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3d.

Kenya Report
Analysed by
George Padmore

(See article p. 2)

SALFORD FLOOD SCANDAL

Reported by Harry Ratner



The 1946 floods in the Kersal Estate, Salford.

JUST over 7 years ago, in the autumn of 1946—thousands of working-class people in Salford suffered disastrous flooding. Hundreds of homes, put together by years of hard work and a lifetime of saving, were ruined by the slimy and dirty waters of the River Irwell. Scores of newly married couples saw all their new furniture ruined.

The majority have had to buy their furniture on the Hire Purchase system, and many had not completed payments when the floods ruined their homes. Owing to the high cost of living and low wages, most of the men have to work overtime in order to meet H.P. commitments.

Even after the waters had subsided, the damp, the stench and the filth remained for many weeks.

FLOODED AGAIN

A few weeks ago, on January 20th, the river flooded again.

This second flood has brought sharply to public notice the scandalous record of eight years of procrastination, delay and "passing the buck" from one authority to another, with the result that very little has been done.

The source of the floods is the River Irwell, which flows through the most densely populated and low-lying districts of Salford. This river bends and winds in several loops, both in Salford and before reaching it. It is banked by numerous factories and works which pour all their waste products, both liquid and solid, into the river. Apart from polluting the river this eventually results in the silting up and gradual raising of the river bed. It is widely thought that this contributes to the flooding every time there is heavy and prolonged rain.

FLOOD PREVENTION

Immediately after the 1946

floods, the Salford City Council engaged experts, including the late Sir Pearson Frank, a well-known civil engineering consultant, to submit schemes for flood prevention. Eventually a scheme, known as "Scheme A" was agreed upon. But its cost, estimated at £2 million, was far in excess of the capacities of a town like Salford. It would have meant an absolutely impossible rate burden.

The Labour controlled City Council sent a deputation in 1948 to the Labour Government asking for financial assistance. It was finally agreed that the Government would pay a third, the Catchment Board (now the Mersey River Board) a third and Salford the remaining third. This was in 1948. Since then, i.e., in

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Opposition Grows To German Rearmament

Labour Parties Seek Recall Conference

THE decision of the Parliamentary Labour Party to support German Rearmament—a decision carried by only two votes—is creating a political storm in the Labour Movement. Gone is the old apathy and feeling that 'nothing-can-be-done-about-it.' Not only is the decision itself being vigorously opposed in all sections of the Movement but local Labour Parties are pressing for a Special Emergency Conference of the Party to permit the members themselves to decide.

At the Annual General Meeting of one of the London Labour Parties, a resolution to this effect was actually moved by the Member of Parliament and, needless to say, was carried unanimously. Similar things are happenings in Labour Parties throughout the country.

Typical of the many resolutions now flooding in to the National Executive Committee is this one from Halifax:

"The Halifax Labour Party reaffirms its opposition to any form of German Re-armament and views with alarm the decision of the National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party to support the re-armament of Western Germany within E.D.C.

"In view of the decision of the Margate Conference and in

view of the danger of disunity within the party on this issue, we call for a special national emergency conference to reconsider this issue without delay."

NO TRUST IN TORIES

Unlike Mr. Morrison, the rank and file never did believe that Anthony Eden could be trusted to make that effort at "the peaceful re-unification of Germany" which last year's conference demanded. For this reason, the failure of the Berlin Talks was, to them, only a further demonstration of the crying need to replace the present

conducted inside the unions by Labour Party members.

Already the representatives of three important trade unions—Agriculture, Iron and Steel, and General and Municipal—have cast their votes on the N.E.C. with the six Constituency Party representatives against German Re-armament—and this before even their local branches had time to express the members' feelings.

With this example before us, it is clear that no reason exists why the Labour and Trade Union Movement should be saddled with policies it doesn't want.

Naturally, nobody with any knowledge of the trade union movement will suggest that getting the top to truly reflect the feeling at the bottom is an easy task. Nevertheless it can be done—providing a lead is given by socialists inside the unions.

AGAINST CYNICISM

If 104 back-bench Labour M.P.'s can stand up to, and morally defeat, all the high and mighty statesmen of the Parliamentary Labour Party, there is no reason at all why the million-headed membership of the trade unions should not force its leadership to act in accordance with rank and file desires. To say otherwise is to be cynical of the fighting abilities of the workers—and cynicism is the worst enemy of socialism.

If your local Party and trade union branch has not already done so, make sure that it goes

Editorial

Government by a Labour Government operating a truly socialist foreign policy. There was never any doubt therefore, that the great majority of Constituency Parties would react in the way they have done.

However, a few parties, while opposing German Re-armament have, we understand, hesitated to demand an emergency conference because they feared that at such a conference the block vote of the big unions would be lined up in support of the re-armers. This is a defeatist attitude.

FIGHT FOR THE UNIONS

The vote of the unions can be wielded for progressive policies if a sufficiently active campaign is

De-Requisitioning Will Cause Housing Chaos

A Challenge to Labour Councils Says Sam Goldberg

THE Tory Rents and Repairs Bill proposes to hand over the worst slum property to local authorities. But this is only half the story. At the same time, the better class property which Authorities have requisitioned, is to be handed back to the private landlords, under the Tory de-requisitioning scheme.

Similarly, whilst the Bill proposes to increase rents to tenants of rent-controlled houses, the de-requisitioning plan will enable private landlords to realise a nice profit on properties which have been converted into flats and dwellings by local authorities.

For even if Local Authorities wish to purchase property they have requisitioned, they are compelled to pay the enhanced value

arising from the conversions and repairs they themselves have carried out.

The Rents and Repairs Bill will probably take till about April to get on the Statute book. But the de-requisitioning plan, which is just as dangerous, is being quietly proceeded with, without, as yet, any great public outcry.

A LANDLORDS' PLAN

Yet the Plan's purpose, like the Rents Bill, is to further enrich the Tory's friends, the landlords. This

is made quite clear in the "Report of the Working Party on Requisitioned Properties in use for Housing."

And it comes, moreover, at a time when most large local authorities are not only short of houses. They are also short of the land to build them on.

In Birmingham for example, the Labour controlled City Council estimates that in three years, after building another 13,000 houses, all the available land within the boundaries of the city will have been used up.

That means that unless empty houses or partially used accommodation are converted into flats, unless luxury golf courses and private land is taken over, unless slums are torn down and blocks of flats erected, the whole housing programme within Birmingham will grind to a halt—with 55,000 people on the housing register.

WIDESPREAD PROBLEM

Nor is this problem confined to Birmingham. The working party arrogantly states:

"Although shortage of land is pleaded by many local authorities as an obstacle, there is evidence that full use is not always made of the density standards laid down in Development Plans... such use together with more infilling would help to compensate for shortage of

building land... Greater flexibility by local planning authorities in determining density standards in different parts of a planning area and in permitting minor adjustments to the London Green Belt would ease the positions."

"PACK 'EM IN"

The motto of these Tories appears to be... "Pack 'em in like sardines except in private property."

48 Local Authorities who have 76,500 families in requisitioned property are housing more than 6 families per thousand in this way, whilst considerably more property taken over houses a smaller proportion of the population. It is probable that 150,000 families are affected by these proposals.

Yet Local Authorities are being asked to de-requisition property in one, two or three years, and allocate alternative accommodation in new, publicly-owned houses and flats. This policy is causing chaos, where it is being applied, to the Points and Allocation scheme, pushing the number of houses being allocated to priority hardship and health cases to below a crisis level.

This ramp is being resisted by many Councils. The Ministry's "suggestion" to Councils to de-requisition all properties on specified dates is already being ignored in many areas. With a campaign by the Labour movement, there is little doubt that active resistance could compel the Tory Government to abandon it.

NEXT WEEK

I.C.I.'s apologia for Monopolies will be analysed by a chemical worker.

Star Letter

We are NOT anti-German

To The Editor, "Socialist Outlook"

Dear Comrade,

Your German Re-armament article last week clearly shows the duplicity by which our Party leaders have scored a paper victory. By a questionable interpretation of a steam-rollered, undiscussed and undigested Conference resolution handed down from on high by the N.E.C. they announce to the world that British Labour supports German re-armament! This is not true!

We must announce to the world that this is not true. Particularly we must tell our German Socialist and Trade Union comrades and brothers that this is not true. Let there be no misunderstanding. We are not anti-German. We are anti-re-armament.

Cannot our paper play some part in telling the Labour movement of Germany what British Labour really thinks?

Westminster Andrew Kirkby

End the 'de-facto' Coalition—John Baird M.P.

BOTH the Wolverhampton Constituency Labour Parties were represented at a successful anti-Tory Conference organised by the "Socialist Outlook" in Wolverhampton last Sunday. Also represented were the A.E.U. (3 branches) and the District Committee, the N.U.R., the Sheet Metal Workers, and U.S.D.A.W.

John Baird—Wolverhampton's popular Labour M.P.—opened the conference with an appeal for an increased circulation for "Socialist Outlook" and a powerful plea to trade unionists to fight against the

present coalition policies of Labour's top leadership.

It is not the Bevanites who are responsible for the decline in Labour's vote at recent bye-elections, said John Baird, it is the lack of a 'will to power' among some of our leaders. Officially Labour is in opposition, he said, but the present policies of the Front Bench make us a 'de facto' coalition.

The recent large vote in the Parliamentary Labour Party against German Re-armament was most encouraging and it was now necessary to follow it

up with an Emergency Conference of the Party.

A resolution to this effect was carried unanimously at the end of the meeting.

Other speakers were Norman Dinning who dealt with industrial questions, and John Lawrence who spoke chiefly on foreign and colonial affairs. From the most intelligent discussion which followed, it was clear that Wolverhampton Labour—like Labour everywhere—is determined to fight Toryism whether it be at Westminster or at Transport House.

Councillor F. Henderson

