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TUC SHOWS NEED FOR RANK-AND-FILE MOVEMENT

By BRIAN BEHAN

THE Right wing of the Trades Union Congress General Council has emerged triumphant from Bournemouth. Here was a week of lost opportunities for the Left. Though its treachery to the London busmen had completely discredited the General Council in the eyes of many rank-and-file workers it was able to avoid any real exposure.

Not only did the General Council quite brazenly defend its attitude in the report it presented to Congress. In addition, in Tom Yates's presidential address it reaffirmed its 1957 line, which had such bad results for the busmen.

The Left, in the person of Frank Haxell and others, made only a very mild comment on the report. Haxell said the attitude of the General Council 'did not meet the requirements of the present situation'. One would have thought steps would have been taken to bring more pressure than was the case, he added.

Frank Cousins was against an 'inquest'—presumably because such an inquest might well raise the question: Why did Cousins in the last analysis bow the knee to the General Council and agree not to extend the dispute?

Neither would force vote

Neither Haxell nor Cousins was prepared to move the reference back of this section of the report and force a vote.

And so the report was approved by the whole Congress because of the Left's failure to pass from words to deeds.

BEHAN SACKED—BUT SCAFFOLDERS WON'T WORK WITH FRESH LABOUR

Six hours after he had started work on the Shell-Mex site, South Bank, London, Brian Behan was sacked by McAlpines. The scaffolders took a decision not to work with any fresh labour, and when last Monday the firm started a man in Behan's place sixty scaffolders downed tools.

Union officials told the strikers to go back to work but they refused. The man to whom objection was taken left the site on Tuesday evening, and work was resumed on Wednesday on the understanding that if fresh labour was started the workers would come out again.

Behan's case was considered by a conciliation panel on Wednesday, and the Shell-Mex workers will review their attitude in the light of its decision.

Pending this inquiry Behan has been refused unemployment benefit, on the ground that McAlpines will not state the reason for his dismissal.

Building workers are convinced that because of his militancy Behan's name is high on the master builders' black list. His last job was last December with Minters—who sacked him after two days' work, and were forced to reinstate him as a result of an official dispute.

SPECIAL BRANCH VISIT OUR OFFICE: TALK OF 'SEDITIONOUS LIBEL' PROCEEDINGS

Two officers of the Scotland Yard Special Branch—Chief Inspector Williams and his assistant—called at the office of The Newsletter as this issue was going to press.

They interviewed the Editor, Peter Fryer, and Bob Pennington, and informed them that proceedings for seditious libel were being considered in respect of articles on the Notting Hill race riots in last week's issue.

DEATH OF DOCKS MILITANT

The Newsletter deeply regrets the untimely death of Jimmy Fullerton, 26-year-old worker at the London and St Katharine docks, who was killed in a car accident on Wednesday morning. A leading docks militant and a member of the portworkers' unofficial liaison committee, Bro. Fullerton was a good friend of this paper. We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow and five children.

BIRMINGHAM MILITANTS BACK NATIONAL RANK-AND-FILE CONFERENCE

Six prominent figures in the Birmingham Labour movement are sponsoring the national rank-and-file conference called by THE NEWSLETTER at London's Holborn Hall on November 16. They are:

E. A. BATES, president of Pype Hayes branch, Amalgamated Engineering Union;

A. DAWSON, shop steward, Tractor and Transmission, BMC, Drews Lane;

M. J. DURKIN, Birmingham district secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers;

G. R. JAMES, shop convener at B.G. Machinery;

COUNCILLOR A. TAYLOR, Labour Councillor on Birmingham City Council;

STAN YAPP, AEU convener at GEC, Witton.

Bro. James in his letter says: 'I sincerely trust the conference will bring forth a new spirit of unity and strength in the coming months.'

The conference discussion continues in this issue with letters from two building workers, **PADDY MAHONEY**, member of Brixton AUBTW branch committee, and **JOHN BYRNE**.

The Economic League has begun to take notice of the conference. Issue no. 61 of the Economic League Bulletin (September 1958) tells its company director readers that 'Extremists Prepare for Action', that The Newsletter 'is run by extremists with vast experience of industrial agitation' and that 'it is likely' that the local conference campaign committees 'will remain in being as permanent unofficial bodies'.

Yates's presidential address contained some important passages. He declared that the TUC would never use its industrial strength for political ends.

We are now assured that should another conflict develop in which the individual union is confronted with employers backed to the hilt by the Tories, the General Council will

(Continued overleaf)

COMMENTARY

LESSONS OF A STRIKE

THE clothing workers at the Sumrie factory in Leeds have gone back to work after winning certain concessions from the management. The firm had torn up an agreement whereby the workers did a 40-hour week for 45 hours' pay, and was trying to enforce a 44-hour week for 44 hours' pay—i.e., both a wage cut and an increase in hours. Despite repeated efforts by the shop committee to reach an agreement, the boss said he would accept nothing less than a 44-hour week. After the strike had lasted only one day he began to back down, and offered terms which the workers rejected. On the fourth day of the stoppage further concessions were obtained, and the strikers agreed to return to work.

The new scheme provides for a 41-hour week for 44 hours' pay. Time-workers will receive the extra three hours at normal rate, male piece-workers at 4s. 6d. per hour, female piece-workers at 3s 6d. per hour, or the average, whichever is less. The shop committee feel that, though they would rather have kept the 40 hours, the strike has been worth while. If there had been no strike no concessions at all would have been made. Indeed, certain gains have been won. For instance, overtime will be payable for all hours above the normal day's work, whereas before the strike the workers had to put in nine hours a day before going on to overtime rate. Again, under the old system a worker who was one minute late lost half an hour's pay. In future late time will be deducted over the week to the nearest quarter of an hour.

This strike shows the reality of the employers' offensive. All over the country bosses big and small are trying it on in the way that Charles Sumrie did. Wherever the workers do not fight to protect their wages, jobs and workshop organization, they will be chopped down. But the workers have immense power; wherever they stand together and resist they can put a spoke in the employer's wheel. And what is true on a local scale is true of the whole country: if the workers realized their power and used it they could sweep away the Tory Government.

The strike has two other lessons. East Leeds Constituency Labour Party unanimously declared support for the strikers, offered them financial help, help with duplicating, use of the party rooms as a strike headquarters, help in finding accommodation for mass meetings, or any other help they might need. This is a model of how local Labour Parties should behave towards workers in struggle. It not only helps the strikers—it helps the parties to transform themselves into local campaign centres, to link the political and industrial struggles, to attract militant workers to the Labour Left. Of great value, too, was the way local supporters of THE NEWSLETTER reproduced our strike reports as a penny bulletin and distributed 400 of them to the Sumrie workers and 300 at other factories. This is the kind of initiative that will help make the national rank-and-file conference on November 16 a true forum of labour.

We congratulate the Sumrie workers on their fighting spirit and on the limited, but important, victory they have won.

TUC (Continued from front page)

repeat its attitude in the bus strike and work might and main to contain and destroy the dispute.

And so in fact the General Council is giving the Tories the green light to go ahead and chop off section after section.

In this connexion Yates's attack on 'unofficial' strikers, on 'self-styled militants' and 'bad shipmates', should be noted. Two points arise:

- (1) Disputes should be judged, not by whether they are 'official' or 'unofficial', but by the specific issues involved in each case.
- (2) We should be on guard against attempts to expel militants for leading disputes which ought in fact to be led by their unions.

Similar to pre-1926 period

To criticize the performance of the Left at Bournemouth is not to score debating points or to pose as perfectionists. We are moving into a period of history which has a good many similarities to the period before the 1926 General Strike.

THEN AS NOW an economic crisis was developing within capitalism.

THEN AS NOW the employers tried to isolate sections of the working class.

THEN AS NOW the employers made certain concessions in order to avoid a head-on collision, until the ground was cleared for action.

THEN AS NOW the working class was prepared to defend with great sacrifices the gains made immediately after a war.

THEN AS NOW the working class was saddled with leaders who betrayed it by working consciously to maintain capitalism.

Another 400,000 came out

Unable to avoid the General Strike, the General Council worked to destroy it. In his book 'The General Strike' (Cresset Press, 1957) Julian Symons points out that within 24 hours after the strike was called off another 400,000 workers had come out.

The leaders called off the strike without any guarantees whatever on wages, conditions or protection against victimization. The whole trade union movement received a blow from which it took something like twenty years to recover.

Union membership fell from 5,500,000 to 5 million; trade union funds fell from £12 million to £8 million. Not least, the working class had the Trades Disputes Act (the 'Blacklegs' Charter') fastened on it in 1927.

As a result of the leaders' not carrying the dispute on, extending it, forcing the Government to resign, the workers had fifteen years of the dole, and then a war in which hundreds of thousands were slaughtered.

Will sacrifice workers' interests

Could there be a more 'adventurous' and 'extremist' leadership than one that will sacrifice the whole interests of the working class rather than fight?

Surely if we are not to repeat the hardships of the past the Left must make up its mind on certain questions.

Do we renounce the right of the trade union movement to take strike action for industrial and political ends?

How can we ignore the fact that in every industrial dispute even the most dim-witted can see that the working class faces the whole of the employing class—the Tory Government included?

Are the leaders of the TUC merely a 'tired and heavy' 'old guard', suffering from 'timidity', as Will Paynter tries to make out in the Daily Worker of September 6?

Are they a 'general council . . . of decent trade unionists', as the Economist of September 6 describes them?

Are they 'respectable, conscientious, serious, hard-working, responsible officials, genuinely trying to do their best, according to their lights, for their membership', as R. Palme Dutt had it in the June 1958 Labour Monthly?

They are conscious reformists

In our view the General Council of the TUC consists of quite conscious reformists who will surely repeat the 1926 pattern if we allow them to.

Do we split the movement when we declare this? On the contrary, we feel that to recognize this is the only sure way to arm the movement for its future struggles.

And from this fact there follows the need for the building of the rank-and-file movement down below as a safeguard against betrayals at the top.

This is an important question, which will be discussed in full at the rank-and-file conference called by The Newsletter at the Holborn Hall, London, on November 16—to which we invite all trade unionists, whatever their political or religious beliefs, to come.

A WORKER'S-EYE VIEW OF PLANNING

From a Correspondent

Four thousand men employed by Langs to construct the Birmingham-Northampton motorway are complaining that no canteens have been provided.

They are having to drink their tea and eat their sandwiches in the rain.

When work began there was an article in the Observer lauding the careful planning that had been done before a single pick struck the earth. The planners forgot one thing—shelter for the workers during meal-breaks.

PIT 'ECONOMIES' WOULD BE A SELL-OUT

By Tony Harris (Lancashire miner)

BY the time this appears three leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers—Ernest Jones, Ted Jones and Arthur Horner—will have met representatives of the National Coal Board.

The Manchester Guardian of September 9 says this meeting is to 'discuss ways of making the industry more efficient so that it can meet the current pay claim'.

Sir James Bowman, one of our former officials and now chairman of the NCB, has already been putting the pressure on for an acceptance of 'economies'.

'It was a great error to argue that, because of undistributed stocks of coal, now 13 million tons, British miners could afford to relax productivity,' he said last Saturday.

'Now more than ever is the need to hold or reduce our costs by reaching the highest level of efficiency.'

Production per man-shift in British mines is now higher than ever before. Bowman asks us to push it higher—for what? So that more and more miners can be put on the dole and help the Coal Board to get tougher?

Bowman expects that 'the drop in home demand this year might exceed eight million tons, compared with five million in 1957, when an increase of two to three million tons had been expected.'

Harder work, less money

In the past eleven years miners have accepted their leaders' statement that they must 'make nationalization a success'.

The shortage of coal was used as a reason why we could not get the complete 'Miners' Charter', which included the demand for the return of the seven-hour day.

Now that there is a surplus of coal the Coal Board wants fewer miners to work harder for less money. Our leaders will be committing an act of betrayal if they go along with the Coal Board in the 'economy drive'.

BEHAN, PEARCE, FRYER AND CADOGAN IN NEW ISSUE OF LABOUR REVIEW

FOUR well-known ex-members of the Communist Party are authors of the main articles in the August-September issue of Labour Review.

Brian Behan, building trade militant and a former member of the Communist Party executive, writes on 'Socialists and the Trade Unions'.* Brian Pearce ('Joseph Redman') discusses, under the title 'Export of Revolution', 1917-1924', Soviet foreign policy in the early years.

Peter Fryer writes on 'Freedom of the Individual', and Peter Cadogan (who with Christopher Hill and Malcolm MacEwen signed the minority report of the Commission on Inner-Party Democracy) discusses 'Stalinism and the Defeat of the 1945-51 Labour Governments'.

There are eight pages of book reviews; the reviewers include Ekiomenesekenigha (a young West African), Henry Collins, Tom Kemp, K. R. Andrews, Douglas Goldring, John Daniels and the Rev. Stanley Evans.

A communication by G. N. Anderson on 'Science and Socialism' and an editorial welcoming the rank-and-file conference called by the Editorial Board of The Newsletter complete an unusually interesting issue.

Labour Review costs 2s. and can be obtained from New Park Publications Ltd, 266 Lavender Hill, London, S.W.11.

* This article has been reprinted as a threepenny pamphlet, which is now available.

Socialism and the Colour Bar

By G. GALE

SOCIALISTS have nothing in common with mealy-mouthed 'do-gooders' who want to be kind to 'our poor coloured brothers'. Our attitude is not a patronizing one. We are not distributing charity.

Such an attitude is just as colour-conscious as the fascist attitude of beating up coloured men. It is merely a nicer form of regarding coloured people as inferior.

It is not enough to deplore manifestations of racial discrimination. We have to find out what are its causes—and fight them.

Who benefits from it?

We can start from two well-known facts. First, young children of different colour can play together without any distinction. Secondly, there is not a shred of scientific evidence to back up the idea of racial inferiority.

This means that racial discrimination is not an inborn instinct. It can only be instilled by social environment.

It is a false attitude, deliberately instilled for some social reason. What is the reason for it? Who benefits from it?

For many years British capitalism has had at its disposal masses of cheap raw materials produced by cheap labour—in Africa, the West Indies, Malaya and so on.

Producers treated like cattle

The people who produced this wealth have been treated like cattle. And when they have revolted against their treatment and demanded a decent standard of living they have been subjected to military force and police brutality.

Such actions have had to be reconciled with the outlook of a civilized nation. How could Britain, which professed a 'Christian' outlook of love and brotherhood, commit such atrocities against human beings?

To reconcile these irreconcilables, to soothe the national conscience, the people so treated had to be less than human.

They had to be inferior 'in the eyes of God'. They had to

446,000 UNEMPLOYED: H

By H

EVERY week the Press reports factories closing, redundancies and short time. Every week, too, the Press reports declarations of union conferences and executives against unemployment. But in spite of these declarations sackings go on.

It is clear that more than declarations and resolutions are needed if we are not to return to the mass unemployment of the thirties.

That is why trade union militants welcome the decision of The Newsletter to call a national conference in London on November 16 to discuss how rank-and-file militants can get together to rouse the movement.

Such a conference can help us translate pious declarations into action on the shop floor—not only against sackings but against the attacks on trade union organization and conditions which accompany sackings.

The state of affairs in my own industry, engineering, is typical.

CONFED. LEADERS' RETREAT. The annual meeting of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions has just taken place. It issued a declaration that it would do 'everything possible' to defend the security of employment of its members, adding:

'If in spite of all efforts some redundancy is inevitable, the EC, district councils, shop stewards and members are urged to take every practicable step to make the best possible arrangements to ensure that the minimum of hardship is experienced.'

This means that the Confed. leaders do not really intend to fight sackings at all and are already preparing, before even a shot has been fired, to retreat to the 'lesser evil' of asking for compensation.

This is no answer to unemployment. Our leaders are saying in fact that we cannot stop sackings and the growth of unemployment.

If that is so and periods out of work grow from a few days to weeks or even months, as before the war, how will a couple of weeks' compensation carry the unemployed worker?

DISARMS THE MEMBERS. We are told the declaration was a 'compromise' to achieve unity among union delegations. But such a compromise achieves nothing; worse, disarms the members.

If people had been serious in their views they would have openly debated the differences in policy. It is only through open and frank debate that the members can be educated.

Such compromises in fact only sow the seeds of future disunity and confusion when, as is inevitable, the workers will be forced to fight anyway.

Having said this, let us also realize that even if the Confed. annual meeting had adopted a 100 per cent. correct resolution this by itself would be worthless unless followed by action in the districts and factories.

What should we do when the management calls the stewards in and announces that 100 workers are to be sacked next week?

WON'T ALLOW IT. In my opinion the stewards must stand up to the workers and propose that they say to the management:

'We will not allow anyone to be put out of work. How do it is your responsibility. You employers have always claimed the right to run your industry and to appropriate the profits. It's up to you to find us work.'

'If you or your fellow employers can't offer the redundant workers comparable alternative work in the district then you'll have to share the work around by reducing hours without loss of pay.'

'And if a single man or woman is sacked with no work to go to we'll all come out.'

be less sensitive to pain and insult. The origin of the colour bar lies in colonial oppression.

This attitude is deep in the social structure of imperialism. British troops abroad have always been encouraged to think in terms of 'niggers', 'Wogs' and 'Chinks'.

This is bound to lead to discrimination when coloured men come to live in this country. But now yet another factor enters.

The coloured population of Britain has been growing for some years. There have always been incidents—refusals of lodgings, for instance. But why should serious incidents hit the headlines just at this particular time?

It is no accident that this should happen when the post-war boom is showing signs of ending, when unemployment threatens, when industrial battles loom ahead.

There is a real danger of white workers seeking to avoid unemployment by insisting that the coloured man goes first.

This must be fought against by every socialist and militant worker in the country.

This is not out of pity for the coloured worker. It is an elementary rule of working-class action, learnt through years of experience. 'Unity is strength.' 'An injury to one

is an injury to all.' These are not empty phrases—they are the only ways to defend working-class standards.

If the employers are able to create a pool of unemployed—no matter what its colour—they will be able to drive down the conditions of every worker in the country.

Ten outside the gate

No man can have decent working conditions while there are ten men outside the gate waiting for a job.

White and coloured workers must stand together in the interests of all. We must not fall for 'divide and rule' tactics.

The materials are available, the machines are there, there are skilled workers in plenty, and there is abundant need for all that they can produce.

If the workers are cast aside, the machines rendered idle, the materials wasted, it is not the fault of a few coloured men, but a fundamental flaw in the social and economic system.

The attention of the working class must be directed towards building a new society, in which production will be for use, not profit. We must not be diverted into fighting among ourselves.

IS THE SOCIALIST ANSWER

ATNER

Here some quite sincere trade union militants may put forward this objection:

'This is the worst time for workers to strike. In a slump, with unsold products piling up, the employer is at his strongest and we are at our weakest.

'The management may even welcome two or three weeks' stoppage if they've got surplus production in hand. Besides, the men realize this and you won't get them to support you.'

There is a lot of truth in this argument. But what is the alternative? To accept sackings without a fight? To go in for the lesser evil of compensation?

But even to go in for compensation needs pressure on the employer, which according to the above argument we are too weak to exert.



WIDEN THE FIGHT. The answer is that if workers in a single factory are not strong enough then the fight must be widened to bring in the whole district.

The sacking of 100 men at one factory affects every worker in the district. It means 100 jobs less.

The workers in the factory on the other side of town whose jobs later have that much less chance of a job if they have allowed 100 of their mates to queue up at the Labour Exchange the week before.

That is why the fight against sackings cannot be left to individual factories. It must be co-ordinated on at least a district-wide basis.

When workers in any single works are faced with sackings the local employers' association must be told:

'We hear that X Ltd intend to sack some workers. We warn you that if they are not either retained or placed in other comparable jobs in other factories in the district not only will the workers at X Ltd be on strike, the whole district will. Our policy is: One man on the dole—everyone out.'

WORKERS FEEL ISOLATED. Would the workers support such a policy? I believe they would.

What creates the present apparent lack of fight in factories where redundancies now go unchallenged is not lack of interest. On the contrary the workers are very worried indeed. But they see no way out.

The workers in each factory feel isolated. They have no confidence that if they do fight they will get support. For this we must blame the trade union leaders, who have repeatedly let the workers down.

The workers remember how, in 1956, 12,000 workers came out solidly at Standards in Coventry against sackings—and were ordered back to work by the union leaders.

They remember how the Norton workers were left to fight on their own for twenty weeks, and how when they were on the verge of victory, thanks to the solidarity action of the men on the Earls Court motor cycle exhibition, the executive of the Amalgamated Engineering Union called off the strike without even consulting the strikers.



RANK-AND-FILE. So now the workers are more cautious. They want to feel that if they do fight they will get support.

That is why it is important to build up a strong rank-and-file movement, to link up militants and shop stewards in one factory with those in others through rank-and-file conferences, shop stewards' forums and the like.

This does not mean ignoring the official machinery of the union. On the contrary it is necessary to get district committees to adopt a policy against sackings and other aspects of the Tory attacks, and to press for the district committees to call conferences of shop stewards to co-ordinate action.

But here again, to overcome the conservatism and routinism that exist on many committees, an active and conscious rank and file is necessary. That is why I hope many engineering workers will attend the conference called by The Newsletter on November 16.

The only people who benefit when white workers fight coloured workers are those who exploit us both.

Fine comment on capitalism

We have seen this 'divide and rule' tactic applied often in the colonial field—and all too often by Labour leaders.

'Ah,' they say, 'you must realize that if we give freedom to the colonial peoples our standard of living will fall.'

A fine comment on a system where some can only live well if others are in poverty! Of course, it is not true at all.

What could those people do with their raw materials, their rubber, oil and sugar? They could not consume them all themselves.

The demand of the oppressed peoples to live better will not threaten the livelihood of the British working class. But it will threaten the profits of the big business combines.

Better standard of life

What does the worker in Africa, the West Indies, the Middle East, want? He wants a higher standard of life.

IF HE WANTS clothing and shoes, where are they to come

from? From the advanced countries.

IF HE WANTS houses, where are the materials to come from? From the advanced countries.

IF HE WANTS to build factories and dams, where are the materials and machines to come from? From the advanced countries.

How can a better standard of life for people in backward areas possibly mean a lowering of the standard of life of people in the advanced countries?

Moreover the wealth which is produced in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is deliberately restricted and the prices artificially maintained—in the interests of the oil companies, the sugar companies and the rubber companies.

These are the ones who exploit the colonial peoples. And they are the same ones who exploit the British worker over here.

Both internationally and here in Britain the coloured worker is the ally of the white worker in his struggle for decent living conditions and for a better society.

As long as the employing class can keep these workers apart, so long will it rule over both of us.

ECONOMICS

WHAT KIND OF CRISIS ARE WE ENTERING?

By Our Economic Correspondent

FOR some months contradictory trends have been weaving an involved pattern through the economy. The financial journalists, under obligation to fulfil their stint, but not wishing to be caught out by the unexpected turn, have been more than usually woolly of late.

In truth there has been something of a lull, as is not unusual at this time of year.

In Britain an apparently favourable foreign trade position—and the growth in the reserves—have accompanied the symptoms of gathering, but not as yet acute, recession.

While the 'Three Wise Men' still mutter about the dangers of inflation, the Government and the banks take steps which are designed to encourage consumption, at any rate among the middle classes, by lower interest rates and the new personal loans schemes.

Excess capacity has revealed itself in many industries, and industrial production has been falling off. But so far these classic symptoms of crisis, however ominous, have remained subdued.

A good deal has been made of the levelling out of the U.S. depression during the summer and the fact that its impact upon the rest of the world has so far been slight.

Problems of stagnating economy

In interpreting the present phase the following points should be borne in mind:

1) An economy which is stagnating—as the British economy is now doing—has different problems from one which is expanding.

And the sort of problems which beset the economy when it was stretched out under the pressure of a high level of investment and demand have a different significance in the new context.

2) During the expansion inflation and the balance of payments were the danger points. Now that the boom is subsiding neither assumes the same form.

Prices tend to level out with the weakening in demand. Any falling off in export demand has been counteracted for the moment by cheaper import prices.

The kind of balance of payments problem which countries like Britain and France have experienced during the 1950s has been specifically a consequence of expansion and prosperity.

A less sensitive area

3) This does not mean no more balance of payments problem. But it does mean that it is a less sensitive area until the depression deepens and spreads. Then the main problem will be the maintenance of exports under conditions of more intense international competition.

4) The holding down of costs is part of the battle for the market. In the present transitional stage—i.e., between full prosperity and depression—there will be continued resistance to wage increases, indeed stiffening resistance.

But it will be accompanied by a certain flexibility, with the employers playing on the workers' feelings of insecurity and on sectional divisions.

The time for the pushing home of their point will be when unemployment has risen higher and penetrated further into industry.

5) The defenders of capitalism are still looking anxiously at the state of the U.S. economy, despite some of the optimistic statements with which they have been consoling themselves.

If the depression has not got worse there is still no sign of a sustained recovery. Without that there will be nothing to help lift the rest of the world capitalist economy out of the incipient depression which has so far developed without much direct effect from the USA.

There is, moreover, still plenty of time for this to appear and for difficulties in Europe to react on the USA.

Precarious nature of equilibrium

6) Attention should be drawn to the generalized nature of the crisis symptoms. India's serious difficulties, for example, indicate the precarious nature of the world equilibrium of capitalism.

The problems of most primary producing countries can be expected to worsen. And there is not one major country which is not confronted by economic prospects of greater uncertainty than at any time for a decade.

FRANCE

DE GAULLE MYTH—AND BONAPARTIST CONSTITUTION—IN THE MAKING

By Tom Kemp

MODERN authoritarian régimes take care to assume power with constitutional endorsement whenever possible and to find a place for the 'popular will'. This is the meaning of the current constitution-making in France.

On September 28 voting will take place throughout France and the colonies, as well as among French citizens in other countries, for or against the new constitution.

The real issue will be for or against de Gaulle; and the new régime, which has already been installed, has taken over the instruments of propaganda and is using them to create the myth of the infallible saviour.

For all practical purposes the result of the referendum is a foregone conclusion. Its timing—at the end of the holiday period and before the full significance of the constitution can be digested—is perfect.

The seal will be set on the defeat of the working-class movement last May by a massive vote of the people themselves for de Gaulle! There should be no illusions about that!

In Algeria matters are well in hand. An army order dated June 27 says the de Gaulle myth must be created in every way among the Algerian population—photographs and symbols in even the most remote villages, the slogans 'De Gaulle, leader of France' and 'You are all sons of de Gaulle' are to go up everywhere.

'Noes' can be identified

The system of balloting ensures that those voting 'No' can be identified, while special officials will be in attendance to 'help' Moslem women to deal with their ballot papers. (Similar gerrymandering has been a commonplace of electoral practice in the West African colonies in the past.)

The native capitalists and big estate owners will bring in the electors in droves to vote for the right ticket—and a big part of them are collaborating with de Gaulle.²

What about the constitution itself? It is a typically Bonapartist contraption. Of the five bodies which compose the political machinery of the State only the President has effective power. He will be appointed by the members of the other bodies, most of whom will be his creatures.

The President can dissolve the Assembly. A Prime Minister of his choosing forms the Government and the Ministers will have to resign their seats in the Assembly.

The Prime Minister also has the power—in reality on behalf of the President—to call for a referendum should there be a deadlock between the Government and the Assembly.

Various provisions make it clear that parliamentary government, as understood in France since 1871, is to go—unlamented, it must be said, by any wide body of opinion.

President's sweeping emergency powers

The Assembly will either simply register the will of the President and his Government, after the fashion of Hitler's Reichstag, or it will be bypassed, ignored and dissolved.

To cover such eventualities the President has sweeping emergency powers to be used when he deems that an emergency exists.

Meanwhile the partisans of reaction take up their positions with the State apparatus while out in front stands the honoured personality whose pseudo-liberal phrases and assumed high principles give many liberals an alibi for their cowardice and inaction.

But above all de Gaulle is the defender of established

property relations against the working class. The paralysis of the working-class movement, or more particularly of its official representatives, shows how well he is succeeding.

- 1 For example, the latest public opinion poll shows that 68 per cent. have confidence in de Gaulle to restore peace in Algeria and 52 per cent. approve the policy of 'integration'.
- 2 It is true that the African national movement is split on the question of support for de Gaulle and an important minority is hostile. By putting the alternative: 'Either take independence and fend for yourself or fall in with my proposals', de Gaulle has cleverly exploited the fears of the bourgeois nationalists who do not want complete independence now. It is perhaps significant that (according to *Le Monde*) the Communist Party of Madagascar has announced that it will vote for the de Gaulle constitution in the referendum.

Constant Reader | Disguised Taxation

MEMORANDUM on public library charges issued by Finchley Constituency Labour Party is to be discussed today in the BBC's World of Books programme.

This document shows the illegality and inequity of the charges now made by many public libraries for reserving books.

Any calculation of the tax burden on the working people of this country must nowadays take into account not only taxes openly so called but the increasing variety of 'charges', such as the Health Service charges, national insurance contributions and so on.

Book-reservation charges belong to this category, and are a heavy burden on students and old people.

I have heard arguments used in defence of reservation charges which remind me of the 'coals in the bath' canard of the early twenties ('If you give workers houses with baths they only put their coal in them')—on the grounds that 'most reservations are for trashy novels'.

Starving our libraries

Some say, too, that just as the municipal refuse-collection service undertakes to clear only one dustbin per house per week, and anything more than that has to be paid for, so anyone who expects such service from his public library as the reserving of a book is asking for 'something extra' of the same order, for which he ought similarly to expect to pay.

It seems to me that the analogy is rather between the person who regularly 'supplies' a full dustbin (as against the one who only half-fills it) and the person who makes conscious, demanding use of his public library: why should the latter have to pay extra any more than the former?

What lies behind the controversy, of course, is the starving of our libraries of the financial resources they need to increase their staffs and expand rather than restrict the services they offer.

All done by mirrors

PEOPLE sometimes wonder why the Soviet leaders consider it worth while to support a number of 'friendship' and 'cultural relations' societies in this country, since they must realize how unrepresentative they are.

One of the answers was indicated at the July meeting of the executive committee of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR.

Commander Edgar Young, that widely-travelled fellow-traveller, gave an account of a visit he had made to the Hungarian-Soviet Society while touring Hungary and said that the Society was 'very anxious to receive SCR publications'.

Hungarians and others under Khrushchev's rule who have

no means of getting a balanced picture of the British scene may well be persuaded by means of the publications of the SCR and similar bodies that wide circles of British trade unionists, intellectuals and so forth are in solidarity with the Soviet bureaucrats—an idea that cannot but discourage resistance to the oppressors.

Jolly old pals

A SPEECH of Rosa Luxemburg's is brought to mind by the news that Lord Alexander of Tunis has accepted the presidency of the Anglo-German Association.

In her last speech, on December 30, 1918, little more than a fortnight before she was murdered by reactionary officers, she said:

'You will all have read how the German troops in Riga are already marching shoulder to shoulder with the British against the Russian Bolsheviks.'

And she pointed out that the social-democratic officials responsible ought, by their own laws, to go to prison for this: 'For by the German penal code it is an offence punishable by imprisonment to enlist German soldiers for foreign service.'

The German forces fighting in Latvia in this period, against the socialist revolution, came under the command of Lt-Col. Alexander, Irish Guards, now Field-Marshal Lord Alexander.

Death of a Labour interventionist

Though Alexander is still very much with us, another living link with the intervention in Russia recently passed away in the person of Lord Baldwin, better remembered as Oliver, 'Labour' son of the Tory leader Stanley Baldwin.

He served at the opposite end of the long anti-Soviet front, in Transcaucasia.

His memoirs, 'Six Prisons and Two Revolutions', aroused comment for their anti-Semitic sneers, and for their attack on 'the British Labour Party, who consistently urged the withdrawal of the British troops from Georgia at a time when their presence would have saved both Georgia and Armenia'.

As the book appeared in 1925, however, during a major witch-hunt against the Left in the Labour Party, Baldwin got away with this.

Return of Kalmucks

ALL familiar with the ballad of Abdul the Bulbul Emir will remember with affection the name of the bold Kalmuck, Ivan Skavinsky Skavar, his worthy adversary.

Soviet News recently reported the re-establishment of the Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in the USSR.

The Kalmyks—or Kalmucks, as they are better known here—were among the nationalities which were deported bodily from their homelands in 1943-45 because some of their members had allegedly collaborated with the Germans.

Most of these nationalities—not all—have been allowed to return in recent years.

Evidence of the restoration of the Balkars, another of these victim-nations of the Stalin era, to their native mountains, appeared in the accounts of their experiences written by the British climbers who lately visited the Caucasus.

BRIAN PEARCE

LETTERS

BUILDING WORKERS MUST GET OVER THE BONUS BARRIER

EXPLOITATION, fear of sackings, short-term jobs, with unemployment all around. Pre-war building workers knew them all, yet they won the eight-hour day, holidays with pay and tea breaks. Today we fight all out to *maintain* these conditions.

Building workers must ask the questions: Are we advancing? What holds us back? Are we militant enough?

Some of the finest struggles have taken place since 1945. Tersons, 1951: financial support £1,900; eight weeks' battle. Rowleys, Biltons, Abbey Wood: splendid examples, all making for a small gain.

But the problems remain, for all those struggles were divorced mainly from branch activity. The only advances made were in addition to trade union branch activity.

Basically all those struggles were around bonus. If every worker who engaged in those fights had attended his branch and taken part in making policy our industry would have taken giant strides forward.

Isolated battles on sites

In 1945 50,000 workers marched for a wage claim of four-pence per hour. They won it. Each year since the bosses have thrown a 'No' into the silence. Yet many job sites are resisting sackings, defending standards and conditions.

The employers introduced bonus as an alternative to a pay claim. The militants made bonus the goal.

This has led to isolated battles on sites, and sell-outs by all employers at disputes machinery. For disputes machinery is the arm of the employers' organization.

Can those who see bonus as the goal fight effectively? No; to fight low wages and sackings the whole machinery must work, the present policy must be changed. And this can come only through a full branch life.

Consider the 300,000 miners whose earnings have dropped substantially. Now they have to go forward for a wage claim. The employers will knock off the builders' bonus as they did the miners', for unemployment is growing.

Should this happen in our industry as a result of unemployment it will be too late to fight.

Would support clear lead

Our basic wage is not a living wage. Many thousands of building workers, forced by trade union neglect to exist on flat rate, would support a clear lead for a wage claim.

As a first step in this direction, bonus by private contractors should be rejected and the myth of a small section of workers fighting one employer—when really they take on all employers—should become the reality of all building workers, armed with the potential might of our unions, facing the employers nationally for the benefit of all workers.

Today, with few exceptions, bonus earnings are low in comparison with production.

If the employers introduced bonus in good faith, would there have been so many struggles around it? Would not the whole industry be working by target? Would not targets decrease as the cost of living rises?

Workers in other industries are brushing aside the myths. Dockers, gasworkers, busmen, are lining up to face the employers. Our industry, with its proud history, must stand with them for a real advance in our living standard.

London, S.W.2

Paddy Mahoney

WITHOUT THESE MEN UNIONS WOULD BE TAILOR'S DUMMIES

WHAT is holding back the building industry?

1) Because we take on all the employers on the one building site we fight in isolation. Against your own building site is the whole of the Master Builders' Federation.

2) Phoney disputes commissions are the employers' trick to smash job organization. Have we ever won a commission?

3) Tory policy is to cripple workers' bargaining power by unemployment to flood the labour market, by wage freeze and rising costs.

4) Many workers have no faith in their trade union machine. They see the job stewards' committee on the site as enough. Through mass meetings they are able to determine job policy.

While advances can be won this way, they are limited and end when the job ends. Our trade union machine, representing 1,250,000 workers, has unlimited powers.

By branch life, changing policy as on the job, election of real representatives, we can make real advances. We are the union. Our support is its strength.

Link up the sites

5) When each job ends we have to start to organize all over again. By now linking up the different sites with shop stewards' meetings we can ensure 100 per cent. trade unionism on all jobs.

Shop stewards' committees are the heart of job organization. They are composed of 'key men' who, by working on the job, sharing the problems of all, can give practical leadership.

Without these men who fight for union members the unions would be only tailor's dummies.

With unemployment growing, now is the time to go forward for better conditions—now while we are working.

All building workers should support the call for better-organized jobs and for a decent living wage.

London, S.W.2

John Byrne

CLERKS AND OTHER WORKERS HAVE COMMON PROBLEMS, COMMON FIGHT

It is sometimes claimed that clerks have interests different from those of manual workers.

This is sheer nonsense. A clerk has to sell his labour power in the same way as a manual worker.

The pool of unemployment which the bosses and their Government are striving to create will be used to destroy our living standards just as it will be used to destroy the living standards of manual workers.

Our jobs moreover are directly threatened.

Sackings of manual workers are usually followed by sackings of clerks.

Electronic computers, able to do the work of many people, can throw a large number of wage clerks on to the dole queue.

This can be prevented only by complete solidarity with manual workers.

Jointly we must beat back the capitalist offensive, bring down the Tory Government and establish a régime which serves the workers' interests.

Let there be no scabbing by clerical workers during strikes. Instead let us associate ourselves fully with all progressive demands.

And let us strive for 100 per cent. trade unionism among engineering clerks.

Leicester

Alan Stanley (engineering clerk)