fresh instance of this in R. P. Dutt's 'notes of the month' in the June issue of Labour Monthly. 'British Labour', he writes, 'once advocated a positive policy for peace, expressed by none more ably than the late Arthur Henderson, but now forgotten. That policy was collective security.'

Now, the policy of 'collective security' (that is, of support for alliances of certain imperialist states against others, allegedly 'in defence of peace') was put over on the Labour Party in a bitter struggle during 1933 and 1934, and in those days the attitude taken up by the Communists was very different from what Dutt's present reference would suggest to the innocent reader. In the Labour Monthly for September, 1934, Dutt himself congratulated the London Labour League of Youth for **rejecting** the 'collective security' policy. In the November issue 'R. F. Andrews' (Andrew Rothstein) wrote that the triumph of Henderson's line at the Southport conference 'placed the Labour Party machine at the disposal of the British Government when next it engages in a world war' and called on socialists to 'oppose the Labour Party's conception of the League as a "collective peace system".'

In May, 1935, the Soviet Government's alliance with France—or rather the 'Stalin-Laval communiqué' which accompanied it, calling on French workers to stop fighting French militarism—introduced confusion into Communist thinking on the war question, and rendered powerful aid to the Right-wing in the Labour Party. A certain Hugh Gaitskell was able to write in Plebs for July of that year that the Soviet Government were now 'supporting . . . the Labour Party's proposals'. Nevertheless, Dutt's book 'Fascism and Social Revolution' came out in a second edition in June, 1935, with this passage unchanged: 'Bourgeois pacifism, preaching the conception of "collective security" within imperialism, and in the name of this conception proclaiming support of the war-preparations and war-measures of the various imperialist states, becomes an indispensable part of the war-preparations of imperialism. The success of the fight against war depends on the strength of the mass struggle, and cannot be separated from the fight against imperialism, against modern capitalism.'

From Lenin to Henderson

'The change in Communist Party policy took place quite sharply at a Central Committee meeting at the beginning of

August, 1935, and the sharpness of the turn can be shown by means of two quotations from the same writer, Reg Bishop, in the same paper, International Press Conference (predecessor of today's World News). In the issue of June 22 Bishop criticized a memorandum issued by the London Trades Council for its support of 'the so-called "collective peace system"'. ('There is nothing here of the working-class fight against war.') In the issue of August 31, Bishop announced that 'the demand of the British workers, as voiced by the Communist Party, is that the British Government immediately associate itself with the collective peace system'.

There is no disgrace in the mere fact of changing one's policy—but one ought not to conceal the fact that there has been a change, and indeed one ought to explain why. This the Communist Party seems now quite incapable of doing, which is of course, why it cannot write its own history. And, if Khrushchev gets really serious about the war of 1914-18 having been a war 'against German militarism', I wonder how long British Communists will be allowed to publish honest accounts even of the anti-war struggles in the Allied camp in that period, such as the pamphlet discussed at the beginning of this column?

P.S.: Have I missed something, or is Dutt not a pioneer in Stalinist circles in thus openly 'rehabilitating' Henderson? In Volume 10 of the Large Soviet Encyclopedia, second edition, published in 1952, the article on Henderson, though giving no details of him between his ceasing in 1933 to be president of the world disarmament conference and his death in 1935, says: 'Henderson's entire activity marks him as an agent of the bourgeoisie in the workers' movement, a betrayer of the working class and an enemy of the USSR.'

BRIAN PEARCE.

LETTER

YUGOSLAVIA AND STALIN'S DIPLOMACY

A comrade has pointed out a mis-statement in my article 'More Summits? What Past Summits Produced.' I wrote of Tito's forces in 1944 that 'they earned Stalin's bitter hostility by refusing to let him give away part of their country to the British imperialists'. This was in connection with Stalin's agreement that Greece should be wholly a sphere of British influence.

The deal which Tito's forces frustrated was not that Yugoslavia should be partitioned, but that Western interests and policies should be represented in equal proportions with the Communist Party in the Yugoslav Government.

I am grateful for this correction. The general point however stands, and indeed is strengthened, that the Yugoslav revolution, under the leadership of Tito and the Communist Party, frustrated Stalin's deal with Churchill and thereby earned his hostility.

JOHN ARCHER.

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What Policy can Kenya's Workers and Peasants follow?

In writing these articles James Baker has had the assistance of a young African Worker who was present in Kenya during the 'emergency'.

Japanese People Oppose American Treaty

By W. HUNTER

THE Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Japan decided last week to 'resort to force' if the Government rams through the ratification of the United States-Japanese 'Treaty of Mutual Co-operation and Security'.

The treaty guarantees to American land, air and naval forces the use of land and facilities in Japan, and it ratifies Japan's place as the main American base in the Far East against China and the Soviet Union. Opposition to the treaty is intense and widespread among the Japanese people, and 20,000,000 people, almost half the adult population, have signed a petition against it.

To push the treaty through the Lower House of the Diet—the Japanese Parliament—Prime Minister Nomusuke Kishi called a session of the Diet, but notified only those in favour of the ratification of the treaty. Eisenhower included Japan in his tour of Far East bases with the idea of assisting Kishi to overcome the massive opposition in Japan, and American Government spokesmen are declaring that he will still arrive in Tokyo on June 19 in spite of the humiliation suffered by his Press Secretary Mr. James Hagerty last Friday.

Hagerty had to be rescued by an American Army helicopter from a hostile crowd at Tokyo airport, but when he got his breath back Mr. Hagerty declared that 'only a minority of Japanese people opposed the pact'. In this he was echoing Mr. Herter, the American Secretary of State, who two days previously had told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington that demonstrations in Japan against the treaty had no public backing.

Weeks of ferment and political crisis in Japan give the lie to both Herter and Hagerty. The General Council of Japanese Trade Unions has called for a programme of daily demonstrations until Eisenhower arrives on June 19. On May 20 police dragged MPs who were demanding abolition of the treaty, and calling for a general election, out of the Parliament buildings.

Eight days of anti-government demonstrations culminated on May 26 in country-wide demonstrations estimated to include 2,000,000 people. On the same day 200,000 people besieged the Diet buildings in Tokyo. Reporting this demonstration, the 'Economist' (May 28) stated that active in the demonstrations were 'bourgeois housewives' and 'lower middle-class shop keepers'—an indication of the breadth of the opposition.

On June 4 over four million workers went on protest strike. Transport was paralysed. A giant demonstration led by students and workers in Tokyo again demanded the resignation of the Kishi Government and non-ratification of the pact. MPs of the opposition Socialist Party have refused to attend sessions of Parliament in protest against the way the Government forced the Treaty through the Lower House, a conference of the Socialist Party has unanimously decided to submit the resignations of all 125 MPs in the Lower House and the party is boycotting meetings of the special Upper House Committee formed to discuss the Treaty.

Opposition on all sides

Even the 'Democratic Socialist Party' formed by a right-wing minority which split from the Socialist Party last October (criticizing its 'Marxist tendencies' and 'class party system'), opposes the Security Pact and military alliances. And the mountain of anger against the treaty can be measured by the dissension in Kishi's party itself.

'Several leading Liberal Democratic politicians failed to support Mr. Kishi in pushing ratification of the treaty through Parliament' reported John Campbell in the 'Observer' of May 29.

Feelings against the treaty were further inflamed last month when it was revealed that planes from Atsugi in Japan had been used for espionage flights over China and the Soviet Union.

While, at the end of May, the Hiroshima City Medical

Association reported that cancer of many kinds—not just leukaemia—is four times more common among citizens of Hiroshima who were close to the explosion of 1945 than among other people.

'Security? Remember Hiroshima' read placards which students and workers thrust under the nose of Hagerty.

Hagerty and Eisenhower are representatives of the American ruling class which singled out the populations of Nagasaki and Hiroshima to be the human guinea pigs of the 1945 atom bomb experiment, with the excuse of winning a war already won.

The great struggle in Japan led by the students, the unions and the Socialist Party must be supported by British labour.

The right-wing of the British Labour Party will no doubt condemn the Japanese Socialist Party in the same way as Woodrow Wyatt condemned the Japanese students a fortnight ago in 'Reynolds News'.

'Democracy is not making much advance,' he wrote, 'when governments are deposed, or have their policies changed by mass demonstrations—rather than through the ballot box.'

Japanese socialists must, then, allow themselves to be reduced to radio active dust, 'democratically' and 'constitutionally'. Kishi is not fighting for 'democracy', he is fighting for American imperialism and for the big trusts—Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo—brought back to their pre-war power under American occupation and linked with American capital.

It was mass demonstrations and strikes embracing four million workers in Japan which protected democratic rights against Kishi, in autumn 1958, when he was forced to withdraw his bill which would have revived the police powers which existed in the pre-1945 regime.

In fact, Wyatt's advice has nothing to do with democracy. Wyatt opposes the Japanese students because he is a fervent supporter of the war alliances whether they mean bases in Japan or bases in Britain.

But every Left-winger in the British Labour Movement must salute the students, members of the Socialist Party, trade unionists and all the forces fighting against the security treaty in Japan.

Victory for Socialism and 'Tribune' could give a real spur to the anti-war struggle by inviting representatives of the Japanese Socialist Party over here to campaign for a joint struggle of British and Japanese labour against the war-alliances. Every trade union branch and every local Labour Party must demand that the National Council of Labour gives full support to the Japanese people in their struggle.

SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

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a report of its second Whitsun congress—its debates—its policy decisions for the Labour and Trade Union movement.

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