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**BULLETIN
OF THE YOUNG CHARTISTS**

**Committee for
an American
Labour Party**

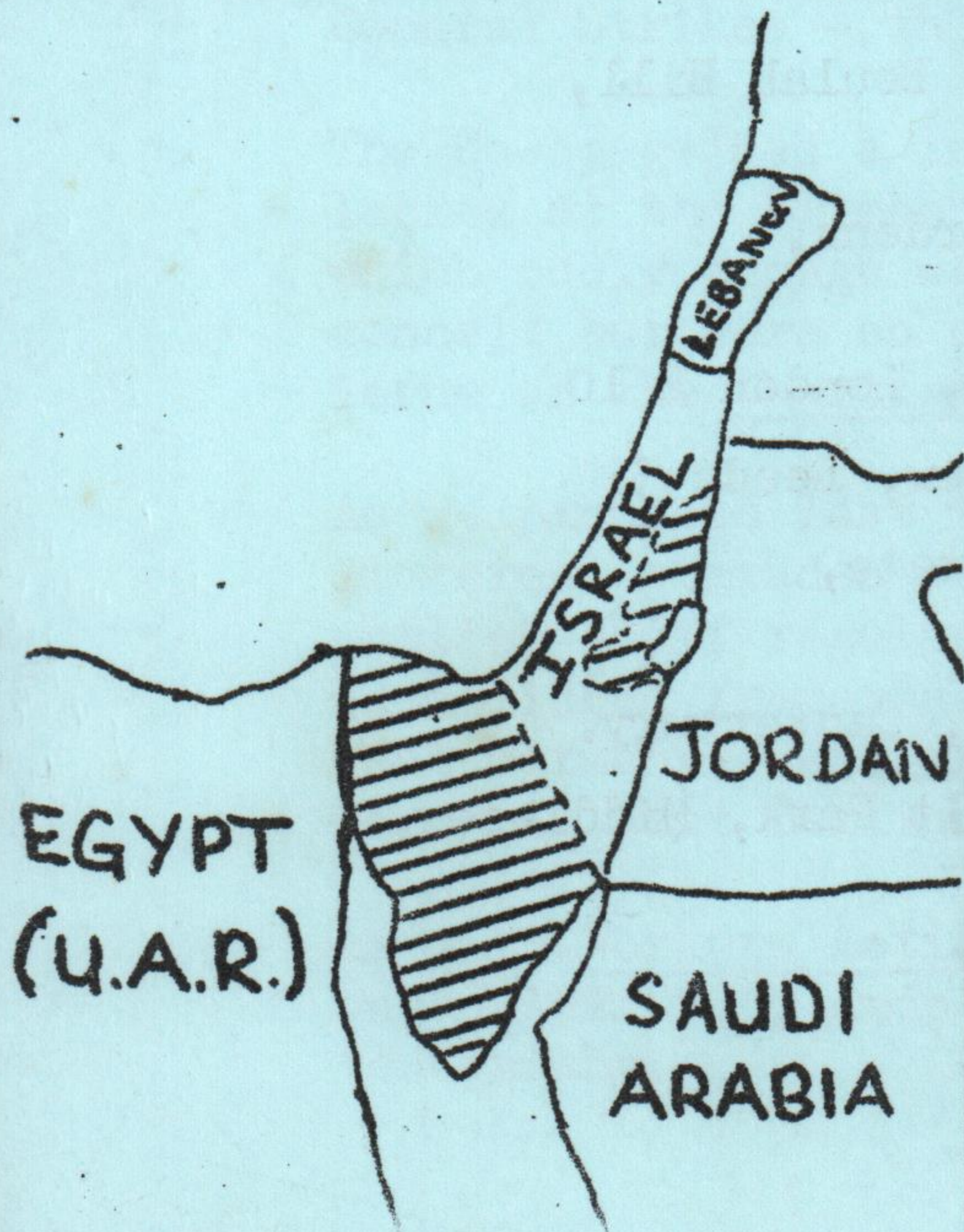
THE CHARTIST

VOLUME 1

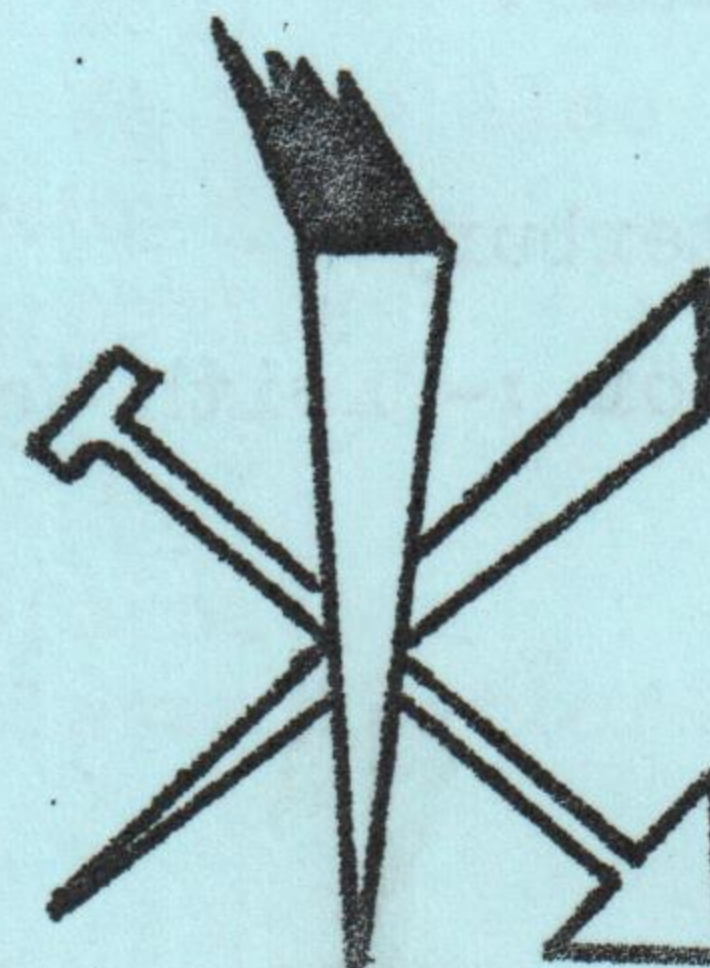
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NUMBER 5

GENERAL STRIKE !



**POSTMEN
SOLD
OUT**



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EDITORIAL

We are in quite a unique position this issue - everything we wrote about last time has been hot news since. Lets take just a couple of examples:- Laos and Ireland.

Laos exploded into the headlines, as the "ARVIN" troops got chewed to pieces and the NLF/DRV armies gained their biggest propaganda victory since Tet.

Ireland saw the demise of the hated Chichester-Clark and his replacement by the equally obnoxious Faulkner. Once again, we appear to be the only tendency to demand the Labour leaders, North and South, take the power and finish off the Tories, Green and Orange, once and for all. If you can think of a better solution - drop us a line. (we're pretty sure we won't get a reply to this offer).

Having been proved right on these points, it must seem bigheaded to say we are slowly being proved right about the Industrial Relations Bill. The special Congress at Croydon only demonstrated the power of the TUC and the total unwillingness of its leaders to use this power. If the TUC really used its industrial strength and political power, the Bill, the Tories and the whole rotten set-up could be swept away. However the onus for this descends on us to demand they do this. Already the leading militants of many industries are coming to agree to our slogan of "TUC - Call a General Strike". In the next months, as we grow in size, and as the movement gains momentum, this will be heard more and more. One Chartist remarked to me after the massive TUC demonstration "There goes the future government of Britain". This sums up our perspective - we want control of our movement and control in our case means power.

This is perhaps a good juncture to publish Comrade Knight's article as a salutary warning - we are playing for keeps if we talk about General Strikes - this must be emphasised over and over again.

The Co-op gained a lot of useful publicity for us - if any readers looked at the "Times" they would have read the article on our activities which oddly enough was reasonably accurate. Please forgive our conceit but we're so chuffed about it we've reprinted it in this issue of the Chartist.

As we promised last time, we are running an article by one of our fraternal comrades from Workers Action in the USA. We hope to publish stuff regularly from now on from this source. We have also established fraternal relations with the "SPARTACUS" group from West Germany - who organised the impressive May Day Apprentices March in West Berlin last year.

As with Workers Action, if you are interested in any information on "SPARTACUS", drop us a line and we'll forward any relevant letters to Germany.

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Once again, we had a veritable flood of letters about the last issue. Thanks to all the writers for enquiries, suggestions and donations. The fighting fund now stands at £15.50p after the first month. Remember we need £200 by the end of the year for a regular printed monthly.

FIGHTING FUND

Young Chartists N C	=	£10
Leeds Young Chartists	=	£ 2
West London Young Chartists	=	£ 1
East London Young Chartists	=	£ 1
South London Young Chartists	=	£ 1
Burton Socialist Chartist	=	£ 0.50p
Total	=	<u>£15.50</u>

Total for target = £184.50

If you can't afford a straight donation, how about a subscription - 50p a year, a big saving !

One last point - we felt we had to commend our Leeds comrades on their excellent work. Our slogan was adopted as slogan for the big union march through Leeds mainly due to their activity. They have really made a deep impression on the Labour Movement there. A classic example of what can be done if you put your mind to it.

" U R G E N T "

" U R G E N T "

" U R G E N T "

All Chartists going to Skegness for Easter - phone us before (01-771 9468) or meet us there. Special "Briefing" for LPYS Conference - Help needed urgently.

DANGER - GENERAL STRIKE !

For all sections of the labour and revolutionary movements now the life-or-death question is not "Will there be a General Strike ?" but "How do we prepare for it ?" That a General Strike -- in fact a working-class upsurge of far greater proportions than 1926 -- is being slowly prepared by the present class-conflict between the trade unions and the Tory Government cannot be doubted. That the TUC itself on March 18 was forced to vote on the question shows how far we have come since the fight against "In Place of Strife". Inevitably, the vote went against a strike.

But the sheer scale of the TUC demonstration in February, the almost unanimous response to the AEF and TGWU's "Kill the Bill" strikes in March, the bowing of whole sections of the official TU leadership to the shop-floor demand for a one-day General Strike - these are events whose historical significance is wholly beyond the grasp of today's working-class "leaders" even on the "Left".

Suddenly, almost without warning, the whole situation in which we find ourselves has changed. Suddenly decisive sectors - even if as yet a minority - of the working class have become politicised as they have never been for decades - one can even say since the early and middle 'twenties. The March strikes were the biggest political strikes since 1926. The idea of political strike action has taken root and will dog the "moderate" leaders increasingly as the Tories try to impose their fines and laws.

And all the time the mood of hitherto "moderate" workers in their millions has hardened and become bitter as this Government's class-face has been revealed. With unemployment approaching the million mark, with prices literally soaring in every sector, with the lowest of low-paid groups such as the postmen being savagely victimized while police and top civil servants get favoured treatment - and with class measures such as the "economic rents" policy to top the lot - the demand to bring down this Tory Government is becoming a popular rallying-cry even apart from opposition to the "Industrial Relations Bill".

In the coming period anything could happen. The economic crisis is becoming desperate and allows little leeway for the ruling class. Every section of the people must be oppressed. Every major strike now becomes a political conflict with repercussions far beyond the industry directly concerned. And strikes are getting longer and more bitter. The postmen will not forget or forgive. With them, the Tories were lucky. But "defeats" such as the postmen's - if piled up one on the other - are the kind of events which have led men to the barricades. One false move by the Tories against a section of workers in the future could provoke a revolt in which the pent-up anger of millions of until now patient,

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long-suffering and "moderate" trade-unionists - joined by that of housewives, tenants and youth who have hardly thought politically before - exploded in a full-scale revolutionary upsurge and General Strike to put 1926 in the shade.

The terrible danger in all this arises precisely from the fact that our political "leaders" are almost oblivious as to what it means. Some Labour members of Parliament and right-wing trade union leaders, it is true, understand quite well what is happening and are consciously striving to lead us to defeat. They know that a full scale General Strike would imperil capitalism itself, they have come down on capitalism's side and they are deliberately aiming to split and weaken the Labour movement. But by far the most influential leaders nowadays are those on the "left", either in the Communist Party or on the trade-union wing of the Labour Party, and here the main trouble is the most hopeless confusion, and a self-delusion which deludes those who listen to them too. Here, co-existent with a more or less vague desire for "socialism" is a most pitiable fear of the employing class, fear of the state and the army, fear of provoking a real conflict and struggle for working class power. "What happens after a General Strike? Are we advocating revolution and civil disorder?" asked Jack Peel at the TUC Special Congress. This right-winger was successful in frightening the delegates. They want to believe that a show-down can be avoided - and so they tell themselves and their supporters that it can, that "reason" and "negotiations" and "pressure" will settle things to the satisfaction of all concerned. The terrible danger is that this leaves millions of our fellow workers unprepared for the decisive show-down which is now inevitable. We are in a position in which a revolutionary situation is approaching. A general Strike is going to come, whether we like it or not. But a General Strike is a terrible weapon for those who are not prepared to handle it. A General Strike means that we challenge the constitution and the government. We must be prepared to face the troops being brought in against us. We must know how to appeal to the troops, how to win them to our side, how to link their desire for democracy within the army to our own movement for democracy in industry and in society. A General Strike means that we either win or we lose. It poses the question of power. Either we and the whole Labour movement take hold of the power of the state, or we are crushed for a whole period. A General Strike is not something to be treated flippantly. Any "leader" who demands an unlimited General Strike must be asked: "And what is your strategy for winning it? Should we follow you, how do you propose leading us to the armed conquest of power?" People who shout "General Strike!, General Strike!" and refuse to answer that question should be exposed as the "revolutionary" charlatans they are.

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When the Socialist Labour League, rank-and-file Communist Party members and large sections of the shop-stewards' and trade union movement raise the demand for a General Strike we Chartists say "Yes !. A General Strike really is the only way to defeat the Tory Government and its anti-union legislation ! But to be successful a General Strike must transform itself into a full-scale social revolution. If we are not ready for a social revolution - and the whole Labour movement should be ready for this - then we are not ready for a General Strike, and if we were pushed into such a strike it could only end in a fiasco." That is how our position is put. We give neither an abstract "Yes" nor an abstract "No" to the call for a General Strike, but rather explain what the General Strike really means, solidarising ourselves with the demand for a General Strike, raising it to the demand for the seizure of power itself, and at the same time warning of the dangers of a General Strike whose objective is anything short of armed insurrection, preparing the movement for the future tasks confronting it and doing all we can to prevent an adventuristic or premature outbreak.

Yes, this is a "cautious" approach. But far from being "reformist" or "compromist" the Young Chartists in this respect are acting in the best traditions of Bolshevism. If we have our way, then when we embark on the General Strike the whole movement will have been prepared in advance, and we will utilise the opportunity to conquer the armed power of the state.

To seize power under a Tory Government would not be easy. The ideal under present circumstances would be for the Government to be forced into resignation by the threat of a General Strike, or by such nation-wide and planned industrial and political mass action as simply made it impossible for the Tory Government to govern. Do we support those who demand "A General Strike to force the Tories to resign" ? Of course we do! A General Strike really could force the resignation of this government, and really could bring to power a Labour Government which would legislate a Socialist programme - but that is because a General Strike poses the question of power, disintegrates and shakes the ruling apparatus to its roots, infects the Army, the civil servants, the mass-media workers etc., and thereby makes possible the seizure of power by the labour movement and working class. A General Strike leadership whose aim was simply to call off the strike in return for a General Election would be worse than useless. From an objective standpoint it would be criminal. Just as one does not use a sledge-hammer to knock in a pin, one should not use a General Strike to obtain elections to decide which new representatives of the bourgeoisie should govern the working class. If one uses the General Strike weapon it should be treated with the respect it deserves and used as an integral part of the social revolution and a means of conquering state power. Otherwise only disaster can follow.

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If there were a General Strike against the Tory Government in the near future, if the whole apparatus of the bourgeois state became paralysed, if the troops were sent against us and their officers feared they would refuse to shoot, if workers began to occupy their factories, and then..... the Tories promised elections and the strike were called off, then what would be the result? The ruling class would have received the fright of its life. It would believe - rightly - that its very existence as a class had been threatened. Its Tory representatives would feel - rightly - that they had won a lucky victory in getting the developing revolution nipped in the bud so easily in exchange for elections. The militant workers would feel cheated and defeated, having tasted power only to be robbed of it. The Tories would revel in their victory, the workers' leaders would be howled down by the bourgeois press, "law and order" would appear victorious, the political parties would vie with each other for the "law and order" vote - and the outcome of the elections would be a foregone conclusion. The possibility of a new General Strike might not arise for a whole period, and a "Labour Government with a Socialist Programme" would be a prospect no less distant.

We support the slogan "for a general strike to bring down the Tory Government" because we support the Socialist programme, the working class seizure of power and the nationalisation of the monopolies by a workers' government. As far as the Young Chartists are concerned, we would be quite happy to lead an armed insurrection and a working class seizure of power tomorrow. However, that possibility simply is not on the agenda. Nor is it on the agenda for any of the other "Marxist" groupings in the Country. The mass of ordinary workers have not even heard of us, let alone recognised us as "leaders". Our task is to gain credibility for the idea of revolution, for the idea of seizing power, and to do this will require a long, long period, probably many years, of patient work in the trade unions, in the co-operative movement, in the Labour Party and in every other part of the labour movement. We must know how to unite our forces with those of other sections of the movement, how to participate in the day-to-day struggle for economic demands, how to get results, how to retreat as well as how to advance. We must become a real power in the movement, and we will not do that by issuing abstract demands for instant General Strikes.

We would be ready for a General Strike and a seizure of power tomorrow - if the working class followed our lead. If we were in the place of Vic Feather and the leaders of the Labour Party—i.e. if we had the mass support they have—we would be in a position to throw out the Tories and seize the state power without delay, and we would do so. We would use our position to strengthen the whole working class, bringing the authority and weight of the TUC and Parliamentary Labour Party behind every strike action in defence of wages and conditions, ensuring that no section of the movement was left isolated, forcing the Tory Government to confront the whole weight of the labour movement at every point, forcing concessions out of them on wages,

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the £20 National Minimum wage, Equal Pay, a rent and price freeze, mobilizing huge demonstrations not to "let off steam" but to reveal the movement's strength, and to help all sections of the working population identify with it and feel its power as their own. If—in the Labour leaders' place—we really dug our heels in against the Tories and employers, if we really used the strength available to us, if we unconditionally backed the shop stewards', tenants' and other movements from Congress House and from Parliament, if we used all the means of propaganda at our disposal to issue our class appeal and won actual gains for the people despite the Tories and employers—then the whole weight of the working class would rally in a body to our support. Even more backward workers and large sections of the middle class would be convinced in action that we were a movement and a Labour Party prepared to back them and defend their interests come what may.

Such a force as this could topple the Tories almost without effort. We would demand elections. If the Tories refused to hold them, then a General Strike—prepared in advanced—could be called, we could take over our factories and places of work, and elections could be held through our own labour movement organizations and under our own auspices. If the Tories allowed a General Election, that would be better still, and we would use the General Strike to take power after assuming office in Parliament. With the press and mass media taken out of the control of the millionaires and operated by the journalists, technicians and workers themselves, the Tories would be unlikely to win another election again. And if the Labour Party became what it should be and what it was originally set up to be—that is, an organization embracing all the working-class parties and unions within it—we in the Labour Party would be in a position where we held power permanently, and elections were held not to decide between Tory and Labour but only to decide the composition and policies of the Labour Government.

We would immediately proceed to legislate the nationalization of the giant monopolies—Ford, ICI, the Insurance Companies—without compensation and under workers' control. We would ruthlessly crack down on any attempt to "mutiny" in support of the "Crown" or the old order, if necessary appealing to the troops against their officers, arming the entire working class if need be. That is how we would act if we were in the shoes of the trade union and Labour leaders in the period ahead. That course of action is what we mean by our "socialist programme". That is how we pose our demand that the TUC and Labour leaders call a General Strike to force the Tories to resign. For us it is part and parcel of the programme of revolution which we openly proclaim.

Chris Knight - Leeds Young Chartists.

PROSPECTS FOR THE LPYS: An address to delegates

This year's Labour Party Young Socialists Conference has some important decisions to make. We have not all come here to bracing Skegness, from all corners of the Country, simply to digest our boarding-house bacon-and-eggs breakfasts, march through the high winds to this Pavilion and affirm once more our faith in the "Socialist Programme". There is nothing basically wrong with the programme we adopted last year - the point now is to get our programme implemented. It is no use simply repeating the programme all over again and priding ourselves on our "ideas!" We've got to become a power. We've got to know how to unite our forces with those of the wider labour and trade union movement and get things done.

What concrete opportunities lie before us? One development this year has been the movement for a "Youth TUC" (the Trades Union Youth Conference Committee). The Conference held in Manchester in February succeeded in rallying a large number of serious working class youth. The organisers, however, many of whom were Comrades from the Young Communist League, opposed our position that there is no solution to the problems faced by trade unionists other than political action through the Labour Party. We must not let the matter drop there. We must not allow our principled differences with the YCL comrades to get in the way of the closest unity in action between ourselves and all the "Youth TUC", brothers and sisters in campaigning on the many issues upon which we are agreed: Non-selective comprehensive education for all; Minimum wage for all studying at 16 or over; A 35 hour week for all young people. And many other issues which also form a part of our programme. If we do this we will strengthen both ourselves and the movement for a Youth TUC, and on this basis we can be sure of politicising the whole movement in the long run. Our National Executive must make a new comradely approach to the Youth Conference Committee on this basis.

Another arena for work is the co-operative movement. The Co-operative movement, to be effective, must express itself through the Labour Party. It must affiliate direct, at national level. So far, the impetus in this direction has come overwhelmingly from members of the Labour Party Young Socialists. Our National Executive must give full support to this campaign.

We must also ensure that the resolutions we pass in regard to the young workers in uniform do not remain on paper. Our Executive should give a firm lead in support of the Soldiers Trade Union Rights Movement, mobilising YS branches in all areas where there are barracks troop concentrations etc., leafletting the troops and campaigning around the Soldiers Charter.

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We must place no blocs to the unity of the working class, oppose all bans and proscriptions in the Labour movement, and welcome all socialist tendencies into the movement to transform it into a real tribune of opinion. If groups such as the Socialist Labour League wish to join in this effort, we will welcome them.

We must, therefore, in conclusion, remember that the importance of the LPYS does not lie in any pure, abstract positions it develops in and of itself, but only in the appeal it has outside its ranks within the broader movement.

Martin Cook - Canterbury Young Chartists.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE-EAST

Recent events have confirmed our analysis of the reactionary nature of the Arab rulers and states, and of the significance of the social fissures which are opening up within the Zionist Israeli state itself.

On the one hand, we have seen that, despite Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Arafat's touching faith that Hussein would honour the cease-fire agreement that ended last September's civil war, the Jordanian Government has shown no hesitation in attacking the now weak and divided guerilla movement. The latest vicious assault on Irbid is only the latest breach in the truce that the other Arab Governments were supposed to police. What is more, the so-called "progressive" regimes of Syria and Iraq have not lifted a finger to prevent the threatened extermination of the Palestinian revolution.

The only way out for the Fedayeen is to mobilise the strength of the workers, landless labourers and poor peasants in Jordan and throughout the Middle East to overthrow the rotten regime.

On the other hand, in Israel itself, there has been not only an increase in labour unrest but also the sudden appearance of left-wing opposition currents among the youth. Last month, 200 young demonstrators - who have called themselves the Black Panthers - assembled outside the central Police Station in Jerusalem. The Panthers represent a large, underprivileged group - the 'oriental Jews' - and they were demanding better jobs and housing and equal rights with the European Jews. While Israel is an imperialist creation, a constant threat to social revolution in the Middle East, we maintain that its destruction by the victorious movement of the Palestinian masses can most directly be attained by exploiting the contradictions within Israel itself, making a class appeal to the Israeli working class and to such oppressed groups as the Black Panthers represent.

The Young Chartists say : Victory to the Fedayeen ! Arab and Jewish workers unite : for the destruction of the Zionist state of Israel and the creation of a Multi-National Palestine in a Socialist Federation of the Middle East !

CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE USA: THE FIGHT FOR A LABOUR PARTY.

Capitalism is an international system, and the current crisis in British capitalism which has produced the recent attacks on the living standards and organisations of the working class (In Place of Strife, The Bill) extends far beyond the boundaries of the United Kingdom. In the USA capitalism faces many of the same problems and has been reaching towards many of the same solutions: anti-union legislation, deliberately creating unemployment, cut backs in education and social welfare spending, government attempts at strike-breaking and even wage controls are either under consideration or are already being implemented. As in Britain, US industry has become increasingly unable to compete with lower prices and better designed products from Japan and West Germany, and tries to restore its competitive position by cutting back real wages. Unionised workers have responded to this by increasing trade union militancy and both countries have experienced strike waves of a magnitude exceeding anything that has occurred since the 2nd World War. In spite of this wages have generally failed to keep pace with rising prices.

If the situation is remarkably similar in both countries, the American working class nevertheless faces unique problems. The first and most obvious of these is the continuing division of the working class along ethnic and racial lines. Slightly over 10% of the US population is black and Spanish speaking Americans, (an even more oppressed minority,) as well as Puerto Ricans, make up smaller but still substantial fractions of the total population. Almost all of the members of these minority groups are workers, for the most part concentrated in the worst paid and worst organised jobs. Blacks, however, constitute something between 20 and 30% of the workers in certain highly important industries, steel and auto for example. Since the freeing of slaves, the bosses have been able to use this division among the working class to hold wages down, turn the antagonisms that workers would otherwise have directed at their employer against black and brown workers, and maintain a category of people so economically insecure as to provide a permanent supply of scabs. Thus in the American South where racism is the most strongly embedded in the working class and segregation still the rule the union movement has never been able to make much headway. Most jobs remain non-unionised and wages even for white workers are well below the national average. If this is a problem to the US Labour movement, to the bosses it's a blessing: thus the British capitalist class longs to reproduce similar divisions among British workers and is using the new Immigration Bill and figures like Enoch Powell to achieve this end. In Britain as in America white workers must realise that the racial discrimination, far from helping them maintain their standard of living in the face of increasing competition, is the most vicious tool the bosses have got. Rather than sending the immigrants home or keeping dark skinned workers out of white job categories the entire working class must fight for more jobs: a shorter working week at no loss in pay to create jobs for everyone at the bosses expense.

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The American working class is being made not only to fight the imperialist war in SE Asia, but made to pay for it as well, through the war related wave of inflation that eats up wage gains almost as fast as they are won. As their living standard drops and their sons come home in plastic bags, the anti-communism instilled during the Macarthy period is being overcome and replaced with a desire to see the war end. Yet, seemingly endless rounds of peace marches organised around totally classless and meaningless slogans and led by the liberal wings of the democratic and republican parties have produced a general feeling of hopelessness. Peace marches will not end the war. What is required is the conscious activity of the American working class: a general strike against the war. Just as a movement is growing in Britain for a general strike against the Tories' Industrial Relations Bill, during the Cambodia crisis work stoppage committees sprung up in several major cities, attracting for the first time considerable numbers of workers into the previously exclusively student orientated anti-war movement. One group of rank and file workers in the US, The Committee for a Labour Party, better known by the name of the paper it published, Workers Action, has launched a campaign for a one day general strike to force immediate withdrawal of all US troops from SE Asia. Inside the United States, the bastion of world imperialism, a one day strike has an entirely different meaning than it would in countries like France and Italy where the CP regularly calls one day political strikes as substitutes for more militant actions. The US has never had a national general strike and political strikes are almost unheard of. For the American working class to utilise the strike as not just an economic tool but as a political weapon against an unpopular war would shake the very foundations of American imperialism, bring the war to an immediate close and produce a tremendous increase in the overall level of consciousness and organisation within the labour movement.

The fact that the American working class sees the strike as an exclusively economic weapon and has not yet realised its political potential is an indication of the prevalent lack of class awareness. America is the only highly industrialised country in the world that is without a party that even claims to represent the interests of the working class. Without a political expression of its own, the Labour movement is left to choose between the two bourgeois parties, the Republican (roughly the equivalent of the Tories) and the Democratic (Liberal), neither of which are concerned about the interests of the working people. Thus the Labour bureaucracy is tightly tied to the Liberal Democrats and is able to contribute large amounts of their members dues to supporting essentially bourgeois candidates who pose as the "friends of labour". Recently however, the difficulty American capitalism has been experiencing has forced the liberal politicians to put aside their pretensions of defending the interests of workers in favour of direct support to the class they do in fact represent. Thus, when Nixon sent troops in to break the strike in the New York Post Office, not a single voice was raised in Congress opposing him. Equally there has been little real resistance from either party to the administration's proposed wage controls and anti-labour legislation and until recently at least the Vietnam War was pursued as a bi-partisan project. All of this has prepared the ground for the formation of a political party of the working class in America. Already many workers are unable to vote for either of the existing parties. The task facing the American left is to provide a class alternative: a Labour Party. In a period of rising unemployment and recession, factories closing down and wages being eaten up by inflation, isolated economic strikes frequently represent to the boss only an opportunity to reduce inventories.

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Thus even short-term gains, wage demands become increasingly difficult to gain through economic struggle.

The solution for the working class is not however the realisation of short-term economic demands but the destruction of capitalism and its replacement by an economic system that is able to meet the needs of society: Socialism. Workers Action, which has actively agitated for several years for the formation of a Labour Party, does not intend to create a reformist Labour Party such as exists in Britain. British militants are all too well aware that theirs is a bureaucratized party headed by people such as Wilson and Castle who would rather accomodate their party to capitalism than overthrow it, would rather produce programmes such as In Place of Strife than fight for the interest of the Labour movement. The creation of a Labour Party in America would represent the destruction of the Democratic Party, the breaking away of the working class from their present reformist leadership of the Trade Unions and the emergence for the first time of a politically conscious working class fighting under its own class banners in the USA. In actuality the formation of an American Labour Party could be the creation of the revolutionary working class party, unhindered by an ossified reformist leadership: the kind of party the British Labour Party should be if it is to really represent the working class.

Tweet Carter - Committee for an American Labor Party

WHO SAID IT ?

A Political Quiz of past blunders, changes of mind and other amazing things

WHO?

1. Went back "to the folk from whence I came" ?
2. Is "Charlie Smith" ?
3. "Are Patriots, stopping the sellout of British Industry to America" ?
4. Joined the Labour Party, burnt his card and said "I only did it for a bet" ?
5. Easily defeated Macnamara in a game of badminton ?

Answers:- 1. Ray Gunter 2. Lord Delacourt Smith 3. The British Communist Party (see Morning Star, 1970) 4. Tariq Ali 5. Nikita Krushchev

WHO SAID ?

6. "We will never, as a Labour Party, be on the side of Imperialism in SE Asia" ?
7. "Anyone who votes Labour must be bonkers" ?
8. "We are facing a conspiracy of the forces of International Communism and the Pope" ?
9. "A week in politics is a very long time" ?
10. "Shoot if you must this old grey head, but spare your Country's flag he said" ?

Answers:- 6. H. Wilson 1953 7. Quintin Hogg 1966 8. Ian Paisley 1969
9. H. Wilson 1966 10. H. Wilson 1969

LESSONS OF THE POSTMENS STRIKE

If the Labour and Trade Union movement is to avoid such disastrous and unnecessary defeats as the postal workers have recently suffered, we must soberly and frankly examine the causes of such defeat. Defeat is the result of weakness. The strength of the postal workers' solidarity was unquestioned, their will to win stronger with every week of the strike. The rank and file knew how to fight, and were willing to learn how to win. They were shown how to lose.

This brings us straight to the question of leadership. In the situation of today, as comrade Trotsky sketched out in this same historical epoch, the trade unions can either serve as secondary instruments of capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers, or on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instrument of the revolutionary movement of the workers. There is no neutral or middle way. When the Trade Union leaders try to tread this way, they fall to disaster (though still on a good salary), while the rank and file are shot to pieces.

The magnificent solidarity and fighting spirit of the UPW workers was brought to nothing by the inability of Jackson and his executive to face up to the political decisions that a collision with the Tory Government made necessary. In such a conflict, the postal workers' struggle did not merely take on a political aspect, it could be no other than a political struggle, in its essence, and was well understood as such by the Tories themselves. If Jackson, instead of begging exclusively financial support from the trade union movement at large, had demanded, as of right, specific forms of industrial support, in particular from the POEU, and had widened and politicised the struggle as a crucial one championing the cause of all lower-paid workers, there can be no doubt whatsoever that the Union would have won massive and overwhelming support from the labour movement and an all out victory for the postal workers.

Fraternal demands placed squarely on Lord Delacourt Smith of the POEU and other labour aristocrats would have opened up roads to victory which the TUC itself would have felt obliged to follow up. In the sorry event, in the absence of all such demands and initiatives, Jackson and his executive made it only too easy for Vic Feather to play his weak and treacherous role. And the anger and resentment of the POEU rank and file at the effectively strike-breaking role that their union was driven by its leadership to play, was squandered in the general betrayal and defeat. The workers, correctly, have no use for defeat. They derive their gains from solid victories, however slowly gained. If we are forced to learn from our defeats, the only lesson to be learnt is what must be done to win.

Bill Cartwright - Southern Area Young Chartists

LONDON CO-OP POLITICAL COMMITTEE DEFIES DEMOCRATIC DECISION

The Political Committee of the London Co-op have decided, at a recent meeting, to ignore the resolution proposed by Young Chartists, and passed overwhelmingly at the January sectional meetings, for the L C S to affiliate direct, at national level, to the Labour Party. With the exception of two Labour Party members—Ron Heisler and Reg Taylor—the Political Committee is refusing to implement the resolution by hiding behind the excuse that the resolution did not imply national affiliation by the L C S but by the whole co-operative movement. That was neither the wording nor the intention of the resolution, as members of the Communist Party and the right-wing C M A know. The resolution proposed national affiliation because of the voice it would give the Left in the Labour Party and because socialist demands could be placed on the Labour leadership from another section of the movement.

But for the Communist Party to accept this logic would be for it to accept the need to break out of its isolation ; for the right-wing to accept it would be to call for its own annihilation.

The Political Committee may ignore the importance of an affiliation by the L C S —the 'Times' newspaper does not ! In a report printed on the 22nd march (reprinted on the following page) that bourgeois organ says that the Left is dismayed by the stalling of the 'Old Guard' of the 1960 Campaign Committee. It goes on to warn of the dangers to the Labour Party leadership of such an affiliation, suggesting that not only would the L C S vote be important to the 'Left', but that affiliation would almost certainly mean an automatic seat on the National Executive. The Young Chartists are interested in the enormous influence this would give the Co-op within the labour movement.

We reported in the last issue of the 'Chartist' the embarrassment of our opponents; such embarrassment continues. Keith Veness who moved the resolution at the sectional meetings was recently recalled to a meeting of district 33/34 of the 1960 Committee, a district incidentally which is largely opposed to Labour Party affiliation. The meeting consisted of about six people and was said to be informal. Our comrade was subjected to a barrage of questions about the Young Chartists, its policies and membership. Needless to say our comrade welcomed these questions and used the opportunity to put forward our perspectives for the London Co-op.

That meeting, held informally was used by certain members of the 1960 Committee in an attempt to expel Ron Heisler, a member of the LCS Political Committee and the Socialist Charter. These threats have now been dropped as a result of pressure by more realistic Stalinists on the 1960 Committee.

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We understand that approaches have been made to the 1960 Committee by M P s sympathetic to the Committee. Our information is that under some left-wing rank-and-file pressure from within the Labour Party itself, they have suggested to the 1960 Committee that it change its obstructive attitude towards affiliation.

The Young Chartists placed affiliation on the agenda for clear political reasons, which we have declared openly at every stage in our campaign. We are socialists. We stand for a completely nationalized economy under workers' control as the only answer to the problems faced by the working class today. But we will not let our ideas and programme stand in the way of the unity in action of the whole movement—including those with whom we differ fundamentally—on at least those bread-and-butter issues on which we are agreed. In our opinion ALL sections of our movement must be united in combative fashion from the bottom up if power is finally to be wrenched from the ruling class. (We made all this clear to the "Times" reporter, but will make no official complaint over his portrayal of us as mild-mannered "left-wingers" rather than virulent Bolsheviks).

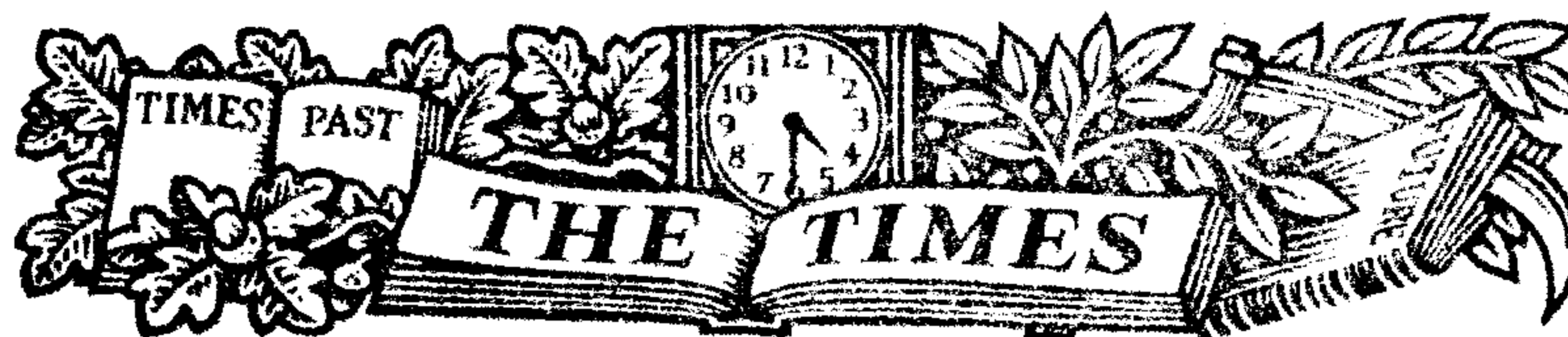
As trade-unionists, Co-operative members and Labour Party members, we say our leaders have no right to keep us divided and weakened in rigidly separated organizations. The Labour Party is the political arm of our movement. As Co-operative members we should be there within it, fighting against the right-wing leadership alongside our trade-union brothers and sisters, fighting for the unity of our combined forces so that we can represent a real challenge to the Tories and the bosses. The LCS Political Committee therefore has a clear duty to affiliate. To remain outside is to set itself apart from the mass organization of the working class. For the 1960 Committee to continue with its present policy is to sever itself from working-class politics.

The lessons of the last three months in the London Co-op are clear. A section of the leadership of the 1960 Committee—a body whose activities successfully led to the electoral annihilation of the right-wing C M A—have become in many respects as bankrupt as the C M A itself. This section no longer represents the Left or the rank-and-file. They must be replaced by people willing to unite the Co-operative movement's forces with those of the wider working-class movement, enabling the Co-op to develop its full potential as a political force. For the Young Chartists and our Co-op supporters, that will be one of our main tasks in the coming months.

Keith Whelan — South London Young Chartists.

(See next page for "Times" article).

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MONDAY MARCH 22 1971

The Times Diary

Co-op dithers over safe NEC seat

Labour leftwingers are watching with dismay while the London Co-operative Society dithers over a proposal which could give the left a safe seat on the Labour Party's national executive. The proposal is that the L.C.S., which has been dominated by the left since 1960, should affiliate at a national level to the Labour Party—and thus take over control of the seat on the executive which goes to the affiliated socialist, cooperative and professional organizations.

The seat at present is in the gift of the Royal Arsenal Co-op, one of the oldest and largest of the co-operative societies, and the only one which is affiliated. The Royal Arsenal has double the votes of the five other affiliated societies combined. The Fabian Society is the second largest of the other runners, but is a long way behind.

This is an opportune moment to strike. Arthur Skeffington, a long-standing member of the Royal Arsenal's political purposes committee, held the seat unopposed from 1953 (with a break in 1959 following an internal dispute), and his death in February leaves it vacant. The Royal Arsenal intends to put forward John Cartwright, its likable young political secretary, and he would assuredly get it (although Tom Ponsonby, general secretary of the Fabians, has entertained an ambition to take it over).

But the London Co-op, which is easily the largest cooperative society, would outgun the Royal Arsenal if it did affiliate. It now

looks however as though it will not do so until at least the end of the year. The leftwing Young Chartist group pushed a resolution in favour of affiliation through the society's quarterly meetings, but the old guard of the "1960 Campaign Committee" has blocked it on the L.C.S. board.

The Young Chartists are not particularly interested in the national executive seat as such. They believe that the election of a representative would cause a therapeutic ferment within the rank-and-file of the L.C.S., and regard their resolution as part of an internal campaign to revitalize the society. They are also attracted by the idea of contributing directly to the Labour Party conference.

The old guard inevitably distrusts the Young Chartists and fears that an election would unduly disturb its rule. It also feels a loyalty to the Co-operative Party, fearing that it would be weakened if its largest society turned its attention more directly to the Labour Party, and does not want to offend the Royal Arsenal. It also argues that its political grant (no less than £40,000 a year) is not sufficient to take on the cost of affiliation—an argument which the Young Chartists treat with derision. While they acknowledge the variety of the L.C.S.'s political work in London, they also reckon that the money spent on "useless political circuses in Bulgaria" would be better spent at home.

THE SOLDIER'S CHARTER

An oppositional grouping has begun taking action within the British Army. This is the newly-founded Soldiers' Trade Union Rights Movement, a small but fast-growing organization, members of which have approached us with a good deal of information on current soldiers' grievances and conditions. The Young Chartists wish them every success and are helping "from the outside" by leafleting and discussing with soldiers wherever this is possible. The response we have gained so far has been extremely encouraging. Here is a summary of the Movement's demands :

1. We demand the absolute right for all servicemen to form Soldier's Committees and to join a trade union.
2. It is at Company level that the Soldiers' Committees should be set up in the first instance. Each Committee would then represent a hundred or more men, with the Chairmen of the different Committees forming a higher Committee at Regimental level. Company elections should take place, say, every six months. There should be one man, one vote, with all officials subject to immediate right of re-call, and with at least the Chairman of each Committee being "full-time"—i.e. freed from other duties.
3. One of the most bitter complaints of soldiers is that the "fatigue" system can be abused (and often is) by officers wishing to discriminate against individuals. It is "official" army policy that dirty jobs (cleaning latrines etc) should be spread out evenly. To ensure that this is done, each Commanding Officer must, in our view, be required to keep a book that records every fatigue that each man is doing. The Soldiers' Committee to have daily access to this book to ensure fair play. People who think they are being victimized may take their grievance to the Committee. The Soldiers' Committee should also ensure that the book is made up ahead of schedule : for example, we would like it to see that all duties in excess of normal working hours are written in with a minimum of twenty-four hours notice, with at least one week's notice for any duty in excess of twenty-four hours duration and a month's notice where a duty involves being sent away for more than a week.
4. The Soldiers' Committee should have access at any time to the Company Commander who must give a decision on an issue within 24 hours. If that decision should prove unacceptable to the Committee, then the case may be taken up by the Regimental Soldiers' Committee, which would have immediate right of access to the Commanding Officer. If he does nothing, or his decision is not accepted, then the Soldiers' Union nationally may take up the matter and sanction a work-to-rule until satisfaction is obtained.

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5. "Military Crimes" are "Crimes" that would not be considered such in Civilian Life - e.g. insubordination, failure to salute an officer, disobedience, threatening a superior, or "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline". The greatest number of these are dealt with by the Company Commander or Commanding Officer (i.e. Courts Martial are rare); the object is not to establish justice but to maintain and enforce discipline. Perhaps this explains why we have never known such a case, once brought by a soldier's superior to the CC or CO, dismissed. The first aim of the CC or CO is to "back up" the person bringing the charge. There is no way to ensure justice, in our view, other than by allowing a Soldiers' Committee representative to be present at Company Commanders' or Commanding Officers' Orders. This representative could advise the accused after the charge had been read and before the "award" (in civilian language "sentence") had been given. If the Soldiers' Committee felt the accused to have been victimised, it would decide on action to be taken in the usual way.

Where an offender is Court Martialled the President of the Court Martial should confine his duties to those of "Judge" as understood in a civilian Court. There should be a jury made up of a cross-section of servicemen. This would bring Courts Martial more closely into line with civilian Courts, abolishing the present situation in which the President of the Court Martial (usually a Major in a District Court Martial and a Brigadier in a General Court Martial) performs the functions of both "Judge" and "Foreman of Jury". The accused should have the right to declare a Jury "biased" if he thought a disproportionate number of officers comprised it. Any complaints of this or any other sort would be taken up by the Soldiers' Committee, which would have a representative and advisor present throughout.

The Soldiers' Committees and the Union should negotiate a full review of the Manual of Military Law, and abolish vaguely-worded "crimes" such as "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline" etc.

6. Complaints by Officers about subordinates' hairlength are in some cases a form of victimisation and an unnecessary source of friction. There should be negotiated an agreed haircut and hairlength standard, and an illustrated booklet, made up of photographs of appropriate hairstyles, should be published as a guide. Once haircut standards had been set at a sensible level, it would be up to the Soldiers' Committees to be the guardians of this agreement. An enormous amount of unnecessary friction on a petty issue could in this way be avoided. The regulation that "the hair on the head shall be kept neat and tidy" should mean just that, and not mean "short" unless this were the will of the soldiers themselves.

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7. The overall job of the Soldiers' Committees should be to guard against any victimization or over-zealous enforcement of ambiguous rules. The Committees should act as watch-dogs over the Warrant Officers. They (the Soldiers' Committees) should, with assistance from the Union nationally, negotiate set and reasonable standards of cleanliness, neatness etc for all military equipment, including vehicles, garages, outside areas, barrack-rooms, accommodation, stores and personal uniforms. Once reasonable standards had been agreed, the role of the Soldiers' Committees would of course be to ensure that they were not overstepped or "bulled" by over-zealous N C O's. Probably, it would be not only the average soldier's, but also many a tax-payer's opinion that "bulling" is largely if not wholly a waste of man-power and money. We have made some advances already in the last few years : cases of painting grass green outside the Guardroom, or white-washing piles of coal, are now rare. But enormous savings in man-power and money are still to be made.
8. The Mess System must be abolished. There should be one dining room for both Officers and Other Ranks, and no segregation of sleeping quarters. There should be a communal social centre with public and saloon bars open to both Officers and Other Ranks alike. The Soldiers' Committees should have a say in the management of this social centre. Advantages would be (a) the abolition or at least reduction of class-discrimination and (b) vast savings in expenditure on quite unnecessary "luxury" Officers' facilities.
9. A Soldier is entitled to some privacy in his living quarters. Every soldier should have the right which at present only married soldiers have—i.e. the right to a "home", a room which is his own personal concern, in which he may receive visitors, including those of the opposite sex, and where his furniture, shelves, drawers etc., are exempt from "bull" inspections by officers. Nobody inspects the Officers' quarters, and this "privilege" should be the right of all soldiers.
10. There must be no interference with leisure hours (e.g. starting exercises on Sunday mornings), or, if a day is lost unavoidably, a free day in lieu must be given later in the week. There must be an end to compulsory attendance at sporting and social functions (Officers' parties etc). The Soldiers' Committees would have to act as watchdogs on all these things.
11. Officers' batman facilities should be abolished. If an Officer wants a batman, let him hire a civilian at his own expense instead of being provided one at the tax-payer's expense. A soldier wants to be a soldier, not an Officer's personal servant whether full-time or part-time. The abolition of all personal servants paid for by the tax-payer would allow soldiers to refuse to bring morning cups of tea to their officers, scrub their floors etc.

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12. The enforcement of all these reforms would be impossible through mere Parliamentary legislation, unless backed up by organization on "the shop floor" as well. In fact, the impetus for change will have to come from below—both in the army itself, and through trade union action from "outside".

The first right to establish must be the right to organize. We demand the right for all soldiers to join or form a trade union eligible for affiliation to the Trades Union Congress. This in itself would be a small gain unless the union were democratically-run and had real power: the Soldiers' Committees should be the basis of the union on "the shop floor". The Committees and the Union should have access to all files except those governed by the Official Secrets Acts (which should themselves be abolished by a Labour Government as soon as possible). In addition, servicemen should be free to join political parties, with the right of free assembly, freedom of speech (the right to send letters to the press etc) and freedom to publish and circulate journals, leaflets etc within the army. There should be vote by post for all ranks whether in the U K or abroad.

The full text of the Soldiers' Charter is being published on May 1 by the Leeds University Union Labour Society. It is a superb document—one of the finest things to have come out of the British labour movement for many years. We print below a pre-view in the form of the following extracts, which well describe the prevailing "atmosphere" of class-discrimination in the Army :

"In the field camp the mess system operates just as it does in the barracks. Marquees are set up for the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes. Officers sleep one or two to a tent: O R's sleep six to a tent of the same size. In the Officers' Mess carpets are placed on the ground, there are armchairs, tables spread with white linen sheets and the Mess silver is very much in evidence. The tables are properly laid and the waiters dress in white shirts and "best dress" trousers. The Bar stocks an extensive range of wines and spirits. In such places some officers exist, comparatively speaking, in luxury. They may well have a proper steel-framed bed, complete with freshly-laundered white sheets and pillow-cases. These beds are made daily by the batmen, who also bring their masters' hot water in the mornings, clean all his kit—a very messy job, this, in bad weather—and generally act as a butler or valet—come-domestic servant. It is no exaggeration to say that many officers are awakened in the morning with a cup of tea.

While such extravagances are lavished on the few, the masses are in a very different position. They queue in the rain for a mess-tin full of stew and two slices of bread. The officers may be eating trout, which, admittedly, they pay for themselves (but any attempt for the men to do this would be squashed on the ground that the cooks could not possibly cope with the extra work). When the men have received their own plain fare they will most likely have to stand to eat it; in good weather, of course, they could sit on the ground. In the evening they may be able to buy beer from the cookhouse,

but there would be no comfortable place in which to drink it, and no choice would be offered. Arrangements for sleeping would comprise one tent between six men, and a sleeping bag and a groundsheet each. Some of the more experienced soldiers may have brought their own camp beds, but they are always a minority. Conditions in wet and cold weather can often only be compared with the Somme or Verdun ; the men squelching around in water and mud two to six inches deep. The Officers Mess and tents would most likely be on raised ground, to ensure good drainage. Needless to say, those of the men are always the most badly-drained and many soldiers have suffered the unenviable experience of being "washed out" during the night. You may ask why all the men do not bring their own steel beds and extra equipment. The official reply is always that there are never adequate facilities for transporting such unnecessary items for the men.

The ordinary soldier rarely complains of his own poor conditions as he accepts that a fighting force must be prepared to "rough it". But they despise their officers for providing such comforts for themselves. And in conditions like these soldiers resent being pulled up by an officer for having dirty boots. "

"The posters say "You're never doing the same thing twice in the army", or "Something different every day". This is true. Owing to the fact that nothing is being produced there is no sense of direction in the teeth (combat) arm. There are so many duties and fatigues to provide ; various departments "phone up" and demand something that draws on the man-power resource of a troop (R S M wants two men to escort a prisoner, B S M wants an extra man on sweeping roads, an officer wants a driver to take him somewhere, ten men per troop for padre's hour, a vehicle to go to workshops, C C thinks certain vehicles are dirty, send a man to the Sergeants Mess to wash dishes, get some bodies together to cut the grass, that man needs a haircut, send him to get one at once, one man to bat for Lieutenant X, the toilets need to be cleaned again, etc.). The Officers and W. O.s walk around in their best uniforms demanding all these things straight away. They tell the sergeants, who in turn tell the J N C O's to make sure that the jobs are done. They in turn tell the privates to do one job one minute and another the next. The private gets fed up with being messed about and takes very little interest in anything among the pile of half-finished tasks. He lives for his beer at night and the next leave."