

THE NEWSLETTER

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DOCKERS & ENGINEERS TAKE OFFENSIVE

HULL: Portworkers Strike

By our Industrial Correspondent

Employers in Hull are again trying to force dockers to unload certain bulk cargoes by basket filling.

By this method men scoop the cargo into large baskets three or four feet high. This is not only extremely hard work, but it creates a tremendous amount of dust which clogs mouth, nose, throat and eyes. In addition, some men develop skin rashes.

Hull dockers have fought this system before. In June, 1959, they struck against basket filling and only returned to work after passing a resolution demanding that the employers be given three months' notice to terminate this method. Now—seven months later—here it is again. On Saturday morning at 'B' Control, Alexandra Dock, men were told to use baskets to unload the 'Yelkenci', carrying 2,900 tons of bulk cotton seed. Every man available for work refused to hand in his book.

By mid-morning, all 600 men on Alexandra Dock were out and 12 ships idle.

British Oil and Cake Manufacturers, for whom the cargo is intended, insist that it be weighed as it is unloaded. The men have been told this is possible only by using baskets. But they reply that the cargo could be put straight into lighters by grab and the lighter skipper could estimate the tonnage. The men's earnings on bulk cargo is usually based on the lighter skipper's estimate and the ship's manifest—That should be good enough for BOCM.

Employers' subterfuge exposed

The Hull Daily Mail on Monday carried a headline—'Men refuse employers' demonstration offer'. The proposed demonstration was to prove that unloading by grabs was impossible.

On arrival at the Alexandra control on Monday the men found that the demonstration was conditional upon two basket gangs going on the ship. Moreover, the grab was to be used on the white cottonseed, which was most likely to stick, while the black seed, which would run more easily, was left to the baskets.

The Port Labour Officer tried to get men to make up the gangs, so did the foreman, and so did the manager. But not one man would go.

Within a few hours, the whole port was out. Thirty-eight ships and 3,000 men were idle.

The men feel that this is a deliberate try-on. Only last week baskets were brought on the dock for a copra ship, but when men refused to use them it was unloaded by grabs.

Now the employers are pointing to a National Joint Industrial Council decision of last October which declared that basket filling should be minimised.

The men say 'minimised' means only when every other method is impossible. Some employers seem to think it means if only one ship at a time is concerned.

In this case, the men do not believe that no alternative method is possible. If grabs cannot be used, then machinery is available for getting the cargo out by suction.

This was the feeling at a mass meeting of dockers on Monday afternoon which, after being addressed by Les Warhurst and Arthur Copes (members of the Hull Port Workers' Liaison Committee), unanimously voted to stay out.

LONDON: Bottleworkers Out

UNITED GLASS BOTTLE STRIKERS NEED SUPPORT

By Brian Behan

For the first time in 34 years the giant United Glass Bottle factory at Charlton was completely strike-bound when its 1,400 workers walked out last Friday over the refusal of the management to reinstate Bro. Wally Morton, chairman of the stewards' committee.

Les Doust, chairman of the strike committee, gave me the background to the dispute. 'On December 13', he said, '400 Amalgamated Engineering Union members made a claim for a £1 a week increase and the 40-hour week. On February 9 the management made an offer of 42 hours without loss of pay, but with no wage increase. A mass meeting of engineers considered the offer unsatisfactory and decided to stop overtime working and to work to rule.'

'Following the decision of the Confederation leaders to accept the offer of 42 hours, the stewards advised members to resume normal working.'

'At 10 a.m. on Friday, the management informed the workers in Bro. Morton's shop that the general manager, a Mr. Morris, would speak to them at 11 a.m. This has never happened before and our members decided that any business the management had should be done through the shop stewards' committee. When the general manager came to the shop our members continued working. He sent for Bro. Morton and sacked him. Our members stopped work immediately, and this spread until soon the entire factory had stopped.'

A great response

A team of strikers are out all day touring milk companies supplied by the company and asking for all supplies from the factory to be blacked. (The management are attempting with very little success to keep production going by using the staff.)

One of the mobile pickets told me of the tremendous response they were getting from other trade unionists. 'We were told by United Dairies, the Express, Home Counties and the Co-op. that they would black everything produced by the scab staff at Anchor Lane.'

The men are confident that they will get the support of the other factories in the UGB combine. Last year the first

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JOHN BROWN LAND BOILERS STRIKE

On behalf of the John Brown Land Boilers strike committee I am to extend our thanks to your paper for its continual support during our strike of almost nine weeks' duration.

You will no doubt be pleased to learn that our convenor is with us again and that our workshop organization has been defended.

It is our intention to produce a leaflet giving details, which you will be at liberty to publish or otherwise.

IAN CLARK

(Chairman and Public Relations Officer),
John Brown Land Boilers Shop Stewards'
Committee.

THE NEWSLETTER

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1960

GAITSKELL'S DILEMMA

SPEAKING at Nottingham last Saturday, Mr. Hugh Gaitskell, using words reminiscent of the Praesidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and with a vehemence worthy of a better cause, denounced the opposition in the Labour Party as a 'small professional anti-leadership group—the self-appointed opposition to those elected in the party to responsible positions'.

The reference was obviously to Michael Foot and those around him. Yet only a few weeks ago the same Mr. Gaitskell declined to reply to Foot's attacks on the grounds that it would be 'improper and undignified'.

Why, then, this splenetic outburst? The reason is obvious. Mr. Gaitskell was speaking on 'an issue of the greatest possible practical significance' (his words), namely, the revision of the party constitution and, in particular, of Clause 4.

Mr. Gaitskell it seems is in somewhat of a dilemma—the traditional dilemma of every revisionist. His opponents are very vocal but his own supporters are too scared to support him unequivocally in public. Mr. Gaitskell is very annoyed at this disloyalty. But there are others who by their congenial formalism and desire to conciliate make it extremely difficult for Mr. Gaitskell to lay his hands on Clause 4. Thus it seems that the greatest opposition—or lack of co-operation—comes from within the ranks of his supporters! Mr. Gaitskell is forced to make haste slowly.

In order to cover his retreat from Socialism Mr. Gaitskell scatters a few moth-eaten shibboleths to the public. 'We shall need to extend the public sector . . . in the field of steel and road transport, certainly in water supplies (!) . . .' After this profound and brilliant contribution to socialist theory Mr. Gaitskell attacks the left for being 'conservative' and lacking in 'imaginative, practical ideas'. Who said Mr. Gaitskell was a 'dissipated, calculating machine'!

Mr. Gaitskell's reason for amending the constitution is that it is out-of-date. There is no doubt that the constitution of the Labour Party does not make provision for many changes, economic and political that have taken place since its adoption. The constitution for example, makes no provision for the acceptance of knighthoods and other such inducements by Labour leaders from the ruling class. But that is not the point at issue. Clause 4, despite its quaint Anglo-Saxon formulation which even Engels commented on, sums up the whole purpose and historical mission of the British working class movement: the establishment of a socialist society and the ending of private ownership of the means of production. On this there can be no compromise—and Mr. Gaitskell knows it. He said: 'I am convinced that what does us harm at elections is not concrete, specific and carefully designed proposals for particular acts of nationalization, but the vague threat to all private property, **which we should eliminate**'. (Our emphasis.)

The tone and content of Gaitskell's speech leave no doubt as to his real intentions. Together with the professional, parliamentary and trade union cabal who support him he is determined to silence his critics and

expel them if necessary. He is equally determined to formalize the reformist practices of the past 15 years by emasculating the Party constitution.

In this sense the Nottingham speech is not merely a statement of aims, it is a symbolic gesture to the ruling class and a declaration of war on the left. It is a reflexion within the party of the immense pressures that are being exerted on the Labour bureaucracy by the capitalist class to straitjacket the labour movement ideologically and organizationally.

The fate of the Labour Party now hangs in the balance. Whether Gaitskell succeeds or not depends entirely on how the left in the Party and the unions acts. Only through a united, uncompromising and **organized** struggle can Gaitskellism be defeated and the Labour Party be saved for socialism. The first condition for such a struggle is an atmosphere free of the threat of bureaucratic retaliation. In other words, an ending of all bans and proscriptions.

Those who, like Victory for Socialism, try to make an invidious distinction between the witch-hunt now developing against the centre and the purge of the revolutionary left in the Party are only making Gaitskell's job easier.

We believe that the Socialist Labour League has a specific and important contribution to make in the struggle for policy and leadership in the Labour Party. Therefore we appeal to all those who are serious about fighting revisionism and bureaucracy in the Party to support our legitimate battle for affiliation.

That is the lesson of Gaitskell's speech.

BOTTLEWORKERS . . . (Continued from front page)

steps were taken to link up the group's 14 factories, now letters have gone out appealing for support.

The local engineering union official, Bro. Hill, has asked his executive to back the dispute.

A victory for the Charlton men can prepare the way for a struggle to improve the low wages and bad conditions which prevail in the glass bottle industry. In the case of warehousemen wages are as low as £8 2s. 6d. for 45 hours and the men have to work in dangerous and filthy conditions. On certain operations the men breathe poisonous fumes, including arsenic.

The men will need to keep an eye on their leaders if they are to win. There is no doubt that the retreat at York encouraged the management at Anchor Lane to attack the rank and file who had begun a fight for the £1 and the 40-hour week.

Since this report was written, a mass meeting of the strikers on Wednesday, February 17, decided to stay on strike. The chairman of the meeting read telegrams from the Scottish factory and the St. Helens factory. The Scottish men say they will stop work in support of the Charlton men on Friday next, and the management have threatened to sack all those who strike. The St. Helens workers are to hold a mass meeting to decide on solidarity action.

Discussions will begin at the Ministry of Labour on Thursday morning at the request of the management.

OUT FEBRUARY 25th

LABOUR REVIEW

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How the 'New Left' Helped de Gaulle Repeat 1958

By TOM KEMP

The surrender of the Algiers insurgents who for eight days manned the barricades in defiance of the government of the Fifth Republic brings to an end its sharpest crisis to date. The tension had mounted until it almost matched the near panic of May, 1958, both in France and in Algiers.

The significant delay before De Gaulle's television broadcast calling the insurgents to order, indicated that behind the scenes his ministers were divided and hesitant. The ominous threat that the army would throw in its lot with the ultras and precipitate civil war loomed on the horizon. The fissures in French society seemed to gape wide—they have been bridged temporarily by De Gaulle's still immense personal prestige and appeal.

Everyone can now see, however, that the stability of the regime hangs on the life of one tired and ageing man—an uncrowned monarch carried to power by the forces from which he now tries to dissociate himself, and with no legitimate heir. The entire capitalist press contemplates with awe the political vacuum which the events of the past week have disclosed.

While the balance sheet of this episode in the still short history of the Fifth Republic is being struck, it is worth casting an eye at the policy of the French liberals and radicals during the crisis.

In short, a general rallying occurred of the official trade union organizations, including the Communist-inspired CGT, to the support of the Republic—the Republic which had issued from a similar rebellion in May, 1958—which, in the absence of political differentiation, meant support for De Gaulle.

When the Fourth Republic was on the eve of its demise these same forces rallied their biggest effort. A vast concourse from the Radicals to the CP thronged the streets; their slogans—defence of democracy, defence of the Fourth Republic. The funeral procession of the Fourth, some have unkindly dubbed it.

At this time no policy was presented which could rally the working class into action and swing behind it vacillating sections of the middle class. The great cry amounted to support for the government, defence of a system which had long exhausted its credit.

This was a move in the bad tradition of Popular Frontism—in which defence of parliamentary institutions was hoisted to the masthead with the tricolour, while the red flag and the struggle for socialism were cast into limbo. A further step along this road was taken in the latest crisis; the bankruptcy of this policy has not yet been widely understood.

The French radical sector has, under its sway, adopted piecemeal the policy of the lesser evil in every critical turn. It appears in a crass form in the policy of Guy Mollet. It infects the leadership of the Communist Party and trade unions. It works its ravages among the so-called 'new lefts'.

Bourdet's letter

An especially subtle, not to say brilliant—if equivocal—exponent of this line is Claude Bourdet, editor of the influential left paper, *France Observateur*. In its issue of January 28, he published a long open letter to De Gaulle. In places he did not mince matters. He spoke of shedding the blood of the torturers, and perhaps that of his own friends, as perhaps necessary to restore the honour of France's name before the world and before history.

He showed an intellectual's scorn for the General's ambiguity and obtuseness. But despite lese majesty and an emotional tone there was shrewd reasoning in Bourdet's editorial.

He argued that the revolt would strengthen the army and that the deteriorating situation in Algeria arose from the

General's own inability or unwillingness to come to terms with the Provisional government of the Algerian Republic set up by the National Liberation Front (FLN). But, since the army no longer had a De Gaulle in reserve, as it had in May, 1958, it would, given firmness, be obliged to abandon any idea of insubordination—indication of which had been plain in the days following January 24.

At the time of writing, at the height of the crisis, Bourdet clearly feared that the General would temporize with the insurgents. It was in desperation, rather than with hope of being heard, that he put forward the proposition of immediate negotiation with the FLN government and asked De Gaulle to be 'once more, as the defeatism of a whole class, and not your own wish, made you in 1940, the representative of the people of France against the social forces to which you are attached'.

Bourdet mingles not a little admiration with his mistrust of De Gaulle; he shows readiness to rally behind De Gaulle as 'representative of the people', though without much confidence that the 'offer' would be accepted.

In fact, the reply came as soon as the paper was off the press: it was seized by the police and reappeared later minus Bourdet's article!

But that does not give Bourdet a clean bill of health. When the regime stands on the brink of disaster, instead of a message to the working people, this 'new left' sends a personal message to the autocrat—and what a message!

In the same issue Giles Martinet is more precise. There is, he argues, no possibility of putting an alternative democratic government in place of the De Gaulle regime. 'This amounts to saying', he adds, with emphasis, 'that all our efforts must tend to oppose a counterweight to the action of the army and the ultras, and to exercise the maximum pressure on the policy of the government.'

There must, he says, be no concessions to the ultras and the principle of 'self-determination' must be really applied; i.e., by De Gaulle's government, since no other government is in prospect!

Martinet called for a campaign of petitions, telegrams, meetings and partial stoppages leading up to a national day of protest, which was not unlike that actually carried out by the official workers' organizations. Thus the policy of the lesser evil was translated into practice. . . .

Took the advice

On the back page of the same journal another contributor wrote 'I have no doubt that General De Gaulle is big enough to accept his responsibilities.'

Yes, in a sense he took Bourdet's advice: while the French 'left' was hanging in the air putting on the pressure. In true Bonapartist style De Gaulle balances between the seething social forces in France and Algeria to conserve French capitalism and maintain its essential positions in the colonies. Last week he moved to ward off a challenge from the extreme right.

He has not thereby become one whit more 'democratic'; and the republic he has saved—with the support of the 'left', whatever its reservations or criticisms—remains the regime of big capital. De Gaulle not merely retains the initiative, obtains special powers and moves to apply his own policy in Algeria—but he is able to use the so-clever 'left' as a footstool in his manoeuvres.

The left and the working class have gained nothing from the timid 'lesser evil' policy adopted consciously or shamefacedly by their leaders.

The lesson of the Algiers revolt is that the French working-class movement remains terribly misled, confused and demoralized; another opportunity to educate it for the trials ahead has been scattered to the winds, with the 'new left' aiding in its own way.

INDUSTRY

LESSONS FROM THE SOUTH BANK ELECTRICIANS' STRIKE

By our Industrial Correspondent

The 120 South Bank electricians employed by electrical contractors, F. H. Wheelers, returned to work last week.

After 16 weeks on strike they had to go back empty-handed, the only solace offered by union general secretary Frank Haxell, is that a special sub-committee will meet to discuss their case. Arguing for the return to work, Haxell said: 'This special sub-committee could not meet if a strike is in progress. If you vote to continue this strike and call for its extension, it is my opinion that the executive council will not support you.'

This statement, made to men who had been on strike for 16 weeks, naturally had a decisive effect in securing a vote for a return.

Disputes of this character—the men were demanding parity in wage rates with other site tradesmen—are not new to the electrical contracting industry. On many sites electricians walk home with less pay than the other building trade workers. At the court of inquiry set up by the Ministry of Labour to investigate the dispute, the employers claimed to have knowledge of 20 sites similar to that at South Bank. Months before this strike took place, the claim of the men had been referred to the negotiating machinery. The claim went through all the appropriate bodies and resulted in deadlock.

Workers want parity, not PBR

The government court of inquiry also turned down the claim and urged the men to return to work and the Electrical Trades Union to negotiate with the employers for a payment-by-results scheme. Haxell and his executive have not yet made themselves clear in the question of payment-by-results. They have, however, accepted the point about returning to work.

The last annual policy conference of the ETU adopted a resolution against all forms of payment-by-result, although the executive opposed the delegates on this question. Although it is not yet clear what terms of reference the 'special sub-committee' will have, it is obvious that the ETU leaders are contemptuous of the ability of the rank and file to win parity of wages by their own action.

The demand for parity payments arises because of the inability of the Stalinist leadership of the ETU to secure any real increase in wages from the electrical employers. Whilst the basic rates of other building workers have remained on a parallel with those of the electricians they have been able to negotiate at site level (often without aid from their full-time officials) a standing bonus which is not tied to piecework. With ever-increasing living costs this site bonus has tended to increase, widening the differential with the sparks. Parity in wages at South Bank would have meant a weekly increase of over £4 for electricians.

Treachery of Executive Council

Haxell has learned that by paying lip-service to the demand for parity and making the strike official, the leadership of the strike can be removed from the strike committee and placed in the hands of the executive. On the first day of the court of inquiry there were 20 sites prepared to take strike action. They were restrained from doing so by the intervention of union officials who told them 'This dispute is in the hands of the executive council, they will tell you when it is necessary to come out. To strike now would only prejudice the court of inquiry'.

The elected chairman of the South Bank strike committee

was not allowed to chair the final meeting of strikers and Jack Frazer, well-known Stalinist on the executive council, was imposed in his place. A resolution from the floor calling for the extension of the dispute and opposition to all payment by results was ruled out of order, as being directly opposed to the recommendation of the Executive. After two-and-a-half hours Frazer put the executive council proposal to the vote. With a quarter of the meeting voting against, Haxell asked that the decision to return might be presented as a 'unanimous decision'—but angry shouts of 'No' forced him to let the matter drop.

CLYDE APPRENTICES PREPARE FOR STRUGGLE

By our Industrial Correspondent

The long-suffering, underpaid apprentices in the engineering industry, their patience exhausted, are rapidly organizing their forces here and preparing to fight for their long overdue wage increases.

Over the past two weeks, two meetings of Clydeside apprentices have been held. The campaign to organize the Clyde Apprentices was started by the Renfrewshire Apprentice Committee—an unofficial committee of apprentices' delegates covering a number of industrial establishments in the Renfrewshire area. A very successful delegate conference held two weeks ago was followed by a further one on February 13. At this latter conference, about 200 apprentices, representing over 40 engineering and shipbuilding firms, elected a committee of 40 to lead the struggle for the Confederation claim. There is no doubt that the boys are determined to back up their claim with action.

Arrangements have already been made to bring the apprentices in the Greenock area into the campaign, the first steps of which have been worked out. These are firstly—that in the establishments covered by the committee the apprentices will ask the Shop Stewards for their assistance in making a joint approach to the individual firms to demand the immediate granting of the claim. Secondly, to recommend to the apprentices that a token stoppage be held in the immediate future followed by a demonstration.

JOHN BROWN LAND BOILERS

The workers at John Brown Land Boilers, Clydebank, who waged a nine-week strike campaign against the victimization of their militant convenor, have won a complete victory. The convenor, Ian Clark, was re-instated and resumed work last Monday.

The Strike Committee, backed up by the solidarity of their workrs, had a wide campaign of factory and yard meetings throughout the Clyde and were given financial support by many establishments.

The Clyde District Committee of The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, instead of leading a campaign on the river which undoubtedly would have brought the strike to a successful conclusion **much more quickly**, referred the matter to the Trade Union chiefs in London.

On their recommendation the workers returned without Clark and negotiations were re-opened on Clark's re-instatement. At a central conference in York last week-end the employers' federation caved in. Their decision was undoubtedly influenced by the militancy of the workers who made it clear that they would take further action in the event of Clark not being re-instated. The victory was entirely due to the militant struggle of the workers.

WHAT IS MARXIST THEORY FOR?

By Alasdair MacIntyre

A NEWSLETTER PAMPHLET

Price 3d.

BETTESHANGER MINERS' FIGHT GOES ON

By our Industrial Correspondent

The entire Labour movement will vigorously applaud the valiant struggle of the Betteshanger colliery stay-down strikers. It was only fitting that they should be given a great welcome when they finally decided to come to the surface and continue the fight on top. It is not only they who are involved in the fight against sackings by the National Coal Board. The shadow of the labour exchange hangs over hundreds of thousands of British miners today. The Betteshanger strike is, part of the struggle of all miners against unemployment.

The struggle of the Betteshanger men alone, however valiant and prolonged, cannot win this dispute. The Coal Board will only surrender if the struggle is extended to the other pits of the Kent coalfield and beyond.

The belated decision of the Kent area council of the National Union of Mineworkers to make the strike official while it is to be welcomed, certainly doesn't go far enough. The NCB cannot be convinced—it must be forced by sympathetic strike action to withdraw these redundancy notices.

The attitude of the NUM is deplorable. As Mr. Plumpton cynically put it: 'We have had meetings with the NUM in the last few days. The union were still opposed to redundancy, but after having discussed that they went on to discuss the least harmful way of implementing it, if forced to do so.'

John Gritten in the Daily Worker (17.2.60) makes the significant admission that many miners fear that the Coal Board has plans 'not yet divulged' for shutting down Betteshanger in the 1965 plan. This revelation—if it is true—underlines the necessity for the adoption of a rank-and-file miners' charter which will include and fight for the following points:

Immediate access to the plans and accounts of the National Coal Board and their examination by committees of miners and qualified technicians.

All transfers to be controlled by elected pit committees.

Decent conditions and wages for miners made redundant by the closing of uneconomic pits to be provided for by immediate suspension of all interest payments.

MERCHANTS OF DEATH REAP A GOLDEN HARVEST

By Bob Pennington

Fifteen years after the end of the second of the wars to end all wars, Britain's arms expenditure will reach £1,630 million a year.

In the last decade Britain's arms drive has cost over £15,000,000,000. During 1959 the Government put in hand a £600,000,000 programme to develop the Blue Streak rocket. According to this week's official White Paper that decision is now under review. Dependent on fixed bases, the Blue Streak is already out-dated before it is even operational. Now further billions will be required to purchase mobile rockets like the American Polaris which is launched by submarine.

The increased expenditure is not to go solely on nuclear weapons. More cash is to be spent on 'conventional' weapons required, according to Defence Minister, Watkinson, 'for local emergencies'. Presumably Mr. Watkinson means for crushing colonial revolts.

These latest Government defence figures presented the Labour Party with a first-class opportunity to attack and expose the Tories and their policies. But the chance wasn't taken.

Labour's Shadow Defence Minister, George Brown, squealed pitifully about the government's alleged secret plan to pull her forces out of Western Europe. Quoting Eden's promise to keep four divisions in Germany, Brown said: 'The Labour Party supported this.' Brown claimed that the Tory government has reduced forces by a division.

Even Labour's back-benchers only criticised the estimates

because of the new 6 per cent. increase of £115 millions.

Labour's acceptance of NATO and the need for a bipartisan foreign policy prevents it making any real fight against the government's arms programme. In 1958 five aircraft companies grossed total profits of £81.6 million. The new defence lists mean they can expect to do even better in 1960-61.

Labour should declare immediately for a withdrawal from NATO and all other military alliances. It should also demand the nationalization of the armaments industry.

THE WITCH-HUNT SPREADS TO SCOTLAND

Alex McLarty, Glasgow Organizer of the Socialist Labour League, has been expelled from the Labour Party.

Following upon the publication of a Socialist Labour League leaflet urging support for the John Brown Land Boiler strikers whose convenor was victimized, McLarty received a letter from the secretary of the Glasgow City Labour Party asking him if he was a member of the League. This was followed by a further letter telling him that as he was a member he was no longer a member of the Labour Party.

When he went along to the meeting of the Hillhead Labour Party, of which he was chairman, both the Secretary and Chairman of the Glasgow Labour Party were present and refused to allow the meeting to start whilst McLarty was there. His request to be allowed to address the Hillhead Party on the subject was rejected out of hand by the officials, who threatened to abandon the meeting.

MORE BULL FROM JOHN BULL

Poor old John Bull! With a declining circulation its owners, Odhams Press Ltd., make frantic efforts to revamp this ageing weekly. Their latest effort is a rather clumsy attempt to continue the witch-hunt against the Socialist Labour League; 'Secret Society under your nose' says the leading headline. This, you are asked to believe, is the Socialist Labour League. Inside there are pictures taken in the League's office, and on-the-spot interviews with League members. Truly, this must be one of the most unusual secret societies in history.

Recently a Mr. Keith Ellis called at the office of the Socialist Labour League and asked for an interview. Every effort was made to assist him and none of his questions were left unanswered.

It appears that little of the effort made by this conscientious employee of Odhams was taken into consideration by the editor. What we have dished up in John Bull is the left-overs of stale gossip such as the revelations of one Bill Jones, a right-wing Labour agent who is supposed to have arrived at his office one Sunday morning to find that it had been taken over by 'Trots'. Surely a tale to make one's hair stand on end! Especially since it appears that Mr. Jones was in agreement that one of the leading Trotskyists should make his home as a caretaker in a flat on these same premises. In all fairness, someone might say that Mr. Jones was really part of the conspiracy himself. Worse still, let us reveal, during the council elections of 1953 Mr. Jones worked with leading Trotskyists, knowing them to be Trotskyists, and in fact sympathizing with them in many respects.

One of the 'awful' revelations made by Mr. Keith Ellis is that somebody is supposed to have lost his girl-friend because he could not see her once a week. We don't know if there is any substance in this story, but we seem to have have read, in other Odhams publications, of similar things takings place in the most respectable circles.

Mr. Keith Ellis endeavours to do his job as a conscientious journalist. He tried to report correctly our conversation with him. But the witch-hunting slant of this article exposes the miserable way people's talents are used to distort the truth. There is nothing secret about the Socialist Labour League; Mr. Ellis knows that as well as any of its members. Is it not time that he as well as other journalists in Fleet Street paid some attention to this abuse of their talents by such unscrupulous employers as Odhams Press?

The African Working Class in the 'White Settler' States

THE SECOND OF A SERIES OF ARTICLES BY JAMES BAKER

THE imperialists have much more at stake in the 'White settler' States than they have in 'Black' Africa. Since the war more than half the new investment of overseas capital in Africa has gone to South Africa, the Belgian Congo and the Central African Federation. Huge profits have been taken out by overseas investors; these economies have been expanding at a fantastic rate.

In these territories the main form of exploitation of the African peoples is through wage-labour on European farms, and in mines and factories. They are employed as unskilled workers at low wages, and many depend on their land holdings in the reserves to provide food for their families and for themselves when they are no longer able to work. Increasing numbers have, however, succeeded in establishing themselves in the towns as an urbanised proletariat.

From the point of view of the imperialists' future development in these territories is limited by several factors. Since the white population is insufficient to provide workers for further industrial expansion, if this is to take place, more effective use must be made of African labour. This means that the 'colour' bar in industry which restricts Africans to unskilled jobs must be lifted. It also means that the legislation which prevents Africans from settling permanently in the towns must be rescinded.

In the present conditions with the Afrikaner Nationalists in power and with their ideology of white supremacy both these measures are impossible. White industrialists in both Southern Rhodesia and in the Union of South Africa have attacked the stupidity of preventing Africans from acquiring industrial skills. They do so because they are concerned with making profits and not with any considerations of human equality. But they have not succeeded in convincing the Nationalists.

The African working class itself has up till recently expressed its refusal to assist in its own exploitation in negative ways: by thieving, idleness, illicit brewing and other forms of 'crime'. Since they are denied a place in society they have demonstrated their indifference to its values.

More recently, however, there have been signs that this working class is becoming more militant and that its class consciousness may be deepening. There have been large-scale strikes of African workers employed on the Kariba dam, in the Durban docks, on the East African railways and on the transport services of the Belgian Congo. Conflicts between

Africans and the police have become more frequent and more violent; the incidence of robbery with violence in the Union has increased. To this the various governments have responded with repressive legislation, the training of riot squads, and the imprisonment and exile of African leaders.

Contacts between African workers and the European working class tradition is minimal. The Africans only contact with the heritage of proletarian internationalism has been limited to the various manoeuvres with which the representatives of the Stalinist bureaucracy have distorted local working class struggles. So far there is little sign of the emergence of a Marxist leadership among the Africans; but neither is there any sign of reformism.

In their present circumstances the African workers may soon begin to understand that they can rely only on themselves to end their exploitation. And if they once take up the struggle, even under Nationalist leadership, it will be almost impossible to confine it within the same framework of constitutional activity as has occurred in 'Black' Africa.

If armed struggles begin in the predominantly proletarian areas of the Union of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, the Northern Rhodesian Copper Belt and the Congo there is no telling how far they might spread. The peasant masses of 'Black' Africa would not stand aside idly while their proletarian brothers were fighting in the South. The whole framework of imperialist exploitation would be in ruins.

This is the danger which Macmillan has glimpsed; as the representative of world imperialism he is seeking to stabilise the situation in Africa before it is too late. Even if this means throwing overboard the representatives of the white minorities this will be a small price to pay. But he must still find representatives of African nationalism in South Africa and elsewhere with whom it is possible to negotiate on the basis of a share of the profits of imperialism. Whether he can do this is doubtful.

And he will still have to deal with the revolt of the whites in Kenya, Central Africa and the Union of South Africa who will not accept being dropped so easily. Macmillan will need all his astuteness to deal with this situation.

FRANCE

'HURRAH'

By Bob Pennington

Shortly after 7 a.m. last Saturday morning, a mushroom-shaped cloud of radio-active dust and poison arose over Reggane, deep in Africa's Sahara desert. French imperialism had exploded its first atomic bomb, accordingly extending the benefits of western civilization to the peoples of Africa.

Demonstrating his strict adherence to high moral standards and Catholic ethics, the deeply religious de Gaulle telegraphed: 'Hurrah for France! She is stronger and prouder this morning.'

Well might the general be proud. Capitalist France now apparently has enough explosive power to commit another Hiroshima in her own right.

The progressives

De Gaulle should, however, spare a grateful thought for his predecessors. First decisions enabling the bomb to be produced were made in 1950 by M. Frederick Joliot-Curie the Stalinist Commissioner for Atomic Energy—a true patriot.

M. Curie was of course well-known in Stalinist peace circles as an 'untiring and devoted worker for peace'. No wonder Picassos' dove looks a little cynical.

Another 'progressive' responsible for the explosion is M. Mendes France. During his term as premier in 1954 he gave the preparatory work much of its impulse.

It would be downright churlish to forget the French social democrats. Gaitskell's political cousin, M. Guy Mollet, took the preparations a very decisive step forward during his premiership in 1956.

According to the Sunday Times, February 14, 'practically every French Government for the past decade has had a hand in this achievement.' A truly national effort.

Although France now obviously feels qualified to join the big international gangsters on equal terms, Washington rather looks down its nose at this 'little' bang.

Chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, Senator Clinton Anderson says he does not think 'one test constitutes the substantial progress called for under the Act'.

Anderson has a point. After all America, Britain and the Soviet Union are estimated to have killed off nearly 1,540,000 people with their tests over the last 15 years. France will have to be responsible for a lot more bone-cancer and leukemia before she can get into that exclusive club.

Constant Reader | A Political Con Man?

TO leave error uncorrected is to encourage intellectual immorality. Those wise (but perhaps a little 'sectarian'?) words of Marx's served as the motto of *The Reasoner*, the factional journal edited by John Saville and Edward Thompson which played a role in the revolt in the British Communist Party in 1956. They supply my excuse for reproducing here the essence of a letter I wrote to *The Listener* on January 21, which is evidently not going to be published there.

It was written in reply to one by Harry Hanson, of Leeds, attacking Alasdair MacIntyre's talk on 'Communism and British Intellectuals'. Hanson, a 'New Left' ex-Stalinist who seems to be not so 'ex' as all that, dealt with historical facts in his letter in a way that must be commented on, given these people's ostentatious concern for Morality with a big M.

To discredit a point made by MacIntyre, Hanson referred to 'the 1936 programme of the Communist Party, "For a Soviet Britain"', as though this had been the programme of the British Communists from 1936 onward. Actually, 'For Soviet Britain' was adopted at the Party Congress held in February 1935. Within a few months, owing to changes in the Moscow line, it had ceased to be referred to in the Party press and propaganda. By 1936 soviets (workers' councils) were definitely 'out' so far as the Stalinists were concerned, as was vividly demonstrated in France and Spain in the summer of that year. To advocate them was now to be . . . anti-Soviet. And in 1938, when an article in the Party journal *Discussion* surveyed past congresses of the British Communist Party, the programme adopted at the 1935 congress (by then, of course, long since 'unavailable') was referred to as 'For Socialist Britain'!

Either Hanson knows these facts—and he writes to correct MacIntyre from the standpoint of one who was politically active in the period concerned, and so knows it from experience and not merely from books—or else he doesn't. If he does, is he not something of a political confidence trickster? If he doesn't, why did he miss this opportunity to keep his mouth shut?

Rome and Moscow

The Jesuit Father Messineo, editor of the important Italian Catholic periodical *Civiltà cattolica*, has been invited to visit the Soviet Union this month, it is reported, and will travel accompanied by his physician Dr. Spallone, who is a member of the Communist Party of Italy.

There will be speculation about what diplomatic feelers for an agreement (concordat) between the Vatican and the Soviet Government may be put out through this mission. The last time a Jesuit went to Russia on the Pope's behalf the results were not happy.

On that occasion the reverend father concerned was Edmund Walsh, of Georgetown University, USA, which has prepared so many young men for the American diplomatic service. (It was Walsh who, when a certain Senator Joe McCarthy was looking for a gimmick to make himself famous, advised the senator to take up hunting for Reds in government jobs.)

Walsh was in Russia in 1922-23, in charge of Catholic relief work among sufferers from the famine which followed the years of war and civil war. Around this time, the then Pope was hoping—if we are to believe Louis Fischer, in 'The Soviets in World Affairs' (1930)—to get some advantage for his church in Russia out of the disestablishment of the Orthodox Church. At the Genoa Conference, it seems, Soviet foreign commissar Chicherin had a friendly chat with the local archbishop into which a lot was read by some observers. Much significance was seen in the comparative restraint with which the Pope reacted to the trial for treason of some Polish Catholic priests in Russia, at a time when the British Government bombarded Moscow with indignant protests.

Whatever the possibilities, Father Walsh did his damndest to kill them. He made trouble with the Soviet authorities

wherever he went, especially over the question of Church property which they wanted to sequester for famine relief purposes; he was suspected of abusing the privileged facilities allowed him in order to help counter-revolutionaries; and he systematically despatched to the Vatican false information about the situation in Russia. By the end of 1923, when he left, he could be certain that all 'danger' was past.

It may be that since, in 1960, Soviet Russia is still there, the Society of Jesus has decided to change its approach—that remains to be seen. Methods of combating the revolutionary working-class movement are many and various, and the enemy is very flexible. One recalls how the Webbs, who loathed Lenin's Russia, became in the early 1930s enthusiasts for the régime of Stalin. Nevertheless, Fabians are one thing and Jesuits quite another. . . .

Dick Beech and Others

Don't look now, but it may be that we are at last going to get some instalments of the official history of the British Communist Party (promised since 1956), in the form of any rate of articles by James Klugman. The journal *Marxism Today* had in its January issue a piece by him on the foundation of the party, in 1920 and 1921.

I was interested to see that Klugman mentions Dick Beech, who attended the second (1920) congress of the Communist International as a representative of the British section of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Beech died in 1955. He had left the Independent Labour Party for the Labour Party not long before. He had been well-known in the trade union movement for a quarter of a century as an active worker for the Chemical Workers' Union, whose journal he was editing at the time of his death, and was also busy in the Movement for Colonial Freedom. Married to Moira, one of James Connolly's daughters, Beech always took a special interest in the fight against imperialism.

As a member of the Communist Party's central committee in the 1920s Beech had for his chief sphere of work the National Minority Movement, the 'red opposition' in the trade unions. He was co-defendant with Harry Pollitt in a famous libel case brought by an official of the National Union of Seamen in 1927. When Trotsky was expelled from the Soviet Communist Party, then sent into exile, and finally banished from the Soviet Union, Beech, who had known the revolutionary leader personally, was not satisfied with the Stalinist 'explanations'. He was one of the small British group who established contact with the American Trotskyists around Jim Cannon and made their paper—*The Militant*, founded 1928 and still going strong—known to Marxists in this country.

(I am told, by the way, that a certain Len Williams, then a keen young tutor for the National Council of Labour Colleges in South Wales, helped to get subscribers for *The Militant* in that area in the early 1930s. Can this be that same Len Williams who, now at Transport House, presides over the purging of Trotskyists from the Labour Party?)

Whether Dick Beech was expelled from the Communist Party for his educational activities or left of his own accord I am not clear, but I understand he had been out of it for some years before, in 1939, on Bob Edwards' persuasion, he joined the Independent Labour Party.

I am assembling information about the earliest years of the Trotskyist movement and of interest in Trotsky's ideas in this country, and would welcome any papers or reminiscences which might contribute to this task by filling in gaps in the political biographies of comrades like Dick Beech.

Jack Tanner, now of IRIS and a mighty Red-hunter before the Lord, was at one time a friend of Beech's, and in his militant days showed a brief, cautious curiosity in relation to Trotsky's writings, or so they tell me. I suppose it's useless to expect any help from him in this bit of research. Still, should he read these lines (as he doubtless will, in the way of business), and feel moved to send along some notes, they would be appreciated. The same applies, of course to Len Williams.

BRIAN PEARCE

Carron Sell-out on 40 Hour Week and Wage Demand

By G. GALE

The decision of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union leaders to accept the employers' offer of a 42-hour week and to forego the claim for a 40-hour week and £1 increase may seem 'reasonable' and 'moderate' to the chairmen and directors of the engineering firms, but it is regarded as a downright betrayal by the men on the factory floor.

I spoke to many of the 40 stewards, convenors and rank-and-file militants who assembled at York to lobby their so-called leaders. Their message was plain.

'Our claim is justified, and we want the lot', said Bro. Searle, a steward from Plesseys, London.

Bro. G. Petrie, chairman of the Dundee Confederation district committee agreed. 'The leaders have stated our claim is justified, so to accept anything less would be a betrayal. Any action to get the full claim would be supported by factories throughout the land.'

Another Scottish delegate, Bro. Dorrian, one of four down from Remington Rand, Glasgow, was outspoken. 'These people should call us out and have a real go at the employers', he said. 'We want no more of this pussy-footing about.'

Not ballots—but action

Demands for action also came from Bro. Staniforth, a member of the Electrical Trades Union and secretary of the shop stewards' committee at Firth Brown's, Sheffield. 'I'm sick of misleading press reports about engineers averaging £15 a week', he declared. 'I know lots of men getting less than £10 a week, some as little as £8 5s. 0d. I can't understand why our leaders don't repudiate this muck. We want more action, more positive leadership, more meetings. Our Confed, leaders are losing touch with the rank and file.'

'No messing about with ballots', said Tom Smith, steward at George Mann's, Leeds, 'we want action—that's the message from the shop floor.'

But the message was ignored. Apparently £1 a week for men at the bench can be forgotten, even though the president, general secretary and executive council members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union are asking for increases for themselves of up to £6 a week—and that will have to come from the men!

The reaction of engineering workers is bitter. Typical was Tom Smith. 'This is a betrayal', he told me. 'There are men in Leeds on the basic (skilled) rate of £9 6s. 8d. Knock off ten bob stoppages, plus fares and rent, and a man with a couple of kids doesn't have an easy time.'

A struggle will now take place in many factories to see that some men don't actually lose by the settlement. Piece workers, for instance, could lose on a basic week. They now receive an extra 6s. 3d. for unskilled men, 7s. 3d. for semi-skilled and 8s. for skilled men to make up any loss in bonus earnings. But there are many different rates of bonus earnings, which will make the settlement difficult to operate, and will place a tremendous burden on shop stewards.

A clash in engineering, at the same time as a big struggle on the railways would have put the Tory government in real difficulties. But the right wing in the unions, like the right wing in the Labour Party have once again come to the aid of the Tories. This is the worst and most shameful betrayal of the engineering workers.

LETTER

I am a relatively new, but constant reader of your lively paper The Newsletter. I am a regular fireman in the Leeds City Fire Brigade and a member of the FBU.

During the past few weeks I have read with interest the different reports of disputes from miners, engineers, dockers, jockeys and now the railwaymen. And I have read with the same interest your fair outspoken comments of support, and sometimes outlining the folly of certain unofficial actions.

It pleases me to read this week's Newsletter headlines, and since the dispute has practically been settled, I know I am only one of the many now wishing our brother trade union members the best of luck with their final settlement. But the matter which most distresses me is the way in which the official FBU claims for fairer conditions in wages, hours and general status, etc., have been totally neglected by your reporters.

You need only read your own front page report to compare the deplorable status of our fellow workers in the NUR and that of us within the FBU.

A few facts: today the average earnings for men is £13 2s. 11d. for a 48-hour week. So that on a starting wage of £10 7s. 6d., a fireman only receives 79 per cent. of these average earnings, yet a fireman's week is 56 hours. And of every hour each minute is literally one of suspense not knowing what the next 'call-of-the-bell' will be. After serving 14 years, a fireman's pay increases on an incremental scale to £12 12s. 6d. This is still only 96 per cent. of today's average earnings. So nowhere along the scale does a fireman equal what the average worker earns in industry.

Where is the incentive for a man to put his heart into the work when he has to slog for 14 years before he is thought capable of earning top money? We demand the scale be brought down to a more reasonable figure of five years.

It is said that our brothers in the Nottingham Brigade have taken the initiative to tender their resignations if no satisfaction is forthcoming. Can you imagine what would happen if all FBU members were so inclined.

All I can ask, nay beg of you, is to look into our claims and possibly compose a small report supporting them, telling the urgent need required to induce young new blood into our (very silent) Service.

W. SHARP

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF LABOUR CAMPAIGN: AREA ASSEMBLIES

book
these
dates
now!

LONDON: March 6	Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W.1. 10.30 a.m.—5 p.m.
LIVERPOOL: March 6	Walker Art Gallery, William Brown Street. 10.30 a.m.—4.30 p.m.
GLASGOW: March 20	Central Halls, Bath Street. 10 a.m.
LEEDS: March 27	Leeds Museum. 3.0 p.m.
MANCHESTER: March 27	Registrar's Office, All Saints. 2.30 p.m.
BIRMINGHAM: April 24	Typographical Hall, Bath Street, Birmingham.