

THE NEWSLETTER

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STRONTIUM: 'WRITING IS ON WALL', SAY DOCTORS

By A Medical Correspondent

THE writing is on the wall about the strontium menace in Britain. This is the conclusion of a letter in the *Lancet*, one of Britain's two leading medical journals, which gives the gravest warning to date about the slow fall-out of strontium 90 already liberated as a result of past atomic explosions.

Even if there are no more H-bomb tests the fall-out already caused will go on for another eleven years, getting worse and worse—and more and more dangerous for children's bones all the time.

The *Lancet* letter is based on information released in two official publications of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment. The concentration of strontium 90 at ground level on January 1, 1956, was 4.5 millicuries per square kilometre.

It is estimated that the maximum effects, from explosions before 1956, and excluding all subsequent tests, will only be reached in 1969.

By this time (disregarding the damage done by the 1956, 1957 and 1958 tests) the concentration of strontium at ground level will be 14 millicuries per square kilometre—a three-fold increase above the 1956 level.

Up to the end of 1956 the highest strontium activity found in human bones was 1.55 units. If it got to be six times higher than that, says the letter, 'immediate consideration would be required'.

In any case, the letter concludes, 'the strontium 90 content of children's bones will increase during the next ten years, even if there are no more test explosions'.

'The writing on the wall,' it declares, 'could not be much clearer.'

These facts are of course known to the British Government. But the tests continue.

The Newsletter Launches H-Bomb Poll

BELIEVING that if medical experts say 'the writing is on the wall' it is time for the workers to act against the H-bomb, THE NEWSLETTER is conducting a poll on this question in a number of factories, pits and building sites.

Object of the poll, which will be taken by Newsletter readers among their workmates, is less to find out what percentage of workers are opposed to British manufacture of the H-bomb and the construction of rocket-bases in Britain—we believe the feeling is overwhelming—than to obtain from industrial workers their opinions on how best these horrors can be fought.

The aim is to bring the working class, with its own particular, traditional forms of struggle and activity, bang into the centre of the campaign.

The biggest space on the ballot forms, therefore, is reserved for the workers' own comments. The students have had their

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WORKERS, LABOUR COUNCILLORS, BACK NATIONAL ANTI-H-BOMB WEEK PROPOSAL

We, the undersigned, record our opposition to the use of the H-bomb and all nuclear weapons.

We consider that the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party should support the campaign of the Daily Herald for unilateral suspension.

We therefore support the proposal of The Newsletter that the last week in April should be an anti-H-bomb week, in which all organizations opposing the use of nuclear weapons will hold protest meetings and demonstrations.

Workers at the ASS engineering factory, Park Royal, London:

Tom McGleneghen
(convener of stewards)

S. Beaumont

H. Berry

F. Cox

G. H. Dennis

T. J. Dicks

Desmond Edwards

J. Finlay

A. B. Fisher

H. French

M. Hendry

A. Hunt

S. Keating

M. Lawrence

T. Lydon

J. Murphy

Con O'Neill

Bill Seden

D. E. Thomas

In Streatham we have as MP Duncan Sandys, Minister of Suicide, responsible on behalf of the Government for H-bomb and rocket bases.

We know the opposition in this area to the H-bomb, and welcome the idea put forward by The Newsletter for an Anti-H-Bomb Week, the week before May Day.

Such a campaign is just what is needed to draw together the various forms of protest: the union branches blacking work on rocket bases, Victory for Socialism, H-bomb committees, the Aldermaston march, meetings and demonstrations organized by local Labour Parties and trade unions, combined in one week of action against the H-bomb and rocket bases, culminating in what would be one of the most powerful May Day demonstrations ever.

Streatham (London) Labour Councillors:

Frank Sims

Peter Hendrie

Peter Gibson

COMMENTARY

THE WAY TO WIN

THE Cohen report and the busmen's 8s. 6d. should leave no doubt in anybody's mind that the Tories mean business. Trade unions which have been singled out for attack, such as the Transport and General Workers' Union and the National Union of Railwaymen, must have the whole-hearted support of a united Labour movement. If this is forthcoming we can lick the bosses on the industrial field just as we have been licking them on the electoral field.

We suggest that the following steps should be taken immediately, and we appeal to our readers to lose no time in urging them through their organizations. First, the Trades Union Congress should call a meeting of all unions with wage demands pending so that a common strategy for united industrial action can be planned. Second, the National Council of Labour should organize mass demonstrations of the three parts of the movement to force this Government of hunger and rocket war to resign. Third, the Co-operative movement should launch a national campaign to assemble supplies of food and clothing for the dependants of those on strike. Fourth, the TGWU should call a mass rally in the Albert Hall of all its members in the London area to discuss solidarity action: the best answer to those who want to defeat the busmen is to shut down petrol tanker transport and the docks, which would force every potential blackleg to remain an honest man. Fifth, local and regional rank-and-file committees of busmen and railwaymen should be organized, and the support of local Labour Parties, trade union branches, trades councils, shop stewards' committees and other working-class organizations sought.

This is the road to victory for the busmen and the railwaymen. Any dithering and hesitation by trade union leaders unwilling to face the need for a gloves-off fight would be playing the Tory game, and could be disastrous.

ONCE MORE ON THE BOMB

Labour's official policy on the bomb is now to support the Government's view on all essential principles, and to try to find as many minutiae [trivial details] as possible which it will not disturb Mr Gaitskell's conscience to launch a campaign about . . . The party agrees that the West must have the deterrent . . . Two of [the] five points . . . are Conservative policy as much as Labour . . .

Thus the *Economist* of March 15 on the joint statement issued by the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress. The big business weekly crows over the Labour leaders' recognition that the interests of British imperialism are paramount. To Gaitskell as well as Sandys the health of our children is a mere . . . 'minutia'. But the *Economist* is crowing too soon. What on Saturday it terms the 'emotionalists' turns out on Monday to be the sane majority of our people. Out of 13,197 readers who replied to the *Daily Herald* questionnaire, 12,968 said Britain should stop H-bomb tests; 12,928 said Britain should suspend the manufacture of H-bombs; 13,004 said Britain should refuse to have U.S. rocket bases; 13,005 said Britain should stop flights of loaded H-bombers. How much the Labour leaders' statement

was designed to throw dust in people's eyes and canalize popular opposition to the bomb, and how unsuccessful it was in this, is apparent when one compares the statement with the *Herald* questionnaire. The Labour leaders say we should temporarily suspend tests. The rank and file say we should stop them. The leaders want the postponement of missile bases until after summit talks. The rank and file want Britain to refuse to have bases. The leaders want manufacture of the bomb to continue. The rank and file want Britain to suspend manufacture (and a majority wants manufacture stopped altogether, though the *Herald* lacked the courage to frame the question in this way). On all essentials, as the *Economist* says, the Labour leaders support the Tories. Their policy is an accommodation to British imperialism.

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'Unilateralism' . . . does not contribute to the cause of peace . . . The arguments of . . . the *Herald* are in line with those of reactionary elements . . . hypocrisy . . . divert attention . . . dodging the fight . . . If the peace movement were to concentrate mainly on unilateralism . . . it would be choosing to fight on the question on which at the present time there is least agreement . . . divisive . . . unrealistic . . .

Thus George Matthews in *World News* of March 15, in the first full-length 'explanation' of the Communist Party's *volte-face* at the time of the Brighton conference, when the line suddenly switched to support for British manufacture of the H-bomb. Matthews claims that his party 'still remains opposed to its manufacture'; but every other sentence in his article, and every *Daily Worker* editorial on the subject, cries out the opposite. The Communist Party, marching ('realistically?') under the Union Jack, congratulates the Labour leaders on a statement which 'on all essential principles' supports the Tories. Matthews pays lip-service to the principle that 'the degree to which the working class and its allies are active in the fight for peace is the crucial question'. Just so. Why then is the Communist Party not calling for working-class action to black the rocket bases and the hydrogen-bomb?

* * *

I agree with this pamphlet. But how can we be sure that workers in other countries will take similar action to us?

Thus a Glasgow convener, commenting on the NEWSLETTER pamphlet *Black the H-Bomb and the Rocket Bases!*, sales of which on the job are exceeding all expectations. We are awaiting the replies to our own questionnaire, and the views therein of workers themselves, before attempting a full answer. But this much we can say this week. One element is missing from the 'moral lead' of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. That element is working-class internationalism: awareness of the need for and possibility of international working-class action against a common threat. We are confident that once the example has been set the gravity of the H-bomb menace and the power of workers' solidarity will ensure that it is followed. It must be set somewhere. Where better than on this island which would suffer so grievously in nuclear war? It is up to our Labour movement to give a lead and rouse the workers of the world with demonstrations like the Suez protests, with industrial action on no matter how small a scale. Only start the snowball rolling. It will become an avalanche.

H-BOMB POLL (Continued from front page)

say, and have left no one in doubt about their feelings; but the workers have it in their power to stop the building of bases and to stop the spread of the terrible strontium menace.

The ballot forms contain these questions:

- 1** Should the Labour Party and trade union movement unconditionally oppose the manufacture of the H-bomb by the British Government?
- 2** Should the Labour Party and trade union movement unconditionally oppose the testing of the H-bomb by the British Government?
- 3** Should the Labour Party and trade union movement unconditionally oppose the construction of rocket bases in Britain?
- 4** Should the Labour Party pledge that when returned to power it will cease manufacture and testing of the H-bomb, halt work on rocket bases and launch a campaign for international working-class action on the same lines?
- 5** Should British trade unions black all work on rocket bases?
- 6** Should British trade unions black all work on the manufacture and testing of the H-bomb?
- 7** What are YOUR views on how the Labour movement could conduct a campaign against the H-bomb and the rocket bases? Are you in favour of industrial action? Are there any other comments you would like to make?

There is space for the worker to state his place of work, trade union, positions held in the Labour movement, whether he is a member of the Labour Party, and to sign if he wants to.

The opinions of a number of Labour councillors are also being sought on the same form.

This ballot is no sense an attempt to conduct a national referendum on the issue of the bomb and the bases, but to find out the views of the workers in a number of key industries and important factories, to assemble their suggestions on the steps that must be taken, and so make a contribution to the great discussion now in progress—a contribution that we hope will help lead to action.

'LET LABOUR BLACK ALL ROCKET WORK'

Saltley ward (Birmingham) Labour Party has called on its national executive to 'ask the Trades Union Congress and all unions concerned to "black" all work entailed in building and equipping rocket bases'.

The resolution, which was carried unanimously, asks for a public campaign against the whole concept of nuclear armaments, and a pledge that when returned to power the Labour Party will stop British H-bomb tests, renounce unilaterally British manufacture of the H-bomb and revoke agreements with the USA for rocket bases on British soil.

'It could make these pledges a clarion call to the working classes of all countries and so unite them in an international campaign to end the menace of death and destruction by H-bombs or rocket missiles,' the resolution declares.

LEEDS MARCH 'FOR PEACE AND SANITY'

Leeds students marched to an anti-H-bomb meeting called by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on Wednesday night under a banner demanding 'Peace and Sanity'.

A. J. P. Taylor told the audience of 1,000: 'There is no distinction between one argument for the bomb and another. When did the Labour Party conference authorize the last Labour Government to manufacture atomic and hydrogen bombs?' No politician should address a meeting without being asked where he stood on this issue.

Other speakers were J. B. Priestley and Canon Collins. 130 copies of the Newsletter pamphlet 'Black the H-Bomb and the Rocket Bases!' were sold.

RAILMEN SAY 'BLACK H-BOMB AND BASES'

Streatham branch of the National Union of Railwaymen has passed a resolution supporting the trade union branches which have called for the blacking of the H-bomb and rocket bases.

The resolution asks the NUR to call on the Trades Union Congress to black work on the H-bomb and rocket bases and to urge the Soviet Government to agree to abolish the H-bomb at the same time as Britain.

HANDS OFF VFS CALL BY SALFORD LABOUR

Salford City Labour Party's monthly delegate meeting sent a resolution to the Labour Party national executive opposing its attacks on Victory for Socialism.

Delegates argued that the the NEC would be better employed organizing campaigns on rents, nuclear weapons and pensions, and for the mobilization of the movement to bring down the Tory Government: that was the road to victory for socialism.

HILLHEAD BACKS VICTORY FOR SOCIALISM

General management committee of Hillhead Labour Party unanimously declared its support for Victory for Socialism. The secretary was instructed to ask VFS to hold a meeting in Glasgow, or send a speaker to the constituency.

NO POLITICAL FUND FOR P.O. ENGINEERS

The illusion that industrial activity can be separated from political activity is still held by some unions.

A 73 per cent. vote in the Post Office Engineering Union's ballot on the motion for a political fund turned down the idea by 27,786 to 23,688 (POEU membership is 69,973.)

Many conservatives are members of this union, but its assistant general secretary, Mr Charles Morgan, does not think that was the main reason for the result. He thinks that many branches feared that political argument might destroy good feeling at meetings and hamper purely industrial activity.

INDUSTRY**RAILWAYMEN READY FOR NATIONAL STRIKE**

Manchester district council of the National Union of Railwaymen, representing 23,000 workers, this week set up an 18-man strike committee ready to bring work to a stop if the demand for a substantial increase in railway workers' pay is not met.

A mass meeting of London railwaymen unanimously passed a resolution calling on the NUR executive to arrange a national strike if the demand is rejected.

SHELL-MEX WORKERS WON A VICTORY

The 1,000 building workers employed by McAlpine on the Shell-Mex site, South Bank, London, returned to work victorious.

The management conceded the main demand—a meeting at site level to discuss the workers' complaints, without the dispute going through the machinery.

A carpenter charge-hand who had refused to operate a decision to ban overtime, as a measure against redundancy, was transferred.

BEDDING STEWARDS BACK BURY STRIKERS

From Our Industrial Correspondent

MEMBERS of the National Union of Railwaymen at the Bury (Lancs.) goods depot are refusing to handle raw materials and other goods for the Moorhouse (Apex) Ltd furniture and bedding works, Bury, where National Union of Furniture Trade Operatives members have been on strike for three weeks.

And the local branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union has instructed lorry-driver members not to cross the picket line. Pickets report that the majority of drivers are co-operating.

Financial support is beginning to come in from NUFTO branches and other working-class organizations as far afield as London.

Last Saturday forty delegates from bedding firms in London, Liverpool, Manchester and elsewhere met at the Bedding Workers' Shop Stewards' Council, a national rank-and-file body, and pledged themselves to seek support for the strikers in their own factories.

Mr Bill Caldwell, chairman of the Council and chairman of the Moorhouse strike committee, told me:

'This is the first time, to my knowledge, that NUFTO members have really dug their heels in on the principle of "No redundancy". This strike underlines the need for the union as a whole to get down to a real policy to fight unemployment.

'Two biennial national conferences of NUFTO, in 1955 and 1957, have gone on record for the forty-hour-week. It's time we stopped passing resolutions and began the fight for shorter hours.'

The 200 Moorhouse strikers are demanding the reinstatement of fifteen sacked workers and the setting up of a disputes panel to discuss alleged wrongful dismissals and the whole question of redundancy.

LEICESTER'S FOURTH SHOE FIRM TO CLOSE

Boot and shoe manufacturing firm of Orson Wright, Wigston (Leicester) is to close down soon because of lack of orders; 160 workers will be discharged.

This is the fourth boot and shoe firm in the Leicester district to close down for this reason in recent weeks.

500 DORSET WORKERS MAY LOSE JOBS

From Alan R. Bennett

THE danger of unemployment threatens at least 500 men and women workers in Poole (Dorset), as secret negotiations about the future of the Royal Ordnance Factory take place between Ministry of Supply officials and potential buyers of what has been advertised as a 'modern self-contained factory'.

Roughly one quarter of the 700 employed are 'established', which means that the Ministry is bound to offer jobs elsewhere.

But the upheaval of homes will bring great distress unless, as the Amalgamated Engineering Union district secretary suggests, the factory is kept as an engineering shop so that the workers could stay in the locality.

He has also pressed for a special conference of all affected, but the Southern Regional Board for Industry rejected such a meeting.

Already local Labour Exchange officials are preparing for a big jobs-placing scheme, in anticipation of at least fairly heavy unemployment.

LEFT CHALLENGE AT ETU CONFERENCE

From Our Industrial Correspondent

THERE is much on the agenda of the Electrical Trades Union conference, to be held a week before Whitsun, that presents a Left-wing challenge to the union's Stalinist leadership—including a composite motion from Communist Party-influenced branches asking for vigorous policies on the 40-hour week.

At the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions meeting last week Frank Foulkes agreed with the Right wing to drop the 40-hour demand and go forward in two stages, with 42½ hours as the first step.

Motions on redundancy have been composited by the executive to produce one innocuous motion, and amendments

from Left critics can be expected.

The debate on women's wages may again disturb the EC's equanimity. At last year's conference women delegates protested at the inadequate policy of the union leadership to gain the 'male labourer rate' for women in industry.

This year the motion demands a vigorous campaign 'in the factories, union branches, Labour Party wards and constituency parties to arouse the interest of the Labour and trade union movement in support of the demand. Failing a successful outcome to this campaign affiliated unions should consider strike action'.

On political questions the Communist Party has concentrated on bases, East-West trade and summit talks. The motion on bases is tinged with nationalism, condemning the decision to set up in Britain missile bases 'under American control'.

It is more than likely that an amendment will be put expressing opposition to missile bases as such, because their construction is part of the preparation for imperialist war.

The preliminary agenda shows that whereas the Right wing has put little down for debate, the Left-wing critics of the Communist Party have continued to gain in strength.

Motions with real gusto

On industrial questions they have tabled motions on women's wages, contracting workers' wages and conditions, and the 40-hour week.

On rents the Left has put down motions with real gusto in them. One calls on the EC to see 'that the full strength of the industrial movement be used' if the Tory Government does not retreat.

The Left has not only demanded a vigorous campaign for the defeat of the Tories, including industrial action if need be, but insists that members of the union should be encouraged to be active in the Labour Party 'supporting that section struggling to win the Labour Party to socialist policies'.

On international questions the Left has tabled the Norwood motion for an international working-class campaign against the H-bomb (around which the controversy raged at last year's Labour Party Conference).

Since the ETU delegation at the Labour Party Conference voted against this motion the explanation for their opposition should be of some interest.

A motion on Germany which demands the withdrawal of British troops and a campaign in the international Labour and trade union movement to compel American, French and Russian troops also to be withdrawn is again on the agenda.

This motion also demands the legalization of the west German Communist Party and the release of 'Professor Harich and other socialist and communist political prisoners in east Germany'.

There is every likelihood that the Left wing in the ETU will again win support from rank-and-file communist delegates, and from other genuine militants, for their arguments.

CROYDON SHOP WORKERS WARN ROBENS

Croydon retail branch of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers unanimously passed the following motion, to be submitted as an emergency resolution to the USDAW annual conference at Margate on April 6-8:

'That this annual delegate meeting is of the opinion that the statement of Mr A. Robens, in which he described strikes in the second half of the twentieth century as an anachronism, can only give comfort to the employers and the Tory Government.

'It therefore decides to withdraw official union support from this member unless he makes a public retraction of this statement.'

PAMPHLETS ON INDUSTRY AND H-BOMB

Supplies of The Newsletter's pamphlet on the industrial struggle, 'Into Battle!', by Brian Behan, Tom Kemp and Bob Potter, are still available. The pamphlet costs threepence.

'Ban the H-Bomb and the Rocket Bases!' by Peter Fryer, which also costs threepence, is reprinting.

Building Workers Struggle for Jobs, Site Organization and Public Ownership

By BRIAN BEHAN

OUR building industry is one of the most backward of all industries. We are building magnificent office blocks, garden cities, handsome schools—but very few outside the industry appreciate the filthy conditions we are sometimes forced to work in.

Now building workers are also faced with unemployment. An industry that has always been casual is becoming the most casual of all. The whole blame for this rests with the Tories. They desire unemployment, and they have begun with our industry.

Therefore the aim of all building workers must be the return of a socialist Labour government.

Encouraged by the growth of unemployment, the employers are resisting the establishment of strong trade union organization that will struggle for better conditions.

In London over the past six months there have been seven major disputes—at Higgs and Hill (White City), Unit Construction Co. (Abbey Wood), Myton's (Moorgate), French's (Fleet Street), Minter's (Financial Times), McAlpine's (Shell Mex House) and again at Abbey Wood—all concerned with the issues of black-listing, victimization and site conditions.

The big thing that has stood out in all these disputes has been the readiness of the workers at site level to struggle. The other lesson is that this has not, unfortunately, been matched by any similar readiness on the part of the official trade union leadership.

Thirty years ago the building unions accepted, in a time of defeat, an outrageous agreement for the settlement of disputes, called the 'green book procedure'.

Aftermath of General Strike

This was the aftermath of the General Strike: in return for recognition of trade unions at site level the right to strike was in practice taken away.

Since the disputes machinery has been set up there has not been a single case where they have recorded that a trade unionist was victimized.

In fact this disputes machinery has been very much to the advantage of the employers, because while a case is being referred to a commission the steward or stewards concerned remain discharged, the site is left leaderless, and the employer is free to do as he pleases in the meantime.

Here is a typical example. On the Bucklesbury House site in the City of London, on which 200 men were employed at the time, the employer decided to discharge twenty workers, including the site Federation steward.

Only two hours notice was given on the Friday, as provided for under the agreement. The employer did not refer the case to the disputes machinery before discharging the men.

The whole job stopped work and the men remained out for two weeks. The instruction of the local trade union officials was for the men to return to work (without the Federation steward) pending the use of the machinery.

Farce piled on farce

'No decision' was recorded at local level. A national disputes commission was convened, which recorded that 'no black-listing or victimization shall occur on either side'. The management still refused to reinstate.

The only action of the trade unions was to ask for another national commission based on the same people, to 'interpret' the first findings.

So farce was piled upon farce. And all the time dues-paying members of trade unions were left completely without the support of their unions. The Federation steward was not reinstated, and the whole site suffered a set-back.

It should be noted that the employer's argument in connexion with the Federation steward was simply that he was 'redundant'.

This failure of the trade union leadership to defend their members has produced a wide degree of apathy within the building unions, and made it possible for the employer to keep down working conditions.

This same attitude of the leadership has been responsible for the failure to take real advantage of the post-war building boom, when the demand for building trade labour was never greater, and to extract the best possible working conditions from the employers.

The first lesson for building workers is to demand that their unions see the defence of the membership as the first charge on the union and the disputes machinery as secondary.

Support from all sections

It is true that owing to rank-and-file activity some unions have been forced from time to time to give official recognition to disputes. All unions should follow this example.

But whether a dispute is official or unofficial, full support should be given to it by all sections of the industry. A dispute must be judged on the basis of the issues at stake, and not on the basis of the official attitude of the trade union leaders, or the disputes machinery.

The recent example of the solidarity around the Shell-Mex men is one that we should extend.

It should also be remembered that even when a dispute is official that is no guarantee of success: because of the existence of the disputes machinery, and the attitude of the unions to it, official disputes are often terminated on a very bad basis.

The Minter's dispute on the Financial Times site was an example of this.

With unemployment growing, bonus schemes on a target basis become even greater evils. Every sincere trade unionist will ask that our executives abolish the bonus schemes and fight for a higher wage.

On sites it is obvious that, where possible, guaranteed standing bonuses should be fought for rather than target schemes.

All these problems in the building industry begin to raise sharply before the building workers the question: 'How necessary are the big building firms?'

Can employers be eliminated?

Is it possible to get rid of Wimpey, McAlpine and the rest, and run the industry without them?

Already the London County Council is employing almost 1,000 men on direct labour. There is no private employer, and the LCC estimates that the houses are being built more cheaply and more quickly.

The site conditions enjoyed by the men on the LCC direct labour schemes are vastly superior to those of privately-employed men.

After six months' employment each LCC worker is entitled to six weeks' full money when sick. At the end of twelve months he is entitled to thirteen weeks' sick money. The bonus schemes are properly negotiated, and pensions are provided.

The private building employer, of course, pays nothing to workers when they are sick—and it is estimated that John Laing's pension is three half-crowns a week after thirty years!

Obviously we can do without the private employer. One of our biggest efforts should be to make the LCC extend direct labour to the major part of its new building.

This would give guaranteed employment to many thousands of building trade workers, and pave the way for socialist

Questions and Answers on the Slump

Forecasting about the crisis in the U.S. economy is in the nature of guesswork. It is especially tempting to leap to conclusions when our prognoses seem to be in the process of confirmation by events. With that proviso, here are some answers, necessarily incomplete and tending to dogmatism, perhaps, owing to brevity.

WILL EISENHOWER BE ABLE TO REDUCE THE UNEMPLOYMENT?

The further jump in U.S. unemployment, growing public uneasiness and prodding from various quarters obviously account for the waning confidence in U.S. government circles that the system will right itself through some built-in stabilizing mechanism.

Public works and similar expenditure will take some time to implement and there is no guarantee that they will get quickly enough to the root of the trouble.

The sectors most in need of a shot in the arm—like steel, motor-cars, aircraft etc.—depend to a large extent upon investment decisions, that is, upon expected profitability and business confidence.

Before they can feel much positive effect from spending on roads and schools they may decline even further.

Nor can lower rates of interest ensure that businessmen do actually step up their investment.

Indeed, the falling off in consumption still seems to have hardly begun and it may well go further, with all its secondary repercussions, so that still greater government outlays will be necessary to prevent further decline.

WHAT WILL THE EFFECT BE ON BRITAIN?

Direct British exports to the USA amount to £250 million a year; those from the Sterling Area are about three times as great.

Any falling off in U.S. purchases from either will have a magnified effect on Britain by provoking a serious payments crisis and by confronting industry with falling markets and unemployment. Exports to

other markets, which also depend upon American prosperity, will equally be affected.

International trade rivalry will intensify. Then, suppose that British Jaguars can no longer be sold so readily in the U.S. market, where else can they be sold—and how, in the short run, can the resources employed in producing them be switched to something else?

There are already pockets of unemployment up and down this country. They could easily widen and merge together into a persistent higher level.

Increased government spending and Keynesian remedies will not replace Sterling Area dollar earnings.

DOES THIS MEAN THAT SLUMP HAS COME?

Clearly the USA is experiencing the sharpest downturn since the war. As yet this is unequally spread over industries and areas. Once it begins to affect the general level of consumption new and wider sections of the economy will be drawn in.

In that case government spending may set a bottom to the decline—but it seems probable that it will have to go further and make bigger inroads into the sphere of private investment decision making than anything yet envisaged by the Eisenhower Administration.

We in Britain are only beginning to feel the first cool breezes of the blizzard in prospect. If the American economy keeps on its downward path there should be a really unseasonable icy blast striking the British economy by the summer and autumn.

We should, however, be trying to determine the nature of the next blizzard, not assume that it will repeat all the features of the last.

TOM KEMP

nationalization.

But in order to campaign effectively for direct labour every building worker should be active, not only in his trade union branch, but also in his local Labour Party.

There exists within the Labour Party (including its LCC group), just as there exists within the trade unions, a Right wing which stands nearer the capitalists than the workers.

So those who join their unions and the Labour Party should do so on the basis of fighting for a Left-wing programme and policies within these organizations.

Two vital struggles go together; the struggle to defend and improve our livelihood and conditions now, and the struggle for the elimination of the employer in the future.

More and more building workers are seeing the need for actively engaging in these two struggles, for a serious, united campaign. Such a campaign—in which our rank-and-file committees have a foremost part to play—would be of enormous benefit to building workers, and to the whole British working class.

RENTS

YOUR HOME, EH? DON'T BE EMOTIONAL

TENANTS and landlords have been writing to the *Birmingham Post* to give their views about the Rent Act. The paper says that about half those who have written are in favour of the Act and half against it.

One landlord, Mrs. D. Taylor, of Stoke-on-Trent, writes

airily that 'the fact that it is someone's home has nothing to do with it. It sheds an emotional aura around the issue but is completely irrelevant'.

'Veritas', of Great Barr, writes: 'Misery is being endured by thousands who are being forced to pay a new rental they cannot possibly afford; or to buy at an extortionate price which will prove a millstone round their necks for the rest of their lives.'

And an Alum Rock tenant, who has been given the choice of quitting his house or buying it for £800, writes of 'the hopeless despair when I catch that hunted look in my wife's eyes—knowing that I cannot say anything to reassure her . . . All while we listen to the tedious platitudes on the radio of the Minister of Housing'.

FRANCE

PARIS POLICE CRIED RIGHT-WING SLOGANS, BUT IT WASN'T A 'FASCIST PLOT'

From Seymour Papert

PARIS

WHAT is the meaning of last week's 'demonstration of Paris policemen? From one angle it was a demonstration of workers demanding salary increases in the face of a rising cost of living and of duties which become increasingly dangerous and onerous.

In this the policemen share the discontent of all Government employees.

The fact that the demonstration marched on the National Assembly does not distinguish it from other workers' demonstrations—at which the slogan of such a march has become increasingly common, but is invariably squashed by the trade union officials (including the communists) in much the same way as Carron would oppose a march of strikers on Westminster.

On the other hand, the policemen are in a special position as workers.

The nature of their duties—they are used regularly for political actions here, and have been consistently used against the North Africans during the past few years—acts as a principle of selection in their recruitment and as a corrupting force in their daily lives.

And most of them come from the very small bourgeoisie and the peasants, who provide the main support for the extreme Right-wing groupings which have sprung up in France (Poujade, Le Pen, Dides etc.)

Pay demand—and anti-Semitism

Both of these aspects were clearly shown in the events of March 13.

Nearly 7,000 policemen and plain-clothes men met in the courtyard of the police headquarters at the call of their trade unions. Angered by the refusal of the chief of police to

see a deputation, some 2,000 marched to the National Assembly.

The slogans shouted ranged from echoes of the pay demand (including a comparison between their £30 a month for risking their lives, and the £300 drawn by MPs for doing nothing) to plainly reactionary and even anti-Semitic slogans.

All this was accompanied by enormous traffic jams and much blowing of police whistles and sirens.

The importance of this demonstration should not be exaggerated. If Right-wingers like Dides had agents in it, this does not make it part of a dangerous 'fascist plot'.

Most significant aspect of the affair is that it shows up once more the disintegration of the bourgeois apparatus of government. Many recent events have shown that there is a virtual breakdown of government in France.

The Prime Minister is not even informed of what his generals are doing in North Africa. The Minister in charge of the police knows nothing of the mood and demands of his policemen.

The entire Government policy on Algeria is so incoherent and purposeless that no one at all is satisfied with it; the bitterness of the policemen's complaints reflects this.

The demonstration has led Maurice Thorez, Communist Party general secretary, to write a letter to Guy Mollet, starting 'Dear Comrade' and proposing joint meetings to protest against fascism.

Constant Reader | The Worker on Hyman Levy's Book

Bert Ramelson's review

THE most serious feature of Bert Ramelson's review of Hyman Levy's new book in the *Daily Worker* of March 11 is its implicit opposition to the very existence of the State of Israel.

'Faced with the problem of how a Marxist could justify what has been achieved as a result of ruthless imperialism [Levy] resolves it by simply ignoring historical fact', wrote Ramelson.

This attitude is not surprising, in view of the resolution passed by the recent Cairo conference, under Soviet-Nasserite leadership, which condemned not just the government or the ruling class of Israel but the State itself as a menace to Arab freedom.

But it compares oddly with what the Stalinist Press wrote in 1948-49. Take, for example, the Labour Monthly of September 1949 (p. 277):

'The plans of imperialism were also foiled in Palestine . . . The Jewish people who had suffered so terribly in their long history, who had been murdered by the million by Hitler, and for whom the Western capitalist countries did not provide security after the war, were firmly determined to fight to the end the battle for their national independence.

'But such was not the intention of Anglo-American imperialism. The reactionary governments of the Arab countries were thrown against the young Israeli State . . .'

Again, when Ramelson sneers at Levy's advocacy that the Soviet Government should 'subsidize newspapers, books and plays in a language that few under 50 years of age can understand', presumably he forgets that for a long time—including some time after it had ceased to be true!—the official encouragement of Jewish culture in the USSR was held up to us as an example of the enlightened national policy of Stalin.

Incidentally, it seems not to be as well-known as it should be among people interested in these matters that there is a Gypsy theatre in Moscow, called the 'Romen' (Romany) Theatre.

Noyes thinks again

Alfred Noyes, the poet, is reported as calling for the British Government to allow independent experts to examine the

alleged diaries of Roger Casement.

As head of British propaganda in the USA during the first world war Noyes was responsible for using extracts from the 'diaries' to sabotage the campaign to get Casement reprieved.

Whatever one's view of the probable facts of the matter, it does the old man credit that, being now shaken in his belief in the authenticity of the documents, he should raise his voice for an investigation.

One would like to see a little of the same selfless honesty among prominent Western Stalinists, who must surely by now be doubtful—if they were ever sure—about the genuineness of the Moscow trials.

What a sensation it would cause if, say, Pollitt or Dutt were to call for independent examination of the NKVD records to check on the 'evidence' linking Trotsky with the Gestapo!

Machines and tractors

The decision to transfer to the collective farms the machinery formerly owned by the Machine and Tractor Stations has been accompanied by a lively discussion in the Soviet Union of the theoretical as well as the practical problems involved.

Some, who saw the destiny of the collective farms as being transformation into State farms, held that the new measure was a step in the wrong direction.

The comment on this view in Khrushchev's 'theses' on the MTS (given in full in Soviet News of March 7) reflects significantly the pressure for greater control of the economy by the producers themselves.

In effect he says that it is rather the State farms that must become more like collective farms, in so far as powers of self-management of the State farms by their workers ought to be increased. ('Leninism teaches us that as we advance to communism we must manage the economy on an increasingly broader democratic basis.')

Marx House gloom

The annual report of Marx House for 1957-58 makes gloomy reading, with its account of falling membership, dropping income, reduced number of lectures ('entirely due to the difficulty in obtaining lecturers') and increasing dependence on support from abroad.

The Marx Memorial Library contains much very valuable

material, some of it not easily accessible elsewhere, and this should be made more widely available.

Perhaps some way can be found to release it from the dead hand which is now obviously killing the organization in charge of it?

What tangled webs

Oh, what tangled webs they weave, whenever they practise to deceive!

According to the Reuter report from Moscow, the volume of the Large Soviet Encyclopedia containing the article on Stalin, which has just appeared, states that 'Beria, Yagoda and Yezhov . . . used Stalin's "erroneous thesis that the class struggle would intensify" as Socialism progressed to "liquidate a number of men who were honest and faithful to the party".'

But Yagoda was removed from the headship of the NKVD in September 1936, whereas Stalin's 'thesis' was given to the world at the February-March 1937 plenum of the central committee.

From Arnot to Klugmann

Last week's World News reveals that 'on the recommendation of the [Communist Party] history commission, the executive agreed to appoint James Klugmann to prepare the draft of the history of the party'.

Klugmann was the author of "From Trotsky to Tito" (1951), which was subsequently withdrawn by the party.

R. Page Arnot, originally named as writer of the history draft, appears to have been dropped from the job.

BRIAN PEARCE

LETTERS

WHAT IS THE TRADE UNIONS' ROLE TODAY?

THERE is need at the present for reassessment of the strength and weakness of the trade union structure and its ability to cope with the demands likely to be imposed on it in the near future.

The tendency is still strong, even in the ranks of the militant lay membership, let alone the mass, to approach the problems of to-day in the laissez-faire way of the days when capitalism was based on free private competition.

Many still believe that the form of organization suitable for those conditions can be used successfully in these modern times.

A lesson to be learned is: monopoly capitalism does not rest on the free initiative of private enterprise, but depends on the more effective power of centralized command.

The cliques at the head of trusts, syndicates, banking consortiums, hold the key to economic power which can be wielded not only against the worker but equally forcibly against the private enterpriser who may menace their interests.

They view their economic life from the same lofty pinnacle as the State, cherishing the power reposed in them by the ownership and control of the major industries in the country.

This forces them at every step to collaborate with the State.

Cannot exploit the competition

This centralization and concentration of capital in the hands of the few, particularly in the main centres of industry, has deprived the trade unions of the possibility of exploiting the competition between the various groups of employers in their efforts to secure wage advances or other reforms for their members.

They are now confronted by a more powerful adversary, one that is closely bound up with the State.

In three major industries the monopolist is none other than the State itself and has at its disposal the full State

apparatus, which will be used if the need arises, in the future as in the past.

Since the trade unions have elected to remain reformist in theory and practice, and have accepted in principle the sanctity of private property, they must adapt themselves to the capitalist State and become contenders for its support and co-operation.

Many of the trade union bureaucrats believe they can influence the State to come over to their side. They believe the State can be freed from the embrace of capitalism, thus emasculating the trusts.

This position harmonizes with the attitude of the Labour bureaucracy, which is content to receive a crumb which falls from the rich man's table.

It is clear that the present trade union movement has become an appendage of the State, having accepted without demur the role of 'handmaiden' to its superior authority.

The leaders are shackled

The 'leaders' are content to be consultative agents in preference to 'protectors' of the members' interests.

They have allowed themselves to be shackled to the monopoly system, to become its faithful guardian.

An immediate task of the trade union member is to free himself from the lethal embrace of the bureaucracy, restore democracy to the organizations and transform them into organs of class emancipation.

Let us not be ensnared into the belief that the present leadership will act as generals in a conflict against the big monopolies and the State.

They may be pushed into it, but they will be there to destroy and not to carry the struggle through to its logical conclusion. Therefore, let us not be deceived.

London, W.2

Jack Bayswater

[The above letter was submitted with the aim of opening 'a theoretical as well as practical discussion on the role of the trade unions in modern society'. As with other signed contributions, it should not be taken as necessarily expressing the views of the Editorial Board.]

THEY'VE DEFAMED MINERS FOR 200 YEARS

IN the last few years people have become used to reading and hearing about how 'lazy' the miners are. But this is nothing new.

A Mr Atkinson wrote to the Lloyds Evening Post (September 25-27, 1765) defending the miners of the Tyne and Wear, who were on strike at that time, against charges of laziness and extravagance, and he ended his letter with this paragraph:

'To be sure it is the business of the Proprietors to represent them as a set of lazy, disorderly fellows, who want only to increase their wages, for the sake of extending their extravagances; the more they are kept down, the more their Masters will be enabled to venture ten thousand guineas on a favourite horse, or the accidental turn of a card.

'But the sensible part of the Kingdom, who will always judge for themselves, must immediately see, that when Butter in the northern parts of England is at sixpence and Butcher's meat at threepence a pound, a man who has but seven shillings a week to support himself, a wife, and four or five children, can have no mighty matter to squander away at an ale-house, or at any other place of recreation.'

Change the prices of the commodities mentioned and the rest of the above paragraph after almost two hundred years, is applicable today and for the very same reasons.

Atherton (Manchester)

Price Jones