

# THE NEWSLETTER

Weekly Journal of the Socialist Labour League

Vol. 3, No. 113

Threepence

August 15, 1959

## THE PRINT STRIKE COULD HAVE BEEN WON Lesson number one is need to prepare

By GERRY HEALY

### A E U LEADERS CAUSED MORRIS MOTORS DEFEAT

From Our Midlands Correspondent

FAILURE of the Amalgamated Engineering Union leaders to support the strikers at Morris Motors, Oxford, in their fight for the reinstatement of shop steward Frank Horsman, was directly responsible for the defeat.

Feeling is high among a large section of the Morris workers that the AEU executive let them down—as it let down the Handley Page strikers last April. Frank Horsman is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union, but ten other unions at Morris Motors came out in support of the TGWU struggle to protect a steward.

Only the AEU leaders—against the wishes of many of their own members at the factory—broke the front.

#### Been trying for years

A strike committee member who is in the National Union of Vehicle Builders told me:

**'Our members came out in support of the TGWU lads on a principle. It does not matter what union a shop steward belongs to.'**

Although Bro. Horsman gets a job at Pressed Steel—at least for the time being—and it is open to the unions to take the question of his dismissal through the industry's procedure or to accept some other form of adjudication, the fact remains that Morris Motors have succeeded in their objective: getting rid of a shop steward.

According to Bro. Tony Bradley, secretary of Morris Motors branch of the TGWU and member of the strike committee, they have been trying to get rid of him for years.

**'This is the top and bottom of the whole issue,'** declared Bro. Bradley in an interview with The Newsletter.

#### Escorted off the grounds

**'They sacked Frank Horsman for an alleged stoppage of work on his section,'** he said. 'Then they shifted their ground and said it was due to his "insolence" and "insubordination" over a long period.

The management violated all procedure agreement. While Bro. Horsman was negotiating with them on an overtime issue, the supervisor was going around individual men trying to make them work the very overtime that was in dispute.

Then Bro. Horsman took up a complaint by a union member in his section over this attitude of the supervisor. Twenty-four hours later Frank Horsman was sacked at a minute's notice and escorted off the grounds by works policemen.'

Workers in the Birmingham British Motor Corporation factories had also seen the victimization as an issue affecting all trade unionists. Their TGWU stewards had declared all work to and from Morris to be 'black'.

DESPITE the printworkers' determination to win their recent struggle they are now back at work under conditions which are a poor reward for their sacrifice.

The strike began over the principle of the 40-hour week. It was the spearhead of a struggle which sooner or later will face the most important unions in the country.

Behind the printing trade employers stood the Tory government and the whole employing class, who are determined that under no circumstances will they concede the 40-hour week, and who can be forced to do so only by resolute working-class action.

Who now supposes that the trade unions can win the 40-hour week by negotiations alone and without a struggle?

#### Myths have been exploded

And since the Right-wing trade union leaders have no desire to struggle, since they are opposed to strike action, the demand for the 40-hour week will be frustrated if it is left in these gentlemen's hands.

As The Newsletter consistently pointed out during the print dispute, as well as during earlier disputes, **only the rank and file**, organized at the base of the trade union movement, can succeed in winning victories in the teeth of the employers' offensive.

Another myth which the print dispute has exploded is that of the craft union leaders' so-called 'militancy'.

At the Albert Hall meeting at the beginning of the print strike, one trade union leader talked about the closing down of the Stationery Office—but throughout the strike the Stationery Office merrily worked a 43½-hour week.

Another union leader talked about closing down Fleet Street. He said he 'feared' it might come to this. Not long afterwards this same leader was engaged in negotiations with Lord Birkett—who considers that strikes are 'disruptive'—and the employers, and the rousing speeches made at the Albert Hall were forgotten.

#### Fleet Street hopelessly divided

'Left' words from the craft union leaders mean exactly nothing, because they are not matched by determination to wage a fight against the employers and, in doing so, to rally the rest of the working class behind the struggle.

These leaders carry out no preparation whatever.

The print strike could have been won without any hardship to the public or the men concerned. Fleet Street was hope-

(Continued on page 223)

#### OUR NEW ADDRESS

From this issue onwards the address of The Newsletter is:

**186 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.**

All subscriptions, inquiries and editorial copy should be sent to this address.

The deadline for receipt of copy is Tuesday midday of each week.

**THE NEWSLETTER**186 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4  
Telephone Macaulay 7029

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 1959

**PLAIN SPEAKING ON THE SUMMIT**

**V**ICE-PRESIDENT Nixon's visit to Moscow was the last in a long series of behind-the-scenes discussions between American and Soviet diplomatists. The secrecy surrounding the preparations for a summit meeting shows the attitude of American and Russian statesmen alike to the world's other great power—which will not be represented at the summit—the international working class.

Why do these discussions go on in secret? For twelve years American imperialism has been arming against the Soviet Union, and waging witch-hunts and spy-scapes designed, we were told, to prevent military 'secrets' from getting into the hands of the Russians. Now representatives of American imperialism and of the Soviet bureaucracy are conducting secret talks! These two countries are not menaced by any other country in the world. But they *are* afraid of the power of the working class in the metropolitan countries and of the workers and peasants of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The Soviet bureaucracy, above all, is afraid of the working class of the Soviet Union and the countries of eastern Europe, over which it rules with an iron hand.



**N**OW the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is fundamentally different from the American imperialists, since it rests on a nationalized economy. Nevertheless its whole history, since Stalinism arose, demonstrates that it will stubbornly defend its caste privileges against the working class. Like all Labour bureaucracies, including the Labour bureaucracy in Britain, it is in essence an appendage of imperialism in the Labour movement. While it is perfectly true that the Soviet bureaucracy will 'defend' the Soviet Union against imperialist attempts to destroy the Soviet Union and so rob the bureaucracy of the source of its privileges, this 'defence' does not consist in the extension of working-class power internationally—the only sure shield for a workers' State—but in collaboration with imperialist powers and diplomatic manoeuvres of various kinds. Such collaboration and such manoeuvres mean the subordination of the class struggle and of the colonial revolution, and in their place—horse-deals with imperialism.

The Socialist Labour League fully recognizes that the Soviet Union is bound to discuss various questions with the imperialist powers. What it does oppose is the stifling of the revolutionary movement in particular countries to suit the interests of Kremlin diplomacy. In Lenin's day there were negotiations of various kinds: but the workers' struggle for power continued to receive the whole-hearted backing of the Soviet Communist Party. This internationalist principle the Stalinists have violated over and over again.

Both Eisenhower and Khrushchev are treating the working class as pawns in the game of power politics. That is why the summit conference is being prepared in secrecy. To Marxists the working class is the most

powerful factor in the struggle for peace. And the history of the last few years has proved this to the hilt. The working class has defeated American aggression in Korea, forced the retreat of French imperialism in Indo-China, routed British and French imperialism in the Middle East and struck powerful blows against Wall Street domination in Latin America. Again, the powerful resistance of the Hungarian workers, and the unceasing underground struggle for socialist democracy carried out by the workers elsewhere in eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself—particularly by the young people—have shaken and splintered the bureaucracy and forced it along the road of closer collaboration with imperialism. Class struggle, not the desire of individuals to live in peace, has upset the calculations of Wall Street and the Kremlin alike. The issue of peace or war will be decided, not in the conference chamber, but on the battlefield of class struggle.

Nor could it be otherwise, since the very basis of all the conflicts in the world today is the class struggle on a world scale, a struggle which knows no frontiers and which will go on despite the wishes of statesmen in either camp.

Illusions are in the air about the efficacy of a summit meeting. It would be dangerous if opponents of war and imperialism were to relax their efforts. We urge all socialists, all communists, all campaigners against the hydrogen-bomb, all serious workers, to ask themselves one question: 'What is the Soviet Union going to propose at the summit meeting that will mean a lasting peace throughout the world?' Hundreds of thousands of words have poured forth about the need for top-level talks. But there has been no clear statement of policy based on socialist principles. The Soviet leaders have nowhere declared that they will demand the withdrawal of imperialist troops from the colonies. They have nowhere declared that they will rally the international working class to halt the manufacture of the H-bomb.

The British Stalinists, and the Right-wing Labour leaders, say: 'Leave it to the heads of State.' The Marxists say: 'Mobilize the working class to stop the manufacture of the bomb, regardless of what heads of State say or do.'

The Stalinists and the Right-wing Labour leaders say: 'The struggle for peace is a struggle for an agreement between diplomatists.' The Marxists say: 'The struggle for peace has nothing to do with robbers' conferences: it is a struggle to eliminate the cause of war, the capitalist system.'



**T**HE opposition to war is still not organized and led in the only direction that can really do away with war: the overthrow of capitalism and the achievement of working-class power. This is another way of saying that the movement against war is still largely *unconscious*. It is based on the genuine and worthy instincts of millions of people who dread the misery, suffering and torment that a new war would bring. But it sees neither the aim nor the means with sufficient clarity. And time is short. Without leadership, the anti-war movement can be dissipated. In a world where the capitalist class is still more aware than the working class of what it is doing and where it is going, the

attainment of such awareness by the anti-capitalist forces—i.e., the attainment of new, conscious, socialist leadership—becomes of paramount importance. That is why every effort should be made to ensure the success of two forthcoming gatherings where problems of working-class leadership and working-class struggle, on a national and international scale, will be discussed.

The first is the National Assembly of Labour, which takes place in London on November 15. Problems of war and peace and the fight against the H-bomb will occupy a prominent place on the agenda of the National Assembly, which will be open to delegates and observers from trade union branches, trades councils, district committees, shop stewards' committees and rank-and-file movements in industry, from local Labour Parties and Labour youth sections, from the rank and file of the Communist Party and from all sections of the peace movement. Not a day must be lost in mobilizing support for the National Assembly, so that the real voice of British Labour can be heard on questions that the official leaders are conspiring to obscure.

The second gathering, which takes place in the autumn of 1960, is an international conference of Marxists, which the Socialist Labour League is calling in association with the International Committee of the Fourth International. It will be open to all revolutionary parties and groupings that are seeking to build Marxist movements in their countries.

What is the importance of such a conference for the struggle against war?

Over and over again Lenin stressed that only when the power of the capitalist class was broken by the working class, led by a revolutionary party, could war be made impossible. The building of a revolutionary leadership that will relentlessly expose all secret diplomacy and rely on the power of the working class to destroy imperialism and put an end to wars—this is the key to the grave problems that now confront mankind.

We solemnly warn all those whose hopes and fears may lead them to grasp at a summit meeting as a

panacea: the apparent thaw may mean that mankind has, through struggle, gained a short breathing space along the sombre road to nuclear destruction. But as long as capitalist society exists it can be only a breathing space. Immense efforts are needed to construct Marxist movements in all countries in the world, so as to challenge the war-makers and replace their system with one of peace and abundance. That is why next year's international conference of Marxists will in the last analysis be more significant for the future of humanity than the comings and goings of elder statesmen.

### CHINA 1927—IRAQ 1959

**T**HE Iraqi Communist Party's 'admission of mistakes' and reaffirmation of loyalty to Kassim has undoubtedly come as something of a shock to many communists in Britain, especially in combination with the impending visit of Kassim to Moscow, and following the virtual disbandment of the people's militia led by the Iraqi communists.

A hint of what was coming was given in the servile, class-collaborationist line of the party paper Ittihad-al-Shaab, passages from which we reproduced in our last issue. When The Newsletter warned on March 21 that events in Iraq looked like following the path of events in China in 1927, some readers may have put this down to our antiquarian zeal for finding historical precedents, or to the well-known Trotskyist 'obsession' with the Chinese revolution of 1925-27. It now seems all too likely that our warning is coming true.

The story of how the Soviet bureaucracy guided the Chinese communists to disaster in the middle and later 1920s is classical, in the same sense as the story of how the British communists were put off the rails in the same period, in connexion with the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee—another 'obsession' of the Trotskyists. If only those who mock at concern for the history of the movement would instead pay it some attention, they would be less surprised when history repeats itself. They might even be moved to help us stop it from repeating itself.

### PRINT DISPUTE (Continued from front page)

lessly divided; the market value of Kemsley shares might have been affected, making an even tastier morsel for Roy Thompson—but who would have cared about that except the shareholders, who have been doing nicely thank you for half a century?

It is rumoured that the Daily Express was not in too robust a position to face a strike—and the poor old News Chronicle would have been thrown into still more painful difficulties than usual.

But instead of going all out for victory the leaders of the unions responsible for printing ink saw fit to go to France and negotiate ink for Fleet Street.

The lame argument behind this move was that in France ink is made under a 40-hour week. Just so. But this ink kept the Press lords happy, the printworkers divided and the strikers deprived of the solidarity action which could have brought victory.

### Simply a red herring

Mr. Briginshaw, Natsopa general secretary, who was busy attacking the Socialist Labour League as an organization 'paid by the employers', was also busy seeing that supplies of ink from France flowed smoothly through the Fleet Street rollers.

In the last issue of The Newsletter we asked Mr. Briginshaw: 'Can it be that you are weakening in the fight for the 40-hour week?'

It is now quite clear that Mr Briginshaw weakened on the 40-hour week and that the attack on the Socialist Labour League was simply a red herring to cover this, since the League was warning the workers of the danger of a sell-out.

We submit to all printworkers that the Socialist Labour League was right to utter this warning.

It is said that next November there will be a show-down with Fleet Street. But how can those who will not fight when ten printing unions stand united for struggle win any kind of fight next November?

What must be burned into the consciousness of every trade unionist is the need for preparation of all strikes which take place today.

This preparation cannot be merely industrial. It must be political as well.

### This was the message

The nature of the employers' offensive and the early intervention of the police in all disputes transform each strike into a political issue.

Small-scale demonstrations and shouting matches which dissipate the energies of the strikers are no substitute for a firm united struggle, which seeks to mobilize the whole working class against the employers as a whole.

Preparation: this was the message of the National Industrial Rank-and-File Conference called by The Newsletter last November. And every dispute since then has proved how

timely that message was.

We were bitterly opposed then, and are today, by the leaders of the Communist Party. During the print dispute they had not a word of criticism of Mr Briginshaw—and when the pay-off came they had not a word of criticism, either.

They neither prepare the workers, nor warn them, nor analyse.

The Daily Worker wrote on August 3: 'It seems they [the employers] have got in the thin end of the wedge so far as speed-up, dilution of labour and shift systems are concerned.'

Where was that reporter during the course of the dispute? It is perfectly clear that the employers are well on the way to breaking down established custom and practice, introducing speed-up and putting the screws on in an industry where trade unionism is at its strongest.

The Daily Worker's Alan Brown commented on the result of the dispute on August 5, in a way that takes the cake for sheer evasiveness.

'One aspect of the print dispute on which there are likely to be divisions of opinion for some time ahead concerns the supply of ink to the national daily newspapers.'

True enough—only the Daily Worker never warned the printworkers about this in the whole course of the struggle. The Daily Worker is wise after the event—because it did not want to antagonize its 'ally' Mr Briginshaw.

### Assumes an impartial air

Alan Brown goes on: 'Some [!] printworkers maintain that if the national newspapers had not been able to continue publication the firms involved . . . would have brought pressure to bear for an earlier settlement of the dispute on terms more favourable to the printworkers.'

Again, true enough. But the Daily Worker consistently failed to make this point during the whole course of the dispute.

'Some printworkers'—in fact it is many printworkers—were far more in the lead than the so-called 'Communist' Party, which claims to be a . . . 'vanguard' party.

Discussing the supply of ink from France, Alan Brown assumes an impartial air. First a sop to Mr Briginshaw: France is the only Continental country in which the 40-hour week is in operation in the printing ink industry.

'The arrangement was made as a result of consultations between Natsopa and French trade union officials.

'Those who consider this step correct point out that no ink "in dispute" was used, nor any ink from any source other than a "40-hour country"—France.

'They argue that . . . it was, above all, necessary to preserve the unity of the ten printing unions.'

### All things to all men

Then a little bit to please the printworkers critical of the Natsopa executive's decision:

'It is likely, however, that while appreciating the difficult position of Natsopa, many printworkers [some have suddenly turned into 'many'] will feel that the failure of the print unions as a whole to agree on stopping the ink supplies meant that the settlement finally arrived at was more unsatisfactory than it would otherwise have been.'

Statesmanlike, isn't it? This is the Communist Party's industrial policy in a nutshell: all things to all men.

This forked-tongued attitude plays straight into the hands of the employers and the Right-wing union leaders.

Only the Socialist Labour League, which week by week advocates the building of powerful rank-and-file liaison committees, has sought to prepare workers for struggle, to warn them against mis-leadership, and to draw the necessary lessons fearlessly.

Unlike the Daily Worker, the Socialist Labour League does not have to keep a foot in either camp. To indulge in 'on-the-one-hand, on-the-other-hand' talk is to court defeat.

The policy of the Communist Party leaders in the print dispute was a policy of defeat.

The policy of the Socialist Labour League was a policy

which would have brought speedy victory. That was why it was so bitterly attacked by those who in practice have betrayed the 40-hour week.

## NEW ATTACK ON SHOP ORGANIZATION IN GLASGOW

By Alex McLarty

ON the eve of the Glasgow fair holidays the management of Fairfield's, Govan, paid off thirty-eight workers in the sheet-iron department.

The workers were given notice one hour before stopping time on the Thursday; the holidays began at noon next day.

Included in the pay-off were the senior of the two shop stewards, Bro. J. Hooper (a member of the Socialist Labour League), with eleven years' employment, and two of the four committee men.

This attack on the workers and their organization is clearly designed to prevent the demand for better conditions.

Last May the workers went on strike against redundancy and for an increase in the bonus. While their demands were not fully met they nevertheless won an increase of fourpence per hour and defeated the redundancy.

They had therefore a claim outstanding for a further increase and were also pressing for extra time on some jobs.

Over the past three months Fairfield's have sub-contracted a large amount of work to cheaper labour.

At a meeting on the Tuesday after the holidays the district official of the Boilermakers' Society, after a militant speech, and after the men had unanimously voted to take action, recommended that such action should be a return to work to allow him one to two weeks to negotiate. This was accepted by the men.

The negotiations, which have taken place this week, proved negative. An attempt to reverse the decision will be made at a meeting this Saturday morning of sheet-ironworker shop stewards.

## 400 STRIKE ON PETROCHEMICALS SITE

ABOUT 400 men employed by Kellogs International on the Petrochemicals site at Carrington, Cheshire, downed tools on Wednesday.

The strike is a protest against the sacking of two riggers for refusing to work without a scaffold in accordance with a decision to work to rule and observe safety regulations strictly.

When the riggers' steward asked the management for an explanation he was told he was sacked too.

The work to rule followed a one-day token strike on Monday in protest at the condition of the buses used to transport men from their homes in Liverpool. Among other defects, the roofs leak in heavy rain. Yet 5s. a day is deducted from each man's wages to pay for these buses.

## BRITAIN'S 'NEW LEFT'—SEEN FROM DOWN UNDER

From a Correspondent

THE Australian socialist bi-monthly Outlook, published in Sydney, carries in its May issue, which has just reached us, two articles of particular interest to readers of The Newsletter.

One is a survey of 'The New Left in England', by Alan Barcan, in which the writer notes that:

'To a considerable degree the ULR-New Reasoner group represents a revolt of the intellectuals. At ULR Club meetings industrial, working-class topics (e.g. workers' control) seem to attract a smaller attendance than more general cultural topics.'

'The Newsletter group'—i.e., the Socialist Labour League—'is distinguished from the ULR-New Reasoner group in having both intellectual and industrial support.

'Its theoretical magazine, Labour Review, is of a serious intellectual level . . . There are some points of comparison

## Norwood Labour Carries on Fight

By VIVIENNE MENDELSON

**T**HE fight is still raging over the suspended Norwood Labour Party. More than twenty members of the general management committee have been expelled, including a 16-year-old member of the youth section.

And every one of the 2,000 members has received a 'loyalty' form to sign before they will be admitted to any of the meetings of the new party organized by Transport House.

Only one of the 'disloyal' members has gone over to the other side. This is our county councillor, Ellis Hillman, who has agreed to accept the reorganization 'under protest'.

But the purpose of the registered letters and 'loyalty' forms circulating around Norwood is to make sure that there will be no protest.

The main condition of participation in Transport House's party is that the member 'agrees to co-operate in the reorganization of the Norwood Labour Party'.

The majority of Norwood's general management committee decided to fight against Transport House interference.

**NO CONFIDENCE.** We carried a vote of no confidence in the officers who had co-operated with Transport House, and elected fresh ones, whom we could trust.

Our aim is to prevent the national executive committee from expelling anyone from Norwood. And we are not prepared to settle for less. Neither now, nor after the annual conference of the Labour Party.

But our fight is not just the fight of a handful of Left-wingers against the national executive committee for the right to stay in the Labour Party.

It started from the Norwood party's refusal to expel members of the Socialist Labour League.

It has turned into a fight for the right of socialists to campaign for their policy in the Labour movement. For the right of Marxists to be in the Labour Party and to organize—just as the Right wing organizes.

In Norwood we have to contend, not only with the Right wing, whose line is of course that we are not fit to be members of the Labour Party—but with the Communist Party as well.

**UNILATERAL ACTION.** The local branch says that by fighting against the reorganization we are splitting the Labour movement in the area, and that we should accept NEC discipline.

These same people accused us of splitting the Labour movement when we put forward the famous Norwood resolution on unilateral action against the H-bomb.

Maybe they think that by supporting the Right wing locally they can get some sort of 'arrangement' with them.

Maybe they fear the emergence of a Left-wing movement in Lambeth which will campaign for genuine socialist policies.

Because that is the most important thing we have learned

from this fight: that if we are to get the support of the local members and Labour supporters we have to campaign and act on issues which affect them, as well as putting forward an alternative to 'The Future Labour Offers YOU'.

For a Constituency Labour Party to attract and keep members, and win the support of the local trade union branches, it cannot come before the people merely at election time.

**It must initiate and lead political campaigns in the area all the time.**

**It must help tenants to fight against rent increases.**

**It must help in trade union struggles.**

**It must always draw the political lessons from the campaigns it carries on.**

**OUR RECORD.** And the reason Transport House is having so much difficulty in subduing the Norwood Labour Party is that we have a record we can point to when we are out canvassing the members.

There are well-meaning and not-so-well-meaning people who ask: 'What will you do if the annual conference upholds the NEC?'

The answer is simple: we shall go on fighting. We have a responsibility, not only to Norwood, but to the whole of the Labour movement.

We shall go on fighting for two reasons.

First, because if the NEC succeeds in murdering a Left-wing constituency party now, it will try to do the same wherever a local party becomes critical.

Secondly, we shall go on fighting because we do not see the Labour Party remaining the monolithic, Right-wing-dominated organization it is now. The attempt by a constituency party to advance an alternative to the Right-wing's policy could be a useful preparation for a much more extensive fight in the future.

**BLIND OBEDIENCE.** The Labour leaders are in difficulties. On the one hand they demand blind obedience to party conference decisions: on the other they prepare to disregard conference decisions should conference decide against their policy.

The balloon will certainly go up. Perhaps after the general election, perhaps over a big industrial-struggle. And when it does, we want the forces of the Left to be ready.

That is why we have not retired from the struggle, but are combating the national executive with all our energy.

We need the support of other constituency parties, in the shape of resolutions to the NEC and the mandating of conference delegates to reject the national executive's action.

The NEC does not separate the policies of constituency parties from the latter's refusal to expel members of the Socialist Labour League.

Nor should we.

between the communists of 1922 and the neo-Trotskyists of 1958.'

Discussing the contents of the journals of the 'new Left', Barcan mentions the special interest shown in re-evaluating the 1930s, the so-called 'Pink Decade', and notes that 'the new magazines have been publishing studies of socialism during the inter-war period; the Trotskyists, in particular, excel at this, for they have long had a dissident version of socialist history'.

The other article is by George Petersen and is about 'The Communist Party and the Intellectuals'.

'The basic reason why the Communist Party has no use for

intellectuals,' he writes, is that 'the decisions of the party are always limited to determining the tactical line—never the strategic line', which is settled in Moscow.

Most 'intellectual' members of the Australian Communist Party, it appears, 'find themselves carefully steered away to being "wood-and-water joeys" for the tiny locality branches into which the leadership fragments the membership.

'Those who do become active in other spheres are allowed to become active only on the periphery of the movement—in the peace movement, cultural organizations, friendship groups—anything and everything except the class struggle in which communist workers are closely directed by the Stalinist leader-

ship.'

The happy corollary to this isolated situation, from the leaders' standpoint, was that when a number of Australian communist 'intellectuals' revolted against Stalinism in 1956-57 the majority of working-class members remained unaffected by the revolt.

### DETECTIVE FINED £50 FOR STEALING

Detective-Sergeant James Goodchild (31), of Melrose Avenue, Billingham, Co. Durham, was at Stockton-on-Tees last Monday found guilty of stealing a box of Turkish delight, valued at 1s. 8d., from a self-service store.

He was fined £50 and ordered to pay £10 10s. costs.

### 16 SYRIAN COMMUNISTS RESIGN

It is reported from Damascus that sixteen prominent members of the Syrian Communist Party have resigned from the party because, they say, it has 'betrayed the national aspirations of the Arabs'.

## CINEMA

### LET IT GO ON ROARING—IN FACT AS WELL AS FANTASY

#### The Mouse That Roared

WHAT endeared the Goon Show to millions of listeners throughout Britain was undoubtedly its merciless caricaturing of pomp, prejudice and piety.

Now Peter Sellers has done it again—this time in the cinema.

But while the Goons were merciless, their satire was never savage, and though 'The Mouse That Roared' is a criticism of all Establishments and their H-bomb mentality, its humour is free from acerbity.

Perhaps this is why the film is so effective and will succeed with ordinary people, though most of the critics in the slick journals damn it with faint praise and praise it with faint damns.

### FEROCIOUS

The theme is that simple folk can challenge the most ferocious giant, amazing themselves by making him look foolish and finally defeating him.

An absurd and microscopic English-speaking State in the French Alps, Grand Fenwick, declares war on the USA because Americans are producing an imitation of its world-famous wine, thus ruining the small duchy's trade.

There is no idea at all in Prime Minister Sellers's mind of prosecuting the war seriously. In fact he wants to surrender at once because, he believes, defeated enemies of the USA always fare better economically than its allies.

But Sellers the general, a simple forester in peace-time, who reluctantly leads Grand Fenwick's invading army of a score or so mailed yeomen armed with bows and arrows across the Atlantic in a tugboat, unexpectedly disobeys orders.

In a Goon-like sequence he captures the Q-bomb and carries it home in triumph to Sellers the Archduchess.

Then the trouble starts. The Q-bomb, far more powerful than the H-bomb, makes its possessor master of the world.

Grand Fenwick is at once besieged, not by invading armies, but by beves of diplomatists, anxious to negotiate.

### FATAL

No opportunity is lost to ridicule and deride every aspect of the international and national political game.

Most telling of all is the scene in which the Archduchess's ancient motor-car careers downhill without brakes or driver while its passenger, the not-so-bright U.S. general the Fenwickians have captured, clutches the fatal Q-bomb to his chest.

Sellers is brilliant in all three parts and, except for the

irritating heroine who plays the ideal American girl rather shrilly, he is ably supported by the rest of the cast.

'The Mouse That Roared' is comedy in the British tradition and will not please those who prefer the more pungent satire of some French films.

But it pulls no punches for all that and will give no comfort to those who believe that the forthcoming meeting between Eisenhower and Khrushchev, or any other meeting between heads of State, will settle international problems.

PATRICIA MCGOWAN

## BOOKS

### 'THE BATTLE FOR SOCIALISM' IS WEAPON FOR MILITANT WORKERS

By William Hunter

AFTER this clear and comprehensive survey of the policies of the Socialist Labour League\* it will be more difficult than ever for some of the 'new Left' to be taken seriously when they sneer about the British Marxists' 'mindless militancy', or about ideas 'distilled in a cellar'.

Militants in the trade unions and Labour Party will grasp eagerly at this book, which meets a need that many of them have been expressing for some time.

'The Battle for Socialism' is packed with facts, precisely annotated. There is a great deal of material in it for the socialist propagandist.

But it is more than a propaganda handbook. Much more. It surveys the disintegration of capitalist society. It focuses attention on the turn to violence and reaction throughout the capitalist world. It analyses the employers' offensive in Britain.

### STRUGGLE

It uncovers the causes of Labour bureaucracy—both Stalinist and Right-wing reformist—and shows how these bureaucracies stand athwart the road to socialism. It underlines the urgent need to smash their grip on the working-class movement.

Above all, it elaborates a programme for building a leadership which will consciously mobilize the workers for struggle and consciously prepare them to take power.

Marxists are separated from all other trends on three counts, writes Peter Fryer.

First, they are guided by a scientific theory which explains the laws of development of human society.

Secondly, they seek the combination of socialist consciousness and mass struggle. They do not confine their activities to propaganda and education.

Thirdly, they organize in such a way that decisions reached through democratic discussion can be carried out in a disciplined way.

All other trends in the working-class movement have failed, Fryer says, because they did not rely on the workers and because they did not set the achievement of working-class power as their goal.

### SUCCESSFUL

It is from this point of view that he discusses the attitude of the Stalinists and the Right-wing reformists towards such problems as the H-bomb and the employers' offensive.

He is confident that the working class can successfully solve these problems under the leadership of the Marxist movement, and can wage a successful fight against Labour bureaucracy of all kinds.

The restatement of socialist principles in 'The Battle for Socialism' is refreshing and wholesome. It will be of great help in the job of cleansing the Labour movement of 'new

\* Peter Fryer, **The Battle for Socialism** (Socialist Labour League. 192 pages. 3s. 6d.)

thinking' that is in reality anti-socialist thinking.

To Fryer the work of the Socialist Labour League is 'the natural and inevitable continuation in a new historical period of the revolutionary struggle waged by those who fought capitalism in its infancy'.

The League came about through the merging of two streams. There was the Trotskyist movement, which originated in the early communist 'Left Opposition', and which had concluded at the end of the second world war that 'the place for Marxists was inside the Labour Party, where, in the course of the workers' experiences and struggles, a revolutionary movement of consequence might be built'.

### SERIOUS

They were joined by Communist Party members who broke with Stalinism after the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and the Hungarian revolution.

Peter Fryer, as one of these latter, discusses why he and others who now criticize the Communist Party from the standpoint of Marxism did not condemn earlier the crimes of

Stalinism.

He answers frankly and honestly, but in a dignified way, without breast-beating. They joined the Communist Party to get to grips with capitalism, he says; they left it for the same reason.

**'It is precisely because we . . . are faithful to the best we learned in the Communist Party that we have become Trotskyists.'**

This is the first book that the Socialist Labour League has published. Although it is stamped with Fryer's individual, lucid and meticulous style it has, of course, only become possible because of the development of the movement he describes and the collective experience it embraces. In a very real sense this book is the product, not of an individual, but of a movement.

Through an able publicist a serious force has made a serious contribution to socialist literature.

'The Battle for Socialism' will certainly be a political best-seller and a recruiter for the Socialist Labour League.

## Constant Reader | When Rank and File Won Shorter Hours

As the movement for the 40-hour week develops, trade union officials tell us that rank-and-file initiative means ruin.

Presumably they are banking on their listeners' having forgotten how the crucial battle for the nine-hour day was won by the engineers—though this is the classic example of a victorious fight by British workers for shorter hours.

It was in 1871, when engineers worked up to 60 hours a week, that the Nine Hours League arose on the north-east coast. A purely rank-and-file movement, it brought out the engineering workers in Sunderland in April of that year, in complete disregard of the stick-in-the-mud officialdom of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

The society's executive council hastened to call a meeting of the district committee, which the general secretary attended in person, to condemn 'the hasty action of a few members . . . which precipitated the strike'.

Despite one of the largest Sunderland firms having already given in, they appointed a deputation to meet the local employers and negotiate a settlement.

### Employers gave in

The employers offered to introduce the nine-hour day on June 1, and the official deputation accepted this.

But the strike committee, backed by a mass meeting of the men, refused to agree, and within a week the employers had given in: the nine-hour day was introduced in Sunderland on May 2.

That same day, a struggle for the same demand began, still under rank-and-file leadership, in Newcastle. There the fight was tougher, but after five months complete victory was won.

Only after the strike had been on for seven weeks did the union's executive bestir itself sufficiently to organize collections in aid of the strikers; but there was much solidarity through unofficial channels.

### International solidarity

An attempt by the employers to bring in scabs from abroad was met by an appeal from the strikers to Karl Marx's International Workingmen's Association.

The latter sent representatives both to the works where foreign workers had been taken on and to the countries where they were being recruited, to explain the situation, and soon the employers found themselves deprived of the foreign labour they had relied on to break the strike.

The engineers who won the nine-hour day in 1871 were as unafraid of taking the help of an 'extremist political organization' as they were contemptuous of officials' attempts to suppress rank-and-file initiative.

And so they won their historic battle, to the advantage of all sections of their class.

A fuller account of this episode will be found in the official history of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, 'The Story of the Engineers', by James B. Jeffreys (1945).

### They are wonderful

Our ruling class has a technique for disposing of awkward questions by appointing Royal Commissions to sit on them until public concern has blown over.

This was applied, for instance, when the Metropolitan Police came under criticism for 'third degree' methods in the Savidge case in 1928.

An elderly man and a young woman went into Hyde Park. Soon afterwards two policemen pounced on them and they were charged with improper conduct.

When they appeared in court the magistrate found the evidence so flimsy that he not only dismissed the case but awarded substantial damages against the police. The magistrate's comments led to the question of a charge of perjury against the policemen concerned being raised.

### Grilled for five hours

A policeman then called on the young woman in the case, a Miss Savidge, at the factory where she worked, and took her to Scotland Yard.

There, as she afterwards told a Labour MP, she was grilled for five hours by what were then spoken of as 'American' methods, in an effort to get from her a confession incriminating herself and her companion in the park.

When Tom Johnston raised the matter on the adjournment in the House of Commons, the Tory government of the day appointed a tribunal to investigate. The majority report of this tribunal exonerated the police, and was widely characterized as 'whitewash'.

So a Royal Commission on Police Powers was set up. It reported in the following year that no important changes were needed—by which time most people had forgotten about the original case and its implications. Which was, of course, the object of the exercise.

The Royal Commission trick does not always come off as the government of the day wishes, of course; but it has succeeded all too often.

### Free hand for another MacDonald?

Gaitskell's blunt declaration recently that a Labour government would not be bound by conference decisions

of the Labour Party has come as a shock to some party members.

In 1932, after the educative experience with MacDonald, the Labour Party conference resolved to subject any future Labour prime minister to conference decisions and to national executive committee guidance between conferences.

That was in a period when Left-wing trends were on the upgrade in the party. After two or three years, however, for reasons which are worth studying today, the Right recovered its ascendancy—making possible the Tory victory at the 1935 election and the subsequent continuation of Tory rule into the outbreak of war in 1939.

When the post-1931 mood had been successfully dissipated, the idea of democratic party control over a Labour government was 'tacitly dropped', as Attlee puts it in his 'As It Happened' (1954).

BRIAN PEARCE

## LETTERS

### LEADING SCOTTISH TRADE UNIONIST ON THE BRIGINSHAW CIRCULAR

WHILE not necessarily agreeing with the Socialist Labour League on all issues I must commend the general secretary of the League for a most principled and lucid exposure of Briginshaw's circular.

I do so in a personal capacity.

Sincere trade unionists everywhere are becoming increasingly disgusted at the sell-out by top trade union leaders in so many industrial disputes over wages, hours, redundancy and general working conditions.

Since the big wages strike which took place in the ship-building and engineering industry in 1957, thousands of rank-and-file workers in many industries have been learning the bitter lesson and becoming more and more critical of their leaders.

Dumbarton

Ian Clark, president, Glasgow and S.W. Scotland district committee, Plumbing Trades Union

### 'OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY'

CONGRATULATIONS to all concerned with the July 25 issue of The Newsletter. However, it is regrettable that some inaccuracies in Cliff Slaughter's 'Open Letter to Members of the Communist Party' [July 18, p. 212] were not corrected.

Moffat did not go to the Devon pit and hold a secret meeting with the branch committee thereby persuading them to call the men up. By the time Moffat got to Fishcross the men were on the surface.

They had all sworn not to come up until told by Benny Hughes, the pit National Union of Mineworkers delegate. The majority of the branch committee was underground.

Secondly, when Moffat talked with the National Coal Board he was accompanied by several of those who had stayed down and he was the only NUM full-time official present.

The Devon action had as its sole aim the winning of talks with the NUM. This I would attribute to the strong influence of the local Communist Party.

All these facts were reported in the Scottish editions of the daily newspapers.

There is so much to criticize in the Communist Party's policy and actions that there is absolutely no excuse for misrepresentations.

Shotts (Lanarkshire)

Bob Todd

### THE PINNACLE OF PRIVILEGE

By G. Gale

Last Saturday the Queen and her baby were splashed across every front page. The Daily Herald was transformed into 'the Queen's Herald', with four full pages of gush and mush in 'the paper that cares'.

True, the front page broke us in gently, if sentimentally, with 'The Queen breaks it to her children'.

But by page two we were among people who really know! 'Yes, it's going to be a boy,' confided Henry Fielding.

'The news is no surprise to me' wrote 'the Herald man who was there!' A character forecast based on the stars told us that the baby will have 'intelligence above average' and 'no limit to the intellectual drive'. It will be 'glamorous' and possess 'a great gift for self-sacrifice'.

The Daily Worker 'wished the newcomer well'.



What does The Newsletter say? We are anti-royalist, and we shall stay that way. The royal family is the pinnacle of privilege, the figure-head of a class society.

All the mush is intended to take people's minds off the conditions they live in, and give them at second hand the glamour and excitement that is missing from their own lives.

We do not believe that sort of muck can fool working men and women for long. Many working women must be contrasting their own experience with the five months complete rest the Queen is to have.

The Socialist Labour League firmly believes that the working class will destroy a society that breeds unemployment and war. When that is done there will be plenty of useful work for dukes and princes.

### 'IT'S A REAL GAP'—LIVERPOOL READER

It's a real gap without The Newsletter for two weeks. One doesn't realize it until it doesn't come out.

Liverpool 8.

R.H.

### USA FEEDS BUTCHER FRANCO'S GUNS

During July the Spanish army carried out a large-scale exercise in Don Quixote's La Mancha, called appropriately enough 'Operation Dulcinea', in the presence of American military observers.

Immediately afterwards, Ullastres, Minister of Commerce, left for the USA, where he was granted a loan of 400 million dollars on the pretext of stabilizing the peseta.

In fact nothing is being done about the peseta; already the cost of transport has increased 40 per cent. It is no accident that Spain has one of the best-equipped armies in Europe, together with one of the lowest standards of living for the masses of the people.

Pau (France)

C.D.

### ALL THE WINNERS

The following prizes have been won in the Socialist Labour League's summer holiday draw: First Prize (£15) R. Spurway, 163 Courteney Avenue, Harrow Weald, Middlesex (ticket no. 9053). Second prize (£7 10s.) P. Little, 9 Canterbury Road, Tilgate, Crawley, Sussex (8584). Third prize (£5) S. L. Boyd, 91 Beaconsfield Street, Liverpool 8 (1910). Fourth prize (£2 10s.) G. V. Stone, 62 Whitehouse Rise, Belper, Derby (5663). Prizes will be paid out through sellers of winning tickets.