

THE NEWSLETTER

Weekly Journal of the Socialist Labour League

Vol. 3, No. 109

Threepence

July 4, 1959

PRINTWORKERS GO INTO ACTION AGAINST 'BLACK' PAPERS



'A Fight to a Finish'

By BOB PENNINGTON

BRITAIN'S printworkers are militant, and determined to win their biggest battle since the 1926 General Strike. In Watford, Maidstone and Streatham employers' strike-breaking attempts have met with stubborn resistance.

The West Herts. and Watford Observer, which normally sells 85,000 copies, last week produced a 'black' edition of 45,000 copies. The attempts to get the paper out of the works ran into a solid wall of pickets, reinforced by men from Odhams.

Newsagents had their scab papers torn out of their hands, ripped to shreds and scattered over the roadway.

Attempt by the management to get a van loaded with papers out of the main gate failed completely. By Wednesday of this week it was still inside. Pickets rejected the offer of managing director Peacock to call a 'truce' over the weekend; they insisted on staying on duty.

'We could not have agreed to that', Natsopa member Ted Grimes told me. 'What if the bosses had changed their minds over the weekend and forgot to notify us they were going to move the truck?'

Local Labour declares support

To co-ordinate the picketing the strikers in Watford have set up a central strike committee in the local trades hall at Woodford Road.

Harrow Borough Labour Party at its meeting on Tuesday passed a resolution of support for the printworkers and called on all Labour Party members to 'black' any printing products of firms that have not signed the agreement. It also called on its members to help with the picketing.

(Continued overleaf)

Scenes from the battle in Streatham last week, when pickets seeking to prevent the distribution of the 'black' South London Press were set upon by police.

THEY'RE IN THE MONEY

Between 1954 and 1957 the output of the printing, publishing and bookbinding trades increased by 52 per cent. In 1958, seventy-nine public companies in the print trade reported profits of £44 million—an increase of £3,000,000 on 1957.

The gross surplus per employee in 1958 was £460.

The giant of the printing trade, Amalgamated Press, was recently bought out by the Daily Mirror for over £16 million. The new empire formed by that deal has total net assets of £42 million.

On Monday, at the Amalgamated Press annual general meeting, new boss Cecil King announced a consolidated group profit of £3,664,000.

Previous chairman, Berry—one of the Kemsley family—drew over the last five years the following amounts: £91,600, £116,000, £99,850, £81,550 and £77,200.

Last year the fourteen directors of this concern shared between them in directors' remunerations £167,000.

Norwood Labour Party Backs the Printers

All trade unionists and Labour Party members are called to a meeting at Rushcroft Road, Brixton, at 3.30 p.m. on Saturday, July 4, followed by a march to the 'black' South London Press.

THE NEWSLETTER

Weekly Journal of the Socialist Labour League

Vol. 3, No. 109

Threepence

July 4, 1959

PRINTWORKERS GO INTO ACTION AGAINST 'BLACK' PAPERS



'A Fight to a Finish'

By BOB PENNINGTON

BRTAIN'S printworkers are militant, and determined to win their biggest battle since the 1926 General Strike. In Watford, Maidstone and Streatham employers' strike-breaking attempts have met with stubborn resistance.

The West Herts. and Watford Observer, which normally sells 85,000 copies, last week produced a 'black' edition of 45,000 copies. The attempts to get the paper out of the works ran into a solid wall of pickets, reinforced by men from Odhams.

Newsagents had their scab papers torn out of their hands, ripped to shreds and scattered over the roadway.

Attempt by the management to get a van loaded with papers out of the main gate failed completely. By Wednesday of this week it was still inside. Pickets rejected the offer of managing director Peacock to call a 'truce' over the weekend; they insisted on staying on duty.

'We could not have agreed to that', Natsopa member Ted Grimes told me. 'What if the bosses had changed their minds over the weekend and forgot to notify us they were going to move the truck?'

Local Labour declares support

To co-ordinate the picketing the strikers in Watford have set up a central strike committee in the local trades hall at Woodford Road.

Harrow Borough Labour Party at its meeting on Tuesday passed a resolution of support for the printworkers and called on all Labour Party members to 'black' any printing products of firms that have not signed the agreement. It also called on its members to help with the picketing.

(Continued overleaf)

Scenes from the battle in Streatham last week, when pickets seeking to prevent the distribution of the 'black' South London Press were set upon by police.

THEY'RE IN THE MONEY

Between 1954 and 1957 the output of the printing, publishing and bookbinding trades increased by 52 per cent. In 1958, seventy-nine public companies in the print trade reported profits of £44 million—an increase of £3,000,000 on 1957.

The gross surplus per employee in 1958 was £460.

The giant of the printing trade, Amalgamated Press, was recently bought out by the Daily Mirror for over £16 million. The new empire formed by that deal has total net assets of £42 million.

On Monday, at the Amalgamated Press annual general meeting, new boss Cecil King announced a consolidated group profit of £3,664,000.

Previous chairman, Berry—one of the Kemsley family—drew over the last five years the following amounts: £91,600, £116,000, £99,850, £81,550 and £77,200.

Last year the fourteen directors of this concern shared between them in directors' remunerations £167,000.

Norwood Labour Party Backs the Printers

All trade unionists and Labour Party members are called to a meeting at Rushcroft Road, Brixton, at 3.30 p.m. on Saturday, July 4, followed by a march to the 'black' South London Press.

THE NEWSLETTER

180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4

Telephone Macaulay 7029

SATURDAY, JULY 4, 1959

RALLY ROUND THE PRINTERS!

CLASHES between police and printworkers have demolished at one stroke the legend that pickets in the South Bank dispute last autumn were beaten and jailed because of The Newsletter's 'adventurism'. Today the police are assaulting and hauling into court pickets among whom there is not as yet one single supporter of this paper. The lesson is clear. The employing class makes no distinction between 'un-official' and 'official' disputes. The police do not ask what a picket's politics are before they hit him. And when any section of workers takes strike action it is challenging the might of the whole employing class, including its police force. The whole course of the print dispute confirms the warnings The Newsletter has given about the employers' offensive, and shows how timely was the National Industrial Rank-and-File Conference last November, which sought to prepare all workers, printworkers included, for the inevitable struggles that faced them.

It is plain that the employers have a concerted strategy for beating back the workers. From this flows the need for the working-class movement to have a unified strategy in its resistance to the employers' attacks. The printing employers want to smash the power of the print unions. Like McAlpine on the South Bank and Dick at Standards they are seeking to 'rephase' their industry. They want to introduce new techniques in a way that will increase profits. As in the London bus strike last year, the employers will do their utmost to isolate and smash one section of the working class. Today the printworkers, like the busmen before them, are fighting the battle of their whole class. If they lose, other workers will find it much more difficult to win the 40-hour week and wage increases.

Therefore everything must be done by both the industrial and the political wings of the Labour movement to see to it that the printworkers win their fight in the shortest possible time. The whole movement must understand that the printworkers, splendid though their morale and determination are, cannot win this fight on their own. Now is the time for solidarity action! Maintenance workers, dockers, railwaymen and transport workers must co-operate to halt the production and distribution of every scrap of 'black' print. Let Labour make certain that the shut-down is 100 per cent. Let other unions, and local Labour Parties, rally to the picket line. Let demonstrations be organized, including a massive central London demonstration, in which the working class can show that it stands firmly on the side of brothers in dispute. Let the Trades Union Congress arrange a national levy. Let printworkers be invited to put their case to mass meetings of other workers. If the working class rallies around the printworkers, and fights this battle energetically and aggressively, an important victory can be won.

The Newsletter pledges full support to the printworkers and will do everything possible to speed their victory.

PRINTWORKERS (Continued from front page)

In Crawley the stoppage is complete. A coloured member of Natsopa picketing Hubners Ltd told me he was convinced that the dispute was a test case for the whole employing class.

Another picket said: 'This dispute must end either in a retreat by the employers or the weakening of trade unionism in the printing industry. I am confident we can win through.'

Outside Metal Box Products in Bermondsey I met a group of young pickets—none of them older than 19.

Sheila, a red-haired youngster, told me: 'I work as a perforator for £4 10s. a week, so you can see why I want the increase. Yes, I support the claim, and I'm in favour of staying out until we get it.'

'Like the bus strike'

Her boy friend Peter, who is 19 and works at Metal Box as an assistant machine-minder, said: 'I get about £6 6s. a week after stoppages. When I have paid my fares, about 3s. or 4s. a day, and coughed up my keep at home there isn't much money left.

'To get any extras you have to work overtime. What's the good of that?'

He too was prepared to stick it out as long as need be: 'If we win then it will be easier for other workers to get the 40-hour week. If we lose then it will be harder for them. That's why this strike is like the bus strike.'

Peter and some of his mates had been out on Friday's demonstration at TV House.

'Oh yes, they turned the water hose on us', he said. 'But we gave as good as we took, and quite a few coppers' helmets rolled.'

Attempts by the Press to stir up antagonism between Covent Garden porters and printworkers on strike have flopped.

On Monday hundreds of men demonstrated outside Odhams in Long Acre. Soon the road was a mass of scuffling men and police. Despite extreme provocation the men carried on with the intended march.

Covent Garden porters' pledge

The Press claimed that the incident was sparked off when demonstrators clashed with a Covent Garden porter. Next day porters in the Garden pledged themselves to raise £100 for the printers' strike fund.

Pickets at Empire Ink in the East End—suppliers of ink to national newspapers—told me: 'We're answering the bosses in the most effective way—a strike. By the week-end the national Press will be brought to a standstill. They started the fight. We will finish it.'

In Leeds the local branch of the Socialist Labour League is producing a regular duplicated bulletin written by a group of socialist printworkers.

MANCHESTER TRADES COUNCIL BACKS THE PRINTWORKERS

Manchester and Salford Trades Council is calling on all trade unionists in the area to help the printers' struggle by refusing to handle 'black' work.

The monthly delegate meeting unanimously carried an emergency resolution moved by Bro. H. Ratner (Amalgamated Engineering Union) stating that the printworkers 'are fighting for all unions with similar claims' and urging 'all trade unionists in the Manchester and Salford area to give all practical assistance both financially and by refusing to handle "scab" work'.

WIGAN TRADES COUNCIL AGAINST THE BAN

At the June delegate meeting of Wigan Trades Council and Labour Party this week a resolution was carried protesting at the proscription of the Socialist Labour League and The Newsletter. The delegate to the annual conference was mandated to vote against the proscription. Out of the 70 delegates present only six voted against.

PAISLEY WORKERS WIN PARTIAL VICTORY, PREPARE FOR FUTURE STRUGGLES

From Our Scottish Correspondent

AFTER nearly six weeks on strike the Paisley millworkers voted unanimously to return to work at a mass meeting last Sunday.

They were told by their union representatives that agreement had been reached with the management of J. and P. Coats that two men, suspended when they failed to complete a new work load, would be reinstated.

The work-study officer of the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers would be allowed facilities to study the disputed job, and the employers would consider his findings.

Preventing excessive speed-ups

If after two weeks the job still cannot be done, negotiation procedure with the union will be recognized, and the threat of disciplinary action against those failing to complete the job will be removed.

The management has also agreed to let two union delegates attend negotiations with the union's Scottish secretary.

The strikers feel they have gained many of the points they came out for. It remains to be seen how effective the new procedure will be in preventing the excessive speed-ups that have been the management's policy inside the mills.

The workers are determined to build the union inside Coats's, and so prepare the ground for any future struggles that may be necessary.

The feeling is being expressed that if the unions whose members are responsible for maintenance work inside the mills—the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Electrical Trades Union—had taken action instead of letting their members go on working throughout the strike, then a settlement would have been achieved earlier.

AFRICAN SEAMEN GO BACK TO NIGERIA TO CARRY ON THEIR STRUGGLE

By William Hunter

THE seventy-eight African seamen who struck against racial discrimination have left Liverpool by air and returned to Lagos in Nigeria.

The Elder Dempster liner Apapa sailed last week without them.

Before their return to Nigeria, African crews on other Elder Dempster ships in Liverpool, Manchester and London went on sympathy strike.

Another Elder Dempster liner, the Accra, arrived at Liverpool on Monday with the Nigerian prime minister on board. The end of last week found a collection of people, including Mrs Bessie Braddock, MP, Nigerian government officials and Hogan Bassie, the Nigerian boxer, working to remove the dispute from Liverpool before the Accra berthed and her crew joined the strike.

Mrs Braddock told the crew they must go back immediately, otherwise the firm would class them as deserters and they would be arrested and taken out of the country.

'Fight is just beginning'

'Don't think it's lost,' one of the seamen told me after the meeting where they decided to go. 'The fight is just beginning. We'll fight up there'—i.e., in Nigeria.

A cable from the Nigerian Seamen's Union had informed them that the Lagos dockers were out in sympathy.

Trouble for Elder Dempster is not over.

In a few days the Apapa will arrive at Lagos with her 275 passengers feeling that the self-service voyage was not very agreeable. They will have to clean up after themselves in the Bay of Biscay and fetch and carry in the tropical heat.

Elder Dempster will still have to get an African crew in

Lagos. But it is certain that the Nigerian Seamen's Union will blacklist the ship.

There is a big fight brewing over the discrimination against Africans on rates of pay and conditions.

STRIKE BRINGS VICTORY FOR BRICKIES

From Our Merseyside Correspondent

Bricklayers employed by J. Crosby and Sons on a Liverpool building site stopped work last Friday afternoon after the firm sacked two members of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, E. Carrol and J. Rand. The strikers won a quick victory.

The firm said there was a shortage of bricks. The strikers said the firm was trying to weaken site organization.

Work was resumed on Saturday morning when the two men were reinstated and arrangements were made for future negotiations on welfare and conditions.

FRUITLESS NEGOTIATIONS LED TO WAVE OF STRIKES IN MOTOR INDUSTRY

By Harry Finch

THE present wave of strikes in the Midlands motor industry is the result of months and months of fruitless negotiations.

Many Nuffield strikers said to me, after the union officials had secured a return to work—with an estimated 20 per cent. voting against the return:

'The machinery is strangling us. The union officials are hiding behind it to help the management, not us.'

The sell-out of the Midland redundancy strikes in 1956 led to a long period of sackings and short time for thousands of workers.

The motor workers are now trying to take advantage of the present boom in car production (artificially maintained by Tory government relaxations on hire purchase and credit, as part of its pre-election manoeuvres) to make good the long period of stagnation and suffering they endured in the recession.

A decent living wage

There are three main issues in these disputes: bad piece-work rates; 100 per cent. trade unionism; and the fight of low-paid day-rate workers to bring themselves up to a decent living wage.

Day workers, such as crane-drivers, slingers and labourers, often have to speed up their work to keep pace with the speed-up of track work; but they get nothing extra for this.

The Nuffield day workers' strike brought home the fact that these workers receive an average of only £9 10s. per week.

The employers' offensive in the motor industry takes the forms of increased automation without extra wages, stiff resistance to 100 per cent. trade unionism, attempts to tighten control of shop stewards' movements, sackings (as at Standards)—and the use of the negotiating machinery and of willing trade union officials stepping in to 'get them back to work'.

Without these union officials stepping in every time there is a dispute the motor workers would undoubtedly be in a far stronger position.

Take the Nuffield day workers' dispute as an example.

Here we had a solid strike of over 500 workers who already had four months of negotiating machinery.

Defied the sacred cow

They asked for a rise of sixpence per hour. The bosses said 'No' to the shop stewards and 'No' to the union officials at works and local conferences, as well as 'referred back' conferences.

At the local conference stage the day workers decided that the farce had gone on long enough. They struck work.

Then the Transport and General Workers' Union sent in the big gun to 'get them back'—Kealy, a national organizer,

who told the strikers they had defied the sacred cow of the negotiating machinery.

They should have gone to the general conference at York—even though every striker knew it was a waste of time.

A striker shouted: 'If we return to work now and the management says "No" again, will the union make our strike official if we come out again?'

Kealy replied: 'No, it must go to York, and then the executive will consider the case.'

Then Beard, the local official—who is not exactly popular among the strikers—put in: 'Think of your poor wives and children.'

Another striker retorted: 'Keep them out of this. We're fighting for a living wage, and that is for our families.'

But after two hours the platform got its way, for though there was a good spirit among a number who spoke against the return, that cohesive leadership capable of rallying the majority to defy the officials and stay out was lacking.

Breaking York memorandum stranglehold

The need to create rank-and-file committees in the motor factories, linking the piece workers and day workers into a fraternal unit—so that the employers' splitting tactics in sending thousands home when there is a sectional dispute can be combated—has emerged clearly in these struggles.

Such committees can link themselves together and carry the shop stewards forward with them.

Such committees, in the disputes that will recur time after time, can also appeal to workers in factories other than their own for solidarity action.

Above all, the basis can be laid for breaking the stranglehold of the York memorandum.

This machinery for stamping down on workers' militancy was imposed by the bosses on the defeated engineering unions in 1926.

Since then the unions could have scrapped the York memorandum thousands of times. But the trade union leaders, frightened of class struggle, have been as eager as the bosses to keep it going.

This hamstringing procedure can be smashed only by the workers' moving forward in struggle.

The workers' demands must become the issue—not whether this or that point in the employers' constitution was carried out.

The present motor disputes are a sign that the necessary leadership will be found in the course of the struggles—and there is no better way of hastening this process than the formation of factory branches of the Socialist Labour League.

THEIR STAY-DOWN FORCED NCB TO DISCUSS

By Edward Knight

PIT after pit in the Scottish coal-fields responded immediately to the call of pickets from Clackmannanshire's Devon colliery, where sixty-eight miners were staging a stay-down strike against the National Coal Board's decision to close their pit.

Within three days about 22,000 miners in pits in Clackmannanshire, Stirlingshire, Ayrshire, West Lothian, Fife, the Clyde Valley and the Douglas Valley were out in sympathy, and to express their own opposition to the closures.

A campaign committee was set up to win support, and a branch official of each pit that joined the strike was brought on to it. Pickets toured the coal-field by car.

When I asked Benny Hughes, Devon pit delegate, about the NCB's claim that the Devon colliery is 'uneconomic', he replied emphatically:

'Output per manshift is one of the highest in Britain, averaging between 28 and 30cwt. There is a profit of around 7s. 10d. for every ton of coal produced. Absenteeism is one of the lowest at 11 per cent.'

'Men were brought here six to eight years ago on the promise of a life's work. Now we are told it is "uneconomic"

and is to be closed by January of next year.

'The miners, of course, have not been consulted. We have been told that work will be found in the neighbouring Glenochil colliery, but this cannot provide other than short-time working for the men that are taken on. This is a fight against government policy, not just to keep the Devon open!'

Asked what had been the outcome of the stay-down, Bro. Hughes replied that they had forced the NCB to meet them, together with Abe Moffat and representatives of the miners' Scottish executive.

And if the talks were not successful?

'This is my personal opinion, but I think that every miner in Britain should down tools to stop the closures programme. This is a trial. We must await its outcome.'

Youngest down the pit, 17-year-old Andrew Stewart, refused to go to the surface until the rest of the men went up.

George Bolton, 25-year-old secretary of the Scottish Miners' Youth Committee, who stayed down for the whole period, told me: 'This has shown that the miners in general are prepared to grasp any lead given in this fight against the closures.'

And Bill Muir (24) said: 'The cold was our worst enemy. News of support from other pits kept our spirits high.'

BUILDING WORKERS PROTEST AT BANS

A mass meeting held in the canteen at Taylor Woodrows' building site in the Strand, London, unanimously passed a resolution condemning the bans and proscriptions on the Socialist Labour League and fully supporting the building of a rank-and-file movement in the Labour Party and trade unions.

Wealdstone no. 1 branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union has protested at the proscription of the Socialist Labour League and called on the AEU executive to fight for the lifting of the ban.

MARXISTS ON THE MARCH

A strong contingent of Socialist Labour League members took part in the British Peace Committee's 'March for Life' in London last Sunday.

The Marxists marched under their own slogans, calling for working-class action against the hydrogen-bomb and rocket-bases; sold more literature than at any previous Communist Party sponsored demonstration in Trafalgar Square; and by their participation nailed the lie that Marxists will not engage in joint activity against the H-bomb with others whose policies they disagree with.

* * *

The executive of the Socialist Labour League sent greetings to the eighteenth national convention of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. The following reply, signed by James P. Cannon and Farrell Dobbs, was received:

'The eighteenth national SWP convention warmly welcomes your fraternal greetings.

'We salute the formation of the Socialist Labour League. Your militant defence of the programme and movement of revolutionary socialism against such formidable enemies in Britain is an inspiration and model to all your co-thinkers across the Atlantic.'

AUSTRALIA

'LEFT' OFFICIALS WILL NOT LEAD A STRUGGLE AGAINST PENAL CLAUSES

From a Correspondent

MILITANT workers in Australia have become used to having their struggles sabotaged over the last few years.

Some Right-wing union officials are recognized by all militant workers as sell-out merchants who do their utmost

The Bureaucrats Used Their Boots

'SPEECH! Speech!' was the chant from the crowd of young people surrounding the platform. For the first time in his life, the Labour Party's national youth officer, Alan Williams, found that he was enthusiastically being called on to make a speech. He did not seem to welcome this.

He went red. He hopped backwards and forwards. He spoke to Sarah Barker, assistant national organizer. Perhaps she could help? He spoke to the young people.

'Go away', he said. Then he climbed down from the platform and disappeared.

You don't believe me? Then you obviously were not at the party's sports day and youth rally at Abbey Wood last Saturday.

ASSERT THEIR RIGHT. A large section of the crowd surrounding that platform were members of the youth sections of the suspended Streatham and Norwood constituency parties. They attended the rally to assert their right as Labour youth sections to be present and to demonstrate, by a poster parade, their opposition to the suspension of these Labour Parties.

Streatham section had been informed that they 'did not exist'.

Before entering the rally grounds the sections took the precaution of handing banners and posters over the hedge to friendly hands on the other side. Then they walked in the front gate, and started gathering the posters.

Within minutes a lad was on the ground, his poster knocked from his hand. Five men rained blows on his body. His girl-friend intervened. She got a blow in the face.

Posters were seized and used as weapons against demonstrators. Boots and fists were used indiscriminately against boys and girls.

to get the men back to work as soon as there is the slightest possibility of militant action.

But many of the 'Left-wing' union officials are not blameless. They may not directly sabotage militant action, but the result is just the same as if they did.

Whenever disputes occur they are confined to the workers directly concerned, and the legend is spread that other workers should stay at work and support the strikers financially.

Inevitably the small band of strikers get the Australian penal clauses applied to them, and they go back to work with their demands unsatisfied.

Monopoly's stringent wages policy

A classical example of this timid strategy is the recent strike at Port Kembla by 110 employees of Pillars Ltd, a Sydney firm doing construction work for Australian Iron and Steel, which is Port Kembla's big steelworks.

Australian Iron and Steel have a stringent policy of not paying a penny over the award rate for the job. In addition, in all contracts with contractors working on building jobs for them they insert a clause requiring the contractor to pay the same rates.

At the beginning of April the Pillar workers went on strike for a £2 per week increase. The 110 workers concerned were members of five unions, the ironworkers, boilermakers, builders' labourers, plumbers and bricklayers.

It was obvious from the start that the workers were taking on, not Pillars—who in their Sydney shop pay more than award rates—but the steel monopoly of which Australian Iron and Steel is the principal subsidiary.

A victory for the Pillars men would have been an overwhelming defeat for the steel bosses. It could have meant arresting the decline in workers' conditions shown in the fact

A crowd gathered and questions were asked. Had the Empire Loyalists intervened? No. These were the Labour Party organizers saving our sports day from the Youth Sections That Do Not Exist. Everything was official, and all could breathe again.

John Hill—all fifteen stone of him—and Bert Stronell would make sure that no rude posters would shock Uncle Griffiths or Aunt Sarah.

TATTERED POSTERS. However, the Youth Sections That Do Not Exist proved tougher than the party bureaucrats. Through the crowd they streamed with tattered posters. They marched around the field again and again.

The Co-operative grounds superintendent threatened to call the police. 'Call them', said the young people.

The police arrived. Streatham and Norwood held an open-air meeting with an audience of over a hundred.

The police left, and the Youth Sections That Do Not Exist stayed to the end.

FRIGHTENED MEN. As those triumphant posters fought their way out of the fray and down the field—'Policies not Purges', 'No Gags on Youth', 'Hands off Streatham Labour', 'Norwood Says End Manufacture of H-Bomb'—I stood amazed.

How frightened these men must be of ideas if, when a red banner goes up in a field on a sunny Saturday afternoon, they feel compelled to answer it with their fists and their boots?

JANET SUTTON,
Secretary, Streatham Labour Party Youth Section (Suspended).

that the wages received by Wollongong workers dropped from 54 per cent. of the value of production in 1953-54 to 37 per cent. in 1956-57.

Nevertheless not one of the five unions made the slightest effort to extend the dispute. The union officials' militancy was confined to paying the men £4 5s. per week strike pay.

Permanent threat of action

The inevitable happened. After seven weeks the metal trades employers' federation obtained a court order, directing the men to go back to work on penalties of £500 for each union for each day on strike and £10 per week for each striker who did not present himself for work.

The mass meeting of the strikers which met to consider the court order was addressed by a united front of union officials varying from Communist Party members to Right-wingers.

Pofitics did not divide them, however. With one accord they advised the men to go back to work—on pain of expulsion from the unions if they did not.

Though the steel barons, the court and their own officials were all against them, the men decided to return to work by a majority of only five.

They are now back at work and in a worse position than before. Not only have they failed completely to make any economic gains, but they are under a permanent threat of court action if they take any militant action in defence of their conditions.

The story is practically identical with that of the workers at A. E. Goodwins Ltd, Port Kembla, twelve months ago.

The 'Left-wing' union officials use the excuse that the penal clauses prevent their extending local disputes. When

asked why they do not fight the penal clauses their excuse is always that no struggle against the penal clauses is possible without a united front of the trade union movement.

The leadership of the ironworkers' union being what it is,

the 'Left-wingers' have a perfect excuse for doing nothing.

The vicious penal clauses have continued in existence since 1955 mainly because the people regarded as Left-wing have not been willing to lead a real struggle against them.

Constant Reader | Stay-Down and Stalinism

THE late Montagu Slater wrote a memorable piece of reportage—'Stay Down Miner' (1936)—about the stay-down strike of the South Wales miners in 1935.

The immediate object then was to force the bosses to stop employing non-members of the Miners' Federation, and the strike succeeded—with the co-operation of the local railwaymen, who refused to man trains carrying blacklegs.

The idea of the stay-down strike was taken by the South Wales miners from their comrades in Hungary, and in turn it inspired the stay-in strikes which swept the French factories in the following year.

In assessing why the mighty wave of militant action by the miners and other workers in 1935 and 1936, in Britain and France, achieved so little, it is impossible to leave out of account the part played by the Stalinists in that period.

Slater wrote of a battle to come in 1936 which would be of the same order of magnitude as that of 1926. Yet it did not take place.

Scottish and other miners should keep that lesson of history in mind. Today as then the last thing that the Stalinists want is an all-out, class-against-class show-down in defence of the workers' interests, for this would interfere with the high-political calculations of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Unless the rank and file wrest control we may see an exhausting and fruitless series of marches to London and back again, down the pit and up again, without any clear strategic aim arising from the needs of the struggle.

Having it both ways

AN acquaintance in my local Labour Party, a councillor, has just been telling me—for the umpteenth time in the short period I have known her—about the backwardness of the workers as shown in their failure to register at elections sufficient enthusiasm for herself and her colleagues.

Yet this person reacts with horror to events like the South Bank struggle, and to expressions of working-class militancy generally. These, forsooth, 'discredit the movement'.

So it is wrong when the workers are passive and accept the capitalist Press line on politics—but apparently it is even worse when they revolt and hit out on their own behalf.

Needless to say, this worthy, who wants the workers to be just sufficiently awake to vote Labour, but God save us, no more than that, supported my expulsion from the Labour Party.

There is a book which ought to be better known, giving an amusing and penetrating 'profile' of this element of patronizers and paternalists in the movement—G. T. Garratt's 'The Mugwumps and the Labour Party' (1932).

The New Reasoner and ourselves

A friend from the New Reasoner circle was telling me recently that he notices a tendency among the members of the Socialist Labour League to assume that all truth has already been revealed and the only thing that remains is to apply it.

That is certainly a weakness to which Marxist groups are traditionally prone (as we see from the example of the old Social Democratic Federation, the pioneer Marxist organization in this country) and against which we must constantly be on our guard.

But while we must not suppose that 'there is nothing new

under the sun' we must not fall into the opposite error, either—that of failing to see that certain phenomena are not so unprecedented as some may think.

The New Reasoner group, for instance, has much in common with the original Fabians. Not the degenerate, anti-socialist Fabians of today, but those of whom Engels wrote in 1893:

'With great industry they have produced amid all sorts of rubbish some good propagandist writings as well, in fact the best of the kind which the English have produced.

'But as soon as they come to their specific tactics of hushing up the class struggle it all turns putrid. Hence too their fanatical hatred of Marx and all of us—because of the class struggle.'

A major obstacle

For today's set-up one should perhaps substitute another name for Marx's and something like 'irritated resentment' for 'fanatical hatred'—otherwise the characterization fits not at all badly.

One of the other reproaches our New Reasoner colleagues make against us is that we are too fond of criticizing the Stalinists.

While we are ready to engage in joint activity with Communist Party members on such issues as the fight against bans and proscriptions, we certainly do not aim at any sort of 'peaceful coexistence' with Stalinism, whose ideas and methods we see as a major obstacle to the progress of the working-class movement.

Nor is it imaginable that one of our publications could carry an article in praise of the 'communist' government of Kerala, which shoots down workers on strike and governs on behalf of 'all classes'.

BRIAN PEARCE

BOOKS

STIRRING TALE ABOUT THE STAFFORDSHIRE POTTERS

Tilewright's Acre, by Frederick Harper (Lawrence and Wishart, 15s.)

THE theme of this book is the impact of expanding capitalism on the Staffordshire potters soon after the French revolution.

This was a crucial period of British history. The ruling classes of Europe had not got over the fright given them by the revolution.

The pioneers of British trade unionism and of Chartism had to contend with ruthless employers, whose use of the military was commonplace, with the religious fervour of the Methodist revival, and with their fellow-workers' ignorance and fear.

REBEL

Frederick Harper, himself a Staffordshire man, unfolds the political development of Tom Tilewright, a 'thrower' by trade, who, with some of his fellow-potters, forges the first links of trade unionism in the Five Towns.

Harper portrays Tom's deep friendship with the Methodist Joseph Capper, who sees in the horrors of society around him a challenge to his Christian conscience; and Tom's love for his childhood sweetheart Mary, with whom he finds the intimacy and sympathy his wife Phoebe cannot give him.

Out This Month

THE BATTLE FOR SOCIALISM

By

PETER FRYER

190 pages: 3s. 6d.

Published by the
Socialist Labour
League.

CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE—The World We Live In—The Two Nations—Hard Times Ahead—Towards a Slump—The Growth of Unemployment and Short-Time Working—The Hydrogen-Bomb and the Threat of War—Oppression in the Colonies—A System in Decay—The Socialist Solution—Class Struggle the Only Road to Socialism

LABOUR AND LEADERSHIP—The Crisis of Leadership—The Labour Bureaucracy—Centrism—The Communist Party

THE MARXIST MOVEMENT—What Is Marxism?—The Evolution of British Marxism—Marxists and the Labour Party—Marxists and the Trade Unions—Principles and Programme of the Marxist Movement—The Marxist Press—Towards a Revolutionary Working-Class Party

Among the host of sensitively drawn characters there is Saunterin' Ned, the lonely rebel against the new way of life, who runs away from the mutilation of the valleys he loves.

Sometimes the author slips into textbook jargon; but we are compensated by a stirring tale, told in language that is often beautiful, with a fine sense of locality and an understanding of working people.

RAMBLE

One passage struck me with peculiar intensity, because of Hola. It is a public holiday in the Potteries. The people want to ramble on the moors, in freedom and joy:

'This was the abode of folk who wanted to forget titles, all in authority, all who exploited their fellows and made themselves great by the greatness of the crimes which their laws would never condemn.'

A book of breadth and vision.

ALAN BENNETT

LETTER

STUDENTS AND THE PROSCRIPTION OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

THE London School of Economics Labour Society recently passed a resolution 'protesting at the method used by the NEC of the Labour Party in proscribing The Newsletter and the Socialist Labour League'.

Why did this negative resolution succeed, and why was one defeated that categorically protested at the proscription and urged its withdrawal?

Because many students do not understand the role of political struggle outside Parliament, nor the role of the working class in this struggle. Without this framework they cannot understand the role of the Socialist Labour League.

They discount as insignificant the struggles of workers against trade union bureaucracy and in defence of working conditions.

Nor do anti-H-bomb students seem to have thought out the implications for socialist foreign policy of unilateral action. A few students are prepared to denigrate the League, but so far their 'polemic' has not reached a political level.

But there are students who disagree with or are disturbed by the proscription, and with whom it is possible to argue and discuss.

During the debate on the resolution I made what I now consider to be the mistake of claiming the legal 'right' of the League to work within the Labour Party, by quoting the 1919 constitution and the existence of Victory for Socialism and the Fabian Society.

But surely it is only a confrontation of the League's politics and a recognition of its special contribution that can win this 'right' and make it a reality.

London, N.12

Rhoda Atkin

H-BOMB (Continued from back page)

been caused by fear and assumptions?

People who claim that wars result from economic causes bring facts and evidence to back their case. The 'assumptions and fear' argument, being in the realm of psycho-analysis and metaphysics, never has any concrete evidence to back it up. It is, in short—an assumption!

But it is an extremely dangerous one. When you say 'nations' act because of fear and assumptions, what is meant by 'nation'?

Do you mean its statesmen? In that case, the argument boils down to trying to make existing rulers see the light; or, at the most, to replacing them by better politicians, within the framework of the same economic and social system.

If only they would trust one another, get round the table, all would be well.

Advocates of this policy have to explain why the League of Nations failed; why the H-bomb menace grew up while the United Nations has been in existence (with summit talks all the time, in fact); why the Geneva conference on the prohibition of nuclear tests has been such a farce.

The CND's big weakness

The only thing the advocates of summit talks do not tell us is what they are going to talk about when they get there.

These ideas mean that in practice you do not need to organize the working class as a social force. In fact you cut right across that and hold it back.

All you need is a series of marches and demonstrations saying the same thing over and over again, a multiplicity of individual protests—but no link with political and economic demands and absolutely no connexion with the class struggle.

This is the big weakness of both the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War.

THE WORKERS AND THE H-BOMB FIGHT

By G. GALE

THE Socialist Labour League believes that the H-bomb is a direct outcome of the capitalist system, and cannot be got rid of without abolishing that system.

Michael Randle (The Newsletter, May 16, pp. 145-6) denies that the bomb is a product of capitalism and claims that violent methods must not be used to get rid of it. He seems to rest his case on the following:

- (1) It was a Labour government that first introduced nuclear weapons.
- (2) The Soviet Union is a major nuclear power.
- (3) The Socialist Labour League puts the struggle against capitalism above the struggle against the bomb.
- (4) We assume that the working class is on our side, and that could lead to neglecting to campaign against the bomb among the workers.
- (5) Those who are campaigning against the bomb are campaigning for better human values. Therefore it is wrong to use violence, because you cannot achieve good human values by bad methods.
- (6) The H-bomb is a product of 'assumptions' and 'attitudes'—e.g., fear. Therefore if we can persuade one nation to give a moral lead and abandon the bomb, that reduces world tension and reduces the fear that makes other nations want the bomb.

I will reply to these points one by one.

(1) Despite its social reforms, the Labour government did not basically alter the capitalist system of production. Britain remained a capitalist country, with production geared to private profit.

Continued same property relations

Those industries that were nationalized were subordinated to a private enterprise economy.

The Labour government functioned as a capitalist government. It continued the same property relations, continued colonial exploitation, joined reactionary military alliances—and introduced nuclear weapons.

(2) Russia is not a socialist country. It is a country in transition between capitalism and socialism, being held back by a bureaucracy which, owing to the economic backwardness and isolation of Russia after the revolution, was able to seize power and murder the real leaders of the revolution.

This bureaucracy has departed from the Leninist policy of a world-wide struggle against imperialism, and instead relies upon international diplomacy to come to terms with its enemies.

It relies, not on the working class, but on an international balance of power.

That is why the Communist Party is against unilateral action on the bomb, but supports the Right-wing 'non-nuclear club' idea, which permits both Russia and America to retain the bomb.

There is a further point. The Russian leaders were largely responsible for the defeats of the working class in Germany, France and Spain before the second world war, and were responsible for the failure to overthrow capitalism in France, Italy and Greece after the war. By this, they share the responsibility for the nuclear threat that faces the world today.

(3) It is not a matter of putting one thing 'above' anything else. We do not say we will achieve our aims one at a time, in a set order.

We say capitalism is a system that cannot give lasting peace and permanent social security. It produces unemployment, poverty and war.

The way to fight it is not to treat these evils as separate issues, but to see them as all products of one cause and to unite into one campaign those who fight against any of them.

Anyone who is fighting against the social system that produces the bomb is thereby fighting against the bomb—even though he may not consider that he is fighting against the bomb, nor even that he is fighting against the social system.

In other words, the campaign against the hydrogen-bomb as such is only a part of the fight.

The struggle for better working conditions, against unemployment, against colonialism, are struggles against the system that produces the bomb.

The Shell-Mex strike was a blow against the bomb.

The printing strike is a blow against the bomb.

The struggle of the African peoples for freedom is a blow against the bomb.

The fight against racialism is a blow against the bomb.

And the fight for socialist policies and democracy in the Labour movement is a blow against the bomb.

The Socialist Labour League supports people who are fighting on any one or more of these fronts and tries to explain its policies to them—to convince them that from fighting against symptoms they must go on to fight against causes.

(4) We have never said that workers are automatically on our side against the bomb. What do we in fact say about the working class and the bomb?

First, that since the workers are tremendously powerful, no campaign against the bomb can possibly succeed unless it involves them.

Industrial workers are far more important in the fight than are teachers and students and preachers, even though these latter groups may be more conscious of the menace at the moment.

Secondly, the working class is the class that by its social position comes most into conflict with the capitalist system—the system that produces the bomb—and that is driven to overthrow it. It is in this sense that we call the working class the 'natural' opponents of the H-bomb.

There is a tremendous amount of work to be done among workers on the H-bomb question. How could it be otherwise? The working class is so powerful that the capitalist State applies tremendous resources—the popular Press, television and so on—towards turning workers' minds away from such fundamental issues.

Nobody has stressed the need for continued work on this question among the working class more than The Newsletter.

More than a year ago we put out a pamphlet, 'Black the H-Bomb and the Rocket Bases!'. And it was a supporter of The Newsletter who moved the resolution for unilateral abandonment of the bomb at the Brighton conference of the Labour Party in 1957.

(5) Of course we are campaigning for better human values. But human values are moulded by society to a large extent.

How can you produce better human values in a society based on colonial exploitation (Holla); which divides human beings on racial grounds (Kelso Cochrane); which periodically throws workers on the dole; in which the summit of scientific achievement is the production of weapons of mass murder?

Sweep away old society

Yes, we want better human values. But to get them we have to sweep away the old society based on corruption, greed and murder.

(6) The argument about 'assumptions' and 'attitudes' has the advantage that nobody knows quite what it means. How do these assumptions and attitudes arise? Who is responsible for them?

If all the nations are acting out of fear of one another, how did it all start in the first place? Have previous wars

(Continued on previous page)