

THE NEWSLETTER

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

Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper

Vol. 2, No. 52

Sixpence

May 10, 1958

BRING DOWN THE 'SHOW-DOWN' GOVERNMENT!

Emergency Conferences, Councils of Action, to Back Busmen

THE strike is solid. The London busmen are giving a magnificent display of unity and militancy that is daily amazing the capitalist Press and is a tonic and an inspiration to the whole British Labour movement.

But there is no room for complacency. It would be foolish to close our eyes to two facts: first, that these 50,000 busmen bear on their shoulders the entire brunt of the capitalist class offensive; secondly, that this is a political struggle, in which the continued existence of the Tory Government is at stake. Both facts lead to the same conclusion: the strike must be extended as rapidly and effectively as possible, both to bring aid to the busmen in their fight for the 10s. 6d. and to bring down this employers' Government.

There is every possibility that the railwaymen, despite the hedging of their leaders, will take strike action. They have kicked their heels long enough in the employer's antechamber. The streets of London, swept clear of buses by working-class action, are the plainest possible warning to the Government that it is playing with dynamite. But precisely because events are moving so rapidly, this is a time for clear thinking, cool judgment and plain speaking.

A word, then, to Frank Cousins. He made the best speech of his career at the Empress Hall, three days before his members came out. He cleared up the confusion caused by the manoeuvrings of his executive and contributed perceptibly to the unity of purpose that has marked the strike from the outset. But at Birmingham on Sunday he argued that 'we are not taking on the Government'. This is stepping off in two different directions at once. Why, even Alfred Robens, whom no one could suspect of undue bias towards the Left, declared:

This is the beginning; crack the powerful Transport and General Workers' Union and it will then be the turn of the railwaymen and after that, who knows? More than once I have said in the past year that the policies of this Government were leading up to what could be the greatest industrial strife since before the war. I believe that it has started.

In other words the Government has declared war on the unions. This is a political act. The Labour movement must fight back or be crippled for a generation. Crush the Tory Government, drive it out of office, and use the full industrial power of the working class to this end—or be crushed by it: this is the alternative now facing us. The Government has been preparing for this struggle for months. The Times wrote on Monday:

The Government know that this is the first serious industrial test that the economic policies they introduced last autumn have had to undergo. Any want of firmness now, any flinching from the consequences of their policies, and they realize that not only would the flood-

gates be thrown open to pay claims throughout industry . . . but their prestige would take a heavy fall among all their supporters. It is important to the Government that the bus strike should remain isolated from the dispute over railway pay, and these are early days for anyone to be sure that they will succeed.



HERE are the Government's hopes and fears and strategy in a nutshell. 'No flinching' . . . 'Keep the flood-gates shut' . . . 'Keep the railwaymen isolated from the busmen.' The conclusion is clear: we must hammer the Tories by every possible means, build rank-and-file unity between busmen and railwaymen and close down every channel of scab transport or scab petrol. It is a scandal that what amounts to a scabs' charter appears in the London evening papers, that petrol distribution men, whose own claim for a substantial wage increase was turned down last week, have not been called out in sympathy, that Underground men and sub-station electricians have not been called out. It is a scandal that the busmen are left to fight alone while leaders talk.

Support the busmen! This is the slogan of the hour. The employers are not standing still; they are mobilizing to smash the strike. Neither must the workers stand still. Strikes are won or lost in the first few days. The necessary solidarity action must come speedily. Any dragging of feet, any faith in pious formulas, could lead only to the defeat of the whole working class.

Support the busmen! Let this call resound through the entire Labour and trade union movement. Let resolutions of support and financial aid pour in. Let emergency conferences be organized locally and nationally to plan solidarity and set up Councils of Action.

Support the busmen! Every single unit of the movement should be mobilized in a powerful, intensive, systematic and tireless campaign to back the strike and carry it forward to full victory. Let the Trades Union Congress be bombarded with the question: 'What are you *doing* to help the busmen?' The Parliamentary Labour Party should make the life of the Government as miserable as possible, by obstructing Commons busi-

THE NEWSLETTER AND THE STRIKE

In view of the exceptional importance of the London busmen's struggle, half of The Newsletter this week has been devoted to the second issue of a Strike Bulletin largely written by rank-and-file busmen themselves. A number of articles and letters have unavoidably been held over to next week.

ness until the strike is won and the Government swept away.

The class struggle has opened out, suddenly and dramatically, on to a broad arena, and we must not be slow to grasp the implications of these days when workers learn to tell friend from foe; nor slow to seize

the rich possibilities that are now arising for far-reaching political changes. The British working class got rid of Eden. The utmost extension, and co-ordination from below, of the sectional movements, the determination of rank-and-file busmen and railwaymen not to go under, can now sweep away the whole Tory Government. There is not a moment to lose.

Here Are the Basic Facts about the H-Bomb

By J. H. BRADLEY

TO understand the dangers in the testing and use of nuclear weapons one must know how they are made and work. Nearly all the heat and blast of both atomic and hydrogen bombs come from the splitting (called fission) of heavy atoms of uranium and plutonium into smaller pieces.

All the pieces together weigh very slightly less than the original uranium or plutonium—an amount which for most purposes is too small to matter, but which does mean an enormous amount of heat is set free, as was explained by Einstein's Theory of Relativity.

When a great deal of heat is set free in a very short time a violent explosion is caused, and an atomic bomb lets loose a great deal more heat than TNT. One pound of uranium lets out as much heat as 2,000 tons of TNT.

The fragments left over (fission products) represent all the chemical elements of the earth, though there are more of some kinds than of others.

Small, fast, dangerous particles

Unfortunately these fragments are not exactly like the ordinary elements of which everything is made, for they continue to send out small, fast, dangerous particles for ever.

As time goes on, they send out particles in smaller and smaller numbers, but it is many years before one can stop worrying about them.

These particles are of two important kinds—there are other kinds, only one of which will have to be mentioned later. The dangerous particles or radiations are gamma-rays (a very penetrating X-ray) and beta rays (a fast moving electron).

Beta rays can all be stopped by putting a heavy shield in their way; most of them can go less than a foot in air. Gamma rays are only partly stopped by any shield however thick and heavy. Nevertheless the thicker and heavier the shield the fewer gamma rays get through.

Near atomic piles, and in the atomic bomb just at the instant of explosion, there are particles called neutrons. They are only partly stopped by thick shields. Neutrons are not found in fall-out.

Set each other off

The atomic bomb, as used against the Japanese, works by the uranium atoms setting each other off. Heat has nothing to do with it. Every time a uranium atom is split, two or three neutrons fly out, and if they hit another uranium atom this is likely to split too.

Only one kind of uranium, uranium-235, and only one kind of plutonium, plutonium-239, have the power to do this. Even then a lump of about 11lb. is needed, or too many of the neutrons fly out through the surface and do not cause another atom to split up.

So the bomb is fired by shooting together two lumps of uranium to make one lump weighing more than 11lb. A strong, heavy case called a tamper holds the lumps together for as long as possible in order to get the biggest bang.

The 'small' or 'tactical' atomic bomb simply has a poor tamper, so as to give a lesser bang.

We see that once one uranium atom has been split by the source of neutrons which is built into the bomb, it sends out more neutrons to split other atoms, and so on. A lot of heat is set free, but does not help to split the uranium.

Now for the H-bomb. Here heat is set free not only by splitting up uranium, but also by joining together light atoms called lithium-6 and hydrogen-2 (deuterium).

The products of the joining-together, or fusion, weigh less than the atoms we started with, so again a lot of heat is set free. Many neutrons fly out during the fission.

The joining-together starts when the lithium-6 and deuterium are made very hot, about the temperature of the middle of the sun. And the hotter they get the faster they join together. The sun does not explode because it has very little lithium or deuterium.

The H-bomb is made hot by putting it inside an atomic bomb, to get things going.

If this were all nobody would be very worried, because the atoms formed by fusion are not dangerous to health and there are not very many fission atoms from the uranium

This is the first of two special articles by our scientific correspondent on the scientific and military aspects of the hydrogen bomb. They will be followed by articles from our medical correspondent on the health hazards of nuclear tests, and from Cliff Slaughter, sociologist and member of The Newsletter's editorial board, on 'How to Beat the Bomb'.

This series has been designed to give workers the facts as simply and as clearly as possible; our correspondents will be glad to answer readers' questions or deal with any difficulties.

detonator. It would be not much worse than an ordinary atomic bomb in the radio-active products it spreads all over the earth.

But things are not done so. Lithium-6 and deuterium cost hundreds of pounds an ounce, while there is a lot of unsalable uranium, called uranium-238 and no use for atomic bombs.

And though uranium-238 on its own will not explode, it will split just like uranium-235 when hit by fast neutrons from a hydrogen bomb.

So a big, heavy coat of uranium-238 is put round the H-bomb, and then it turns out that one needs much less lithium-6 and deuterium than before for the same size bang. There are a lot more fission products too, which are the cause of all the fuss.

Don't get it wrong—uranium-238 is cheap at a few pence a pound, but H-bombs still cost about £1 million each.

Now we come to what the fall-out trouble is all about.

Fall-out is a dust of the remains of a nuclear bomb, including the dangerous radioactive fission products.

Some of it falls near the test site, some it is swept up tens of thousands of feet into the air and takes years to come down.

A hydrogen-bomb takes about five years to deposit half its dust, also all over the world, but in the USA more than anywhere else.

Now Macmillan and Eisenhower have been exploiting a profound historical error in their claims to have a 'clean' H-bomb, that is, one with no fall-out in this way.

That fine white dust

After the March 1954 test in which the Japanese fishermen were injured there was a great uproar over the LOCAL fall-out, that fine white dust which hurt the Japanese, the Marshall Islanders and the U.S. servicemen.

That dust was very largely powdered coral, sucked up in the wind of the mushroom cloud, covered in fission products, and dropped over thousands of square miles around. The great concern was primarily that such a thing would also happen in war.

Actually that only happens if a good deal of dust is sucked up, or if there is a local rainstorm within a few hours after the explosion. It is very easily avoided by exploding the bomb above 20,000 feet over land, or even lower over the sea.

Not nearly enough attention was paid in 1955 to the far more insidious and long-term effects of fall-out all over the world. And in time of peace it is the worldwide fall-out which matters.

All Macmillan and Eisenhower mean by 'no fall-out' is 'no LOCAL fall-out'—none near the test centre immediately afterwards. Plenty fell on Japan, America, and of course Europe, from Christmas Island. Very little fell into the Pacific Ocean, though that would have been the safest place for it.

The 'clean' tests of Macmillan are a greater danger than the 'dirty' tests of anybody else.

The Soviet Union is a little more truthful. It simply says its tests were made 'at a great height'. That is all the British and Americans have done for their '96 per cent. reduction in fall-out'.

Too expensive to test

Now there IS a clean H-bomb. It is simply made by leaving off the outer layer of uranium-238.

It is so expensive that no nation could afford more than 10 at the very outside. Nobody will use one in any war. Nobody has tested one in peace for two and a half years.

Khrushchev announced in Bangalore in 1955 that he had a bomb with 'relatively small quantities of fissionable material'. Eisenhower has never claimed that.

The USSR does not pretend that its recent bombs have been anything but dirty. Nobody can deceive the Japanese or anybody else about what is used in his bombs.

The USSR also has various other types of bomb, slightly different from those I have described, but all very dirty. (See for instance The Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 1, May 10, 1957, or the Manchester Guardian of April 23, 1957).

The differences don't matter. They are all as dirty as each other.

Figment of his imagination

For this reason the 'undetectable tests' are another figment of Macmillan's lurid imagination. Filters for collecting fall-out, sensitive pressure recorders for measuring air waves, and delicate seismographs for detecting ground shocks are hidden in every Western embassy and consulate in and around the USSR.

High-flying aeroplanes collect samples every few hours; especially when the British or Americans suspect each other of having had a test.

What is undetectable—and makes the shifting Western positions on disarmament, control and inspection look so ridiculous—is a stockpile of atomic or hydrogen bombs.

There is no such thing as a realistic inspection system for nuclear arms.

Perhaps one might be able to work out how much uranium, plutonium and thorium each country has made within 10 per cent., by a detailed inspection of factories, records and witnesses.

'Within 10 per cent.'—within enough to leave bombs to blow half the world to smithereens. It leaves plenty of room for provocations and incidents over fictitious charges or real suspicious of concealing bombs.

Aerial inspection is impossible

Aerial inspection for bombs—or ground inspection either—is impossible. Nuclear bombs are piled in some innocent looking shed in some railway yard or dock, in some barn, or in little holes in the ground not the size of a military pillbox.

What a consolation it will be if the U.S. can carry pictures of Soviet bombers and missiles taking off against America—the day after Washington has been flattened and New York is a heap of smoking, radio-active rubble.

But aerial inspection does give a perfect opportunity for an aggressor to pin-point targets, and so is far too dangerous to be put into force until after substantial disarmament, or at least till after the setting up of an effective system of radar stations.

Ground inspection can also be used for all kinds of spying: we have to get used to this fact, because ground inspection has to come at some stage.

Aerial inspection is useful only in discovering military airfields as a preliminary to ground inspection. Even Russia's plan for inspection at ports, junctions, military depots and airfields is not infallible, though a good deal better than nothing.

Holes in the ground

Once ballistic missiles are hidden in little holes in the ground, once those missiles no longer need the lengthy and elaborate preparation of the U.S. versions, all talk of inspection by air or ground becomes meaningless.

We may already be too late; in two years we shall certainly be too late.

Only two kinds of inspection remain: neither gives an absolute safeguard, and neither can touch the stockpile.

Production of new missiles and new bombs can be prevented or enormously hindered by inspection, and not least because in a world disarmed no Government planning war can ever trust its own citizens enough.

Where there can be a Kennan, a Marshall, a Stassen, an Oppenheimer or a Kapitsa, there could be more. Few politicians would care to face the price of being caught getting ready for nuclear war.

Long-range radars all over the world can give warning of an attack ONCE IT HAS STARTED. This seems a permissible last line of defence, for all nations might have small numbers of anti-aircraft and anti-missiles under strict supervision and with merely atomic rather than H-warheads.

Can be made unsuitable

Such counter-missiles can be made unsuitable for anything but ground-to-air use. Supervision prevents the transfer of war heads to any other purpose. The deterrent is gone, but we are left a vestige of defence which is actually a good deal safer than all the defences we have at the present time.

It cannot be turned to aggression because of a supervision almost impossible to evade, because the failure of an inspector to report every five minutes would call out instantly all the powers of emergency investigation.

A conspiracy to capture within five minutes a hundred radar stations in a dozen countries is not a practical possibility.

This is not a good alternative to full disarmament, but it is a compromise which might be agreed for some years till everybody felt really safe.

NUM LEADERS ARE IN FULL RETREAT

By Price Jones

'We shall oppose closure [of uneconomic pits] unless we are satisfied that the reserve has been exhausted or a pit has become a danger to those employed in it. The Board must not discharge men employed in deep-mined pits until it has closed all surface mines.'

Only three or four days after Edwin Hall, Lancashire miners' area secretary, had made this statement it was announced that for the first time since nationalization a large-scale dismissal plan was to be put into operation.

Seventy-six men at the Dean and Chapter colliery (Co. Durham) finished work on May 2 because their pit is deemed to be uneconomic and because new machinery has been introduced underground. Pit ponies will be retained, but the men must go.

After consultations between the management and the union, the union representatives managed to 'persuade' the National Coal Board to whittle the original list of 96 names down to 76.

But at the same time the union agreed to the principle of the NCB retaining the power to make men redundant when it suits their purpose.

Instead of agreeing to the closing of 'uneconomic' pits the union leaders should be fighting with all the means at their command against NCB measures which give no guarantee about the future of the miners whose jobs are hit.

SOCIALIST DOCTORS TO HEAR CALL FOR ABANDONMENT OF H-BOMB

By George Cunvin

THE Socialist Medical Association, which fathered the National Health Service, is fighting to improve that service and is resisting the Tory Government's efforts to undermine it.

Several resolutions which will be discussed at the 28th annual conference of the SMA on May 10 and 11 show that socialist doctors and their associates are alive to the many problems confronting the working-class movement.

Housing and health have always been closely interrelated, and this point is given fresh recognition in an emergency resolution which will come before Conference. This reads:

'This Conference is gravely disturbed by the probable effects of the Rent Act on the nation's health.

'Thousands of families have for years suffered from over-

crowding and unhygienic conditions, with adverse effects on physical and mental health.

'To these have now been added the insecurity and widespread mental distress produced by the Rent Act.

'When the full effects of the Act are felt in October, many families will be forced to pay a higher rent than they can afford with a bad effect on their level of nutrition.

'Others will be faced with eviction, with disastrous effect on mental health and family life.

'This Conference therefore calls on the Government to amend the Act immediately, to restore security of tenure to all tenants and to place an upper limit on the permissible increase in rent; and on the Labour movement to intensify the campaign for the early return of a Labour Government and the implementation of the Labour Party plans for the municipalization of rented property.'

A resolution from the Thames Valley branch demands that the SMA stress to the Labour Party the urgency of nuclear disarmament, and adds:

'We believe that Britain should announce that she will unilaterally abandon the H-bomb and take all further steps to secure the complete nuclear disarmament of this country.'

'NO INCREASES,' INSISTS WARD PARTY

Crossgates (Leeds) ward Labour Party has passed unanimously a resolution calling on the Labour-controlled City Council not to increase council house rents. There are three huge council house estates at Crossgates.

LCC COUNCILLOR GREETS THE NEWSLETTER

Among other messages of greetings on The Newsletter's first anniversary, we have received one from Coun. E. S. Hillman, of London County Council, which says:

'Best wishes to The Newsletter on its first anniversary. This much-needed socialist journal deserves the support of every thinking socialist in the Labour movement.'

Greetings from Michael Foot, editor of Tribune, and from the American novelist Howard Fast, were published in last week's issue.

'NO ONE WILL TURN OUT,' SAID RIGHT WING

Rank-and-file Labour Party and Communist Party members joined in Leeds Trades Council's 120-strong march through the city last Saturday, with posters saying 'Support the London Busmen', 'Black the Bomb' and 'An End to the Tory Government'.

Constant Reader

When the ETU Blacked the Albert Hall

CURRENT talk of industrial action against the H-bomb and the Rent Act, and in particular the Electrical Trades Union's welcome decision on the blacking of rocket bases, calls to mind the time when the lights were put out in the Albert Hall.

Shortly after the Armistice of November 1918 which ended the first world war, George Lansbury booked the Albert Hall for a meeting to launch the Herald as a daily paper.

Suddenly the Hall authorities cancelled the booking. Lansbury appealed to the Government to intervene against this discrimination, but was told they 'had no power in the matter'. Then the ETU took a hand.

The telephone rang

The telephone rang at the Albert Hall and the authorities there were curtly informed that unless they kept to their agreement with Lansbury the lights would be cut off.

The following exchange took place:

'Is that a threat?'

'No, it's a fact.'

The fuses were removed, and the local power station manager was told that if he promised not to reconnect them it would not be necessary to put the pickets on; otherwise,

however, all Kensington would be deprived of light.

Brisk inter-union liaison resulted in the busmen and taximen announcing that they would not put down passengers near the Hall, while Underground railwaymen undertook not to stop their trains at the stations nearest it.

The Hall authorities were desperate: there were evening concerts arranged, and in a few days' time the great Victory Ball . . .

'Could he possibly . . .?'

They appealed to the Government to help. The Government appealed to George ('Could Mr Lansbury possibly make it convenient to come to the Board of Trade at once?'); and his reply was—'If we can have the hall, the ETU will, I am sure, restore the light.'

The Government asked the Hall authorities to change their minds about honouring the Herald booking. This was done. The lights went on again.

The Herald meeting assembled 12,000 people in the Albert Hall, and thousands more were turned away. Lansbury remarked that the incident had shown 'how dependent all of us are on ordinary workaday people'.

BRIAN PEARCE