

# THE NEWSLETTER

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## ELECTIONITIS — BUT NO REAL CHALLENGE

From WILLIAM HUNTER

SCARBOROUGH

**BEVAN** told the eve-of-conference rally that Labour had now got a policy and a leader, and he hoped this week would see a united socialist movement and a new lead to Britain.

But the concern and frustration of the rank and file at the lack of distinctive socialist policies, and at the absence of a fighting challenge to the Tory Government, have not been removed by the new get-together at the top.

The national executive wanted a pre-election rally like the 1951 conference, under the theme of 'Unity for a General Election'.

But by Wednesday delegates were commenting that outside the conference hall there was much less discussion than in previous years.

And the reason for this was clear. Conference had not been getting down to the real issues.

### No priority for these

The problems that concern Labour supporters are those which arise from the Tory offensive: growing unemployment, the decline in the standard of living, the H-bomb and the threat of war.

But these have not been given priority on the agenda. The leaders have chosen subjects on which they expected least controversy.

'Learning to Live', 'Prosper the Plough' and 'Plan for Progress' have been taken first, with the hope that the rank and file would be lost in a fog of phrases.

The resolutions on the H-bomb have been pushed to the end of the conference, to be taken in a general debate on an NEC policy statement issued just as conference began, covering other topics as well as the bomb.

When Gaitskell moved the emergency resolution on Quemoy on Monday morning the vote was taken immediately. In fact the whole of Monday morning passed without a rank-and-file delegate on the rostrum, except for the mover of the reference back of the standing orders' committee report.

### Afraid to release energies

Significant was the refusal of the platform to entertain the Salford emergency resolution asking for a campaign against war over Quemoy. The leaders are afraid to release the energies of the rank and file.

The NEC secured a narrow majority on public schools only with the help of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. The vote at the conference is wielded by AEU president Carron.

'I wish to thank you, Mr President—or should I say that?' said Gaitskell at the AEU dinner on Monday evening. 'A defeat for the NEC this afternoon would have been a bad thing electorally.'

Harold Wilson, opening the debate on 'Plan for Progress' on Wednesday morning, declared that Labour insisted on a return to full employment. But how?

Wilson talked of forcing the pace of investment by 'every means open to us' and by 'purposeful and planned expansion'. But that still left the 'How?' unanswered.

Roy Jenkins, MP, gave many reasons why we needed expansion—but still did not say how.

By using the three-year rule and excluding resolutions on nationalization from the agenda, the NEC prevented the floor from putting forward real practical proposals for socialist

(Continued overleaf)

## OLIVETTI WORKERS STRIKE TO DEFEND SHOP ORGANIZATION

From Our Scottish Correspondent

'THIS is the most blatant case of victimization I have seen', declared Bro. Hanton, Amalgamated Engineering Union official, at a mass meeting of Glasgow strikers on Tuesday morning.

These 700 strikers, workers at Olivetti Typewriter Co., Queenslie Industrial Estate, are now in the second week of their strike against the sacking of Electrical Trades Union shop steward Joe Black.

Bro. Black, maintenance electrician, had been told that the management required his signature and those of seven others to a form accepting the need for a tightening up of disciplinary measures. This followed allegations that maintenance staff had been seen reading newspapers on Sunday duty. Bro. Black refused.

Next day he was called before the chief engineer and told that he was immediately dismissed—this without the right to defend himself, or even to have his shop convener present as was customary practice. After protest he obtained agreement to consult the convener, but still was not allowed to answer the charge against him.

Bro. Peter Murray, shop stewards' convener, told me: 'The aim of the management is to break the shop organization. A recent recruitment drive has produced almost 100 per cent. trade unionism.' Proof of this was that only three out of the 700 workers scabbed.

The stewards believe that the victimization of a militant shop steward is the management's reaction to the success of their organizing campaign.

## MERSEYSIDE WORKERS HEAR ABOUT RANK-AND-FILE CONFERENCE

SEVERAL meetings were held on Merseyside last week to tell workers about the national rank-and-file Conference called by the Editorial Board of THE NEWSLETTER on November 16.

Brian Behan, well known building trade militant and member of the Editorial Board, addressed 200 dockers at the Gladstone dock.

'The irresponsible people,' he declared, 'are those trade union leaders whose timid Right-wing policies and fear of using the power of the movement serve to lengthen strikes and impose increased hardship upon the workers.'

Addressing dockers in no. 5 sector, Liverpool, William Hunter referred to the recent articles about The Newsletter in the News Chronicle.

'If a fanatic is someone who believes strongly in socialist policies, who strives might and main to develop in the working class an awareness of its own strength and power—if that's a fanatic, then we plead guilty,' he said.

## COMMENTARY

### LESSONS OF FRANCE

**D**E GAULLE's referendum victory in France and the devastating defeat suffered by the leadership of the French working class sound a harsh warning to British socialists. However the plebiscite may have been rigged in Algeria and elsewhere, whatever intimidation and mass suggestion may have been used, the facts remain. They will be used everywhere to sow disillusion and demoralization among the workers. What is the use, the defeatists will ask, of organizing when in France the working class has proved incapable of leading the people against reaction?

Our reply must be clear and forceful. De Gaulle has been confirmed in power as a direct result of the combined betrayal of both traditional leaderships of the French working class—Thorez equally with Guy Mollet. Neither wanted real unity: the Right wingers because they openly prefer capitalism, the Communist Party leaders because they fear revolutionary action. This is the key to the French defeat. A successful workers' revolution in France at any time during the past thirteen years would have penetrated deep into the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. This is why the Kremlin, right up to the Adenauer meeting, was ready to welcome de Gaulle. This is why Thorez and Duclos have mystified and misled the rank-and-file militants of the Communist Party with opportunist manoeuvres for top agreements and blocked until too late every genuine attempt at unity below or militant industrial action.

This suicidal policy is the root cause of de Gaulle's victory. But it also bears within it the seeds of defeat for Thorez as well as de Gaulle. If the French workers, who have hardly yet flexed their muscles in this struggle, can be brought to see through their leaders and take the necessary steps, they can sweep de Gaulle and his Fifth Republic from power and their own mis-leaders with him. This is the lesson for British workers. Only a rank-and-file movement, clear-eyed, hard-headed, inflexible against the blandishments of boss and bureaucrat alike, can bar the road to fascism and pave the way to a socialist system in which the threat of fascism will be removed once and for all.

### WATCH THOSE CLOCK-WATCHERS

**N**O single instance exposes so clearly the mealy-mouthed Right-wing boasts of 'socialism' in the nationalized industries as the recent case of Harry Shaw.

Just six weeks before this 68-year-old employee of British Railways was due to complete forty-five years' service he was curtly declared redundant. He was told that this meant he would not qualify for the coveted long-service award of a clock to which he and his wife had looked forward ever since he agreed to continue work after reaching retirement age.

Here is phoney nationalization in a nutshell. Cynical contempt for old workers on the one hand. And on the other cushy jobs on the board for old Right wingers. No wonder they tremble at the idea of real workers' control. It would end their soft jobs and fat salaries. But it would also guarantee to every worker in every industry in Britain, not just a long-service clock, but a comfortable and respected old age.

### LABOUR (Continued from front page)

planning to prevent unemployment.

The fear of a return to the thirties was shown in the contributions of delegates from areas where unemployment is higher than the average.

It was clear from Wilson's speech that one great advantage he saw in the Crippsian controls he advocated would be trade union support for wage restraint.

### Applause for the busmen

A composite resolution from Norwood and Poplar put a finger on the big question for the trade union rank and file: will the Labour Government seek to unload the economic burden on the working class?

The resolution deplored the Tory Government's wage freeze policy and urged that on returning to power the Labour Government support the unions in attempts to improve the workers' standard of living.

There was applause when the mover, Vivienne Mendelson, mentioned the London busmen's strike—and for the first time the great industrial struggles of the past year intruded into the conference discussions.

'Despite the controls Harold Wilson advocated,' she declared, 'the same employers now fighting the unions will still own industry and have decisive power. There would be no problem of winning the General Election if the workers were convinced that the Labour Government will defend their interests.'

## INDUSTRY

### THERE WILL BE RESISTANCE IN THE PITS TO THIS INFAMOUS WAGE AWARD

By Stan Boyd, treasurer, Cronton (Lancs) branch, National Union of Mineworkers

By accepting the wage award with strings the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers have in effect agreed to help the National Coal Board in its plan to weaken and split the miners.

The day wage men receive an inadequate increase of 7s. 6d. This increase, and much more, is to be taken out of the hides of both day and piece workers.

The piece workers have a nine months' rates standstill imposed on them, without any immediate wage rise.

The agreement on Saturday working is again designed to split the men. The union leaders, who expressed 'firm' opposition to Saturday work a few months ago, have now accepted a return to Saturday working at selected pits.

There are two pits at our colliery—one produces small power-loaded coal and the other 'round', large coal from 'spade faces'.

We could now have the position where the second pit would be working Saturdays with the other pit on a five-day week—and the men arguing among themselves.

In the mean time the NCB will be building up its stocks of large coal to use against the miners.

The men I work with are vehement against acceptance of the wage award with strings. They want the day wage men to get a wage rise, but they see clearly the intention of the NCB to split the miners.

There is general disgust at the activities of the union leaders and a cynical attitude to the union machinery.

If the national delegate conference on October 10 does its duty it will reject the propositions of the NCB and demand a wage increase for all—without strings. It will find the mass of the union members behind it.

But the leaders will move heaven and earth to secure acceptance of this infamous wage award by the delegate conference and to avoid a fight with the NCB.

The ball is passed to the rank and file in the pits. The cowardice of our leaders will mean a further strengthening

of the NCB policy, which is already apparent to the miner on the job.

The NCB will increase the pressure for higher productivity by means of the 'standing over' tactics of officials and the cutting down on concessions won in the past.

That there will be resistance and struggles at pit level is absolutely certain. The crime of the leaders is in isolating individual pits and areas. The need for a national link up of the rank and file is imperative.

### **Solidarity is the answer**

Defeatists will tell us that the NCB is invulnerable because of its huge surplus stocks of coal.

This is certainly one reason why the Coal Board feels it can wave a big stick at the miners. But the answer to that is not to accept everything it hands out to us but to spread solidarity through other sections of workers.

If the miners are in struggle it is other sections of the working class who will be asked to handle this surplus coal. They could be brought into support of the miners by blacking the coal.

The need is for a solid movement in the mines which would ensure that no pit or area fights in isolation.

### **TENANTS WILL FIGHT TORY EVICTIONS**

Two thousand tenants living in requisitioned properties in Wandsworth have been told by the Tory Borough Council to find other homes by November 1959 or they will be evicted.

A deputation from Streatham Tenants' Defence League told a recent meeting of the Housing Committee that people seeking other homes had been offered properties with rents ranging from £4 to £12 a week.

The £4 per week rents entailed buying the contents of the flat for £1,000. The League intends to resist attempts at eviction.

## **ECONOMICS**

### **WHY THE USSR WANTS EAST-WEST TRADE —AND WHY IT IS NOT A PANACEA**

By Tom Kemp

EXPANDING east-west trade has become an increasingly insistent theme in Soviet policy and propaganda. Spreading symptoms of depression in the capitalist world have provided a readier hearing than for a decade for such proposals, and have forced some relaxation of trade restrictions imposed during the cold war.

The USA, however, lags very much behind the European capitalist countries in developing exchanges with the USSR—but it is precisely with the USA that the Soviet rulers would most like to expand trade.

Emphasis has been laid in Soviet speeches and articles upon the development of trade as a means to ward off capitalist depression—the appeal being directed not to the Labour movement but to business and government circles.

There are plenty of other indications, too, that whatever merits east-west trade may have it is primarily viewed by the Soviet Government as a means of overcoming their economic difficulties and enabling development to proceed more smoothly.

#### **'Would enliven business activity'**

Last June Khrushchev addressed a letter to Eisenhower on the subject, offering a big programme of exchanges which 'would enable American industries to work at a higher percentage of their capacity and would raise the level of employment'.

An article by the president of the Soviet Chamber of Commerce states that his country is willing to place orders worth

several thousand million dollars in the next few years, which 'would certainly enliven business activity in the country' (i.e., the USA).

He also made the point that 'trade between the two countries could develop even faster if the USA gave the Soviet Union a long-term loan and instalment terms [my emphasis—T.K.]. This would provide the conditions for big Soviet orders to be placed at once with the American enterprises.'

It has been necessary for Khrushchev to rebuke 'certain comrades' who argued that this policy would help to sustain capitalism.

As party leader he cannot, by definition, be a 'revisionist'. In any case, for him, theory is not important. What is necessary is to carry forward the economic plans upon which his reputation depends.

This means that difficulties encountered must be overcome, even if the policy required is inconsistent with Marxist theory and gives the lie to the claim to have built socialism in one country.

#### **Clutches of world market**

In fact the USSR has not been able to extricate itself from the clutches of the world market. So much is tacitly admitted by its theorists. In the article just cited, for example, the following passage occurs:

'The assertions that industrialization contracts the market are wrong in principle, all the more so with respect to the socialist countries. In every country [i.e., without distinction of economic system—T.K.], the growth of industry, the power base, transport and agriculture inevitably has the extension of the home market as its concomitant, and consequently provides a wider basis for extending foreign trade.'

There can be no doubt that the desire of the Soviet Government to expand foreign trade is genuine.

This will enable lags and disproportions in the economy to be overcome—the goods and machinery with Khrushchev wants to buy in the USA will admittedly enable a short cut to be taken in the building up of sectors of the economy (chemicals, refrigeration, plastics etc.) in which she is deficient.

And what is offered in return? Mainly raw materials and the typical products of a less advanced country. If possible, too, the USSR wants credits from the capitalist west.

#### **Cannot make real inroads**

It is probably true that the USSR wants more from the advanced countries than she can directly pay for.

In the mean time sales of Soviet goods on the world market have in some cases contributed to falling prices and intensified trade problems.

In so far as goods from the Soviet Union are received in exchange for those sent from the advanced capitalist countries, they still have to be realized on the market.

It is difficult to see how east-west trade—of the kind which the Soviet leaders propose—can make real inroads on the capitalist trading problems.

That is not an argument against it. All trade restrictions and bans should be opposed, those on trade with the USSR and China in particular.

#### **Should be no illusions**

But there should be no illusions in east-west trade as a panacea for our ills, such as seem to be held by some trade union and Labour leaders as part of the alternative to a struggle against capitalism.

On the contrary, it must be seen as a weapon in the fight:

**First**, against capitalist restrictions and insecurity;

**Secondly**, against the claims of the Soviet leadership to have built 'socialism in one country';

**Thirdly**, for a real international socialist programme.

**Constant Reader****The Blue Lamp Flickers**

THE appalling news that, in protest against 'petty discipline', policemen in London's West End have been taking unauthorized tea-breaks and failing to bring street-walkers to the court to pay their monthly tax has undoubtedly recalled to official memory the great London police strike of 1918.

On that historic occasion, while the first world war was still in progress, practically the entire Metropolitan Police Force, then about 12,000 men, left their beats.

Several thousands marched from New Scotland Yard to Tower Hill in columns of four, half a mile long, headed by a piper. Even the police at Buckingham Palace took part.

The Prime Minister hastily intervened to grant wage increases and a pension for widows. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner resigned. The men went back to their beats.

But the authorities were determined not to recognize anything like a police trade union, and after a while began dismissing alleged ringleaders for 'breaches of discipline', combining this procedure with further concessions on pay; until they had so weakened and isolated the militants that they were able to get away with a Bill prohibiting policemen from belonging to a union.

None of the successive Labour Governments interested itself in ensuring trade union rights for policemen.

Pay increases, yes—even when other workers were being rebuffed; but strictly on the initiative and by the grace of the authorities.

A well-documented account of the police strikes of 1918 and 1919 and the breaking of the Police Union appears in the current (August 1958) issue of the *Economic History Review*, from the pen of V. L. Allen, who wrote 'Power in Trade Unions' and 'Trade Union Leadership'.

He notes the role played by 'many Labour politicians and trade union leaders' who 'believed it was inimical to the interests of internal security to give policemen the same freedom of association as was claimed as a right by industrial workers'.

**A flunkey too fervent**

THE peculiar enthusiasm shown by certain of our Labour leaders, when in Ministerial office, in the performance of the Court functions attached to their jobs, has long been a theme for ironical comment in what are called well-informed circles.

A striking example occurs in J. W. Wheeler-Bennett's life of King George VI, now being serialized in the *Daily Telegraph*.

He tells how J. R. Clynes, Home Secretary in the second Labour Government, spent sixteen days at Glamis Castle waiting for Princess Margaret to be born.

'By some oversight and miscalculation', the biographer writes, the doctors had told Clynes 'that his presence would be required early in August. Instead of awaiting a more definite summons, he arrived in an excess of zeal on August 5, to find himself decidedly premature.'

He stayed there until the little girl arrived on August 21. Somehow or other the affairs of the Home Office continued to be dealt with as smoothly as ever while the former gas-workers' leader kicked his heels in the Scottish baronial hall—waiting to certify, on behalf of Britain's ruling class, that no ersatz prince or princess had been smuggled into the succession, in a warming-pan or otherwise.

**'Death' of a nation**

A book 'Kurdistan, Divided Nation of the Middle East' has lately been published by Lawrence and Wishart.

What we are not likely to get from the Communist Party's publishers, however, is a book on 'Macedonia, Divided Nation of the Balkans'—though this was a theme of communist propaganda for many decades.

It is now the party line that 'Macedonians are Bulgarians':

there is no autonomous régime for the part of Macedonia which is included in Bulgaria, and one of Tito's major offences seems to be that there is a Macedonian autonomous republic in Yugoslavia.

BRIAN PEARCE

**LETTERS****'NON' VOTERS COULD BE IDENTIFIED  
AMONG FRENCH CITIZENS ABROAD**

IT may interest your readers to know how the plebiscite (sorry, referendum) of last Sunday was organized among French citizens abroad.

One had to choose either a OUI or a NON slip, which was then placed in an un gummed blue envelope.

This, together with a signed statement attesting to identity, place of residence and so on, was placed in another envelope stamped 'Referendum', which was in turn placed in a final envelope addressed to the nearest Consulate.

Clearly this meant that as the votes were counted each NON voter could be identified.

One can well imagine that a little cross was put beside that name on the list and that all kinds of disabilities and petty annoyances could be subsequently inflicted on its owner.

At least, this must have been in the minds of many of my compatriots, not without memory of what happened under Hitler or during the Occupation. Or NON papers might have been destroyed altogether . . .

A very similar method—with perhaps greater possibilities of psychological pressure—was employed in the voting of the armed forces.

This may, of course, be merely the product of a tortured imagination. But who knows what percentage of the OUI votes was produced out of fears of this kind? Or extracted by the pressure or 'advice' of officers, the boss or the curé?

French citizen (name and address supplied)

**CONGRATULATIONS ON FINCH'S SERIES: IT  
SHOWED WORKERS THE RIGHT ROAD**

I WAS surprised not to see any letters of congratulation in THE NEWSLETTER on Harry Finch's articles about socialism.

More articles of this type for workers to read are needed now that capitalism has once again come to a state of bankruptcy; workers must be shown the correct road to take, and Harry Finch's articles have clearly shown it.

Now is the time for militant workers to start forming groups to combat the capitalists' attacks, as we have done in Birmingham with the Militant Workers' Movement.

Some workers might think that a revolutionary path to socialism is too drastic, but they should realize that there is no such thing as 'peaceful coexistence' with capitalism, as some trade union and Labour Party leaders think.

The time for action is now, before the ruling class uses such things as the Cohen reports to drive wedges into the ranks of the British working class.

The red flag of socialism must be raised now.

Birmingham, 17

P. Wilde

**THUNDER ON THE LEFT**

'For the first time, the stale and discredited orthodox communists of King Street find themselves with effective enemies on the Left.

'If the dissidents can unite they can form an independent party more militant and more intelligent and more numerous than the tired old CP of Britain, which may soon be battling for its life against enemies not so old and tired as itself and no more scrupulous.'

—From a review of 'The British Communist Party' by Henry Pelling, *Daily Telegraph*, September 30.