

THE NEWSLETTER

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DON'T LEAVE THE BUSMEN TO FIGHT ALONE

JUDAS got thirty pieces of silver. The railwaymen are offered 3 per cent. in the hope that they will sell out fellow trade unionists. The busmen are getting £3 a week strike pay—the railwaymen are offered 3 per cent. scab pay. The Government hopes to buy off the railwaymen while it deals with the busmen. Give Greene's members this sop and maybe the tube men won't stop in solidarity with the bus strikers. Give them a few coppers and maybe they will leave 50,000 other transport workers in the lurch—not to mention the 12,000 or 15,000 of their own members who stand to be sacked. All along the Government has sought to keep the different sections isolated, under the old principle, 'Divide and rule'. It will be a shameful day, worthy to rank with Black Friday in the annals of British trade unionism, if Greene and the other leaders accept this insulting offer.

On Black Friday—April 15, 1921—the miners were left to struggle alone by their colleagues in the Triple Alliance, the railwaymen and the transport workers. Three of the four architects of that dark betrayal later crossed over to the bosses' camp. One of them was J. H. Thomas. If Greene swallows the Tories' bait today and blacklegs on the busmen he will earn the lasting contempt of all who cherish the British Labour movement's traditions of solidarity and struggle.



NO one who has read the newspapers close to the British ruling class this past fortnight has any doubt that the Government has been planning its strategy well in advance. The Observer discusses the chance of a general strike; the Economist, reckoning up how long a general strike could conveniently be weathered, opines that it is better for the employers to 'stand' rather than 'deliver' wage increases. The Sunday Times reveals that 'a close watch is being kept on the danger of a sympathetic dock strike, which would require emergency powers to be taken by the Government'. 'By the weekend,' forecasts the Observer, 'there might develop a feeling that the Government meant to break the busmen.' Yes, gentlemen, you are right. Such a feeling is developing, and the attempt to buy off the railwaymen confirms the workers' suspicions. The Tories are aiming to make an example of the busmen, to teach the whole movement a lesson through them.

Will the rank-and-file railwaymen countenance a conspiracy between Greene and Macmillan to make the busmen scapegoats and whipping-boys? Or will they repudiate their spineless 'leader', who has carried on negotiations as if the busmen did not exist? If the railwaymen have a spark of class feeling and common sense—and we believe they have much more than a spark!—they will rise in their wrath against any acceptance of an offer designed to smash the busmen. The London district council of the National Union of Railwaymen has done well to ask its executive to reject the

offer and call an immediate national stoppage. Now let a mass meeting of London tube men be called to decide the plain question: 'Are we prepared to scab on the busmen?' For as long as tube trains carry passengers who normally travel by bus, then those who man them are scabbing.



BUT a major responsibility for the busmen's isolation must rest on Frank Cousins. The strike is almost a fortnight old and he has done nothing to call out other sections of his membership in support. The rank and file are having to send deputations to get anything done about 'black' transport. Cousins is content with the Trades Union Congress statement. But the busmen expect *action*, not fine words. They need help, in the shape of a rapid and far-reaching extension of the strike. The strike is weak because it is limited. Cousins's union has immense power. Why should the busmen go it alone? Let him use his power to put the maximum pressure on the 'show-down' Government and bring a speedy victory.

This is the quietest strike of the century. The members are being given little or nothing to do except a minimum of picket duty. The strike is too 'official'. The initiative of the ordinary workers is not being tapped; their energy and militancy are not being fostered. There are too many loop-holes for scabbing. It is reported that at Baker Street, where fourteen messengers are employed—men unfit for normal duties—although all fourteen are supposed to be out, all but three are in. At one large north London garage, over 100 women strikers are kept indoors on 'domestic' duties instead of being given the chance to participate in the experience of picketing. At a big garage in south London there is a state of affairs described as 'chaotic'; dispute cards are stamped once a week only, at the same time as strike pay is handed over. Meetings are not announced. Surely this is the way to lose touch with the members and spread apathy and demoralization.



THREE things are needed to win this strike. First, its extension *industrially* to the key sections of the transport industry, and above all to the Underground. Second, its extension *politically* to force the resignation of the Tory Government. Third, the utmost mobilization of the rank and file so that every single striker has his days packed with activities. More and more mass meetings; more joint meetings with workers of other industries; more collections among other workers; wider distribution of leaflets and Strike Bulletins; the setting up of solidarity action committees from below to link the busmen with other sections in struggle, to exchange information and experiences, to plan a common strategy and common action, to build a powerful, militant rank-and-file movement: these are vital tasks. This is the way to prevent a sell-out. This is the way to win the strike.

The Appalling Radiation Peril

By J. H. BRADLEY

OUTSTANDING fact about our knowledge of the dangers of fall-out is our abysmal ignorance. An article in the periodical *Science* recently revealed that new studies have shown fatal illnesses to result at less than one half the dose of radium believed dangerous since 1948.

These illnesses can take as much as forty years to appear, though most of them turn up within twenty years. Ten years has brought a halving of the danger level.

Who dare say what fifty years will bring?

Add to this the fact the danger levels for all other radioactive substances were set by comparison with radium, because radium is the only one which has been in use for a long time—a comparison made by the very simplest physical effects IN DRY AIR, which may turn out quite unrealistic for biological dangers—and one sees that all talk of safety at present levels is folly.

The people who set the safety limits were men with too little knowledge—great scholars trying to do the impossible because the facts are not known.

They realized they did not know everything, so they took a tenth of what was known to be dangerous and called it safe. But there are good reasons why not a tenth, nor a hundredth, nor a thousandth may be safe—or any amount at all.

But nobody can tell

They allowed ten times as much strontium-90 as radium, because they knew it did ten times less damage—in dry air. They may be right. Nobody can tell.

The two important kinds of radiation from fall-out do harm in different ways. Gamma rays, like all other X-rays, can pass right through a human body, but some of them are stopped on the way.

Every one which is stopped, or turned aside from its path, splits off an electron from some atom or other. These electrons move very fast, and are just like those other fast electrons called beta rays.

So beta and gamma rays act in a similar way. Except that gamma rays act all over the body, throwing out electrons everywhere. Beta rays and electrons cannot move very far in flesh—two or three tenths of an inch at the most.

Gamma rays do damage everywhere, very little more in one place than another, beta rays only near the place they start from.

Actually nearly all the damage is done where they stop. And beta rays do not start all over the place—they are found chiefly near the most sensitive vital parts of the body. That makes them far more dangerous than gamma rays.

For instance, there is a lot of strontium-90 in fall-out, and quite a lot of strontium-89. Both these go into bones. Go just

This is the second of two special articles by our scientific correspondent on the scientific and military aspects of the hydrogen bomb.

The series will be continued with an article by our medical correspondent designed to give workers as simply and clearly as possible the facts about the diseases caused by radio-active fall-out.

in the right place to shoot beta rays into the bone marrow, where all the blood-cells are formed.

Go into unborn and growing children, who are forming a lot of bone and blood. Children who feed on milk, the most dangerous of all foods in strontium-89 and 90.

Milk formed by cows who cannot help but eat the dust on

the grass in the fields. Cows which, like all mothers, feed their offspring milk rich in calcium, and the strontium which goes with it.

That is why it is not true that all the fall-out around us is only like living a few hundred feet higher up a hill, or like living in Scots granite houses. We do not live with our sensitive bone marrow getting most of the damage from cosmic rays or granite.

But don't worry—there is a charming term to describe strontium-90. It is measured by Sunshine Units. Moonshine would be a better word.

There will be a lot more 'sunshine' yet, and moonshine too. By December 1955 activities as high as 240 millicuries per square mile had been found to fall in one day from those 'tactical' bombs tested in Nevada.

It fell at Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire. Enough in fact to give 240,000 people the 'maximum permitted dose'.



GENETIC EFFECTS

FALL-OUT will also have effects on future generations. It does not matter whether one follows Lysenko, Darlington or anybody else. It is a fact of experiment that radiation to a parent causes defects to its offspring many years later, which are transmitted from generation to generation. Some of them may not turn up for many generations.

The story of safety limits for genetic effects is also rather shocking.

First the geneticists at Harwell studied their beloved fruit fly, *Drosophila*. It breeds very rapidly, eats little, and needs next to no space.

An excellent insect for quick results—if only they were not so ready to assume that all other living things react just like fruit flies.

Geneticists got a shock

Then they studied mice, and got a nasty shock. Mice suffer ten times as much inheritable damage as fruit flies for every particle of radiation which hits them.

A mouse may not be very much like a man, but it is a great deal more like a man than a fruit fly. It has a backbone, lungs and blood. Its young are born alive.

Men may be even more sensitive than mice, and the price will be paid by our descendants for thousands of years. We have not the slightest idea how to repair the damage once it is done.

And if we should happen to change one germ so that our drugs no longer affect it, we shall pay a terrible price in this generation. Nobody knows whether the Asian 'flu is actually a change caused by radiation, but it is a warning what could happen.



WHAT WE CAN DO TO MINIMIZE THE DAMAGE

GENETIC damage is nearly all caused by gamma rays from outside the body. There is next to nothing one can do about gamma rays from fall-out in peace-time, except all go to live far underground, because the fission products are mostly several days old before they come back to earth.

In war-time a great deal could be done because there would be heavy local fall-out shortly after an explosion. Such dust can be dug or ploughed in, or washed down the sewers.

Its rays can be cut down enormously by staying in a foxhole six feet deep, with a roof on top, for a few days.

Even in peace-time the strontium danger could be reduced.

First, all food should be scrupulously clean from dust. All fruit and vegetables should be thoroughly washed several times.

The old National Loaf included a little finely ground chalk so that our children should get enough calcium, which prevents most of the strontium from going into bones.

Free enterprise is rapidly leading us back to less calcium, more rickets, and more danger from fall-out.

Milk should be purified

Milk should have its calcium and strontium taken out at no more cost than softening the same amount of water, and by similar methods. Then pure calcium can be put back in.

People who have 'hard' water are safer than those with 'soft' water. The hardness is dissolved chalk and limestone. So people in parts of Derbyshire, the Chilterns, the Downs, and those Londoners whose water comes from deep wells are better off than others.

But if your water comes from the Lea or the Thames, you are not so well off, and people in slaty or granite mountain areas are worst off of all.

Hardness could be added at most town waterworks by putting a thick layer of chalk lumps on top of the filter beds. It would not get the strontium out, but it would put a protective substance in.

The cost of all these precautions every year would be less than the cost of a few H-bombs. Even £10 million is only four shillings each. Arms take 150 times that amount every year.

Be warned—don't go giving your children calcium salts in their food. You can easily end up by giving them a disease called hypercalcaemia—too much calcium. It is as bad as strontium-90.

The only safe and effective way is by nation-wide treatment of bread, milk and water.

COME AND BE SIMPLIFIED

A body recently set up in east Germany, says the Democratic German Report, is called the 'Central Operational Staff for the Organization and Control of the Carrying Out of the Law on the Perfection and Simplification of the Work of the State Apparatus in the German Democratic Republic'.

YUGOSLAVIA

BELGRADE WON'T WILT IN PEKING BLAST

By Michael Banda

'THE first time as tragedy, the second time as farce . . . ' That is how history is said to repeat itself, and this has certainly been confirmed by the new dispute between the Stalinist world and Yugoslavia.

That Peking instead of Moscow is acting as the major spokesman of Stalinism has scarcely made the level of the anti-Tito polemics any higher.

Most important thing about the Peking declaration is the way it tries to bring back to life the 1948 Cominform resolution. The Yugoslavs' reply—in their theoretical magazine *Komunist*—is sardonic and vigorous. They ask:

'Is the purpose of the article a discussion on ideological divergences which may exist between Communist Parties?' and answer:

'The article obviously is designed to preclude constructive Marxist clarification of definite problems facing socialism today, and to subject a Communist Party to some kind of "ideological isolation" just because it places those problems on the agenda.'

These words show how deep is the split between Belgrade

and Moscow and how illusory the attempts at reconciliation have been.

Seeking the probable motives of the Peking statement, the Yugoslav reply declares: 'Either the former attitudes of those now attacking us were insincere . . . or they have meanwhile changed their attitudes for the worse, returning to the old methods which they themselves criticized and rejected in the relations between Communist Parties and socialist countries.'

The honeymoon is over

And so the honeymoon which began with the Belgrade declaration, and which was so rudely interrupted by the Hungarian revolution, has now been definitively ruptured by the demonstrative boycott of the Ljubljana conference and a new outbreak of the propaganda war.

The Chinese Stalinists have begun hurling slanders at the Yugoslavs. But already they are getting the worst of the encounter. Here is a telling passage from the Yugoslav reply:

'What happened to most of those who signed the first Cominform resolution? Out of seventeen signatories from socialist countries, twelve have finished ingloriously or tragically.

'Traicho Kostov was sentenced to death. Vulko Chervenkov was removed from the post of Prime Minister and sharply criticized. Anna Pauker was expelled from the party. Vasili Luca was sentenced to life imprisonment.

'Matyas Rakosi led Hungary to the brink of ruin and now lives as an émigré away from his country. Mihaly Farkas is in prison for crimes against fellow communists. Erno Gero is also living as an émigré.

'Jacob Berman has been in prison for a breach of the law, for arresting and persecuting honest communists. Georgi Malenkov has been condemned by the party for belonging to the well-known anti-party group. Gustav Bares has been removed from party functions. Rudolf Slansky was hanged. Bedzih Geminder was also hanged.'

Constant Reader

HOW A BUS STRIKE WAS LOST IN 1937

'WHAT we learn from history,' writes a famous military historian, 'is that we do not learn from history.'

The outcome of the London bus strike largely depends on whether or not that dictum is disproved in this case.

In 1937, when Ernest Bevin headed the Transport and General Workers' Union, he wrecked the London busmen's strike for the 7½-hour day by refusing to call out the tramwaymen, sending back provincial busmen who had come out in several areas and making no attempt to involve the Underground or other railwaymen.

In troubled waters

The result was a Court of Inquiry recommendation which did not meet the busmen's demands, the calling-off of the strike on this basis, and a brawl within the union that gave ample opportunities to the Communist Party leaders and to W. J. Brown to fish in troubled waters in their respective fashions.

The 1937 dispute went on for four weeks, and was defeated. An isolated busmen's strike could this time also go on and on, exhausting the strikers and ending in defeat.

By bringing in other transport and rail workers now this strike can be made successful—and a boost to the authority of the organized working-class movement in this country.

Irrelevant or irreverent?

TAKEN to task by correspondents for his comments on the London Labour Party conference on H-bomb policy, 'Critic' of the *New Statesman* has returned to the attack.

His objection, he writes, is to 'turning a Labour Party con-

ference intended for discussion of policy into an irrelevant shouting match.

Whatever else might be said about the questions that were asked, they were hardly 'irrelevant'—all related to the bomb and how to get rid of it.

Perhaps this was a misprint for 'irreverent'? There was certainly no misplaced reverence about the meeting: and that was the most reassuring feature about it to many newcomers to the Labour Party.

May Day proof

As there was no proper provision for discussion, questioning inevitably assumed a 'discussional' character.

And Bevan, the chief speaker, did nothing to lower the temperature when he called one of his questioners a 'self-satisfied little person who thinks she knows all the answers'.

This referred to Vivienne Mendelson, who spoke for the Norwood resolution at the Brighton conference and is evidently now a 'marked woman' for some people.

The reception which The Newsletter's banner and placards were given on the May Day march to Hyde Park proved that the ideas behind the questions put to Bevan are widely held and gaining support.

BRIAN PEARCE

LETTERS

WE MUST MAKE OURSELVES HEARD

AT Hyde Park on May Day the full force of oratory of the communist speakers, with their appeal for a 'British Road to Socialism', came through their efficient loudspeakers, making even their Union Jacks tremble.

The Newsletter speaker next door talked about how the fight against the H-bomb and the fight to preserve the workers' standards were linked together.

More sense and socialist talk than any to be heard from his noisy neighbours.

We must make ourselves heard, and to this end I have great pleasure in enclosing £5 towards the cost of a loudspeaker (or its hire).

Edgware (Middlesex)

'Socialism'

LET BOTH HIDE THEIR FACES IN SHAME!

IN the hydrogen-bomb campaign, I am all for 'hiding the face of the party'. The official policy of the Labour Party and the Communist Party is such that both have every reason to hide their faces, in shame.

The week-end after the Aldermaston march, Gaitskell and Bevan spoke at the official Labour rally in Trafalgar Square. A procession from Hyde Park bore the Aldermaston banners into the Square, and held them there in silence throughout the speeches.

I was in a coach-load of people going to join this march. There were people of no party on the coach, but most of the passengers were either Labour Party members, defying their leaders' policy, or Communist Party members, defying theirs.

For the Daily Worker, the previous day, had denounced this procession as disruptive and called for unity with Gaitskell.

'I'm uniting with them'

One communist, when asked how he came to be on the march nevertheless, said: 'The Daily Worker's right—we need unity. So I'm uniting with the people I've been working with for the past year.'

He wouldn't have been working with them, of course, if he had been strictly following the party line.

Ever since Bevan made his 'don't-send-me-naked' speech at the Labour Party conference last October, the official com-

munist line has been to support Bevan.

Khrushchev, it is generally known, told Bevan that Britain must keep the H-bomb. (Accounts of Khrushchev's motives differ, but the most plausible version is that he fears that if Britain renounces the H-bomb America will insist on giving it to west Germany.)

The campaign for Britain to stop making the H-bomb cannot therefore be a party one, until the Labour Party can be induced to change its policy.

Coming together of people

It must be what it is at the moment—a coming together of people from all parties or none, people who feel that the interests of nations, classes, and parties are less important than the interest of the whole human race, in simply staying alive.

When Wolfgang Harich suggested that both communists and social-democrats were afflicted with such hopeless gangs of leaders that they must by-pass the leaders and get together for common aims, the east German leaders regarded the suggestion as so explosive that they put him in prison for ten years.

It remains an explosive idea, and in this country it's beginning to happen.

London, N:10

Alison Macleod

INCONSISTENT WITH SOCIALIST PROGRAMME

BY supporting direct working-class action against the H-bomb and the building of rocket bases THE NEWSLETTER is doing an excellent job.

However the programme of The Newsletter pamphlet 'Black the H-Bomb and the Rocket Bases' includes demands which are inconsistent with an international socialist programme.

The only way to remove the threat of war is by an intensive working-class campaign of blacking the bomb and the rocket sites, against the Western capitalists and the Russian bureaucracy.

As revolutionary socialists let us be consistent in our reliance upon the workers and not on any conference of warmongers, whether these are the ruling classes of large nations or of small (as suggested by point 5 in the pamphlet's programme). The logical conclusion of this argument is to support the United Nations.

On page 5 the pamphlet states that it would be folly 'to rely on the murderers of the Korean people, of the people of Kenya, of the Hungarian people, turning their H-bombs into ploughshares'.

A ludicrous contradiction?

Yet in point 4 of the programme it demands that the Labour leaders (who support NATO and the H-bomb) and the Russian leaders (with the intercontinental ballistic missile) support an international working-class campaign against the H-bomb and the social systems which these gentlemen uphold, a campaign which would be against their vested interests. Surely this is a ludicrous contradiction.

A demand to extend the nuclear weapon-free zone (the Rapacki plan) to the whole world side-tracks the real issue of direct workers' action.

The Rapacki plan, leaving missile bases in Britain, France and Italy and leaving Russia with the ICBM, does not lessen the danger of war.

We cannot have confidence in the international working-class movement and at the same time demand that the Labour bureaucrats and the Russian bureaucrats put into operation demands which they are opposed to.

The only socialist policy for peace is international working-class action against the bomb, for international socialism.

London, E.8

David Prynn