

THE NEWSLETTER

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DEFEND THE ETU AGAINST FLEET ST AND KING ST!

By PETER FRYER

THE capitalist Press attack on the Electrical Trades Union is part of the general offensive by the employing class and its Tory government against the workers' living standards, conditions and organizations. The employers hope to divide the workers, smash their will to fight, hamstring their organizations, quench their militancy, push down the purchasing power of wages, create a reserve army of unemployed and so rule the roost in industry for years to come.

There is nothing the capitalist class would like better at this time than to be able to draw the teeth of a very important and powerful trade union, so that it can attack with impunity the standards of that union's members in a series of key industries.

And the efforts to discredit and weaken one particular union would, if successful, be merely a prelude to attacks on other unions. This was made clear by The Times on December 4:

'Statutory regulation of public companies is considerable and there are also public powers of supervision and investigation into their affairs. One of the possible results of the present controversy might well be a suggestion that the State should acquire similar rights in respect of trade unions.'

While the Government may consider it inexpedient at the moment to appoint a tribunal—Macmillan told the Commons on December 5 that other methods should be tried 'before more drastic action is considered'—there is no doubt that Mr. F. W. Farye-Jones, Tory M.P. for Watford, was expressing the secret hopes of many of his colleagues when he demanded it.

No one in the Labour movement will be naïve enough to suppose that the capitalist Press or the Tory M.P.s are any friends of democracy in the ETU. The Press Lords and Fleet Street editors are not elected, and are responsible to nothing but their own guilt-edged consciences when they whip up campaigns against workers' organizations.

Moreover this same Press which weeps crocodile tears about the absence of democracy in the ETU stoutly defends the bureaucratic practices of the Right-wing trade union leaders when these leaders are fighting communism or militancy or in any way resisting pressure from their rank and file.

The great hope of the capitalist class in relation to the ETU is that its own Right-wing agents (they may not be conscious agents, but they act in the employers' interests nevertheless) will be able to replace Frank Haxell and Frank Foulkes.

These Right-wingers are now organizing an all-out effort to retake the union. Behind them stands the sinister news-sheet Iris, whose finances appear to be unlimited and whose supporters include lawyers, business men and renegades from the working-class movement.

From Woodrow Wyatt to the Maritime House headquarters of this periodical, all the reactionary elements are crawling from under their stones in the hope of exploiting the situation in the ETU for their own dark purposes.

Militant socialists and rank-and-file Communist Party members alike, regardless of their differences on other questions, must join forces and rally to expose these people, to explain to their fellow-members the class purpose and class basis of the attack, to defend and protect their union.



BUT the defence of the ETU as a trade union by no means implies the defence of its present leaders or of their corrupt Stalinist policies and practices.

In standing up for their union in this crisis militant socialists
(Continued overleaf)

INDUSTRY

JOINERS ON THE MAURITANIA WIN STRIKE

Joiners on the luxury liner Mauritania have won a strike against sackings.

When J. D. Insulation, sub-contractors, sacked 25 of their 90 joiners the rest stopped the job immediately, insisting that there be no sackings before Christmas (the ship leaves Liverpool on January 15 after refitting).

Within three days the firm agreed to reinstate all the dismissed men, and guaranteed jobs for all the workers until Christmas.

HIGGINS AND CATTLE STRIKE CALLED OFF

The Higgins and Cattle strike, reported in The Newsletter last week, was called off by two votes. The Electrical Trades Union executive did not see fit to make it official.

NEW PAMPHLET FOR SALE ON THE JOB

The latest Newsletter pamphlet, 'Into Battle', is published today. It consists of articles by Brian Behan, Bob Potter, Tom Kemp and The Newsletter's industrial and economic correspondents.

Reprinted from the issues of November 23 and 30, these articles discuss the building, transport and railway industries and the economic situation. The commentary of November 23, 'Eve of Battle' is also included.

Copies of 'Into Battle' can be obtained from The Newsletter, 180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4, price threepence plus postage.

TOTTENHAM WORKERS BACK RAILWAYMEN

TOTTENHAM Trades Council at its November meeting passed a resolution condemning the Tory Government's attack on the working-class movement and the policy of rejecting in advance the railwaymen's wage claims.

It called on the Trades Union Congress to give a lead to the entire movement and support to the utmost any action the railwaymen took to enforce their claim.

Only reply of the TUC was their usual postcard of acknowledgment. So at its December meeting the Trades Council decided to ask the TUC what action they propose to take if they agree with the resolution—and if they disagree, to say where they disagree.

Other Labour movement activities in Tottenham include:

OPPOSITION to the planned 'reorganization' of the local fire brigade, which involves the resiting of the main fire station to a dangerous road and the closing down of a sub-station;

ESTABLISHMENT of a tenants' defence organization to resist Rent Act evictions.

COMMENTARY

THE BUSMEN'S ANSWER

THE gloves are off. The London busmen have struck the first blow, and it is a resounding one. The executive of the Transport and General Workers' Union advised them to let their 25s. per week wage claim go to arbitration. By 105 votes to 25 the delegates rejected this advice. Their decision gathers up all the main threads of the present industrial situation. What should be the workers' attitude to arbitration following the Tory Government's 'declaration of war'? What should be their attitude to leaders who try to persuade them to accept arbitration? How can the workers win their battles when their leaders do not want to fight? To these questions the busmen have given answers sufficiently clear and pointed to humiliate the leaders who urged arbitration on them, and to send the first shudders about a possible London bus strike in the New Year down the spines of the Fleet Street editors.

The last thing Mr Cousins and his colleagues want is a London bus strike. Rather than see their members embark on a struggle they would send them through a long-drawn-out procedure which the Government has already thrown on the junk heap, with the possibility of winning a few dismal and derisory coppers at most. The TGWU leaders misjudged the temper of the busmen if they expected them to have any faith in such a course. The *Manchester Guardian* misjudges their temper when it pleads with Mr Cousins to 'hold the busmen in control'. Mr Cousins knows his duty perfectly well without such well-meaning reminders, but . . . but it doesn't seem to work so well now. The workers have had a bellyful of the sell-outs and strike-breaking for which the arbitration machinery is now no more than a tattered and sleazy veil. The time has come for every section of the workers to declare, as the busmen have declared, that arbitration today is a phoney. The time has come for struggles to be fought out, if the employers and their government are not to gain victory after victory at the workers' expense.

In each industry the militants should show their workmates what the busmen's decision means, why it was the only possible decision, why the busmen's struggle should be supported and their example followed.



THE battle is beginning. If only the workers were half as well prepared as their enemies, no one could be in any doubt about the result. Unfortunately they are not, and nothing is to be gained by pretending otherwise. The will to resist is there, the hostility to arbitration and to leaders who recommend it. Given a vigorous lead, there is no section which will not follow. But all too commonly the lead is lacking, because union leaders are either too blind, too frightened or too treacherous to take their members into a fight. The task that therefore devolves on the Left in industry is colossal. But it has to be tackled, if the movement is not to be thrown back in confusion, if the gains of the past twelve years are to be retained and added to, if the Tory Government is to be smashed.

DEFEND THE ETU (Continued from front page)

and communists in the ETU are not called upon in any way to justify the ideas of Haxell, Foulkes and Co. nor to whitewash their deeds.

Their task is to defend the union as a weapon in the struggle against the employers. Despite all their humbug and high-falutin' talk, the Stalinists are unable to do this, because in practice Haxell and Foulkes play into the hands of the Press Lords.

Take for instance the Daily Worker article of December 3, entitled 'The ETU Minds its own Business Best'. This was an attempt to confuse the rank and file, to identify Haxell and Foulkes with the ETU.

These leaders, claimed George Sinfield, 'were the centre of an overwhelming demonstration of confidence and support' at the union's annual conference last June.

On the contrary, this conference proved conclusively that the

HAVOCABULARY

You don't call it 'slump' in the USA. Just as a stroke must be called an 'occlusion', so—according to Time—the polite terms for 'slump' include:

Recession, rolling readjustment, healthy readjustment, slowdown, shakedown, downturn, downtrend, sidewise movement, plateau, leveling off, period of hesitation, soft period, temporary cyclical swing in long-term growth, polka-dot prosperity with the spots getting bigger.

President Eisenhower's own euphemism for slump is 'a breather'. Pardon us while we have a stomach laugh.

majority of the rank and file, communists included, refused to endorse the Stalinist lies about Hungary.

The conference sent a message of fraternal support to the workers of Hungary in the shape of resolutions:

OPPOSING 'the attempt by Russian troops to suppress the workers' revolution in Hungary';

DEMANDING 'that all Russian forces be withdrawn from Hungary unless their presence there is agreed to by a government freely elected by the Hungarians';

PLEDGING 'our support to the Hungarian people in their efforts to obtain a government of their own choice, free from outside intervention'; and

DEMANDING that 'those imprisoned or deported for their part in the fight for Hungarian independence be released and returned to their homes'.

On the question of Hungary—and on many other matters—the Daily Worker, the Communist Party leaders and Frank Haxell and Frank Foulkes are no more custodians of democracy and truth than is the capitalist Press.

The Daily Worker and King Street, in fact, are playing the same role in relation to the ETU as they played in relation to the Soviet Union during the years of Stalin's terror.

Everyone who criticized the Soviet leaders from a Marxist point of view, in the belief that they were betraying the real interests of the Russian workers, was instantly branded an agent of imperialism, an enemy of the USSR, a fascist spy or a wrecker.

Stalinism and the capitalist Press in reality helped each other in those days. Neither had the interests of the Russian people at heart.

Needless to say, when there is something rotten inside a trade union its enemies will seize on this for their own ends. Isn't it precisely this kind of attack that the employing class makes on the Soviet Union? And don't bureaucrats of all kinds make it easier for the capitalists to launch this kind of attack?

The ETU leaders and the big business newspapers are feeding from each other's table.

Both want things to stay as they are. Both want to preserve their privileges—the bosses their profits, the bureaucrats their big salaries, expenses and cars.

By their anti-democratic actions Haxell and Foulkes are discrediting communism, discrediting the ETU and stoking the furnaces of the professional communist-baiters.

And the more furious the Press campaign rages the more secure from Left-wing criticism do Haxell and Foulkes feel.

The Left-wing critics must not be fooled. They have a job to do—the job of rescuing a great trade union and transforming it into a genuine instrument of working-class advance.

If they are true to socialist principles then neither Fleet Street froth nor King Street cock-and-bull stories will be able to divert them from this task.



THE crisis inside the ETU is only partly a matter of election procedure. Basically it is a *political* crisis, a reflection of the crisis of Stalinism, of its inability to cope with the truth that it sought for so long to hide.

Les Cannon resigned from the Communist Party over Hungary, and from that day on the Communist Party machine has done everything it could to destroy Cannon.

He was sacked from his post at the union's Esher college on economy grounds. But the fact that the rest of the leadership continue to draw what many members consider handsome salaries and profligate expenses suggests that economy may not be the only reason.

Many think that Cannon was sacked because he had broken from the Communist Party, just as Frank Chappell, who has got on to the E.C., did not receive the full support of the diehards in the course of his election because he is a critic.

The real battle inside the ETU is the one between genuine Lefts, socialists and communists alike, and the Stalinist leaders, who put their own interests and the interests of King Street above the interests of their members.

The capitalist Press is trying to cash in on this battle. Now

it is perfectly true that capitalism is the main enemy of every worker; but from this principle it follows that where a leadership is playing into the hands of the capitalist class by chopping down critics in the way Cannon has been chopped down, those who have the interests of their union at heart must come out in its defence in their own way.



TRUE to the usual methods of a bureaucracy when its position is challenged, the leaders of the ETU—again most ably assisted by the capitalist Press!—have done their utmost to divert attention from the political issues at stake.

It is common knowledge in the trade union movement that there is less democracy inside the ETU now than there was before the Stalinists took control ten years ago.

This is not said to praise the old leadership. It simply shows that the Stalinists cannot face the political and administrative problems raised by the Left-wing opposition to them; and this is the fundamental reason for the recent tightening-up of the rules, which further narrows the rights of the ordinary members.

The provisions limiting members' right of appeal and forbidding the circularization of other members are clearly aimed at minimizing opposition and criticism from militants.

The question is: does such whittling away of democracy within a trade union strengthen or weaken that union in its fight against the employers?

Does it enhance the name of communism or discredit it when this whittling away of democracy is the work of leaders who style themselves communists?

(Continued overleaf)

Behind the Headlines

A bank chief cables . . . sell." And behind those few words the activities of the Stock Exchange are spotlighted, the mysterious Stock Exchange which only recently admitted the public to view its activities through a glass screen, and which is so hidebound in prejudice that women are even yet excluded from its precincts.

The London Stock Exchange dates from 1802. Its members, highly vetted and selected, are either brokers or jobbers. Brokers act as the direct contact between clients wishing to buy and sell, and work on a commission basis.

Jobbers, however, are the more interesting species, for their income is derived not from commission but out of their own slick manipulation of transactions—from the difference between buying and selling prices. And usually they specialize in only a limited number of securities.

BUYERS AND SELLERS. Indicative of how they work is the fact that when asked for a quotation jobbers give two, one for buyers and the other for sellers!

The basis of speculation on the Exchange, of course, lies in the rise and fall of stocks and shares. But if that is the basis, what gives it remarkable possibilities is the fact that transactions take place on roughly a three weeks credit system. And how convenient this is.

For it becomes possible, as with the so called 'bears', to sell stock which, in point of fact, they haven't actually got, and for which they haven't in any case paid, and, by creating a buyer's market, lowering the price.

BEARS AND BULLS. Then, lo and behold, when the prices have been sufficiently lowered, the 'bear' buys up the depreciated stock in order to meet the demands of his earlier clients.

The same transaction can be conducted in reverse. The 'bull' buys shares—and, needless to say, does not pay for them. He gambles on a rise so that he can sell and make a nice little profit before the account closes.

So it becomes a mad scramble for these gentlemen to cash in on the prevailing political and economic situations. And it seems they are not at all adverse on occasion to spreading a few stories about a particular set of shares.

Not so long ago gold mine shares dropped very considerably because a rumour started that uranium, that by-product of gold mining, was being superseded for atomic purposes by hydrogen. Of course, it was just a rumour—but somebody cleaned up.

THROGMORTON JUNGLE. And the Bank Rate? Well, as a result of the 7 per cent. being fixed, oil shares fell by the equivalent of £100 million. Or take the Syrian crisis recently, when, following speeches by Khrushchev, B.P. shares dropped 9s. each.

What is clear is that the Stock Exchange operates in a completely jungle fashion—devil take the hindmost. The aristocrats of Throgmorton Street are only concerned with their own immediate interests.

Perhaps William Johnston Keswick, director of the Bank of England and also chairman of Matheson and Company, referring to the sale of gilt-edged securities, may be quoted:

'Again it is anti-British and derogatory to sterling but on balance . . . it makes sense to me.'

It makes sense to members of the Stock Exchange all right. But it hardly makes sense to the working class.

James Hutcheson

DEFEND THE ETU (Continued from previous page)

When the capitalist Press is concentrating on the lie that genuine communism is synonymous with the destruction of democracy, it is nothing short of criminal for the ETU leaders to bring grist to the witch-hunters' mill in this way.

The old argument of many rank-and-file workers to Communist Party members used to be: 'You chaps don't do badly on the job, but how do we know that if we voted you into power we could ever vote you out?'

The recent actions of Haxell and Foulkes have strengthened this argument. They are determined to keep hold of the union till the last possible second, even if in the process the rights of ordinary members are mutilated, the term 'communist' is made to stink in the nostrils of the men in the workshops, and the union is gravely weakened as a weapon of working-class defence.

Socialist principles abandoned

In their fight against Cannon, the ETU leaders have abandoned socialist principles. There was never any attempt to conduct a political struggle against him, to combat his ideas or answer his arguments.

Nor did anyone dare to suggest that the moment he turned in his Communist Party membership card his abilities (praised to the skies not long before) suddenly and mysteriously vanished.

Haxell and Foulkes fought with the weapon of **procedure**, ruling that the votes of a number of branches were invalid because of breaches of rule.

And the answer to Haxell and Foulkes is not to be found in the rule book, but in the fact that the position Cannon adopted on Hungary is now the ETU's official position!

The E.C. took a thrashing at the 1957 conference, and the stand the dissidents took on Hungary was vindicated. The E.C. was exposed as a clique fighting and intriguing against its own membership.

Even if one were to accept that the ETU leaders are entirely correct about the infringements of rule—and in fact they are far from having established this—their conduct is still wholly against the traditions and principles of trade unionism and of communism.

Anxious and perplexed

Let it be noted that the rank-and-file members who have been disfranchised are neither dupes of the capitalist Press nor cunning Right-wingers. They are ordinary electricians working on the job, and they are anxious and perplexed about the state into which their union seems to have been brought.

A genuine communist or socialist leadership, faced with accusations such as have been made against Haxell and Foulkes, faced with the confusion there undoubtedly is from one end of the ETU to the other, faced with the overriding need to strengthen members' morale for the important class battles ahead, would not have hesitated to hold a fresh election instead of skulking behind the rule book.

A genuine communist or socialist leadership would not just pay lip-service to the principle that the members are the ultimate arbiter: they would put that principle into effect, so cutting the ground from under the Pr-ss Lords' feet.

The game the ETU leaders are playing has nothing in common with the conduct of a leadership claiming to be socialist, communist, militant or revolutionary. It is a dirty game—no less dirty in its own way than the Press attacks on the ETU.



A SERIOUS feature of the present crisis in the ETU is its internal situation. By their actions in this as in other respects the leaders are forfeiting the confidence of the rank and file.

After ten years of Stalinist husbandry the ETU's finances are at one of the lowest ebbs in its history.

No militant could seriously object to the raising of the membership dues, if this is necessary to keep the union in good trim as an organization defending workers against employers.

But this immediately raises another consideration: is the

full-time official who indulges in anti-democratic practices, and thereby discredits socialism and his trade union, worth the salary he is receiving?

There was a time when boasts were heard from certain ETU members that their union provided the best motor-cars for its officials. Perhaps this is a proper thing to boast about, perhaps not.

At all events, it is high time these officials who want to take higher contributions from their members at a time when real wages are falling should be asked what sacrifices they propose to make.

In the ETU, as in every other union, the full-time officials should not receive higher wages than those earned by skilled workmen in that particular trade, plus reasonable out-of-pocket expenses.

While it is true that the ETU has spent a great deal of money on strike pay, it is no less true that many of its members would willingly make big sacrifices during strikes—as the dockers do—if only the leaders would share the sacrifices.

So long as the ETU leaders play the time-honoured Right-wing game by living like any knighted trade union bureaucrat they weaken the union and bring shame on the party to which they belong.



IT is the argument of this article that the anti-communist, anti-socialist policies of the present ETU leadership are simply feeding the capitalist Press with ammunition for the attack on trade unionism.

Week by week the Stalinists in control of the ETU, while posing as uncompromising champions of progress and militancy, in deeds betray the true interests of their members, and turn their backs on the Marxist principles, ideas and methods they pretend to uphold.

Indeed, how can those who are unable to take a single independent step in criticism of Moscow ever defend trade unionism in the way it should be defended?

The ETU leaders will make a show of defending trade unionism and fighting the class struggle only to the extent that King Street deems it expedient. And King Street will very soon deem it inexpedient if Moscow gives the word.

You have only to look at King Street's sudden switch to support for British manufacture of the hydrogen bomb to see how its policies are determined, not by the interests of the British workers, but by the twists and turns of a tiny ruling group in the Kremlin.

Take another example: the way the Daily Worker recently covered up for the Right-wing policies of the TUC General Council. The TUC Economic Council issues a statement clearly paving the way for compromise with the Tory Government.

The Manchester Guardian headlines its account of this statement: 'TUC's Hint of Wage Restraint'. The Daily Worker presents it as 'TUC Blast at Government Policy'.

Wage-freeze agreement

Again, in March 1957 the ETU leaders found it possible to come to the same agreement for a year's wage-freeze with the contracting industry employers as the Right-wing leadership of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions came to with their employers.

Large numbers of sincere communists inside the ETU are profoundly disturbed by the dictatorial and bureaucratic actions of their leaders. For years loyalty forbade their making an open fight against these leaders. Criticisms were made within the party, but Pollitt, Dutt and Gollan paid no heed.

Now it can no longer be denied that the full responsibility for the state of affairs in the ETU rests squarely on the shoulders of the top leadership of the Communist Party.

At first sight it would seem that sheer expediency and common sense would force them to put the affairs of a union they control in better order, rather than give a paper such as the New Statesman a chance to comment (December 7):

'The communists . . . should . . . realize that if they make the ETU into a CP racket they will not only damage this one union. There are already signs, both in Parliament and the Press, that "boss-rule" can provide the Tories with an

excuse for legislation which would gravely damage the trade union movement?

But the main consideration of King Street, just as in the case of the party fraction in the Fire Brigades Union several months ago, is the maintenance of its power at all costs, even when the instruments through which that power is exercised are unsatisfactory, corrupt or discredited.

The feelings, warnings, questions and protests of the rank and file are not heeded. Just as ordinary communists returning from spells of work with accounts of terrible wrongs and abuses in eastern Europe were told 'Keep your mouth shut', so honest communists inside Stalinist-dominated trade unions in Britain have been told exactly the same.

The net result has been the dwindling and ultimate extinction of Communist Party prestige, and the demoralization of communists who put loyalty to socialist principles above loyalty to leaders.

Restore members' confidence

The time has come to restore the confidence of Electrical Trades Union members in their union's leadership; to restore democratic rights and a sound financial position; to end once and for all the rigging of elections and other abuses.

Communist and Labour Party militants should get together inside the branches of the union and seriously discuss what needs to be done.

Speedy action is imperative. If Frank Haxell and Frank Foulkes go on 'defending' the union in the way they are doing, and the rank and file do not intervene, then the ETU will fall like a ripe plum into the hands of the Right wing.

What measures should be taken to restore rank-and-file confidence and make the ETU a truly militant and truly democratic weapon in the hands of Britain's electricians?

1 Let a national committee of inquiry, democratically elected by the rank and file of the ETU, investigate the entire machinery of the union and all recent allegations and report back to the branches.

The rank and file must have a say in the present crisis. They must refuse to be fobbed off with the rule book and formalistic talk about rule infringements. They alone can put their house in order.

Pending a report from a committee of inquiry of the kind here proposed, the recent amendments to rule should be suspended.

The committee's terms of reference should include the activities and financial policy of the present ETU leadership since it took control of the union.

If everything is in order, and all its actions have been above board, then this leadership has nothing whatever to fear, and everything to gain, from such a democratic inquiry (especially since it claims that Frazer won the election even with the votes of the disqualified branches counted).

2 Let the paid officials of the ETU immediately issue a declaration that from now on all salaries will be cut to the ordinary wage of a skilled electrician, and all expenses cut to the necessary out-of-pocket expenses entailed in the day-to-day business of the union (which do not include the purchase of spirits or luxury hotel accommodation).

3 Let the election for which Cannon and Frazer were candidates be held afresh, so that confidence in the union's electoral machinery can be restored and the attacks of the capitalist Press can be replied to in the most effective way: in democratic deeds.



FOR the moment the Stalinist leaders of the ETU may be able to amend the rules in their favour. But it is not so easy for them to manipulate the minds of the rank and file.

The members' determination to win better wages and to win the fight against unemployment does not depend on the past, present or future policies or actions of their leaders.

In the struggle to defend and improve conditions the membership comes into conflict, not only with the employers, but at the same time with the rules and with those who sit in their Hayes Court offices making and interpreting the rules.

The ETU has a reputation for militancy, but this has nothing to do with its Stalinist leadership. The credit for militancy belongs to the rank and file. They can display the same militancy now in defending their union against Press attacks—which involves defending it against Stalinist mismanagement.

And when the rank-and-file electricians have straightened out their union's affairs both the employers and the capitalist Press will really have something to worry about!

FORUMS

PROMISING WORK IN MOST LONDON AREAS

At the quarterly meeting of London Socialist Forums on December 6 Richard Goss was elected secretary and Harry Kendall chairman of the London Liaison Committee.

Dissatisfaction with the decisions of the London conference was expressed by some representatives, but a resolution seeking a recall conference to reconsider these decisions received only two votes out of twelve.

A review of Forums in the London district showed promising work in most areas with new groups started or being planned. The London conference appeared to have had no adverse effect upon the work of groups—indeed, two new Forums had been founded since the conference.

Plans were made to help local Forums and to open new ones, to hold a central London meeting in the New Year and a national conference after Easter on 'nationalization and workers' control', to be preceded by discussions in the groups and the publication of reports of these.

It was agreed that news of Forum activities and plans should be published in The Newsletter and other organs of the socialist Press.

Cunvin's Column

NODS AND WINKS

While this is neither the time nor the proper place to comment on the inquiry into the Bank Rate leak, what a lesson we are getting in how the ruling class effect their control over the State.

Cabinet Ministers, highly-placed Civil Servants and the directors of the great financial houses all mix together in one big social and economic whirl.

There is really no need for anyone deliberately to give information away. A careless word dropped at the Club, a frown on the Ministerial face at a grouse shoot—that is more than enough for the financial advisers of big business to draw the necessary conclusions and to decide whether the stock market is 'bull' or 'bear'.

TWO LESSONS FOR LABOUR

This danger of members of the Government getting mixed up socially with the ruling class is, unfortunately, one to which the Labour leaders are not immune.

They must take heed of the pitfalls involved and draw the necessary conclusion—stay away from 'their' hospitality!

Second important lesson is that when Labour returns to power after the next election it should remove from the boards of the nationalized enterprises all those people who are so intimately associated with big business.

From the evidence already heard by the inquiry it is quite clear that these people will almost always place their own financial interests first even if their actions are 'anti-British and derogatory to sterling'.

PALACE BEEF AND CARRON

One of the current roles of the monarchy is to help in the task of seducing Labour leaders from their allegiance to

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socialism.

Latest device is for the Queen and her husband to give 'private' dinner parties to which they invite all sorts of people. The list usually includes one or two Labour Party or trade union leaders, representatives of finance capital and the Church.

Among recent guests at Buckingham Palace have been Nye Bevan and Bill Carron. These little jaunts will not add to their stature among the rank-and-file of the movement. Here's my advice to Nye and Bill—stay away from the Palace, comrades!

ATTLEE AND THE LORDS

During the debate on the reform of the House of Lords, Lord Attlee said: 'We think it is as much an anomaly as the hereditary principle of Nepal, in which every member of the Royal family is born a major-general.'

If (his is what the noble Earl really thinks of hereditary titles and the House of Lords, then what on earth made him accept that ridiculous title?

And while it may be true that members of the British Royal family don't get born with military titles, they don't have to live many years before they have conferred on them a vast variety of army, navy and air force ranks.

An anomaly, Earl Attlee?

TORIES AND HOUSING

Tory concern about housing the people has been thoroughly exposed in Richmond (Surrey). A vast estate which was left to the parish of Richmond to be used for the benefit of the poor of the parish is being handed over by the Tory council to speculators for development.

This notwithstanding a considerable waiting list for council houses and the fact that the Tories in the past have

always excused their failure to build more houses by claiming that there was no land available to build on.

Richmond Council also took a step back to Bumbledom by passing a by-law which will permit the Council to put the bailiffs in where tenants are in arrears with the rent.

KING STREET AND UNITY

One of the Surrey Labour Parties is conducting an interesting experiment. Inspired by the Socialist Forum idea some of its wards have started 'Open Forums', meeting in private houses, to which all sections of the movement are welcome.

Several Communist Party members as well as ex-members and fellow-travellers have been attending these forums, and discussions have ranged from the Labour Party conference to the Marxist theory of the State.

At the last of these Forums, which took place just a week after The Newsletter published the information that King Street was taking disciplinary action against communists associating with the Forum movement, not a single one of the Communist Party regulars was present—though one or two had telephoned the organizer a day or two before to confirm that the meeting was taking place.

Are Gollan and Co. extending the ban to these Labour Party meetings? What are they afraid of?

In this column George Cunvin will be writing regularly on Labour Party affairs and activities. Every reader can help him present a full picture of the party by sending in Labour Party news from the localities. Write to George Cunvin, The Newsletter, 180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.

SCIENCE

BLUEPRINT TO PRODUCT—BY COMPUTER

By J. H. Bradley

THE control of machine tools by automatic means, now in its infancy, promises to be a development of greater significance than nuclear energy.

The essential of the matter is that motions of the tool—cutting, stamping, polishing etc.—are reported to an electronic computer, which guides them in a set pattern.

This pattern is cut so as to produce the required article, the material being passed from one tool (or from one station, in a transfer machine) to another as necessary.

All instructions are fed in as punched paper tape, punched cards, magnetic tape, pulses from a teleprinter line, or eventually as mere blueprints!

Probably blueprints will always be read by a central service computer, which will issue instructions by teleprinter to 'slave' computers all over the world for recording on magnetic tape.

Enormous complexity and cost

Blueprint readers must be of enormous complexity and cost, simply because no known type of computer can work in terms of human concepts like lines and angles, but only in terms of points.

Instructions will specify that each tool must start from a certain point and follow such-and-such a curve for such-and-such a distance.

Alternatively various points will be specified through which the tool must pass, and the computer will fill in the gaps in a reasonable manner.

Each piece of work is measured immediately the operation, or set of operations, is finished, before any other piece of work is put through that stage.

In this way corrections can be made for the wear of tools, and badly worn tools can be replaced automatically. Sub-standard work or breakdowns will stop the machine and summon the service engineers.

Another computer will be looking after stocks of raw material, spares, tools, and counting, invoicing and dispatching completed work.

Orders for new stocks will go out by teleprinter line, and daily production figures will be available at a few seconds' notice.

In case of difficulty the computer will contact the central computer service by teleprinter line, and initiate a search of the 'library' of instructions (reels of magnetic tape) to cover such contingencies.

If nothing can be found, the human authorities will receive a printed statement of the difficulty.

Short runs of goods can become nearly as cheap as the mass-produced articles, without corresponding transport costs. Modifications to designs can be made merely by inserting a new blueprint.

Eventually a great deal of the design work will be turned over to computers, which can solve all problems of the optimum size, shape, finish, material, etc. of most articles far faster than human beings can.

These ideas could take a hundred years to realize, or three decades. If they were treated like radar and atomic bombs during the war, ten years would be enough.

The potential increase in productivity is so large that work ought to be pursued with the utmost speed.

CONTACTS BETWEEN ARMY AND WORKERS

Khrushchev's efforts, in connexion with his struggle against Zhukov, to put an end to the isolation of the Army from the rest of Soviet society have led to a revival, in form at least, of the organized contacts between soldiers and workers which were a feature of Soviet life until the late twenties.

Under the heading 'Unbreakable Bond between Army and People' Pravda of November 29 reported a visit by Donets miners to one Army unit and a visit by another to a food-processing factory somewhere in Transcaucasia.

A Polish Philosopher Attacked for 'Revisionism' Asks 'What is Socialism?'

IN the current issue of *Marxism Today*, the theoretical and discussion journal of the British Communist Party, there is a lengthy attack by Gomulka against the 'revisionists' in the Polish United Workers' Party, and notably against the young communist philosopher Kolakowski.

Since *Marxism Today* will probably not have space to give its readers an opportunity to see any of the writings for which Kolakowski has been attacked, we print below a translation of one of his articles, 'What is Socialism?'

WE will tell you what socialism is. But first of all we must tell you what it is not. On this question we used to have different ideas from those we have today.

Well then, socialism is not:

- A society in which somebody who has committed no crime stays at home waiting for the police.
 - A society in which it is a crime to be the brother, the sister, the son or the wife of a criminal.
 - A society in which someone is unhappy because he says what he thinks and someone else is happy because he does not say what he thinks.
 - A society where it is better for people not to think at all.
 - A society in which somebody is unhappy because he is a Jew, and somebody else is better off because he is not a Jew.
 - A State whose soldiers are first to enter another country's territory.
 - A State where anybody who praises the leaders is in a better position.
 - A State where one can be condemned without judgment.
 - A society whose leaders appoint themselves to their posts.
 - A society where ten people live in one single room.
 - A society which has illiteracy and smallpox epidemics.
 - A State which does not allow foreign travel.
 - A State which has more spies than nurses, and more people in prison than in hospital.
 - A State in which the number of Civil Servants grows more quickly than the number of workers.
 - A State where one is forced to resort to lies.
 - A State where one is obliged to be a thief.
 - A State where one is forced to resort to crime.
 - A State which owns colonies.
 - A State whose geography is cursed by its neighbours.
 - A State which produces excellent jet planes and bad shoes.
 - A State where cowards live better than brave people.
 - A State in which lawyers almost always agree with the public prosecutor.
- Empire, tyranny, oligarchy, bureaucracy.

- A State in which the majority of people seek in God a consolation for their misery.
- A State which bestows prizes on pseudo-authors and knows more about painting than painters do.
- A nation which oppresses other nations.
- A State which demands that all its citizens shall have the same opinion about philosophy, foreign policy, economics, literature and morals.
- A State where the Government lays down the rights of the citizens, but where the citizens do not lay down the rights of the Government.
- A State where one is responsible for one's ancestors.
- A State where part of the population receives salaries forty times higher than those of others.
- A single, isolated State.
- A group of backward countries.
- A State which uses nationalist slogans.
- A State whose rulers think there is nothing more important than their own power.

- A State which allies itself with crime and then adapts its ideology to this alliance.
- A State which would like to see the political opinions of the whole of humanity determined by its Foreign Minister.
- A State which finds it difficult to establish a distinction between enslaving and liberating.
- A State where racialist agitators enjoy complete freedom.
- A State where there is private ownership of the means of production.
- A State which does not easily distinguish between social revolution and armed aggression.
- A State which does not believe that people must be happier under socialism than elsewhere.
- A society which is sadness itself.
- A caste system.
- A State which always knows the will of the people before it asks them.
- A State which can ill-treat them with impunity.



- A State in which a historical perspective is important.
 - A State in which philosophers and writers always say the same things as generals and Ministers say, but always after them.
 - A State where the plans of cities are State secrets.
 - A State where election results can always be foreseen.
 - A State where forced labour exists.
 - A State where feudal ties exist.
 - A State which holds a world monopoly of scientific progress.
 - A State where a whole population can be moved elsewhere against its will.
 - A State where workers have no influence on the Government.
 - A State which believes that it alone can save humanity.
 - A State which considers that it is always right.
 - A State in which history is subordinated to politics.
 - A State whose citizens cannot read the greatest works of present-day literature, nor see great modern paintings, nor hear great modern music.
 - A State which is always satisfied with itself.
 - A State which declares that the world is very complicated, but in fact thinks that it is very simple.
 - A State where one must be in pain for a long time before one can get a doctor.
 - A society which has beggars.
 - A State which thinks that everyone is in love with it when in reality the opposite is the case.
 - A State which is convinced that nobody in the world can think of anything better.
 - A State which does not realize that it is hated as much as it is feared.
 - A State which decides who can criticize it and how.
 - A State where every day one can deny what one asserted yesterday and still believe that nothing has changed.
 - A State which does not like to see its citizens read too many newspapers.
 - A State where some donkeys rank as scientists.
- This is the first part. But now we are going to tell you what socialism is.
- All right, then! Socialism is a good thing.**

LETTERS | Keeping Councillors on their Toes

URSULA VERITY'S account of a selection conference for a Labour Party municipal candidate and the result thereof takes me back to my first selection conference in 1952—but in our case the results were far better.

Saltley Ward members were dissatisfied with one of their existing councillors. Not only was he a Right-winger but, far worse, he missed advice bureaux without arranging for substitutes and left people standing around in the cold waiting and not knowing that he was not coming.

On average he attended only one ward meeting out of four and generally treated the ward members with contempt.

Members rose in revolt

In 1949 the Right wing were strong enough to force the Ward to readopt him, but in 1952 the majority of ward members rose in revolt and forced a selection conference, to which the retiring councillor, two others and myself were invited.

On the day of the selection conference the secretary received back the invitation he had sent the retiring councillor with one word written across it: 'DECLINE'.

Even then the councillor's supporters, who were thunder-struck, tried a fast one. At the conference they moved that it be postponed for two weeks so that they could persuade the councillor, 'who had given yeoman service' etc. etc. to attend.

The chairman ruled this out of order and so did the City Labour Party representative, who said the councillor had not even given a reason for 'declining' the invitation.

The conference took place and I was declared elected on the first ballot. Now here is the epilogue.

Saltley members were always of the opinion that all councillors should automatically attend a selection conference so that members might always have a choice.

At least three invited

Straight after the 1952 selection conference we carried this principle into effect, carrying a resolution which lays down that every year there shall be a selection conference to which at least three candidates shall be invited.

Since 1952 all three ward councillors in turn have appeared in front of the ward members, with two other candidates present each time.

The councillors have always been re-selected on the ballot vote. We know then that we have the willing support of the members. Our knowledge that every three years we must give a full accounting to the members makes each of us, I believe, conscientious in our work at all times.

One or two other wards in Birmingham have adopted this procedure. I believe all wards should adopt it. The result would be far more progressive Labour groups and far fewer dictatorial, smug or conceited aldermen or fossilized councillors.

Birmingham 9

Coun. H. Finch

LET'S COMBAT THIS 'INFLATION' IDEA

CONGRATULATIONS on your fine editorial of December 7. Your proposals about the role that THE NEWSLETTER will play in the struggle will, I believe, improve the paper's contribution to working-class journalism.

May I suggest that our first task is to reject, with factual evidence, the idea of 'inflation', i.e., too much money relative to the volume of goods available for sale?

It has already taken root in the Labour movement, and I have been surprised at the number of members who have accepted this.

Many withdraw this acceptance when their attention is drawn to the well-stocked shops, and the efforts of traders to sell their goods, but for some the propaganda is greater than the obvious.

What do The Newsletter and its readers think?

London, S.E.25

H. Taylor

THE WAY THE MARXIST LEFT SHOULD GO

THERE are those who seem to think that all the Marxist Left has to do to answer the Right-wing perversions of Socialist theory is to beware of any New Thinking, preach the old incantations, and whistle for a classic slump in which the classic textbook formulas might work.

Some comrades suppose this to be the only true Marxism. I suspect that this would leave the Trotskyists as the only Marxists: a pity, since the Trotskyite tendency developed under the same historical conditions as Stalinism.

Each has some of the opposite virtues and vices of the other... a nice identity of opposites, as we Marxists would say, and both tied up with the past history of a country vastly different from our own.

There are, however, two welcome developments of the British Marxist Left. Events since the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union have led to a certain amount of positive self-criticism not only among communists but also in Trotskyist circles.

Many ex-communists and 'Liberal' Trotskyists show signs of moving away from their twin orthodoxies on the road to a Marxist political science developed in British conditions.

Historic labels growing obscure

Some of the historic labels are already growing obscure, though not quite so obscure as our grandchildren will find them.

In the second place, largely outside the Trotskyist-communist tradition, a number of Marxist or near-Marxist groups and individuals have, in the last two years, begun a serious and scientific attempt to evaluate recent history, to analyse contemporary capitalist society, and to develop a body of Marxist ideas and arguments of considerable value in combating Right-wing pseudo-socialists and rehabilitating Marxism in Britain.

I have in mind the many valuable contributions which have appeared in Universities and Left Review, The New Reasoner, and in Forum movement publications, and also many stimulating ideas from G. D. H. Cole and others associated with the International Society for Socialist Studies.

True, the Hornsey amendments have blocked the growth of the Forum movement as a serious political influence.

It appears, however, that the emergent 'Forum point of view' will continue to be developed by a proposed 'New Left' group of Forum comrades and others, and we may hope that this group will do something to strengthen the lines of communication between the different Marxist and other Left groupings, rather than simply add another sect to the many already in being.

Our 'Old Believers' will correctly object that many of the contributions I have in mind 'lack Marxist clarity' in more than a few respects.

Certainly, however, in their stimulating attack on a wide range of problems, such contributions have done more to win respect for Marxism among progressive and militant British socialists than all the 100 per cent. 'ideologically correct' mixtures-as-before served up by the Trotskyites and the Stalinists in the same period.

We have a long way to go before we can free ourselves from the Marxist distortions which were the global consequence of the epic struggle to build socialism in a backward and isolated country—both Stalinism and its Trotskyist reflexes. I think, however, that we are making a fair start.

Harlow (Essex)

Ken Jones

OLD AND TRUE

'Hideous things will be proclaimed and advocated in the name of Leninism. All the traitors to socialist principles will endeavour to hide themselves behind the shadow of the man who was bigger than formulas.' (R. P. Dutt, Labour Monthly, March 1924, p. 137)