

# On the United Front in Great Britain

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## The Situation in Great Britain and the Policy of the National Government

The events in Britain in the last period have been a striking confirmation of the analysis made by the Twelfth Plenum of the E.C.C.I.

After two years, the National government, though armed with an unprecedented majority and resorting to the exercise of dictatorial powers on a scale not witnessed in Britain before, has failed to solve or even seriously alleviate the crisis of British imperialism.

On the contrary, the crisis deepens, imperialist rivalries intensify, the basic industries are stagnant.

In the same period, fierce attacks on working-class standards and conditions led to mass impoverishment through wage-cuts, application of the brutal Means Test, restriction of civil rights and liberties, police terror and now open preparation for new wars.

The National government has abolished the historical British policy of free trade. They have gone off the gold standard, carried through ruthless economies at the expense of the working class, and increased the exploitation of the workers in Britain and in the colonial countries. What are the results?

Certain temporary trade advantages have been gained by depreciation of the currency, by tariffs, by the Ottawa Agreement, by trade pacts with Scandinavian countries and the Argentine and by increased exploitation of the resources of the British Empire. But no basic improvement can be seen in the vital industries concerned with the ordinary market trade of British imperialism, and where there are certain signs of trade revival to-day, it is in industries closely connected with war preparations.

In the first eight months of 1933 there was a reduction of imports as compared with 1932 by £35,663,821, and a reduction of exports as compared with the corresponding eight months of 1932 of £11,051,637, and the interesting thing about the fall in imports is that the bulk of the decline is in articles such as food, meat and tobacco, revealing a heavy fall in the purchasing power of the masses as the cost of living in England steadily rises. Still later figures show no vital improvement in the trade position.

These facts are disclosed by the Board of Trade figures just issued for October, 1933. There was a steady decline of British foreign trade from 1929 to June of this year. From the beginning of July until now there has been a slight upward trend.

Exports of British goods last month were £34,130,986. This was the highest for any month since April, 1932, and were £4,000,000 larger than a year ago.

Imports at £61,771,103 were at the highest point since February, 1932. How far below the level of 1929 the present trade is can be seen from the following figures. And remember that 1929 exports were only about 80 per cent. of the pre-war exports.

It is on the basis of this situation that MacDonald permitted himself to make the following statement at the London Lord Mayor's banquet on November 9:—

"The imports of raw material for the third quarter of the year are up by one third. . . . They have reached a higher level to-day than has been the case for a good many years past,

and as a complementary fact our exports for the last three months are up by ten per cent."

But it is perhaps more important to give the views of Mr. Montagu Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, who speaking at a meeting of banking interests in London on October 20, 1932, declared:—

"Some are able already to point out the light at the end of the tunnel. I myself see it somewhat indistinctly. But I like to think we shall meet here next year; then I believe it to be more than likely we shall see clearer where we are going and be sensible of the rapid pace at which we have been proceeding." ("The Daily Telegraph," October 21, 1932.)

How rapid this pace has not been is seen in Mr. Norman's speech exactly a year later to the same banking interests when, on October 3, 1933, he declared:—

"They could not look east or west without being persuaded that there were dark clouds hovering ahead. We shall have many difficulties, we shall have much criticism, we shall have many disagreements, but I console myself with this thought: 'that dogs bark but the caravan passes on.'" ("The Times," October 4, 1933.)

Yet it is in this situation that the National government not only makes its prosperity speeches, but covers the boardings with posters declaring 792,000 returned to work, and every week Britain is regaled with stories of thousands less unemployed.

The actual fact is that there has been a return to work of a small section of the unemployed workers. The bulk of these figures simply represent thousands and thousands of men and women who have been struck off from all forms of benefit at the labour exchanges, and no longer officially exist in the records of the government.

Of course, MacDonald does not speak about the social effects of their "sound economy." It is pertinent to draw the attention of the Plenum to the fact that it has been possible in Britain to produce a book entitled: *Conditions of the Working Class in Britain in 1932*, which carries forward the famous analysis of Engels on the conditions of the British working class in 1844. This latest book reveals a terrible picture of mass impoverishment, sickness, malnutrition, and death that constitutes a terrible indictment of the whole policy of British capitalism and its National government.

There is also a rise in the cost of living, which has risen by 8 points since June, due to the higher price policy of the National government. This avowed policy of raising prices is openly stated by responsible leaders of the government. For example, Neville Chamberlain declared in the House of Commons in February, 1932: "We have in front of us a coming rise in prices." Following upon this speech there was much opposition to the policy of the government, because it was felt that it would lead to a rise in retail prices as well as wholesale prices. This was strenuously denied, until at last the unspeakable National Labour leader, J. H. Thomas, let the

cat out of the bag in an article published in MacDonald's official paper, "The News Letter," October 1, 1932, where he wrote:—

"With regard to the undertaking to regulate the importation of meat into this country, Mr. Thomas says it will, of course, mean . . . it is intended to mean . . . that the price of mutton and lamb to the consumer in this country will rise. But it is infinitely better that the present prices of these commodities should rise, than that the purchasing power of our own agriculture and of our greatest and most important customers overseas should be wiped out."

Every method adopted to solve the crisis by the National government, every temporary trade advantage they have gained only sharpened the competition and rivalry between Britain and other imperialist Powers, especially between Great Britain and the U.S.A. British imperialism meets with fierce competition from Japan in India and now in Britain itself, and there is a terrific anti-Japanese campaign being waged in Lancashire about the Japanese menace to Lancashire's cotton industry. The struggle between Britain and America intensifies, particularly for the South American and Canadian markets.

The foreign policy of the National government is clearly directed against America, its greatest imperialist rival, but whilst this is so its greatest war drive is against the Soviet Union. The National government has become the organiser of the anti-Soviet campaign.

The National government gives open support to Japan in its Far East policy and particularly in its policy against the Soviet Union, and big shipments of munitions have taken place both to Japan and China for use against both the Chinese Soviets and against the U.S.S.R. While there is acute economic rivalry between Britain and Japan, the political considerations over-ride this factor and make the National government look to Japan as one of its most valuable allies.

In regard to Germany, everything possible is being done by the National government to maintain the closest and the most friendly relations with the Hitler dictatorship. The terrible atrocities committed by the Hitler fascist dictatorship has aroused a wave of horror amongst large sections of the British population, but the National government's policy is to ignore these protests and to "keep the open door to Germany," in accordance with MacDonald's speech at the London Lord Mayor's banquet on November 9, 1933.

It has perhaps been left to that cunning liberal imperialist and anti-Communist, Lloyd George, to clearly state the issue so far as Britain's policy to Germany is concerned. When he declared in his speech at Barmouth on September 9, 1933, the following:—

"He knew that there had been horrible atrocities in Germany, and they all deplored and condemned them, but a country passing through a revolution was always liable to ghastly episodes, owing to the administration of justice being seized here and there by an infuriated rebel.

"He was neither a fascist nor a Nazi nor a Communist. If the Powers succeeded in overthrowing Nazi-ism in Germany, what might follow? Not a conservative, socialist or liberal regime, but extreme Communism. Surely that could not be their objective!

"A Communist Germany would be infinitely more formidable than a Communist Russia. The Germans would learn how to run Communism effectively."

And that expression of opinion by the leader of Britain's war policy against Germany in 1914-18 sums up the policy of the National government towards Germany at the present time.

In spite of all its protestations of peace, the National government is to-day openly preparing for a new war. Perhaps the most striking confirmation of the open war preparations that are going on in Britain is the new trade revival in all war industries. For example, the shares of thirteen armament firms have recently increased in value by £27,000,000. Beardmore's preference shares by 100 per cent. and John Brown's by 87 per cent. These are two of the biggest armament combines in Britain. In addition, new orders for all forms of munitions have been issued by the National government quite recently. These orders cover manufacture of aerial bombs, bomb-boxes, tanks, fighting aircraft, conversion of old aircraft into bombers, new cartridges, mine-sinkers, high explosives, shrapnel balls, new gun plant, and provision for eighteen

new warships. In addition, it is interesting to see the rise in shares of companies making new bombing aeroplanes.

This, then, is the real situation in Britain—not the fancy picture painted by the National government of Britain having solved unemployment and the campaign for peace, but a Britain preparing for war upon the workers at home and war against its trade rivals, and, in particular, for war against the Soviet Union.

It is the proud boast of capitalist and labour politicians that Britain is the last stronghold of democracy, that what has taken place on the continent could never happen in Britain. In actual fact we are proceeding at a rapid rate towards fascism in Britain, carried out under the slogan of democracy and achieved by so-called constitutional means. How the term democracy is used to disguise the real policy of the National government in its steps towards open dictatorship is seen in the speech of MacDonald in London on November 9, where he claimed that the National government, above all, stood for democracy. And also in a speech made by Baldwin, one of the tory leaders of the National government, in London on November 6, where he stated:—

"... We are the sole guardians of that form of constitutional democracy which took its rise in this country. If it breaks down in our hands, the whole thing is gone for ever in the world. I believe any form of dictatorship is absolutely alien to the whole policy of our people."—"The Times," London, November 7, 1933.)

Let us break in on this idyllic picture of a free and unfettered democratic Britain and see what is really happening. The National government carries out a persistent and daily attack on rights of free speech and public assembly that were thought secure for all time.

What Hitler did brutally, MacDonald prepares to do like a true British gentleman. In December, 1932, Tom Mann was arrested under an Act of parliament passed in the time of Edward III. in the year 1350. This was a test case. The magistrate informed Comrade Mann that he had committed no offence and that it was not necessary for him to have done so in order to render himself liable under this particular Act. Tom Mann was called upon to give an undertaking to make no speeches that would be calculated to be a breach of the peace, or go to prison for two months, as a preventive measure. Naturally, Tom Mann refused to give any such undertaking, and he served the term of imprisonment. The campaign for his release was sabotaged by the reformists, and the consequence is that since last December there has been a steady application of this Act in many scores of cases. As a matter of fact, it is significant to note that there has been more prosecution on questions arising on free speech and public assembly in the last ten years in Great Britain than in the whole previous hundred years.

Then we must note the policy of Lord Trenchard, head of Scotland Yard and the London police force. He is completely re-organising the London police force on a military basis, destroying the rights of policemen to organise in their own independent federation. No chances of promotion to the higher posts are to be open to the rank and file. A new officer class drawn from the ranks of the middle class and of those with years of military experience, all whose social position connects them by the strongest ties with the ruling class. This is the new strata of officers that is to take over the direction and administration of the police force in the future.

Some very significant developments have also taken place in the attempt to suppress the working-class fight against unemployment and against the National government. For example, a hunger march was organised in South Wales in October. This march was prevented from reaching its objective by hundreds of police, whose activities were directed from airplanes equipped with wireless. In Belfast, on the occasion of the anniversary of the bigger unemployed fights of last year, all meetings were prohibited, armoured cars and armed police patrolled the streets, and Dublin and British Communist leaders deported from Belfast. In Glasgow the chief of police brings forward new proposals, the essence of which would give him power to prevent any working-class demonstration, shouting of slogans, singing of revolutionary songs, carrying of banners, and prohibition of any outdoor and indoor meetings to which he took exception. It must be remarked here that the workers of Glasgow, under the leadership of the C.P., have been able to mobilise opposition to these proposals and have forced their withdrawal, but we can be certain they will

come again in another form in the course of another two or three months.

But most significant of all are the tendencies towards fascism contained in the National government's new unemployment bill.

For the first time on a wholesale scale in Britain, three dictators are now to be the sole arbiters of the fate of the great mass of permanent unemployed and their families. Hitherto local P.A.C.s have been subject to mass pressure; now all power is out of their hands. All power is centralised in the hands of three men sitting in the government office in London.

The new bill has as a second vital aim, the splitting of the unemployed themselves. For a certain class of unemployed, the existing rates of benefits are to be continued, they are to be used as the means of splitting the ranks of the unemployed as a whole. Secondly, the provision of clauses in the bill that provide for unemployed workers who refuse to go into the labour camps and whose families become chargeable to the poor law, being sent to prison is meant to still further split even the ranks of that section of the unemployed who will come under the main provisions of the new bill. For this measure is directed, not against those who are popularly described as "not wanting work," it is directed against the militant unemployed workers who will resist being driven into slavery and industrial conscription. This law will become a powerful weapon in the hands of the National government to attack the standards of the unemployed workers.

In short, this bill goes further along the road of fascism in Britain than anything we have yet seen. Unlimited powers to government dictators: splitting the ranks of the unemployed, driving a wedge between the unemployed and employed workers, taking the labour camps into agricultural areas where those workers who are in these camps are away from the mass of the industrial workers, the compulsory physical training that will be enforced on the younger unemployed men, is meant to provide directly the reserve army for use in the coming war. These are the aims of this unemployed bill of the National government. The whole line of this bill follows closely upon all the previous legislation which has limited the right of free speech and public assembly.

We must also not forget the propaganda which for instance Lord Rothermere and his large number of popular papers are carrying on, which openly support Hitler and cry for a strong man in England, or the more clever and cunning propaganda methods of Beaverbrook which called for a stronger government and are aiming particularly at what is known as economic Empire unity by which is meant increased exploitation of the workers in England and in the colonies. Then we also have to take into account the line which Churchill and his consorts are taking in regard to India. This part of the bourgeoisie, representing the Diehard opposition, is opposed to any alteration in the existing Indian Constitution and demands repressive measures in order to maintain imperialist rule in India.

There prevails a strong tendency to underestimate the movement of the "British Union of Fascists," led by Sir Oswald Mosley. Mosley is following the footsteps of Hitler and Mussolini and is endeavouring to win influence by his participation, or better say sham participation, in strikes, unemployed struggles and fights against evictions. This movement is undoubtedly gaining ground in London, in the Midlands and in certain parts of the North of England, and it is necessary to organise a much stronger fight against these fascists. In Scotland great attention must be devoted to the propaganda which is being carried on there by the Scotch nationalists and the Scottish Protestant League, the political content of which in both cases is nationalism and fascism. Both organisations are exceedingly active and received a considerable number of votes at the recent municipal by-elections. It is interesting to note that whilst Hitler in his propaganda in Germany makes the full use of anti-semitism, these organisations have selected the Irish Catholics in Glasgow for this purpose.

## The Situation in the Working Class Movement

There is a rapid growth in the disillusionment with the National government and its whole line and policy. The German events made a powerful impression upon the British workers, especially through the suppression of the trade unions and co-operatives; this is reflected in their support for united front campaigns, and development of the rank and file trade union opposition. Nevertheless, reformist influence is still strong. The recent

elections reveal in some way how this disillusionment expresses itself.

The recent by-elections and municipal elections occurred during the tense international situation caused by Germany withdrawing from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations. This brought the question of war vividly before the minds of the whole working-class movement and particularly was responsible for the important victory at East Fulham, where a traditional Tory seat was won by the Labour Party.

In the recent municipal elections the Labour Party gained 292 seats on municipal bodies and won labour control in many important industrial centres.

There has also been big mass militant activity in connection with the fight against unemployment, expressing itself in the hunger marches and important concessions won by the unemployed in Scotland, Lancashire, South Wales, London, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, all of which aroused big interest and support.

While no big strikes have taken place since the Lancashire cotton strike of 1932, there have been a number of smaller but very important strikes carried through against the will of the reformist unions, such as the miners' strike in South Wales, Durham and Yorkshire, the strike of the London busmen and the strikes at Ford's, Briggs', Firestone's, and Hope's.

It was characteristic of them that they were directed against various forms of rationalisation and worsening of working conditions, in numerous cases were under the leadership of workers themselves, and in spite of the resistance of the trade union leaders achieved considerable successes.

There is also to be recorded a great development of the activity of the rank and file in the trade unions themselves, which is expressed in the support which the opposition obtained among the membership at important trade union conferences. Thus for instance at the last meeting of the National Committee of the A.E.U., where a motion for the rescinding of the provision directed against the Communists was rejected by only 21 votes against 18. At the Conference of the National Union of Railwaymen the official Irish strike compromise which had recently been concluded, was rejected by 79 against one vote and a resolution disapproving the rejection of the united front with the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party by the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress received 31 votes out of 49. The growing strength of the opposition and the militant spirit was also expressed in the strong support which the Communists obtained at the trade union elections and which enabled them to win important positions in the trade unions.

But, whilst there is undoubtedly growing radicalisation and disillusionment taking place, it is prevented from being given really effective decisive development and successes by the splitting and strike-breaking policy of the trade union leaders and the attempts to keep the mass movement in parliamentary channels, and defeatist propaganda to the effect that it is no use resisting attacks in periods of economic crisis.

## The Policy of Social Democracy

The recent annual conference of the T.U.C. at Brighton in September, and the Labour Party Conference at Hastings in October, clearly show in all their basic decisions, i.e., fulsome adulation of the policy of Roosevelt; refusal of the united front; "Left" manoeuvres on the question of war; their so-called "socialist" schemes of legislation, their debates and decisions on the question "Democracy versus Dictatorship," that the general line of British social-democracy is the same policy as led to Hitler coming to power in Germany.

This line is being carried through in Britain under cover of mild "criticism" of German social democracy coupled with vicious slanders against the C.P. of Germany, sham opposition to the National government, left manoeuvres and intensive attacks upon the revolutionary movement.

While posing as fighting the National government and war, their deeds show how effectively they disorganise the workers' fight.

They oppose the Means Test, but oppose fighting by mass action. They set up rival unemployed associations, and under the guise of using them for sports and cultural purposes, endeavour to divert sections of the unemployed from militant struggle against the National government and the Means Test. In many cases they are identified with Social Service Centres, which will play an in-



creasingly more important fascist role when the new Unemployment Bill comes into operation, and in Parliament in the speeches of the "left" leader, Sir Stafford Cripps, they call upon the government to make no concessions to the demands of the unemployed that are associated with Communist leadership and activity.

The reformists speak about their love of democracy, but take no action to fight the Trenchard ban on labour exchange meetings, or suppression of free speech, or the operation of reactionary, anti-working-class legislation.

Henderson, leader of the Labour Party, feeling the workers' hostility towards war, now threatens his resignation as chairman of the Disarmament Conference, after he has finished his role, and carried out the line of the National government. He does this in order to deceive the masses that he fights for peace. The same Henderson who now threatens "bold" action, took his seat in Parliament on the day when the policy of the National government at the Disarmament Conference was under discussion. He never attempted to speak, although he was supposed to have been elected at the recent Clay Cross by-election because of his stand at Geneva. Why didn't he speak? Because he has been responsible for carrying out the policy of the National government at Geneva.

The Trade Union Congress and Labour Party Conferences, under pressure from the rank and file, passed resolutions for a general strike in the event of war, but this feeling was distorted to support the line of the Second International and the International Federation of Trade Unions. In keeping with this they outlawed the anti-war movement in Britain, which has carried out great work in its fight against war and its efforts to mobilise the working class for a real struggle against war, particularly for the prevention of munitions going to the Far East.

The same conferences refused the united front with the revolutionary workers and threatened with expulsion any of their members who dared to take an active part in united front activity against the capitalist attacks, fascism and war.

Recently, Citrine, leader of the General Council of the T.U.C., came out with a speech on the question of the general strike and war. He declared:—

"The Trade Union Congress has special obligations in respect to resistance to war. Under its standing orders, it is required to call a special conference for the purposes of deciding on industrial action when war threatens.

"The recent congress at Brighton considered a resolution from the I.P.T.U. on the same point. This resolution for the first time defines specifically the action which trade unionists should take in the event of war.

"Congress decided that the issues were so grave that the General Council should prepare a report on the methods of giving effect to the resolution.

"It is no use assuming that the trade union movement can be used on any and every occasion when war broke out in some remote part of the world.

"A general strike under our present law is illegal, and it would be folly to attempt to resort to this method in the way we are exhorted to do from some quarters." (From the "Daily Herald," November 5, 1933.)

It is not difficult to see what is behind this speech. It is intended to be the reply to the anti-war movement propaganda for the stopping of munitions to the Far East. But it is something more. It shows that in this statement made by the leading official of the General Council that the first steps are already being taken to prepare a similar betrayal on the question of the general strike against war as took place in 1914; and secondly, it is an open invitation both to Japan and to the National government in its anti-Soviet policy to go ahead with any attacks against the Soviet Union or the Chinese Soviets that they care to make, and the Trade Union Congress will not lift a finger to prevent any munitions being sent to assist Japanese and British imperialism in their predatory designs on other countries' territory. It is also necessary to point to the activity of the "Socialist League," which to-day poses as the "Left" wing of the Labour Party and talks a lot about its active policy and opposition to the old leadership of the Labour Party. The Socialist League declares that it stands for a Labour government which will be empowered to adopt socialist measures and, if necessary, to carry them out by means of dictatorial authority. The Rights and the "Lefts" are working hand in glove in their resistance to the struggle of the workers against capitalism.

It is also necessary to draw attention to the line of the labour leaders on the German situation. They have very carefully and

diplomatically criticised the German social democratic leaders, and stated that such capitulation as was made by German social democracy could never happen in Britain. (Of course they think that the masses have already forgotten their own betrayal of the general strike of 1926 and the policy of two labour governments.)

The Brighton Trade Union Congress was also noteworthy for Citrine's speech on the German situation, and for his attack on the Soviet Union and the parallel he attempted to make about the similarity in political content of the dictatorship in Italy and the dictatorship in the Soviet Union. In connection with all these Left manoeuvres and the social fascist policy of social democracy, the C.P. must much more concretely expose the whole line of the policy of the reformist leaders, and reveal them to the masses in the most simple and convincing manner as the agents of the capitalist class in the working-class movement.

All their schemes of Public Corporations, Utility Companies, and "nationalisation" proposals are schemes for the restoration of capitalism along fascist lines leading to the greater exploitation of the working class, and the strengthening of capitalist monopoly, which in turn leads to increased rivalry between the capitalist powers and new wars.

Their advocacy of parliamentary democracy and peaceful transition to socialism, their false slanders against the Soviet Union, their glorification of Roosevelt's scheme, their slanders about the similarity of fascist and workers' dictatorship are the most important and valuable services they render to the National government. The whole policy of the British reformists is that of the German social democracy, which had led to the triumph of Hitler. This is the main lesson we must bring before the whole working-class movement.

## The United Front

The Communist Party had been active in developing the united front from below for a long time, and some successes have already been achieved in connection with the anti-Means Test fight, the anti-embargo campaign, the release of Tom Mann, the anti-war movement and F.S.U. Then came the publication of the *Manifesto of the Communist International*, in which the lead was given for the Communist Party to make approaches to the Central Committee of the reformist organisations. The Communist Party addressed appeals for united front action to the Labour Party, Trade Union Congress, Co-operative Party and Independent Labour Party, and proposed a certain time and place for a meeting when a common discussion could take place on the situation, and an attempt be made to reach an agreement upon a programme of action that could then form the basis for developing a united front of struggle.

Only the I.L.P. agreed to take part in a common meeting. The Labour Party, Trade Union Congress, and Co-operative Party refused to take part in any meeting, and later, after special meetings of their executive committees, issued a manifesto stating their position.

Their manifesto was called *Democracy or Dictatorship* and dealt with the iniquities of dictatorship, whether from the Right or Left, the benefits of democracy and, finally, that there could be no united front with bodies believing in civil war and proletarian revolution and dictatorship. It was a manifesto which evaded every practical issue the Communist Party had raised, and aroused great resentment even in their own ranks.

It was immediately followed by an attack on any section of the labour movement that was identified with united front activity in connection with the Communists. A pamphlet, entitled: "The Communist Solar System" was issued, which trots out all the old bogeys on the Communist intrigues, talks about our capacity to seduce harmless people in supporting movements whose aims are really revolutionary, which, however, we represent to them in a harmless garb.

But the C.I. Manifesto and the appeal of the Communist Party were warmly welcomed in many sections of the labour movement. All over England our local and district organisations made similar united front proposals to the local labour organisations, but there were only a few cases when we were actually able to break through the ban imposed by the official national Labour leaders on united front activity.

A basis of agreement was reached with the I.L.P., but first only on the necessity of joint demonstrations against fascism and war, the I.L.P. taking the view that to raise any economic issues would give the Labour Party and trade union leaders an excuse



for refusing to participate in united front activity. After the Derby Conference of the I.L.P. the basis of the united front was extended to cover all issues arising out of the capitalist attacks, fascism and war. Similar agreements were concluded between the district organisations of the Communist Party and the I.L.P.

The Communist Party has also played a leading part in the development of activities of such united front movements as anti-war, anti-fascist, anti-Mean Test, the German relief campaign, and in connection with the Reichstag trial campaign, and undoubtedly many sections of Labour Party workers have been won for participating in these campaigns.

The result of the united front campaign can also be seen in the votes recorded at the National Union of Railwaymen's Annual Conference, where a resolution expressing their disgust at the refusal of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress to make a united front with the Communist Party and the I.L.P. was only defeated by 49 votes to 41. Also the decision of such important trades councils as Bradford and Newcastle for participation in anti-war activity; the anti-War Conference in March was attended by over a thousand delegates and important trade unions like the N.U.D.A.W. and N.A.F.T.U. became affiliated to the anti-war movement—the anti-war movement has also a hundred active anti-war committees.

Here I would like to say a word about the Friends of the Soviet Union. It has a very big influence, particularly among the trade unions, co-operatives and local Labour Parties. It conducts big agitation and popularisation of the achievements of the Soviet Union. It replies to the slanders made by the capitalists and social-democratic leaders against the Soviet Union. Through its meetings, conferences, campaigns and workers' delegations it has succeeded in drawing into activity a big membership and has 170 active functioning committees. Its publication, "Russia To-day," has a circulation of 60,000, and the whole work of the F.S.U. is a splendid example of united front work.

But on the whole we have failed to make a decisive break against the ban imposed upon the united front by the reformist leaders, and the united front itself, as far as the Communist Party and the I.L.P. are concerned, has been confined largely to platform meetings and demonstrations in spite of the activity of the Communist Party to make a drive towards the factories and trade unions in order to get committees of action elected that could give the united front a fighting character such as would be able to win the demands of the workers.

At Communist Party meetings at which the Communist International Manifesto and the call of the Communist Party has been explained and in the election meetings of the Communist Party, the following are the most frequent types of questions:—

"Why is it that only a short time ago the Communist Party declared it was impossible to make a united front with the labour leaders and yet now you have asked them to join in united front activity?"

"The Communist Party is not sincere in its desire to build up the united front of the workers. It is only a tactic and manoeuvre on your part to get into touch with masses of workers by exploiting the meaning of unity with your ordinary Communist propaganda."

"Why should the Communist Party which is such a small organisation expect the powerful Labour Party and Trade Union Congress to bother making a united front with it?"

"The Labour Party and Trade Union Congress and the Co-operatives are the real mass organisations of the working class. They are the only united front that is necessary, and are big enough to embrace all workers who want to join them."

"How can you be sincere in your united front proposals to the Labour Party when you put up candidates against them in elections?"

These are typical questions which need to be studied and very carefully answered.

We have to show that the question of the approach to the central committees of the reformist organisations had never been ruled out in principle by the Communist International, but that experience has shown that the only way of building up a fighting united front of action was directly with the workers in the fac-

ories and in the trade unions, that with the development of the German situation and the manoeuvre of the Second International, pretending that it stood for united action, it was necessary to put this to the test in the most simple and concrete way, namely, by approaching the central committees of the reformist organisations in each country on the basis of a fighting programme of action. We must show how this has been done in every capitalist country, and everywhere the reformist leaders have refused to participate in building up the forces that would lead to common action.

In regard to the question of sincerity the test of this is the record of the Communist Parties in every capitalist country in the world which proves that it is not a tactic designed to ensnare innocent workers, but is the indispensable weapon which the workers have to forge in order to build up the power and organisation that can enable them to fight against the attacks of capitalism, fascism and war.

We must say it is not a question of expecting the big powerful Labour Party, etc., to condescend to work with the Communists; it is a question of recognising that these powerful reformist organisations with their financial and numerical strength and undoubtedly exercising great influence over masses of workers, have a political line that is based upon class co-operation with the capitalist class and therefore renders it easier for the capitalists to attack the workers. It is true that as yet the Communist Party is numerically small, but its line is the line of class struggle and the building up of the workers' fighting power, and therefore when the C.P. approaches the Labour Party it does so with suggestions and proposals that mean the strengthening of the workers' fight, and the refusal of the labour leaders to co-operate, is itself an indictment of their policy and demands the repudiation and condemnation of every class-conscious worker.

It is also true that the Labour Party, Trade Union Congress and Co-operatives are mass organisations embracing millions of workers, but if their line is wrong, then it means that something else is necessary. We must draw the attention of the workers to the fact that all these three movements were immeasurably stronger in Germany than in Britain, and yet because their political line was the same as that of the British labour leaders, it has led not to socialism but to fascism.

In regard to the question of why the Communist Party opposes the Labour Party in elections, we must show that the C.P. is a political Party of the working class, whose line alone can lead to the successful defence of the workers' everyday interests through the united front and the building up of their class power, and through the workers' revolution can lead to the workers' dictatorship and the commencement of socialist construction in Britain. That this policy is diametrically opposed to the anti-working-class policy of the Labour Party, and that the Communist Party has put up candidates in elections in order to win mass support for its policy as a whole.

Needless to say that at all times we have to explain to the workers that while the C.P. is anxious and willing to co-operate in all the working-class struggles on a basis of united front activity, this does not mean the surrendering of the right of independence and freedom to propagate the principles and policies of the various organisations, and for the Communist Party it certainly cannot mean any weakening in our fight against the whole policy and practice of reformism and our efforts to win the workers for Communism.

The united front activity has tended to absorb the entire energy of the Party, and the Party organisations have not been active enough in the independent mobilisation of the masses for mass work and mass activity. This has resulted in the fight against reformism not being as consistent and as sharp as the situation has demanded and in turn has led to the committing of opportunist mistakes in regard to the united front. We have not carried out a sufficient and convincing exposure giving the basic reasons of the refusal of the reformist organisations to participate in the united front and what are the differences in principles between the C.P. and these organisations, and alongside this there has been a grave neglect to carry out mass propaganda and agitation for the revolutionary aims of the C.P. and the popularisation in a concrete fashion of the revolutionary way out of the crisis. These weaknesses are being recognised by the Party and efforts made to overcome them.

## Work in the Reformist Trade Unions

Since the Twelfth Plenum and our Twelfth Party Congress there has been a big improvement in the work of the Party, both inside the unions and in preparation and carrying out of economic struggles. Particularly can this be seen in various transport unions, such as the Transport and General Workers' Union and National Union of Railwaymen, where influential rank and file opposition movements have now developed issuing their own papers and carrying out very effective activity inside the unions. A turn has also been made in the work amongst the miners and municipal employees, and some improvements can be noted also in the work amongst the metal workers. But amongst the dockers and seamen, vital sections of the working class, particularly in the fight against war, our activity is still very weak. The same applies to the work amongst the cotton and woollen textile workers, where only slight improvements can be recorded in spite of very favourable objective conditions and excellent participation on the part of the Party in previous big struggles.

The results of these improvements can be seen in the winning of many important positions, both in regard to the election of delegates to the trade union conferences and the winning of positions inside the trade unions themselves. Of particular significance is the recent victory achieved by Comrade Arthur Horner in South Wales. Comrade Horner was nominated for an important position in the anthracite mining district of South Wales. He had thirteen opponents, and after three ballots succeeded in winning the position in spite of the most tremendous mobilisation on the part of all the reformist leaders, Horner's vote being 10,130 and his opponent's 7,186.

Important elections for pits inspectors have also been won by the United Mine Workers of Scotland, a revolutionary union, in spite of a combination of the reformist trade union leaders and the pit managers.

Since the Twelfth Plenum there has also been effective participation by the C.P. in many strikes, such as the big Lancashire cotton strike of last year, and this year in the miners' strikes in Durham, Yorkshire and South Wales, the strike of the London busmen and the strikes at Ford's, Brigg's, Silver's, Hope's, Firestone's and various textile strikes in Lancashire. It is important to note that in most of these strikes significant gains were achieved by the strikers in face of reformist opposition and that many of the strikes were against various features of rationalisation.

What have been the weaknesses in our work in the trade unions?

First, that work in the reformist trade unions is looked upon as a thing in itself and with no conscious driving for the creation of a powerful R.T.U.O. and for the strengthening of the Communist Party. Second, where there has been a growth of our trade union influence, there has been no bigger corresponding activity on the part of the Party locals in the same areas. Third, where we do win positions in the trade unions, particularly in the miners' lodges in South Wales, this is then looked upon as a substitute for all other forms of Party activity and the miners' lodge is also looked upon as the substitute for the Communist Party. Fourth, in the weak struggle we have conducted against Left reformism. Fifth, in the lack of effective fraction work and systematic guidance of the work in the trade unions by the Central Committee. Finally, the neglect of big sections of the Communist Party to understand the importance and necessity of carrying on revolutionary mass work in the reformist trade unions.

Once we can overcome these weaknesses, not only will the work improve, the rank and file movements rapidly develop and greater possibilities of the work of the R.T.U.O., but there will also be a big growth in the ranks of the Communist Party as a result of the steady influx of new members from the trade unions.

## The Fight Against Unemployment and the Work of the N.U.W.M.

It is also necessary to say something about the work in the fight against unemployment and the part carried out by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Here also big steps can be recorded in the fight against unemployment led by the N.U.W.M.

Since the National Hunger March of 1932 there has been a consistent record of mass activity, taking the form of mass demonstrations and hunger marches. This is seen in the successful marches

of the unemployed this summer and autumn in Scotland, South Wales, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and the march to the Brighton Trades Union Congress. It would be impossible to exaggerate the mass interest that these marches have aroused, and it must be remembered that all of them have been carried through in the face of great police activity and the adoption of great preventive measures to smash up the marches and to prevent them achieving their objective. But they have broken through the police cordons, and particularly is this the case in the recent march to South Wales, where strenuous efforts were made to prevent the hunger marchers laying their demands before the responsible central authorities.

A typical example of the way the united front activity is developed in connection with the fight against the National government's unemployed policy is seen in Lancashire. A hunger march is being organised to Preston by the N.U.W.M. and already this march is receiving the support of numerous labour, trade union and co-operative organisations. During the hunger march of the Scottish unemployed workers one of the most important local branches in Glasgow of the N.U.R. supported this hunger march and contributed a large sum to the organisation expenses. These are very important symptoms of the successes in this stage of our united front activity.

A great campaign is now being organised against the new Unemployment Bill of the National government, about which we have already spoken earlier, and in this connection the fight against this Bill is being connected up with the fight for extra winter relief and increased unemployment benefits to meet the rise in the cost of living.

A manifesto has now been issued over the signature of a number of well-known political and trade union leaders for the convening of a great National United Front Conference in February, 1934, and for the organisation of a National Hunger March that shall arrive in London while the National Conference is in progress. It is hoped that this conference and hunger march will mark the biggest step forward yet in the development of effective united front activity and organisation, and it is undoubtedly going to play an historical role in the struggles of the working-class movement.

The Communist Party must support with all its strength the call for the National United Front Conference and the National Hunger March. This call must be popularised everywhere, and the campaign towards the conference and march can itself be made the means of developing all forms of mass activity and action. Local and district conferences especially drawing in the trade unions and trade councils; election of united front committees to lead the work of preparation for the conference and march in every area, and for the popularising of the immediate demands of the unemployed; and, alongside of these demands, the persistent and careful explanation of every single clause and provision of this new unemployed bill.

It must be remembered that all this great mass activity has been carried through in the face of the open sabotage and splitting policy of the reformist leaders, who have called upon their local organisations to boycott all activity of the N.U.W.M. But the work goes on and the fight against the National government's unemployed policy steadily strengthens.

The N.U.W.M., whilst having a paying membership of 40,000 and 350 branches, does not yet develop its work so as to get the best and most lasting results out of its mass activity, and particularly it fails to develop broad unemployed councils, which extend the whole sphere and influence of the N.U.W.M. at the same time as it would draw into increased mass activity large sections of the unemployed who at present are passive.

(1) There is still too much of the flavour of an unemployed "trade union" about the N.U.W.M., and this strongly militates against the carrying out of the line of the Prague resolution.

(2) The weakness of Party fraction work in the local, district, and central organisation of the N.U.W.M. is particularly bad, and the resistance that is met with on the part of leading comrades to the fuller development of mass activity can never be overcome unless the Party fractions are effectively organised.

(3) The inability of the N.U.W.M. to draw in large sections of skilled and semi-skilled unemployed workers, and this is largely due to the weakness in the popularisation of concrete schemes of public works, the 40-hour week without wage cuts, and the fight against embargoes which restricts the possibilities of trade orders.

(4) There is a serious non-recognition of the necessity of



political training as well as a lack of sports and social life inside the N.U.W.M., and this considerably hampers the development of new leaders and forces.

(5) There is also a lack of effective campaigning for a united front of struggle with the reformist unemployed organisations. Too often these are described as being "scab organisations"—an entirely wrong word to use for such bodies of workers and one that can only succeed in alienating the very sections that we have to win.

The Communist Party through its fractions is energetically trying to overcome these weaknesses and to carry out such a line as will enable the N.U.W.M. to win the full results from the very big improvements in all phases of work that have characterised the last period.

## United Front and the Youth

The Young Communist League, despite many weaknesses in their united front activity with the reformist youth organisations, have a few important successes, which are becoming of greater importance in the whole development of the united front work of our Party.

Following upon the publication of the C.I. Manifesto, the Central Committee of the League addressed a manifesto to the reformist youth organisations, and succeeded in establishing the united front with the "Left" reformist I.L.P. Guild of Youth organisation, which claimed a membership of eight thousand at that time.

In most of the districts united front activity was carried out, particularly among the youth unemployed, and the struggle against war.

In the campaign for a mass delegation to the Paris Youth Anti-War Congress good united front activity was achieved in a number of places, drawing in members of the Guild of Youth, Co-operative Youth, the Labour League of Youth, Boy Scouts, young trade unionists, and members of boys' clubs and a total of 57 young workers and 30 students attended the congress.

Following upon the National Agreement for united front work with the I.L.P. Guild practically all districts and units immediately responded and good mass work and fraternal relationships with the membership of the Guild organisation have been developed.

Consequently at the national conference of this organisation, held in June, the decision was arrived at to approach the Y.C.I. to establish a working agreement on the struggles of the young workers in Britain.

Correspondence has already passed between the Guild and the Y.C.I., which has been published in pamphlet form.

The Y.C.I. have succeeded in carrying out a number of meetings and conferences with the Guild membership on the question of the Y.C.I. letter.

The most important has been the Unity Conference, held in Scotland in October and attended by one hundred and fifty Guild and Y.C.I. members. A joint working agreement was arrived at and results have already been achieved in a few places in Glasgow in organising the fight of the youth unemployed. At this Conference decisions were taken to recommend to the National Guild Committee that they conditionally affiliate to the Y.C.I. and the Scottish Guild members definitely decided in favour of this.

They also agreed to commence activities for the collection of finance for the sending of a Scottish delegate to be included in a proposed national delegation to the Y.C.I. to discuss the whole question of joint relations.

Since then the Y.C.I. have replied to a recent letter from the National Guild Committee, wherein the proposal is made for a meeting with a national delegation of the Guild with representatives of the Y.C.I.

## The Communist Party and the I.L.P.

It needs to be recalled that the I.L.P. is one of the oldest socialist bodies in Britain, and one which has played a leading role both in the Labour Party and in the Labour governments. It has been responsible for some of the most prominent of the labour leaders, and has had great influence and traditions in the British working-class movement. It has always been a parliamentary party, and is only known in this respect to the working class. Because of its long history and traditions and its contacts with the working-class movement, to win the I.L.P. for the Communist Inter-

national and for a united Communist Party in Britain would undoubtedly be a very important development in the British working-class movement.

After the defeat of the Labour government in August, 1931, and the General Election in November, 1931, a big movement developed inside the I.L.P. against the Labour Party and for disaffiliation of the I.L.P. The I.L.P. leadership, while criticising the Labour Party, strenuously opposed the policy of disaffiliation.

Inside the I.L.P. in London a committee had been formed called the Revolutionary Policy Committee, representing the more advanced sections which was openly campaigning for disaffiliation from the Labour Party and for the adoption of a new constitution aiming at a more revolutionary policy. The Blackpool Conference took place at Easter, 1932, when the proposal for disaffiliation was side-tracked by the leadership pending further negotiations with the Labour Party to see if a basis of agreement could be found. If no basis could be found in the further negotiations with the Labour Party, then a special conference of the I.L.P. should be held to report the result of the negotiations and take further decisions.

This conference took place in July, 1932. The leadership of the I.L.P. was divided, again the issue was put to the Conference, not as being one of vital differences of principle with Labour Party policy, but that a wrong view was taken by the Labour Party of its own standing orders. By a majority vote disaffiliation from the Labour Party was decided upon. Thereupon a split occurred in the I.L.P., the minority constituting itself as "Socialist League" in Great Britain and "Socialist Party" in Scotland.

In view of these entirely new developments, the question was put at the Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party in November, 1932—what should be the future attitude of the Party to the I.L.P.—and it was decided to place the task of winning the I.L.P. for the Communist International and for a united Communist Party as one of the most important tasks before the Communist Party.

In March the representatives of the C.P. and leaders of the I.L.P. met together for united front negotiations, and nothing is more characteristic of the real way in which certain I.L.P. leaders view their future relations with the Labour Party than the attitude at these negotiations. Leaders such as Paton and Campbell Stephen were openly against the adoption of economic and political demands in the united front agreement which would give the labour leaders the opportunity to refuse to participate in united front negotiations. They did so only because they wished to bring the I.L.P. back into the Labour Party as soon as possible.

In this same period, certain divisional councils of the I.L.P. had gone on record for approaches being made to the C.I. with a view of seeing how the I.L.P. could co-operate in the work of the C.I. Corresponding resolutions were on the agenda of the I.L.P. Conference at Derby in April, 1933. This conference, which was badly attended, already reflected the disintegration which had set in in the I.L.P. There was strong opposition to the continuation of the united front with the Communist Party, but the rank and file delegates defeated this. There was a resolution adopted to give full support to the N.U.W.M.; for making important changes in the constitution and a resolution was submitted calling upon the I.L.P. leadership to approach the C.I. with a view to finding out how the I.L.P. could co-operate in its work and, if necessary, that a special conference of the I.L.P. should be called to hear the result of the negotiations between the I.L.P. and the C.I.

This resolution was bitterly opposed by the General Secretary, John Paton, who outlined the position of the I.L.P. leaders against the C.I. and the Communist Party. Finally, this resolution was adopted by 83 votes to 79 votes.

This was the position, then, at the Derby Conference, and it will be useful here to give the political line of the four groups that were even then clearly to be observed within the I.L.P.:—

- (1) The group around Sandham who are in favour of re-affiliation to the Labour Party.
- (2) The group of Maxton and Brockway, who stand for a centrist Independent Party, posing as being more revolutionary than the C.P.
- (3) The group of rank and filers who stand for affiliation to the Communist International.
- (4) The Trotskyist group of petty-bourgeois and student elements without any mass influence or connections.

One thing is, however, very clear, i.e., whatever differences there may be between the groupings amongst the I.L.P. leaders—in one thing they are all united—that is opposition to the C.P. of Great



Britain and to the C.I. Therefore, the problem before the C.P. and the C.I. in relation to I.L.P. was how to win the membership of the I.L.P. for carrying out the Derby resolution in practice and for a united Communist Party on the basis of the programme and policy of the C.I.

After the Derby Conference, the I.L.P. leaders sent a very formal letter to the C.I. informing them of the conference decision, enclosing a copy of the resolution that had been adopted on co-operation with the C.I. and asking for the comments of the C.I. upon it. Meantime, the C.I. immediately it had heard of the Derby decision had sent a wire welcoming the decision and expressing the hope that it would immediately lead to the development of more effective united front activity and the unification of the revolutionary forces in Britain.

The Communist International replied to the I.L.P. resolution and letter, indicating that the best way the I.L.P. could co-operate in independent work was along the following lines:—

(1) To continue the united front work with the Communist Party as the first step towards practical co-operation in the work of the Communist International; (2) To conduct a fight against reformism in Britain and internationally; (3) To practically carry this out in economic struggles against fascism, British imperialism and war; (4) A warning against the meaning of the attempts to form a new Two-and-a-Half International; (5) The significance of the heroic fight of the German Communist Party; (6) The question of the Soviet Union and the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

While this letter was being prepared and sent to the I.L.P., there were many important events taking place. In Lancashire, under the leadership of Sandham; and in South Wales, under the leadership of Jones—both leading members of the I.L.P.—the united front with the Communist Party district organisations was broken.

Then in June, Brockway, the leader of the centre group in the I.L.P., came out with an article in the official organ, "The New Leader," which was a scurrilous attack against the Communist International and the Soviet Union.

The time of its publication was very carefully chosen so as to take the attention of the I.L.P. membership away from the C.I. letter.

The Communist Party replied at once to Brockway's article and carried out a big campaign against Brockway. Many resolutions and letters of protest were received by the official organ of the I.L.P., but were never published.

The reply of the I.L.P. leaders to the C.I. letter was a classical example of evading every vital question that had been raised by the C.I.

Then came the Paris Conference of the seven "Left" Socialist Parties. The I.L.P. pretended to its members and the workers of Great Britain that it took a different line from the other representatives who were at Paris, Brockway giving the I.L.P. position as follows:—

"The I.L.P. was practically alone in urging that the possibility should not be ruled out of the Third International so changing its tactics and organisation as to allow to be included within the unification of revolutionary parties."

Later on Brockway declares, however:—

"If the Third International proves to be unprepared to change its tactics and organisation, the time will have to come to consider the formation of a new International."

If the N.A.C. of the I.L.P. think that the Third International is going to change its correct working-class line, tactics, and organisation to suit the petty-bourgeois requirements of the I.L.P. leaders, then they are barking up the wrong tree.

In September the Communist International sent a second letter to the I.L.P. This letter was addressed to the membership of the I.L.P. It recalled the line of the first C.I. letter; it then dealt in detail with the line of the I.L.P. leaders—how this leadership, both on the "Left" and Right, were refusing to carry out the Derby decisions for co-operation with the C.I. It drew the attention of the I.L.P. members to Brockway's article and to the manoeuvres of the I.L.P. leaders as revealed at the Paris Conference for the formation of a Two-and-a-Half International. It replied to the slanders about the Communist International and the united front, it dealt again with the role of the German Communist Party, and finally put the proposal that all the organisations of the I.L.P. should really discuss the letter of the Communist International, and it put two principal questions:—

(1) What concrete actions on the basis of the united front can the C.P. and the I.L.P. now carry out around certain practical issues, such as the fight against the Means Test, for a 10 per cent. increase in wages, against the rise in the cost of living, etc.

(2) Is it desirable that the I.L.P. should join the C.I. as a sympathising organisation with Communism, with a consultative vote as per paragraph 18 of the Communist International Statutes.

The N.A.C. of the I.L.P. replied to this letter along the following lines:—

(1) A protest against the C.I. addressing its letter over the heads of the N.A.C.

(2) That the statements of the C.I. about the political line of the seven "Left" parties were incorrect.

(3) That open criticism of the C.I. along the line of Brockway's article was not considered inimical to the interests of the workers.

(4) Finally, they inform the C.I. that their proposal for sympathetic affiliation would be put before the next Easter Conference of the I.L.P.

The true meaning of this ultimate betrayal of the Derby decision was cloaked over by the opening of a so-called discussion supplement in the official organ of the I.L.P., and it is noteworthy that Trotsky was called upon to open this series of discussion articles. Of course, other people such as Brandler and Thalheimer were also invited to collaborate, and it was even proposed to ask Comrade Manuisky for a contribution. The results of this discussion are then to be summed up by no less a person than Brockway himself.

The articles which have already appeared are sufficient indication of the unity between Trotsky and Thalheimer in their efforts to hold the I.L.P. back from joining the Communist International. Trotsky declares that the "I.L.P. must preserve its independence at all costs."

The Party also had many interesting experiences in connection with the recent elections so far as the relation of the Communist Party and the I.L.P. are concerned. After the second C.I. letter the Political Bureau gave consideration to the forthcoming municipal elections, particularly in Scotland, where both the Communist Party and the I.L.P. were putting forward a large number of candidates. The Political Bureau had previously circulated a document to the Party, carefully outlining the policy of the Party in regard to the elections and laying it down that where the situation and record and possibilities before the Party justified it, we should run our candidates against all other parties.

After a full discussion of the situation as far as the municipal elections were concerned, the following statement was adopted:—

"In view of the special circumstances of the Party campaign to win the I.L.P. for the line of the C.I. and for a united Communist Party, in the coming municipal elections, the district leadership shall carefully review the question of the seats at the municipal elections in order to secure the maximum strength of all forces standing for the united front and a united Communist Party."

"The District leadership to approach in those places considered advisable, I.L.P. candidates who have fought for the united front and for the line of the C.I. and on the undertaking of active support for the C.I. letter and a united Communist Party, to be prepared to make an amendment, whereby a fight between the C.P. and I.L.P. candidates can be avoided and the support of both organisations given to the agreed upon candidate, the determining factor to be on the chosen candidate giving the best perspective of success."

That line was carried out in the municipal elections, but we had very little success in obtaining concrete guarantees from the I.L.P. candidates in regard to the specific questions regarding the united Communist Party in Great Britain and affiliation to the C.I.

In an important by-election at Clay Cross, where I was the Communist candidate against Arthur Henderson, the leader of the Labour Party, and where we had not a single contact in the area previously, the Communist Party polled 3,424 votes. During the course of the campaign we received a letter from John McGovern, I.L.P. member of parliament, informing us that he was willing to come and speak in the election campaign on behalf of the C.P. This offer was accepted, and he took part in the fight, but we made a mistake, both in the campaign, in the constituency itself, and in the "Daily Worker" in not clearly explaining the differences in principle that existed between the C.P. and the

I.L.P. so as to avoid any impression being given that the I.L.P. and the Communist Party were two equal bodies with the same political line. Then came an important by-election at Kilmarnock, where the I.L.P. had had its candidate in the field since the general election in 1931, and who had previously received the official support of the Labour Party at the previous general election, but he was now being opposed by the Labour Party.

The C.P. was not in a position to contest this election with a candidate of its own, and a series of questions were submitted to the I.L.P. candidate Pollok, asking his opinion about the letter of the C.I., his attitude to the united front and his attitude to a united Communist Party. His answers were that he was in agreement with the decisions taken at Derby for co-operation with the C.I., that he was a whole-hearted supporter of the united front movement, and that he stood for unity and for the establishment of a united Revolutionary Party. His answers were not considered very satisfactory, as they evaded some of the direct implications of our questions. But Pollok had a good record as a trade union fighter and as a supporter of the united front. The C.P. therefore decided to support his candidature. The C.P. organised a series of independent meetings, at which the line of the Party was very clearly brought out, the reasons given to the workers for our support of the I.L.P. candidate and the differences in principle that existed between the C.P. and the I.L.P. on such questions as the fight for power, the proletarian revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc.

On behalf of the C.P., I then had to undertake some negotiations with the I.L.P. leaders on the question of fuller participation in the election campaign. In the course of these conversations, I criticised some aspects of the campaign as it was being conducted, and made suggestions for its improvement, particularly along the lines of mass activity, and securing the fullest participation of C.P. speakers at all election meetings. The I.L.P., on their side, raised the question of the independent activity of the C.P., and it was pointed out that this could never be surrendered.

Subsequent events revealed that I had made an error in not more clearly defining the determination of the C.P. to carry out independent activity. It should be stated, however, that further independent meetings were carried out, but the striking feature about the campaign was that contrast between the speeches of the C.P. spokesmen and the I.L.P. leaders—a contrast so vivid in treatment and political line as to cause big discussion amongst the workers and differentiation within the ranks of the I.L.P. itself. One result of the C.P. campaign there was seen in the increased votes the C.P. candidates got in Kilmarnock District in the subsequent municipal elections, where in one case we won a seat for the C.P., and in addition recruited many new members.

It must be explained that one of the Derby Conference decisions was to appoint a commission that would make certain changes in the constitution and policy of the Party in accordance with the discussion at Derby. This was done, and what was described as the New Policy of the I.L.P. was finally adopted.

We considered that this New Policy should be treated as a step forward on the part of the I.L.P. and the same attitude was taken by the Party organ the "Daily Worker." What was the basis of our mistake in this connection?

The essence of the New Policy was that it came out of the Derby Conference under pressure from the rank and file, and it represented a break, although a confused break, with the old parliamentarism of the I.L.P.

While this confused break with parliamentarism afforded an opportunity for the C.P. to make further approaches to the I.L.P. members and to sections of workers still under their influence, for mass work in the factories and trade unions, at the same time the C.P. had the task of explaining the weaknesses of this New Policy and to make an exposure of the leadership of the I.L.P. both Left and Right, who would sabotage their efforts to move forward in this direction, outlined in the New Policy in the same way, as they were doing with the efforts of the rank and file to get into closer co-operation with the C.I.

Second, we have not sufficiently and consistently popularised the C.I. letters. It is amazing the number of I.L.P. members who have not read either Brockway's article or the letters of the C.I.

Thirdly, we have not explained convincingly enough to the I.L.P. membership the political line of their leaders, and the division

of labour that exists within the I.L.P. leadership itself to prevent their coming into the Communist International.

Fourthly, the sectarianism of the C.P. and the refusal of big sections of the Party members to see the importance of winning the I.L.P. for Communism.

Fifthly, there was lacking an international campaign and articles by leading members of the C.I. in the "Daily Worker" and in the "Communist Review" on the question of the I.L.P. in order to show the importance which the C.I. attaches to winning the rank and file of the I.L.P.

We must make use of the time remaining up to the Easter Conference of the I.L.P. in order to realise the line of the last letter of the Communist International on the creation of a firm I.L.P. group working for the affiliation of the I.L.P. to the Communist International.

A united Communist Party in Britain would be a great source of strength for the British working class and for the C.I., and would remove a barrier between our Party and the revolutionary workers at present outside our ranks.

In regard to our mistakes, both in regard to the Labour Party and the I.L.P., we think the basic reasons can be found in the fact, that our isolation from the masses, the deep-rooted sectarianism in the Communist Party, our weak connections with decisive sections of the working class, and our under-estimation of the process of disillusionment and radicalisation and moods of the workers, makes us jump into situations, without carefully analysing all the factors of the situation and developing a clear political line that would prevent us from making opportunist mistakes, at the same time as we break down the left sectarianism that still exists in the ranks of the Party. There is a strong tendency to believe that because of united front activity, the guiding line of all Party activity—class against class—has been temporarily suspended.

## The Party Situation and Problems

In 1932 there was a special resolution adopted on the British question. This resolution is still the key to the main questions. It can be said that as a result of its application, good results and big improvements in the methods of work can be seen. These results can be summed up as follows:—

- (1) Big increase in mass work and activity, especially in the trade unions, and developing the united front;
- (2) Better work in the preparation of economic struggles and participation in mass struggles;
- (3) Greater interest in Communism, better attendance at Communist meetings and more questions and discussions on the Communist policy.

But there is no consistent growth of Party membership. Yet the votes recorded for the C.P. revealed a situation which must be fearlessly faced, and which we must try to solve, especially in the present period when the mass influence of the Party is increasing, yet the membership of the Party does not rapidly grow.

It is clear from all the recent election results that there is big disillusionment with the Tories and with the National Labourists, but not yet with the Labour Party. The workers are against the National government, but not yet against their agents, the labour leaders. The workers see the Communist Party as a good fighter against unemployment, in strikes, etc., but not as a vital political force leading the whole fight of the working class against the National Government. The result is that the only alternative they see, and the only way they see of striking a blow at the National Government in the elections is through voting Labour. And one of the strongest arguments against the C.P., in elections is that we "don't believe in Parliament," or that "we haven't got a chance, and that to vote for the Communist candidates under these circumstances is not only wasting a vote, but is splitting the workers' ranks." In fact, so strong is the hostility against the National government that in all the recent elections this question of the Communists' splitting the workers' votes now takes a sharper form than ever before, and this is fed by the Labour Party propaganda.

In all the elections the C.P. has splendid meetings, many times much bigger and more enthusiastic than those of the Labour Party. The workers make many financial sacrifices, but we do not yet win a significant number of their votes.

Why is this? Some of the reasons are as follows:—

The Communist Party does not yet know how to effectively combine its mass work on partial demands with its final aims and



revolutionary way out of the crisis. It does not yet give a strong political lead on all the issues that arise.

While parliamentary illusions are still strong amongst the workers, our methods of agitation and propaganda are very bad, and there is weak organisation in the carrying through of our campaigns—many times helping to foster the impression that we are not really serious in our efforts to win these elections. In addition, bad methods of work and inner-Party life retard the workers coming to the Communist Party.

But perhaps the most important reason of all is in regard to the leading role of the Party. We ourselves do not sufficiently emphasise this and bring it out in all questions. We have too big a tendency to contract the work out to united front organisations, and whilst being tireless in energy, by this neglect of the leading role of the Party, the workers do not see the Communist Party as the leader of their whole struggle, with a clear lead to all questions, carrying through united front activity and all the time out of it strengthening the fight of the working class as a whole and consciously developing the power and organisation of the workers to overthrow capitalism.

Inside the ranks of the Party itself the leading role of the Party is underestimated. There is very good mass work in the factories, trade unions and localities, but it is looked upon as a thing in itself and not as a means to strengthening the workers' struggle for power under the leadership of the Communist Party, by consciously building up the Party out of every phase of activity.

Further, we do not give systematic attention to the bringing forward of new leading forces, even when they are not as experienced as older comrades.

The Party also badly neglects the work amongst working women. We seem to forget how the crisis has affected this important section of the working class, but the reformists do not forget this and give great attention to winning influence over large sections of working women.

We must now resolutely overcome these weaknesses and in all future campaigns plan how we can best draw the working women into active participation. This is especially the case in such campaigns as those against the Means Test, the new Unemployed Bill, the rising cost of living, the cutting down of vital social services such as maternity centres, child welfare clinics and housing schemes. We must endeavour to win them for support for the fight against fascism and war, and to win the women sections and co-operative guilds for united front activity.

## The Y.C.L.

The general offensive of the capitalist class and the National government deals heavy blows at the masses of young workers in Britain. More than one million are unemployed and hundreds of thousands are leaving school every year who cannot be absorbed in industry.

Those in industry are subjected to ruthless speed-up methods, and used in increasing numbers to displace adult labour.

As a result of this drive against the living conditions of the youth and the effects of the general crisis of capitalism, a big development is taking place in the political activity of the British youth.

This is clearly seen in the fact that most of the recent strike struggles and unemployed actions have been of a predominantly youth character.

The new unemployment bill of the National government makes special provisions for singling out the youth, particularly those between 14 and 16, in the whole scheme to lower the standards of the unemployed, and divide the forces of the working class.

The measures for the extensive establishment of forced labour camps for the youth along semi-militarist lines, along with the centres and camps already in existence, are in line with the drive of British capitalism in the preparations for war.

The Labour Party, recognising the growing mass activity of the youth and the important part they play in the class struggle situation in Britain, are paying much greater attention to the youth and are seeking to harness the rising discontent for reformism.

A tremendous campaign has been launched to last for one year in which all the forces and machinery of the Labour Party are being used for the objective of winning a million members to

the Labour Party youth organisation, and the building of youth sections of the trade unions.

So far our Party has not given sufficient attention to, and has not endeavoured to direct the activities of the Party organisations, to the winning of the masses of young workers for Communism, and through the leadership of the struggles of the young workers by the Party, built up a mass Communist organisation of the youth, the Y.C.L.

Tremendous attention is being given by the reformists to the question of work among the youth, by the publication of special papers, the appointment of special national organisers, and the setting up of special sport organisations. In this respect in recent months our Party has achieved some successes in winning influence over, and in helping the Y.C.L. However, this is entirely insufficient, and in the coming period we have to give renewed attention to this work with the objective of building up our work among the working youth.

The question of better methods of revolutionary mass work, agitation and propaganda, raised by the thesis of the Thirteenth Plenum with special concentration on factories and trade unions, is of special importance for our Party. We have to start this work from the approach of understanding that we have to help the workers to the C.P. We can best do this in the way that the Party stands out as the real fighter against the National government. It is necessary to explain every phase of its policy clearly and simply, and show that the policy of the National government is that of the capitalists as a class—that no other government standing on the basis of capitalism could operate any basically different line.

We must learn how to arouse the hatred and opposition of the masses to the National government on the basis of concrete issues and show how to lead the fight against it in factory, trade union and locality.

From this approach we are then in a better position to expose the reformist leaders, to show how they disorganise the workers' ranks, how they are against the united front, how they are the splitters, how the National government's attacks on the unemployed have only continued the Labour government's line, how their advocacy of democracy is a fraud. Their advocacy of capitalist democracy only helps forward the development towards fascist dictatorship.

In answer to the propaganda for a third Labour government, we must show that if there was another Labour government tomorrow, because of its denial of the necessity of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, the workers' revolution, the confiscation of capitalist property and destruction of its political power, the policy of a third Labour government would in all basic respects be the same as that of the present National government.

We must explain very carefully its fancy schemes of so-called socialism such as public corporations and utility combines; that these have nothing to do with socialism and workers' control of industry, that they are only schemes of capitalist restoration along fascist lines, leaving untouched the exploitation of the working class and all existing class and property relations.

Our whole propaganda on these and similar questions needs to be made clearer, simpler and more popular. In the degree that we make the political fight against capitalism understood in its real sense and not as a parliamentary thing, so more concrete will be the exposure of the reformists. In this way we can much more effectively get our policy understood and a correct approach made to the question of the relationship of the fight for partial demands and the fight for power.

In connection also with the fight for partial demands and the struggle for power, much more use needs to be made of the experiences in the Soviet Union.

But whilst using the example of the Soviet Union, it is also necessary to very simply popularise what the Soviet power would mean in Britain, that we should raise this as a principal question, explain how it would reorganise industry and agriculture, how the workers would no longer be exploited but would become conscious builders of their own socialist society, how it would solve unemployment and bring workers' prosperity to socialist industry, how it would bring all idle land into cultivation, develop all forms of culture and education, give freedom and independence to the colonial countries and by the abolition of capitalism abolish the causes of war.

There is no other way—only this revolutionary way. This is the big lesson of the Soviet Union and experience in all other coun-



tries where every kind of "solution," whether attempted by capitalist, social democratic or fascist governments, of the crisis has been tried, and has signally failed. Above all, is the classical example of Germany, where fascism is in power because of the line of social democracy, and the so-called easy way of parliamentary democracy.

What is to be done after the present Plenum?

(1) Popularise the Plenum decisions and carry out great enlightenment campaigns in the Communist Party.

(2) Organise broad study circles and systematic Party days to study the decisions of the Thirteenth Plenum, specific Party problems and better methods of work.

(3) Broaden out all forms of united front activity on the basis of more concrete issues, especially against the National government's Unemployed Bill, against fascism and war, making the main drive for this united front in the factories, trade unions and localities.

(4) To win the I.L.P. for a united Communist Party on the line of the Communist International, for its programme and policy.

(5) To help build up a mass Young Communist League.

(6) To defend every existing right and liberty of working class propaganda and organisation and the real mass fight against fascism.

(7) To raise the whole question and popularisation of the fight for power and the revolutionary way out of the crisis in a more effective fashion.

(8) Give more systematic attention to the development of new forces and persistent daily recruiting for the Communist Party.

The British delegation believe that on the basis of the decisions of the Thirteenth Plenum and the overcoming of our present weaknesses, it will be possible to speedily record a big improvement in the revolutionary mass work of the Communist Party and a big numerical increase in membership in the Communist Party and the circulation of its fighting organ, the "Daily Worker." (Applause.)